

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN, TRINITY COLLEGE

**Explorations of “an alien past”: Identity, Gender, and Belonging
in the Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, and Margaret Atwood**

A Thesis submitted to the School of English at the University of Dublin, Trinity College,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Kate Smyth

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Summary

This thesis uses the short fiction of Canadian writers Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, and Margaret Atwood to explore issues of national identity and gender inequality, arguing that white English-speaking Canadians of British descent have maintained social, cultural, and political hegemony in Canada, and connecting this with the continuation of patriarchal dominance over women from the mid-twentieth century into the twenty-first. While post-colonialism, post-nationalism, and post-feminism have become part of Canadian political and cultural discourse, identity continues to be regulated and inequalities are perpetuated, as these stories are used to demonstrate. The three authors draw on the Canadian Gothic genre to highlight experiences of exile in both urban and rural locations, deconstruct boundaries of self and place, and emphasise how fears about the Other are constructed as threatening to a stable sense of gendered self and home for Settler Canadian characters.

This study is divided into three sections and is structured chronologically by author, with two chapters dedicated to each. Within this, for each author, the first chapter deals with issues of national identity and belonging in the stories and the second chapter deals with gender identity.

The Introduction outlines the social and political context for the thesis, particularly in relation to discussions of power as integral to national identity and gender inequality. It suggests the importance of the short story form as a conduit for these considerations, particularly regarding the exile as a figure of resistance both to ingrained national identity definitions and gender norms.

The Gallant section is structured according to place. Chapter 1 uses Gallant's Canadian and Paris stories to explore how questions of belonging and perceptions of Settler Canadian identity are bound up with the desire for roots and the experience of nomadism. Through a consideration of 1960s and 1970s Canadian nationalism, it suggests the endurance of a Settler Canadian sense of victimisation. Chapter 2 looks at the Riviera and German stories to demonstrate Gallant's engagement with learned gender roles during and after the Second World War, particularly with regard to the notion of women as "naturally" caring, nurturing, and kind, and the possibility of challenging ingrained patriarchal norms through behaviours that challenge gender expectations.

The Munro section is structured according to theme. Chapter 3 first looks at the house as symbolic of identity and suggests that returning "home" relates to a longing for security and a stable sense of self. The second part explores boundary issues and representations of the wilderness as linked with freedom, based on learned desires for authenticity and legitimacy for Settler Canadians. In Chapter 4, the first part looks at social constructions of femininity and beauty and suggests that Munro's female characters are used to engage with contemporary feminist discourse, including the depiction of women as victims of male dominance. The second part explores marriage, motherhood, and confinement in domestic space, proposing that gender roles are learned, particularly within the nuclear family.

The Atwood section is structured by text in order of publication. The first part of Chapter 5 suggests a link between the house as "home" and the development of Canadian nationalism in relation to Atwood's collection *Dancing Girls*. The second part explores the significance of father characters in *Bluebeard's Egg* concerning settler colonial legacies in Canada. The third part examines the settler desire for authenticity and legitimacy with regard to constructions of wilderness and civilisation in *Wilderness Tips* and *Moral Disorder*. Chapter 6 considers feminist change from *Dancing Girls* and stories set in the 1960s and 1970s, to *Bluebeard's Egg* and the 1980s, and the argument that motherhood is in opposition to women's freedom and sexuality, to *Wilderness Tips* and *Moral Disorder* and ideas of post-feminism in the 1990s and 2000s. It demonstrates how Atwood's stories can be used to suggest that post-feminism glosses over the continued processes of heteropatriarchal dominance. The Conclusion summarises the findings of the thesis, suggesting ideas for future research and a comparative project with contemporary female Canadian writers.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Louise Walsh-Delaney.

List of Abbreviations

- AM* Howells, Coral Ann. *Alice Munro*. Manchester University Press, 1998.
- AM* Cox, Ailsa. *Alice Munro*. Northcote House, 2004.
- AM* Dahlie, Hallvard. *Alice Munro*. ECW Press, 1984.
- CI* May, Charles E. *Critical Insights: Alice Munro*. Salem, 2013.
- CP* Atwood, Margaret. *Curious Pursuits: Occasional Writing: 1970-2005*. Virago, 2009.
- GT* Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- MA* Howells, Coral Ann. *Margaret Atwood*. St. Martin's, 1996.
- NSS* Munro, Alice. *New Selected Stories*. Chatto & Windus, 2011.
- SS* Gallant, Mavis. *The Selected Stories of Mavis Gallant*. Random House, 1996.
- ST* Atwood, Margaret. *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. Virago. 2004.
- SW* Atwood, Margaret. *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose*. Anansi, 1982.
- TBM* Munro, Alice. *The Beggar Maid*. Vintage. 1978.

Introduction

(i)

In an article for *The New York Times* in 2015, Guy Lawson writes about Pierre Elliot Trudeau, prime minister of Canada during the late 1960s and 1970s. This was a period when the country was culturally and psychologically detaching from Britain, an era that saw the creation of “quintessential Canadian characteristics” (Lawson), including bilingualism and multiculturalism. In a short space of time, Trudeau decriminalised homosexuality – claiming that “the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation” – and “legalized abortion, funded the arts and promoted a race-blind immigration policy” (Lawson). Trudeau’s political focus suggests an emphasis on both national identity issues and gender equality issues, which have become central concern for his son and current prime minister Justin Trudeau.

Lawson also writes about Trudeau Jr. This 2015 article was published just after Justin Trudeau’s election in November. Lawson states that Justin’s “embrace of a pan-cultural heritage makes him an avatar of his father’s vision”. Of particular interest for this thesis is the younger Trudeau’s claim that “there is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada”, claiming that unified Canadian identity is based on “shared values” of “openness, respect, compassion”, which are “qualities” that “make us the first post-national state” (Lawson). While Trudeau focuses on only the positive aspects of this notion of post-nationalism for Canadian people, it also manifests great insecurity and doubt. This tension is addressed throughout this thesis, specifically in relation to Settler Canadian desires *for* the kind of “core identity” which true says they lack. Political narratives of identity do not always correlate with lived experiences.

This project explores how short fiction can be used to suggest that narratives of Settler Canadian progressivism run in tandem with unequal social and political norms. For example, Pierre Trudeau’s apparently progressive argument from the 1960s that there should be separation between the state and gender identities and sexual practices is repeatedly

highlighted in the short stories chosen in this thesis as disconnected from the lived reality of the time. State-sanctioned power is continually and often covertly asserted over how gender is constructed and discourses about sexuality are shown to be policed and regulated in these stories. The links between how anxieties about Settler Canadian “core” place and belonging are controlled and manipulated and how issues of gender and sexuality are regulated and structured in Canada, as demonstrated through these short stories, form the central argument of this thesis.

An article by Michael Adams in *The Globe and Mail* in 2018 provides an example of the promotion of the post-national Canadian identity to which Justin Trudeau refers. Adams writes that “Canadians cite our traditions and policies of bilingualism, multiculturalism, and mutual accommodation as key achievements. They also note our acceptance of immigrants and refugees from around the planet”. This is contrasted, he asserts, with the “xenophobic nationalism sweeping Europe and the United States” (Adams). He notes that “like other countries, we have many challenges to address and far to go to live up to the values we claim – but Canada has come a long way: from a colony of deferential subjects to a country of global citizens” (Adams). Adams gestures towards contemporary hegemonic and systemic trends of emphasising Canada’s strength and unified identity built on its multiculturalism, as highlighted by Justin Trudeau, which distance Canada from its previous incarnation as victim of British and U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile the “challenges” of white Canada’s legacy of settler colonialism and ongoing problems with racism and discrimination against minority groups are mentioned without scrutiny.

The failure to acknowledge these issues in political, social, and cultural forums dominated by white Canada stems from a desire to market Canada as successful and progressive. This is also bound up with issues of gender equality, as highlighted for example through Trudeau’s well-publicised support for LGBT groups and his emphasis, for example, on having a gender-balanced cabinet. In contrast to his predecessor Stephen Harper, who in

2006 had six women in his cabinet of twenty-six, Trudeau brought in fifteen men and fifteen women (Warzecha). These developments indicate representative political gestures towards what Trudeau in a speech in 2015 called “individual freedom within collective identity” (Trudeau) which does not always equate to the realities of social and cultural divides and continuities of power imbalances. Such nods to gender equality are progressive but gloss over the complexity involved in changing ingrained power imbalances.

Constructions of belonging and place and constructions of gender are two integral and interacting features of identity and political, social, and cultural interpretations of these factors have varied significantly throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, and Margaret Atwood are three of Canada’s most well-known and successful female authors of the mid- to late-twentieth century. Running throughout their stories is precisely this fear of the loss or absence of a “real” or “core” self. This is bound up with the desire for a stable home-place or place of belonging and knowable sense of gender identity. Throughout these stories, characters are depicted as feeling alienated if this “core” self and home becomes destabilised. According to Alison Rudd, there is a persistent fear among white English-speaking Canadians that the nation once had a “cultural core” which has been destabilised by migration and multiculturalism (69). A “core identity” is the very thing that Justin Trudeau in 2015 claims is non-existent in Canada, suggesting a disconnection between local experience and individual fears and political marketing. These stories explore how developing multiculturalism and post-nationalism exists in tandem with deep-seated fears of difference and the unknown and suggest positive as well as negative aspects to mutable national and gender identities.

Significant changes in national and gender identity can be perceived through these stories in relation to the aftermath of the Second World War, the rise of Canadian nationalism in the 1960s, the Canadian literary “renaissance” of the 1960s (Pache 121). This was encouraged by the Massey Report, Quebec Separatism, Second Wave Feminism in the

1960s and 1970s and the development of “post-feminism”, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, a “post-national”, transnational, or “global” Canada in the 1990s and 2000s. Gallant, Munro, and Atwood have often been read in relation to their approaches to Canadian national identity and gender identity. However, this project is the first to focus these stories in relation to the connections between identity constructions and their relationship to sources of power, how this changes over time, how it remains the same, and how it is perpetuated and simultaneously concealed. Gallant, Munro, and Atwood are all white, middle-class, English-speaking Canadian women writers, and their short fiction suggests how perceptions of belonging and gender have developed, as well as how settler colonial and patriarchal power positions endure despite the political propagandizing of a progressive and near-utopian Canada.

While Gallant and Munro are primarily short story writers, Atwood is more famous for her novels and her social and literary criticism. If the aim of this thesis was primarily to focus on the Canadian short story form, Atwood may not fit sufficiently with the other two, who are prime examples of the best short fiction writers of the twentieth century. However, Atwood is included here because this project seeks to combine an exploration and interrogation of the use of the short story as a form with a deeper socio-cultural, psychological unpacking of structures of power in Canada throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and, importantly, into the twenty-first century.

Atwood plays with form and genre, but she has remained consistently preoccupied with issues of power throughout her writing career. In using her relatively neglected short fiction to continue the explorations of these power structures, keeping in mind the changing and persisting social, political, and cultural norms and values demonstrated through the stories of Gallant and Munro, a pattern emerges about the covert perpetuation of psychological unease and state-sanctioned control in Canada during this time. Unlike Gallant and Munro, Atwood is politically outspoken and has become a cultural and literary celebrity,

active (and often criticised) on Twitter and regularly interviewed, particularly after the successful television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Perhaps Atwood's most famous work, the novel was initially published in 1985 and adapted for TV in 2017, having become relevant in the face of contemporary political events. This talent for political and cultural commentary is why Atwood's short fiction forms a focus of this thesis, as her work demonstrates the capacity of literature to interrogate structures of power.

The endurance of these positions and this fear of destabilisation is highlighted through Eva Mackey's interviews with residents of Southern Ontario small towns – a location of particular importance for Munro's stories – and her findings of consistent “anti-immigrant sentiment” expressed by those who perceive themselves as “ordinary Canadians” (20). These are “white and of mixed British and European ancestry” and are thus “unmarked, non-ethnic” and “have the privilege of being simply ‘Canadian’” (20). Most characters in stories by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood can be described as such. Mackey suggests that these “ordinary Canadians” see “ethnic groups” – including First Nations peoples, Inuit communities, Québécois, or those with hyphenated identities (such as Chinese-Canadian or Italian-Canadian) – as being more likely to get financial assistance and special privileges from the government and have thus learned to “construct themselves as victims of multiculturalism” (20). This suggests that an updated form of the “ordinary Canadian” victim mentality as a colonial and imperial subject has developed. This was described by Atwood in *Survival* (1972), in which she claims that survival is Canada's “central symbol”, relating to “early settlers and explorers” against the “‘hostile’ elements and/or natives”, keeping alive when confronted with the harsh Canadian weather and landscape and, later, against U.S. dominance over Canada as a whole (*Survival* 32). This central idea generates “an almost intolerable anxiety” (33), which relates to a construction of the “ethnic” Other by “ordinary Canadians” as signifier of “the boundary of the self, to confirm the subjectivity of the invader-settler” (Lawson 25). When discussing this group, I use “Settler Canadian”, which is

the term most commonly used by the critics who have most influenced my work, such as Cynthia Sugars. I also use it with a view to trouble the “privilege” of “ordinary Canadians”, while considering the binary construction of hegemonic “ordinary Canadian” and subjugated, unwanted “immigrant”.

In addition to settler colonialism in Canada, the Second World War is also an important context for these stories as a time of extreme destabilisation and fluctuation of identity and place. Characters are used to highlight growing fears about more fluid national boundaries and a pluralised sense of home, which are connected to a fear of difference and Othered minorities. As asserted by Coral Ann Howells, “any discourse about ‘home’ is an extension of discourses of nation and national identity and related concepts of belonging and homelessness, dislocation, and alienation” (“Introduction” 4). The large amount of transnational movement during and after the war is an important backdrop for such investigations in the short stories chosen for this thesis. Characters who move and travel are used, especially by Gallant, to disrupt entrenched ideas of home and “core” place and identity. As Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty argue, being away from one’s home-place presents the unsettling reality of the constructed nature of “home”:

Being “home” refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; “not being home” is a matter of realising 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. (296)

Ellen McWilliams argues that over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, Canadian literature has become “less interested in exposing the lack of a distinctive Canadian identity than in exploring a fractured identity based on a divided sense of home” (145). Canadian literature can be a method of challenging and deconstructing the political rhetoric of staunch nationalism and Canadian unity alongside its multiculturalism, as purported by Pierre Trudeau in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when many of these stories are

set. This challenging can also be extended to Justin Trudeau's contemporary and media-savvy emphasis on "post-nationalism" as positive and progressive.

This was also a period of heteropatriarchy, which refers to "the social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural" (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 13). The short stories selected here are also used to identify how hegemonic and patriarchal power continues to be perpetuated on a local level, among families and within communities. In the post-Second World War Canadian short story, Stephen Regan argues "family history or personal history is shaped against the broader canvas of the nation's historical events and movements" (112). This link between the family and the nation corresponds with Kate Millet's argument that "patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole" (33). It "not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads" (Millet 33). Both gender and national identity are sites in which hegemonic power is exercised. A link can be drawn with the war and changes in the relationship between these two sites, and the ways in which this power is continued more covertly and clandestinely.

The focus here is on these authors' stories as the short story form is a "vehicle" for ideas "which may be in some way at odds with the 'story' of dominant culture" (Hanson, *Rereading* 6). It can be "a dissident form of communication" (March-Russell ix). Marie Louise Pratt suggests that the short story is "used to introduce new regions or groups into an established national literature, or into an emerging national literature in the process of decolonisation" (104). In Canada, ingrained Settler mythologies about the lingering effects of British imperialism and fears of U.S. domination, and an identity that is constantly in crisis, make the short story a fitting form for depicting Settler Canadian experience.

In comparison, in the U.S., “there has been a long and enduring tendency for American writers to regard the short story as part of their national literature” (March-Russell 78), particularly in relation to canonical white male writers like Poe, Hawthorne, Updike, or Carver. However, the form is also bound up with the development of a “Canadian” national literature, with early publications including Stephen Leacock’s *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) demonstrating a creation of a national identity through local, regionally-specific communities.

Lohafer suggests that “stories prosper in times of social upheaval, and in places where individuals are alienated” (6). Settler Canadians, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sought to assert a distinct “literary heritage” against British imperialism. But Settler Canada does not have the same dominating male figures at its literary centre as the U.S. Women writers in Canada, from Ethel Wilson and Marjorie Pickthall to Margaret Lawrence and Carols Shields, took up the short story form as a “vehicle for different for different *kinds* of knowledge, [...] suggest[ing] that which cannot normally be said” (Hanson, *Reading* 6, emphasis in original). While the form provides an opening for suppressed ideas to come to the fore, it also offers an opportunity for women writers to “assert the selfhood they have been denied by the dominant culture” (Hutcheon, *Canadian* 6).

The short story form is perpetually depicted by literary critics and journalists as being in crisis. According to Chris Power writing in *The Guardian* in 2018, “the sense we are always experiencing some kind of ‘moment’ for the short story is perpetuated, and they are prevented from simply being short stories in the way that novels, generally speaking, are allowed to be novels.” In the early stages of the development of Canada as a settled nation, there were few publication options for writers. The short story form really began to flourish during the cultural “renaissance” of the 1950s and 1960s through the support of figures like writer, editor, and critic John Metcalf, and Robert Weaver. Weaver was an editor and

publisher with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and published multiple anthologies on the Canadian short story.

One apparent “renaissance” (Thacker, “Short Fiction” 179) of the short story occurred in the late twentieth century, coinciding with what Davey calls the “highly fragmented condition of Canadian culture in the 1980s and 1990s, in which constructions of region, gender, ethnicity, and language have outweighed any construction of a unified national identity” (134). The short story form is “perfect” for a “heterogeneous and fragmented culture” like Canada (Cox, *Teaching* 2). Contemporary Canadian writers, with ancestral links that include Asia, Italy, Africa and the Caribbean – examples include André Alexis and Vincent Lam – are now publishing short fiction which highlights the variety of perspectives in Canada’s literature and culture and unsettles the exclusive national Canadian canon. The fragmentary nature of the form is significant for Canada as a postcolonial nation with a history of precarious and dominated national identities. The form can be used to destabilise linear narratives, providing an opportunity to question accepted definitions of identity and place of belonging. It encourages readers to think about the ways in which marginalisation still exists in different aspects of Canadian society.

Stories or narratives of national identity and gender identity are chosen and perpetuated by those in power and, as asserted by Sally and Rudi Dallos, power “can operate in subtle ways by shaping what aspects of relationships are seen as natural, inevitable, and not worthy of comment” (11), when they are actually socially, culturally, and politically constructed. The dominant narrative of what is “natural” can induce those in “a subordinate position to explain their experience as not to do with social inequalities but to do with there being ‘something wrong with them’” (Dallos and Dallos 18). This relates to both the political and social dominance of Settler Canadians and the patriarchal dominance of men over women in terms of gender equality. Dallos and Dallos argue that the discourses that support and benefit the power of the dominant group are the narratives into which the subjugated

group are expected to “fit”, and these narratives “shape people’s aspirations and beliefs” and they “limit and constrain the possibility of alternative aspirations” (22). If individuals fail to “fit” into these narratives, they are encouraged to view themselves “as incompetent, abnormal, or deviant” (Dallos and Dallos 22). The short stories I have selected for this thesis demonstrate how a failure to “fit” can result in exile, both in terms of belonging in relation to place and belonging in relation to gender. The characters in these stories display how gender and national identifications are often assumed to be an individual choice but are in fact the *effects* of dominant power structures.

The short story is an effective form for exploring this idea due to its traditional treatment of the exile and outsider who does not “fit”. According to Linda Hutcheon, the form focuses on individuals in “ex-centric” positions (*The Canadian 2*) who are often perceived or perceive themselves as being on “the periphery or margin” (Hutcheon, *The Canadian 2*). Frank O’Connor claims that the form is especially appropriate for highlighting the experience of socially and politically “submerged population groups” (86) and “outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society” (87). These are Othered minority groups and exiles who suffer discrimination and are controlled by, but also represent a challenge to, dominant power structures.

The three authors that form the focus of this thesis depict such “ex-centric” figures, Othered by norms of gender as well as place. These figures are explored not just through the short story form but also the short story cycle. These are linked stories, which often have a connected protagonist or setting. Gerald Lynch’s important text about the short story cycle, *The One and the Many*, describes the story cycle as “a form in which Canadian writers have achieved considerable eminence” (3). It allows authors to “subvert the impression of completion, of closure and totality” (Lynch 18), which is integral to challenging national narratives and learned ideas about identity and belonging. It was also “well suited to the concerns of Canadian writers intent upon portraying a particular region or community, its

history, its characters, its communal concerns, regions, and communities” (16). According to Lynch, “Canadian story cycles unified primarily by a recurrent character *are* reliant on place”, which “plays an essential role in the formation of character” (21, emphasis in original). These formal and thematic elements are all evident in the short story cycles by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood explored below, particularly the idea that “place does and does not unify” (Lynch 23).

Considering the potential transnational links to be made in relation to such discussions of power, place, and identity, it is important to acknowledge my own perspective as Irish female, middle-class, and white, and the connections between Ireland and Canada in relation to British colonialism and imperialism, gender inequality, the subjugation of women and minority groups, patriarchal institutions, boundaries and borders, and religious divides, as well as a propensity for the short story form. My viewpoint suggests a cross-cultural perspective on these issues in order to challenge learned constructions of difference and the social, political, and cultural compulsion for individuals to “fit”.

(ii)

Gallant, Munro, and Atwood published short fiction consistently throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, with Munro and Atwood publishing into the twenty-first. During this time explorations of national identity in Canadian fiction shifted from being bound up with the imperial and colonial power of Britain and the U.S., to challenging the dominance of Settler Canadians and the subjugation of minority populations. My reading considers this shift and presents a reconsideration of these characters through a settler colonial perspective, emphasising the hegemonic power structures in Canada. In an interview with Jo Brans in 1992, Atwood states:

A lot of power is ascription. People have power because we think they have power, and that’s all politics is. And politics also has to do with what kind of conversations you have with people, and what you feel free to say to someone. (149)

These stories can be used to suggest the silencing of subjugated voices, both in terms of non-white Canadians and women, and how unequal power dynamics are perpetuated among female characters on each other, while also being internalised so that the female characters are depicted as self-policing in relation to patriarchal gender roles. This silencing of female voices is linked in these stories with the post-war resurgence in the confinement of women to traditional gender roles and to the private domestic sphere. Howells refers to “the shift away from private experience to the recognition of the relatedness between domestic and social structures” in the 1960s and 1970s as an important factor in developing feminist movements (*MA* 15), and Gallant, Munro, and Atwood respond to these changes through their short fiction.

This issue of power and silence also applies to constructions of national identity and place in the stories. While these authors cannot feasibly speak for, or on behalf of, non-white characters, I chose them because they are three of Canada’s most well-known female fiction writers and they often fail to address racial inequalities in Canada in their stories. Non-white characters tend to be silenced and interpreted only through or in relation to white Canadians. This has an effect on the political narrative being shaped in Canada from the 1960s during Pierre Trudeau’s time in power that Canada was a country without racial divides, particularly for international readers.

Hanson states that the “formal properties of the short story – disjunction, inconclusiveness and obliquity – connect with its ideological marginality and with the fact that the form may be used to express something suppressed/repressed in mainstream literature” (*Rereading* 2). What is “suppressed/repressed” in these stories is the reality that, in settler colonial societies like Canada, settlers replace the indigenous populations, become the norm, and conceal ongoing processes of settler colonialism. Second and third generation Canadian settlers perceive themselves as belonging to the country of their birth. As descendants of the original settlers, they “have inherited the blame, and possibly the guilt,

but have no alternative identity, no other homeland” (Bateman and Pilkington 3). According to Maeve Conrick, Settler Canadian preoccupations with “collective memory”, which is bound up with a desire for a “core” identity, is a “strategy” to cope with the possibility of being without a cultural core “in an officially multicultural environment” and a hegemonic power structure that seeks to “project an image abroad” (2). Descendants of settlers may experience a sense of “settler anxiety”, which relates to ideas of “guilt and complicity” (Tuck and Yang 1). They are complicit in the violence and mass erasure of Indigenous Canadians and continue “directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples” (9). This relates to a “settler desire to be made innocent” (Tuck and Yang 9) through “strategies” that “attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege” (10). The ongoing implementation of these “strategies” continues while developments in multiculturalism and post-nationalism are instituted. The disconnect that this creates in relation to perceptions of belonging and identity is examined through the characters in these short stories.

The engagement in these short stories with things that are “suppressed/repressed” suggests that tropes of the Victorian Gothic were “imported” (Sugars, *Canadian* 3) by settlers from Britain with the aim of creating “cultural mythology and historical antiquity” in Canada (4) and to imbue a unified Settler Canadian identity with “a ‘feel’ of authenticity” (Sugars and Turcotte xvii) in this new landscape. According to Sugars, “the extensive colonisation of North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries coincided with the rise of the Gothic as a genre in Europe” (*Canadian* 11). Twentieth century Canadian writers continue to use the Gothic to “articulate their sense of contingency of their presence in Canada” (Sugars and Turcotte xvii), as demonstrated in the stories selected here. The transnational, cross-cultural elements of the Gothic are suggested through the idea of a “resurgence” of the genre after the Second World War and can be linked to “the unprecedented movement and dislocation of people across the globe” (Goldman and Saul 649). It can also be connected

with Homi Bhabha's post-colonial notion of the "unhomely", which Bhabha describes as "the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world" ("The World" 141). "Home" is no longer a single, stable place, and "more and more people are 'unhomed' – often forced to exist in a kind of liminal space traditionally associated with the ghost" (Goldman and Saul 649). Anxieties about this endure in Settler Canada, despite Trudeau's depiction of it as positive and progressive.

The relevance of the Canadian Gothic remains central to this anxiety over a contingent sense of place and home. Settler Canadians sought to create a feeling of being historically and culturally rooted in Canada through the creation and perpetuation of myths and ghosts, but this also creates a sense of dislocation and uncertainty, the effect of which is highlighted in Mackey's discussion of xenophobia among "ordinary Canadians". Gallant, Munro, and Atwood each use the Gothic in different ways, and interpreting their stories in this way allows for the consideration of Canada as a "precarious fabrication" (Sugars, "Haunted" 1), a nation in which members "'imagine' that they constitute a cohesive whole" while repressing a sense that this is an "illusion" (2). Trudeau's comment about the lack of a Canadian "cultural core" suggests embracing this precarity and can be linked with Robert Kroetsch's claim in 1989 that, in Canada, "there is no centre. This disunity is our unity" (31). This demonstrates a developing political and cultural discourse to support Canada's post-nationalism and multiculturalism.

A connection can be made here with the construction of "ordinary Canadians" as victims of multiculturalism and the fear of difference that is demonstrated throughout the stories by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood. These authors are Settler Canadians coming from a tradition on which Northrop Frye based his theory of the "garrison mentality", the notion that "small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier'" in Canada are isolated from their "cultural sources" of the U.S. and Britain and must band together in the face of "a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" (*Bush*

225). Such constructions of Settler Canadian identity are also bound up with the boundary between wilderness and civilisation, the wild and the civilised. The land, which is imagined into a landscape that has a cultural and social function, is “closely connected to national identity and nationalism. Images of the land remind citizens of who they are and where they belong” (Wilton 77). Boundaries are:

arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural, and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others, forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the Self; places where claims to ownership – claims to “mine”, “yours”, and “theirs” – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought out. (Brah 198)

These ideas are integral to my investigation of these stories, with the aim of questioning the desire for a Settler Canadian “cultural core” and the maintenance of boundaries.

The “strategies” for concealing ongoing settler colonial processes can also be aligned with gender inequality and patriarchal control in terms of the continuation of male power and dominance through the suggestion of flaws in feminist approaches, men’s victimisation, and the argument that equality has now been achieved. Gender roles and norms, like national identity are learned processes. They are also politically controlled. Judith Butler argues in that constructions of femininity involve “necessary failures” (GT 10) as a “strategy” to maintain patriarchal dominance and the learned idea that women can never quite measure up to what is expected of them. This relates to expectations of beauty, sexuality, motherhood, the expectation to be nice, kind, nurturing, as well as strong, independent and to gain career success, among other things. Gender, Butler argues, is “performance – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed” (GT 25). “Failures” to perform gender correctly are *encouraged* in individuals through institutional, political, linguistic, and social processes, and such patriarchal norms have been internalised to the extent that women have

learned to police each other and to self-police, to self-sanction when these failures are perceived, thereby maintaining a subjugated position and reinforcing patriarchal hegemony.

A link can be drawn between this and the persistence of a Settler Canadian victim mentality. Despite statements regularly made by journalists such as Michael Adams and politicians like Trudeau about Canada's progressiveness, strength, and freedom, like the "failures" attached to femininity the victim mentality in Canada has actually been perpetuated – though its form has changed – through publicity about a "pluralist national identity" which is "a flexible strategy developed to manage diverse populations" (Mackey 13). The notion of Canada as a victim of U.S. and British cultural and political suppression is maintained as "a method of creating a common national culture that would differentiate Canada from other nations, specifically the United States" (Mackey 13). The persistence of the victim mentality among Settler Canadians is in fact a state-sanctioned "reproduction" of national identity "crisis" which "allows the nation to be a site of constantly regulated politics of identity" (Mackey 13). It allows for "institutions of the state" to "constantly enact policies to intervene in the production of identity and culture" (Mackey 13). This can be connected to Trudeau's comment about Canada's success at balancing "individual freedom and collective identity", and his ideas of Canada as a post-national country. Frank Davey in *Post-National Arguments* (1993) contends that Settler Canadians continually attempt to solidify their identity through "the arguments of a nation that is being continually discursively produced and reproduced from political contestation" (24). In her review of Davey's work, Catherine Hunter proposes that the book suggests "the battle for power is already over" and for "the disenfranchised citizens of Canada" (*Post-national* 131). This provokes a question which is asked persistently through my investigation of national and gender identity constructions in these short stories: To what extent is individual freedom possible?

Together with questioning constructions of the victim mentality in terms of place and belonging, these stories can be used to draw a link with depictions of women as victims

of male dominance. Perspectives on feminism have changed and evolved since Gallant and Munro began publishing in the 1950s, as evidenced through Atwood's later stories from the 1990s and 2000s. Their writing can be read as relevant and important to contemporary feminism in relation to contesting articulations of a unified approach to feminism, and to promoting the need for nuance and complexity in considerations of what femininity and gender inequality means. In the context of the #metoo revelations of 2017, and high profile sexual assault cases of 2018, we are currently in a time of significance in relation to evolving feminist discourse. Some feminist approaches argue that these writers' views are outdated. For example, Janice Fiamengo asserts that she does not consider Munro a feminist writer:

[...] Not if feminist is defined as someone who is mainly interested in presenting women as victims of patriarchal oppression and rigid social roles. (If feminism means a belief in male-female equality, then obviously she is a feminist). Munro's women are not victims, primarily – at least, not of powerful and privileged men – nor are they empowered, self-actualized liberated women, for the most part. Her picture of human society is almost defiantly unorthodox and non-conventional in that sense. Her women often like bad men (and 'bad' sex), make risky choices, or are as manipulative and sneaky and unreliable as any man. That might be argued to be a kind of feminism, but it is certainly not the kind that is now dominant in our society, which tends to prefer to see women as innocent victims. ("RE: Alice Munro", 5 December 2016)

She states in relation to both Munro and Gallant:

To me neither of them has ever seemed very interested in specifically feminist issues: women's lack of power, women's struggle for equality, women's mistreatment by men, women's victimization in society, women's restriction to limited social roles. ("RE: Alice Munro", 13 December 2016)

While she does not discuss Atwood, it is my contention that all three writers prioritise discussions of gender and power, and their short fiction can be read as arguing for the importance of nuance and the acknowledgement of complexity in relation to women and issues of equality, and to an unpacking of the unified idea of "Women" to acknowledge divisions relating to class, race, and religion, among other things. Atwood's stories particularly challenge the idea of "post-feminism", or the suggestion that feminist "goals have been achieved and are therefore no longer relevant" (Davies 4). All three authors refute

the suggestion that women should be portrayed as victims, and that any perspective which proposes particular expectations for women confines choice and is a reproduction of patriarchal power under the guise of feminism.

When considering the changing power structures during the twentieth century, as depicted in these stories, a connection can be made between the constructed “postness” of “post-feminism” and “post-colonialism”, in the sense that the “post” in post-colonialism “does not refer to the end of colonialism, but rather to what was formed under colonialism and remains after official colonialism is abandoned” (Besner, “What resides in the Question” 56). This means that “it is misleading to refer to settler colonialism in the past tense” as the “effects are permanent and the process is still current” (Bateman and Pilkington 2). In contrast, “post-feminism” refers to the continuance of patriarchal structures despite the work of feminist movements, and the concealment of these structures as well as the suppression of feminism through the argument that gender equality now exists.

Due to Gallant’s setting of many of her stories in post-war Germany and France, I am interested in the link between Canadian post-colonialism in the twentieth century and the term “post-war”, which Frank Biess argues is misleading because it suggests a linear process and an end-point to the war. But “after 1945, Europeans in East and West confronted enormous challenges in coping with shared experiences of mass death and destruction on an unprecedented scale” (Biess 3). He states that West Germans were politically encouraged to orchestrate “the erasure of wartime violence” and adopt “an optimistic, forward-looking perspective that emphasised overcoming and selective remembering rather than a public reckoning with the lasting impact of the war and fascism” (3). Biess argues there is evidence for a “transnational” aftermath of the war which suggests the “convergence of individual and social experiences of the war and its aftermath that cut across national boundaries” (4). He contends that there was a “transnational culture of denying on-going psychological damage” which “both reflected and reinforced this larger

culture of ‘moving on’ rather than ‘looking back’” (Biess 3). This meant that post-war societies conducted an “active and quite often conscious” effort to “sanitise the memory of the war” (3). This transnational aftermath can be correlated with governmentally-sanctioned Settler Canadian methods of dealing with the colonial past, including the erasure of violence, a propensity towards selective remembering (and forgetting), and a focus on the future and on the many positive and progressive aspects of Canadian society which has persisted, as evidenced by Justin Trudeau’s construction of the lack of a “cultural core” as a positive development of post-nationalism.

While many of Gallant’s stories explore these issues in relation to urban spaces in Europe, Munro and Atwood’s stories engage with constructions of national identity as learned by characters through state-sanctioned and institutionally perpetuated myths of the Canadian wilderness and the North. These wilderness myths were reinforced through artistic and creative influences. For example, the Group of Seven, early twentieth century painters – all white and male – sought the construction of a “Canadian” national identity through “imagery which would imprint itself on the Canadian consciousness”, including “depictions of rugged wind-swept forest landscapes that would most immediately be associated with the notion of Canadian strength and independence” (Botta 173). This aim of promoting Canadian independence is interesting because the Statute of Westminster – in which full legal freedom was granted by Britain to Canada – only occurred in 1931, by which time the group had disbanded, considering their aims achieved. However, the “ordinary Canadian” victim mentality has continued, despite emphasis on Canada’s strength in dominant political and cultural discourse. McWilliams notes that the Group of Seven paintings are “typical of the settler point of view in Canadian art and literature: it is a perspective based on the elision of Native presence and experience” (51). Their representations “actively participated in defining social perceptions” of the wilderness and Canadian identity, while they simultaneously ignored “cultural specificities” and “geographical disparities” (Pageot 175).

For the sake of the grand narrative and nation-building, local and specific realities were overlooked, including the experiences of Indigenous Canadians.

Complicit in this construction of a national narrative were early settler white women such as English sisters Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill. Both women immigrated to Canada in 1832 with their husbands, who sought success in a “new” land. Both settled in Upper Canada initially, and both published various works of fiction and non-fiction. Parr Traill was known for *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), “a factual and scientific account of her first three years in the bush”, which included “realistic detail that has become a tradition in Canadian literature” (Fowler). This realism can be observed, for example, in Munro’s interest in the landscape and in Atwood’s interest in flora and fauna. Moodie’s *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) has become the most well-known and well-received (Mathews). It “has been variously described as a novel, a romance, a diary, and a history”, and it “opens with a grim warning to prospective immigrants that Canada is not the Eden it is widely promoted to be in England, and that the settler’s lot is a harsh one” (Besner, “Roughing it”). Throughout this thesis, glimpses of these ideas are evident as they have become entrenched in Settler Canadian mythologies and narratives of Canadian national identity.

Atwood reimagines Moodie’s experiences with “the wilderness” in her book of poetry *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, published in 1970. This text, in combination with *Surfacing* (1972) and *Survival* (1972), highlight Atwood’s focus on this theme across genres in her writing during this period, particularly her interest in how gender and place interact. The first section of *Journals* deals with Moodie’s arrival in Canada, “alien and dispossessed” as she “struggles to accommodate the confusion and terror of life in the bush” (Fullerton). The poems move to depicting Moodie’s haunting by the wilderness and the myths the settlers impose on it, and on the idea that she is developing a “dual vision” (Fullerton). The third part depicts Moodie as having become “a part of the land she once despised” (Fullerton). The dangers of the wilderness are “refigured” to focus on the psychological experiences for

settlers, particularly female settlers, and how the potential “horror of the transforming power of the wilderness” means that settlers – represented here through Moodie – are “afraid of what [they] might become” (Hammill, “MA” 51). Despite referencing the problems associated with the occupation of this land, the focus of *Journals* remains on the psychological processes of settlers. Atwood highlights Moodie’s “complicity with the imperial project, yet nowhere do the poems respond explicitly to the detailed representations of native peoples in Moodie’s texts” (Hammill, “MA” 51). However, Moodie and Parr Traill can also be considered as a challenge the connection between wilderness and masculinity, which is examined through the stories chosen for this study.

While Moodie and Parr Traill presented female Settler perspectives through literature, a Settler female alternative to the paintings of the Group of Seven was Emily Carr, who challenges the patriarchal national narrative that the Group of Seven sought to create. She is “one of the preeminent, and perhaps most original, Canadian painters of the first half of the twentieth century” (Shadbolt). She became prominent through her interest in indigenous art in the early twentieth century but, like many female artists of the time, is not as well-known as her male contemporaries. However, in contrast to the empty wilderness narrative imagined by the Group of Seven, in Carr’s paintings “nature is a furious vortex of organic growth depicted with curving shapes that create the impression of constant movement and transformation. By comparison, the human element – churches, houses, totem poles – seem small and fragile” (Shadbolt). These creative influences can be connected with the female characters imagined by Munro and Atwood in their stories about identity and the Canadian landscape, and to some extent by Gallant as she describes a sense of Settler Canadian displacement through migration and a perception of “homelessness”. This is particularly evident in relation to the lack of power and autonomy available to women during this time.

The interactions between these stories presents a transnational and transatlantic perspective on constructions of identity and belonging at this time, and on representations of exile. In Canada, in the early twentieth century, the federal government “undertook the exploration of the North while the growing tourist industry tended to promote a so-called national specificity embodied in pristine nature” (Pageot 175). Attempts were made to strengthen an idea of a (Settler) Canadian unified identity based on the idea that the sublime, untamed, unblemished, mysterious and potentially threatening landscape could be a place of freedom and adventure for white Settler Canadians, and also a place in which they could obtain the security of self, identity, authenticity, and belonging which they associated with Indigenous Canadians in this landscape and which they themselves craved. This mythology continues to be perpetuated and “wilderness” remains “a deeply political construct” (Conrick 3). Parks Canada is an example of consistent “state initiatives to deprive Native peoples of their lands, and to transform inhabited landscapes into human-free, ‘pristine’ wilderness, with the end goal of strengthening the grip of Canadian political and economical elites over the land” (Craig-Dupont 28). Its website states:

National parks celebrate the beauty and infinite variety of our country. Protected and preserved for all Canadians and for the world, each is a sanctuary in which nature is allowed to evolve in its own way, as it has done since the dawn of time. Each provides a haven, not only for plants and animals, but also for the human spirit. (qtd. in Craig-Dupont 28)

This suggests an emphasis on the possibility of freedom and renewal available in this “wilderness” space. Stories by Munro and Atwood engage with settler anxiety about place and the lack of a core identity and home. Discussions about this were taking place among Canadian critics at the time, including Frye states in 1971 that at the time of Canadian confederation in 1867, “to feel ‘Canadian’ was to feel part of a no-man’s land with huge rivers, lakes, and islands that very few Canadians had ever seen” (220). He claims that the Canadian “national consciousness” has been built on “the unknown, the unrealised, the humanly undigested” (220) and that “to enter Canada is a matter of being silently swallowed

by an alien continent” (217), suggesting a sense of settler anxiety that is bound up with the wilderness and the notion of a vast and empty North. While constructions of Canadian national identity are based on victimisation and subjugation by Britain and the U.S., they are also bound up with constructions of the Canadian wilderness as dominant over white settlers. Despite the urban-centric focus of contemporary Canadian identity, these myths about the precarity of identity and place in connection with the wilderness persist throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, as depicted in these stories.

There is evidence of a link here between patriarchal anxieties over power and masculinity, as Mackey argues that these constructions highlight how “the settlers are uncomfortable because *they* don’t *penetrate* and control the (natural/female) foreign space; nature *engulfs* and swallows *them*” (47, emphasis in original). She states that the Canadian landscape is “imagined as essentially female” (48), as demonstrated through Frye’s reference to English poet Rupert Brooke’s comment about the “‘unseizable virginity’ of the Canadian landscape” (220). This suggests that anxieties about the dangers of the wilderness are constructed from a heteropatriarchal perspective, in response to notions of victimisation and domination by larger imperial powers, projecting a desire for power and control onto the landscape and the Indigenous people they found there. These stories explore connections between the landscape and constructions of masculinity and femininity, aspects of which endure over the course of the twentieth century. They suggest a trans-locational sense of anxiety about belonging and identity as well as a desire for coherence and stability with regard to gender identity, which can be challenged through engagement in behaviours that disrupt the power and control of dominant social and political structures.

(iii)

This thesis is divided into three sections and is structured first by author, with two chapters dedicated to each. Within this, for each author one chapter deals with issues of

national identity and belonging in the stories, and one chapter deals with gender identity. As this project emphasises the value of difference, each author is considered from different angles and their stories are interpreted from different perspectives.

As a way of beginning the discussion of place and belonging, Gallant's short fiction can be divided in relation to place, with stories set in or based on characters from Canada, Paris, the Riviera, and Germany. These stories are varied in terms of characterisation and tone, though running through all of them is a persistent interest in themes of exile, movement, freedom, and independence, particularly for female characters. Chapter 1 uses the Canadian and Paris stories to explore questions of belonging, inspired by Gallant's movement between "homes" in Montreal and Paris. Two of Gallant's story collections, *Paris Stories* (2002) and *Montreal Stories* (2004), take a similar approach. However, *Paris Stories* incorporates stories based on the location in which they were written, and *Montreal Stories* is structured based on the place where "their protagonists happen to hail from, regardless of where they turn up in the world" (Banks xii). My use of these stories focuses instead on where the characters are from and where they are depicted as currently living, in order to explore how perceptions of "ordinary Canadian" identity are bound up with issues of rootlessness and nomadism. I examine the influence of the Canadian nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s on these stories, as well as Gallant's depiction of the endurance the victim mentality, even outside of Canada. Chapter 2 looks at the Riviera and German stories and focuses on gender. I demonstrate how Gallant's emphasis on the Second World War and its immediate aftermath highlights learned gender roles and assumptions about gender-appropriate behaviour, particularly with regard to the notion of women as "naturally" caring, nurturing, and kind. I suggest that female characters engage in behaviours that have the potential to subvert dominant heteropatriarchal structures.

These issues also recur in Munro's stories, but they are primarily set in Canada, and many in rural or small-town South-western Ontario, some in Toronto and Vancouver. To

avoid repetition this section is thus structured by theme, with Chapter 3 first concentrating on the house as home and symbolic of identity. I suggest that the return “home”, particularly for female characters, is bound up with socially, politically, and regionally dictated ideas about success and failure which relate to the longing for security and a “core” home-place and sense of self. The second section looks at boundary issues and representations of the wilderness as linked with freedom from learned desires for authenticity and legitimacy for “ordinary Canadians”. Chapter 4 is divided into two sections, both focussed on issues of gender identity in Munro’s stories. The first section looks at social constructions of femininity and beauty, where I demonstrate how female characters are used to engage with feminist discourse at the time, and challenge the necessity for women to be depicted in literature as *simply* victims of male dominance. While this is the case, Munro’s female characters also engage in behaviours that challenge this stereotype. The second section explores marriage, motherhood, and confinement in domestic space, suggesting that gender roles are learned, particularly within the nuclear family, and that female behaviours and attitudes are controlled through conflicting rules by which they are expected to abide, or risk exile and Othering

The Atwood section is structured by text in order of publication, which is effective for an examination of changes in ideas of belonging and gender identity through the latter half of the twentieth century. Because Atwood’s writing is so political, it is beneficial to consider the development of her work alongside social and political shifts, to which she is always responding. Chapter 5 examines the idea of the house and the development of Canadian nationalism specifically in relation to Atwood’s first short story collection *Dancing Girls*, published in 1977. It also explores the significance of father characters in *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983) in relation to settler colonialism and its legacies in twentieth century Canada. The third section examines the settler desire for authenticity and legitimacy with regard to

constructions of the wilderness, and distinctions between wilderness and civilisation in *Wilderness Tips* (1991) and *Moral Disorder* (2006).

The changes in these collections demonstrate Atwood's progression towards a more critical approach to political meta-narratives about Settler Canadian nationalism and multiculturalism. I use these stories to gesture towards the implicit representation of overarching power structures which act on her characters. Chapter 6 considers feminist change from *Dancing Girls* and stories set in the 1960s and 1970s, to *Bluebeard's Egg* and the argument that motherhood was in opposition to women's freedom and sexuality, to *Wilderness Tips* and *Moral Disorder* and ideas of post-feminism. I demonstrate how her stories can be used to suggest that post-feminism glosses over the continued processes of heteropatriarchal dominance. It should be noted that Atwood's prose writings, *Murder in the Dark* (1983), *Good Bones* (1992), *Good Bones and Simple Murders* (1996), and *The Tent* (2006) are excluded from this project. Although these texts deal with issues relevant to a discussion of belonging and gender, an analysis of them is beyond the scope of this study and its specific focus on the short story form. Additionally, Atwood's latest story collection, *Stone Mattress* (2014), is excluded because this investigation seeks to explore changing literary approaches to identity construction, which do not feature to the same extent or with the same complexity in that collection.

Exploring the short fiction of three of Canada's most well-known and most successful "ordinary Canadian" female writers allows for an investigation into ideas of human freedom, personal responsibility and choice, and identity in the context of a nation with a varied relationship to these issues. Much critical research has been conducted on texts by these authors. This project is the first to focus not just on what is included in their stories but also what is excluded. Their perspectives as both dominant and subjugated, as white Settler Canadians and women, can be used to argue the problems that arise in simplistic narratives about identity and unified political and social classifications in order to achieve

both nationalist and feminist goals. Their stories can be used to remind us of the importance of nuance when considering ideas of national identity, boundary construction, and gender equality, which makes them just as relevant now as they were when first published.

Part I: Mavis Gallant

Chapter 1

“At Home” and “Abroad”: Mavis Gallant’s Canadian and Paris Stories

Introduction

In the context of the changes in Canadian identity construction, from the search for nationalism and unity of the 1960s and 1970s to the notion of Canadian post-national “global citizens”, Mavis Gallant’s characters tap into an anxiety about belonging and a sense of precarity about place. This is bound up with war-time or post-war movement, and with the desire for and sometimes apparent lack of a “cultural core”. Whether they are “at home” or “abroad”, identity and perceptions of belonging are represented as unstable and changeable for these characters. This instability is particularly apparent for nomadic characters, exiles, those who do not “fit”.

According to Neil Besner, Gallant’s displaced and alienated characters are created with great “intensity and effect” in the “concentrated field of the short story form” (*The Light* 48). The form can be applied to particular advantage when considering the ways in which Gallant uses her characters to investigate perceptions of “home” and national identity. Her stories explore both Canadian and international experiences of migration and exile and can be used as a method of questioning why one location only should be identified as “home”, and why a “core” identity and sense of belonging to a specific place has been and continues to be prized in Western social groups. Often drawing on the social and political uncertainty during and after Second World War – from the perspective of its effects on Canadians in Canada, and in Europe on British colonists, Americans, Canadians, and Europeans, particularly in France, Germany, and Italy – Gallant’s stories suggest the possibility that

nomadic characters and narratives can destabilise confining and static depictions of home and identity. Though Gallant often emphasises the negative experiences of migration, some of her transnational figures encounter the possibility of identity “transformation through migration” (White 3), which can “lead to altered or evolving representations of experience and self-identity” (1). Gallant also uses the short story cycle, a form that is particularly suitable for investigating the influence of transnationalism on identity and place, transnationalism being defined as “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (Vertovec 447), which is a pertinent concept in this “age of migration” (White 1). The increasing likelihood of people travelling or migrating between countries throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century – whether by choice or by necessity – has changed the way identity is constituted.

The short story’s “restless fragmentation” (Awadalla and March-Russell 8) makes it a useful form for engagement with “new and continuing patterns in migration, diaspora, and globalisation” (9). Gallant’s characters are examples of O’Connor’s “outlawed figures” (87), used here to explore themes of alienation and displacement as a result of the loss or absence of a “core” self and home-place. Themes common to the Canadian short story form, of “displacement, diaspora, and identity” (Awadalla and March-Russell 3), are central to the WWII period and modernist literature which includes characters’ experiences of psychological disturbance, identity fragmentation, and realism (Howells, *Private* 91). The “ambiguous and paradoxical view of the self” (March-Russell 120) is often a feature of modernist short stories, as is a “search for order in the face of moral and social chaos” (Hutcheon, *Canadian* 2). These are prominent ideas in the tradition of Settler Canadian writing that influences Gallant’s short stories and highlights the desire for a secure sense of “home” and self. Alexander Macleod writes that “the supposedly marginalised form of the short story has been consistently central to the major aesthetic and cultural shiftings of Canadian literature” (430). He states that short story writers have been “essential [...] in the

formation of the canon and the society it represents” (430). Gallant’s stories suggest the notion of exile as a state of mind that can occur regardless of place and the “coexistence of the sense of inclusion and exclusion ‘at home’” (Farahani 241). This was highly relevant to mid- to late-twentieth century post-war Canada and Europe, suggesting Gallant’s important contribution to discussions of transnational identity as well as the significance of the Canadian short story form in exploring social and political developments.

Born in Montreal in 1922, Gallant was the only child of an Anglo-Scottish father and Canadian mother. The French-English, Catholic-Protestant divide in Montreal sometimes appears in her work, and was significant for her, especially as she was sent to a French-speaking school and was bilingual from a young age. This gave her an early interest in political, social, and cultural boundaries, which are essential to her stories. Another significant influence was the death of her father when she was ten, though she believed he had gone back to England and waited for him to return to Canada, suggesting an early learned connection between transnational movement, anxiety, and trauma. The young Gallant was transferred between seventeen different schools in Ontario and the U.S., which imbued Gallant with a sense of Otherness. Once she was eighteen, Gallant returned to Montreal, where she worked as a journalist before moving to Paris in 1950. In the sixty-seven years that Gallant lived and wrote in Paris, she published over one hundred short stories in *The New Yorker* and thirteen short story collections.

While Dvořák claims that Gallant is “recognised internationally as one of the best short-story writers in the English language” (“When Language” 162), Besner states that there was a “paucity of critical discussion” (*The Light* ix) on Gallant’s fiction. Canadian critics and readers in the 1960s and 1970s tended to become incensed by Gallant’s derisive tone, which “creates this impression of authorial evasion, of indifference” (Keefer 42). She is often critical of Canadians of British descent. Her short fiction “scrutinizes Canadian ideas of nationalism, cultural heritage, multi-ethnicity, and the idea of ‘home’ itself” (Howells, *Private*

90). Because she lived in Paris and published with *The New Yorker*, she tended to be overlooked by Canadian critics and reviewers due to “the topocentric axiom of national canon formation” (Mount, “Expatriate” 141) and the “scramble to canonize an authentically Canadian literature” (142). This “project of defining a national culture” (Davey 131) was connected with the creation of a number of government-sponsored institutions such as the Canadian Council for the Arts (1957), and the Massey Report (1951) which “concluded that Canada faced ‘influences from across the border as pervasive as they are friendly,’ and warned against ‘the very present danger of permanent dependence’ on American culture” (Stewart and Kallmann). Gallant is now considered “the foremost Canadian expatriate writer” (Mergenthal 192). However, in the 1960s and 1970s, critics tended to define a (Settler) Canadian writer based on national boundaries. Atwood herself argued that expatriate writers are in a “state of permanent tourism” and are “rootless” (*Negotiating* 191), positing the importance of roots for a sense of place and identity. James Reaney claims that “if you are flee the country, [you] cut yourself off from your roots” (40). Gallant chose to remain “on the margins of the local tradition” as it developed in Canada, “keeping aloof from the counterculture and nationalist writing of the sixties and seventies” (Schaub, *Mavis* 5). Gallant’s motivation for leaving Canada was “the most stifling genteelism” (Hancock 102) among those who considered themselves literary. She tells Daphne Kalotay of *The Paris Review* (1999) that “Canada in the early fifties was an intellectual desert”.

However, despite being critical of Canada, Gallant valued her Canadian citizenship.

As she states to Geoff Hancock in 1977:

I would be a Canadian even if Canada ceased to exist, because it is a part of being myself. I have no identity problem concerning Canada [...] In fact, I don’t believe anyone has. It’s something people like to imagine about themselves because it sounds tense and stormy and romantic. (86)

This is a settler construction, which Gallant implicitly links with imported Gothic narratives and connects with the notion of the Canadian victim mentality as a political and social

construction, perpetuated in order to maintain a unified idea of what it means to be Canadian, a collective identity based on a form of failure to construct a “cultural core”. While this has been – at least on the surface – reformulated as positive by Justin Trudeau in contemporary Canadian politics, in the 1960s and 1970s this was a major identity issue. The myths and narratives that are perpetuated contribute to how individuals and communities imagine their sense of place. Benedict Anderson argues that nations are “imagined” (3) communities and Frye states that the question of discerning an identity is “primarily a cultural and imaginative question” (*Bush* i). This highlights the power of social construction which, according to Sally Haslanger is “an intended or unintended product of a social practice” (17). Thus, how Canadians, as Gallant states, “like to imagine about themselves” becomes the reality when perpetuated by hegemonic power structures. Many of Gallant’s characters are depicted as inhibited by hegemonic power structures, including ingrained Settler Canadian identity constructions and patriarchal expectations of femininity, as discussed in Chapter 2. When speaking to Hancock she states that “a story usually begins, for me, with people seen in a situation, like that. [*Locks fingers together.*] The knot either relaxes or becomes locked in another way” (105, emphasis in original). The possibility of the situation becoming “unlocked” is often hindered by internalised dominant power constructions, where internalisation means the perspective “gets incorporated into the structure of the self” (Bartky 286). An example of this is the Canadian victim mentality.

Gallant’s short fiction provides an interesting insight into the projection of Settler Canadian anxieties about unbelonging and placelessness onto European settings, and a persistent preoccupation with the idea of being “rooted”. Hallvard Dahlie describes an expatriate as “an extended tourist, who leaves his [sic] country temporarily because he [sic] believes that certain possibilities for living or art are more favourable elsewhere” (*Varieties* 5). Many of Gallant’s characters are exiles, who have no possibility of return to what they perceive as their home, which is “a more lonely and vulnerable position” (*Varieties* 5). Gallant

also writes about émigrés, who are “political exiles, driven out of their native countries by totalitarian repression, and prepared to return once the political conditions make it morally and intellectually proper to do so”, though they regularly become “permanent exiles” (*Varieties* 5). This notion of “return” to a perceived home is important to all three authors’ stories, but particularly to Gallant’s. Her characters allow the reader to question the entrenched desire for “return” to a stable “home” in which identity can be constructed based on a sense of rootedness. Gallant’s stories propose questions about belonging and identity, such as the following:

If individual and collective identity are rooted so firmly in place, then what of those large populations of the world that are on the move? Does migration then restructure the concept of self and other? Of home and away? Does place remain in place if one leaves or is forced to leave? Or, does place change even if one stays put? (Creet 10)

While the focus is on individual experiences, these stories can also be read as explorative of broader ideas about ideas of belonging as related to nomadism or settlement. This can be related to concepts of diaspora, which is different to settler colonialism as the latter includes a political agenda of domination, control, and power over the indigenous population of the new country. However, the “*concept* of diaspora” is useful here because it “places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*” (Brah 192, emphasis in original). These stories often represent a static and fixed concept of home as limiting and confining.

However, “diasporas emerge out of migrations of collectivities” and are “places of long-term, if not permanent, community formulations, even if some households or members move on elsewhere” (Brah 193), while these stories focus on individual movements and nomadic patterns. The concept of diaspora is relevant to physical or imagined home-places, movement, belonging, inclusion and exclusion of others. It “often evokes imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation” but also presents possible “sites of hope and new beginnings” (193). Gallant engages with these ideas through her characters and they are

important to a consideration of the broader changing attitudes to national identity in the twentieth century. Through considering the concept of diaspora in relation to “processes of *multi-locationality across geographical, cultural, and psychic boundaries*” (194, emphasis in original), the idea of identity as “continuous, uninterrupted, unchanging, homogenous and stable” can be challenged when reading these stories, and identity can be considered as “always plural and in process, even when it might be construed or represented as fixed” (194). Gallant’s consideration of these issues can be connected with the Settler Canadian fear of the lack of a core identity and home-place, and the heightened interest in constructing a unified national identity during the 1960s and 1970s under Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Gallant deals with this fear “at home”, primarily in the urban space of Montreal, and “abroad”, particularly in Paris. She transplants the Canadian Gothic and anxieties about boundaries to urban spaces, providing a transnational perspective on Canadian identity constructions as well as highlighting links with an unsettled sense of belonging in post-war Europe at this time.

The necessity of selective remembering and forgetting after the war, as discussed in relation to Biess in the Introduction, can be examined from a cross-cultural perspective here. Gallant’s stories demonstrate how narratives of identity and nationhood are continually constructed through what is remembered and forgotten, and this construction is determined by the dominant social and political group. Gallant’s characters demonstrate how perceptions of belonging and identity are subject to revision through (sometimes unreliable) memory, and how this is bound up with hegemonic power structures, as is evident through constructions of “ordinary Canadians” and a unified identity. Bearing in mind Pierre Nora’s notion of *lieux de mémoire* or “sites of memory”, memory can be viewed as “attached to ‘sites’ that are concrete and physical” such as battlefields, and to “non-material” sites such as rituals, or indeed myths and narratives, which “validate and authenticate consensual notions of the past while they simultaneously invite alternative readings” (Hoelscher and Alderman 349). However, specific sites of memory and “authentic” collective views of the past are

exclusive, limited by the dominant political and cultural narrative of the particular place. Although “alternative readings” are invited, they are often minoritized and tend not to “fit” with the dominant narrative.

Memories change over time and, according to Maurice Halbwachs, humans “preserve memories” in order for them to be “continually reproduced” (47) in the present, and through this process, “a sense of identity is perpetuated” (47). While Howells claims that Gallant requires the reader to interrogate the ways in which humans can “retain our individuality, our independent sense of self” as transnational migration occurs and “frames of reference change” (*Private* 94), identity is “amorphous and ever changing” and “no deep, single, stable, autonomous identity is available to us, except as an acknowledged human fiction, comforting, but illusory” (Hutcheon, *Canadian* 173). The identities and memories that are reproduced as representative and collective national stories and myths are not determined by individual choices but by those who are in power in that particular place. They are institutionally policed and sanctioned, as well as regulated and monitored among and between members of social groups on each other.

Gallant’s depictions of this are conducted through a focus on individual characters and their experiences on a local and detailed scale, which fluctuates depending on where and when the story is set. She presents an implicit challenge to perceptions of power in many of her stories. For example, in her portrayal of English colonists on the Riviera, she suggests a background context of shifting power dynamics and social and political upheaval, which her characters are resisting but which is working to strip them of their power and social standing. Through Gallant’s stories, memory can be considered as relating to specific place *and* to placelessness: “Movement is what produces memory – and our anxieties about pinning it to place” (Creet 9). Considering memory and place as fluid allows for a recognition of the ways in which memory is constructed through individual and group anxieties, fears, and desires. Gallant’s stories present characters grappling and sometimes failing with the notion of

moving beyond nationalistic ideas of belonging to a specific place, which suggests a reaction against the nationalism being politically and culturally promoted “at home” in Canada at the time.

Formally, Gallant’s stories abide by the modernist tradition of exploring “fragmented self split by trauma, repression, and disorientation” (*Private* 91). However, while modernist literature suggests that humans can access “a general, unifying, underlying reality” (White 5) and often depict a moment of Joycean epiphany, Gallant’s stories develop a near-postmodern focus on “the multiplicity and relativity of experience” (White 5). She uses her characters on a micro and local level to highlight broader issues of political policing of identity and “the constructed and ideological nature of hegemonic positions which have traditionally been naturalised as objective, true, or universal” (Heble 78). Her stories refuse to supply answers for the reader, who must accept the multiple possibilities for characters’ identities as the stories present often paradoxical and contradictory ideas about definitions of home. Home is “an unattainable fiction”, Gallant proposes, “an illusion” that is bound up with “the search for roots” and a “sense of ‘wholeness’ and total safety” which cannot exist (Farahani 245).

(i) The Canadian Stories

“The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street”, first published in *The New Yorker* in 1963 and subsequently collected in *My Heart is Broken* in 1964, focuses on a Canadian family who, having travelled to various European countries, have now returned to Toronto and, due to financial difficulty, live with the sister of the narrator Peter Frazier. The narrative is told in retrospect, with most of the action having taken place in Geneva. Peter remembers his relationship with Agnes Brusen, with whom he was instructed to work while in Geneva because of their employer’s belief in their common Canadianness. Peter symbolises the ways in which fixed notions of place and “origins” can be inhibiting, and points to an ingrained

sense of Settler Canadian anxiety about belonging and roots, despite various transnational movements.

Peter's preoccupation with having a core identity can be read as an effect or learned behaviour from dominant power structures. He sees his failure to create a successful home and identity as individual and personal. However, he represents the persistence of the settler victim mentality and its transplantation outside Canadian national boundaries, though it should be noted that this story was published in 1963, nine years before Atwood's *Survival*. This suggests that Gallant picked up on these ideas about Canadian national identity and incorporated them into her short fiction, but she was not widely acknowledged in Canada at this time and did not have – or indeed want – the same political platform as Atwood. This is examined further in Part III.

From Peter's perspective, the suggested reason for his lack of what Kroetsch refers to as new "beginnings" (15) or what White describes as "transformation" (3) through transnational movement relates to his financial status. After Geneva, he and his family migrated to Ceylon, Hong Kong, and back to Toronto. His migrations are prompted by attempts to recover the wealth that his Toronto-based Scottish-Canadian family had in previous years. Remembering their lavish parties, he thinks of "his father saying 'Nothing can touch us', and Peter believed it and still does. It has prevented his taking his troubles seriously" (SS 198). Peter and his wife Sheila are white, middle-class, Settler Canadians who have learned to perceive themselves as deserving of power and a sense of belonging in Canada, specifically in the urban centre of Toronto.

Peter's attempts to maintain power and status are failing as they are based on narratives and mythologies from that past that are no longer relevant to post-war Europe and evolving definitions of what identity and belonging can mean. However, they are also failing because of what Mackey calls the Settler Canadian state-sanctioned "reproduction" of an identity crisis, as discussed in the Introduction. Peter is an example of how hegemonic

political control becomes ingrained in the individual and thus endures despite transnational movement.

This connects with Paul Ricoeur's idea of individual memory, "official history", and nationally imposed "canonical narrative" with "the constitution of personal identity" and "the communities that structure our ties of belonging" (448). Narratives and myths about national identity and what individuals should strive for in order to "fit" continually influence identity construction. Peter's marriage to Sheilah is dependent on an imagined past in which their power and status was based on a shared pretence that they were happy and financially successful. An old designer dress of Sheilah's is symbolic for them of this past and suggests the ways in which language can be shaped into personal mythologies, based on an overarching learned political background of power and dominance. Gallant suggests that this can be confining and self-delusional rather than progressive and beneficial: "After they remember [the dress] they touch hands and think that the years are not behind them but hazy and marvellous and still to be lived" (SS 193). Existing alongside this imagined identity is Peter's feeling that his middle-class life in Toronto been taken from him through no fault of his own.

Many of Gallant's characters "are in many ways – spiritually, physically, psychologically, emotionally – nomadic" (Gunnars x). They are characters who do not "fit" and who, often paradoxically, maintain a fear of difference and the Other when "abroad". Peter is depicted as believing himself to be above the office job he holds in Geneva and views the time there as a "mysterious period of exile" (SS 195). In pursuit of his goal of returning to his (imagined) life in Toronto, he is convinced that "going somewhere" (SS 209) is preferable to staying in one place. It is paradoxical that he is influenced by the Settler Canadian learned desire for a core home and identity while seeking to achieve this through transnational movement. While this mentality would be embraced and supported by the

political and social structures generated by Justin Trudeau and his idea of global citizenship in the twenty-first century, it contradicts the Canadian nationalism of the 1960s.

Gallant's depiction of Peter implies her critical perspective towards middle-class Settler Canadians and the "strategies" used to maintain heteropatriarchal power and dominance, on a micro inter-personal level that can be expanded to a macro state-sanctioned and institutional level. Peter's desire to reclaim what he perceives as his rightful position of power and dominance is suggested through his appropriation of Agnes's childhood memory of quiet mornings when she was alone and could hear the "ice wagon going down the street" (SS 212). Agnes is Norwegian-Canadian from Saskatchewan and is considered by Peter as inferior because she is female, "ethnic" or at least not "ordinary Canadian", and not from the urban centre of Toronto. This last point relates to an ingrained focus on provincialism and to hierarchical constructions of boundaries, specifically here between urban and what is constructed (by urban-dwellers) as "rural", between city and country, civilisation and wilderness. This is analysed further below, as is the issue of gender inequality. Peter commandeers Agnes's memory as it suggests to him a sense of freedom, certainty, and clarity. He re-imagines the scene with himself as the child experiencing that moment of peace, and the language suggests both a gendered and settler colonial claiming of power, knowledge, and authority: "He has taken the morning that belongs to Agnes, he is up before the others [in his family], and he knows everything. There is nothing he doesn't know" (SS 212). This desire for dominance through knowledge is a "strategy" to cope with a sense of unsettled identity and place, an attempt to reconsider himself as a non-victim despite his cultivation of his victimised status and a threatened sense of identity while he is "abroad" rather than "at home". Peter reports that he and Agnes "were as strange to each other as if 'Canadian' meant any number of things, or had no real meaning" (SS 198). However, the story of the ice wagon brings them closer and Peter acknowledges that "they were both Canadians, so they had this much together—the knowledge of the little you dare admit" (SS

211). Peter represents the ways in which ambiguous and contradictory ideas about national identity can be maintained simultaneously: the notion that Canadian could mean nothing *and* that it could mean unified personality traits such as reticence and silence.

This story also suggests how these ideas of national identity and the desire for belonging to a “core” home-place can be transmitted from one generation to the next within families. Peter applies this belief in “Canadian” traits to his two daughters, who he sees as “more cautious” and thus “more Canadian” (SS 192) than himself. His daughters are depicted as suffering under his limited definitions of identity and place. The eleven and thirteen-year old girls have internalised his conflicting ideas about their Canadian citizenship and his Settler Canadian hubris and perception of other places as less important. Gallant thus implies that ideas about citizenship are learned through institutions like the family which, as argued in relation to Millet in the Introduction, can be considered as representative of the heteropatriarchal nation. However, the family is only one way in which these ideas are disseminated.

Taking a Foucauldian perspective, Lauren Berlant states that “many institutional and social practices are aimed at inducing a visceral linkage of personal identity with nationality” (41). Berlant defines citizenship as a person’s “standing within law” (41) but states that it can also refer to “a relation among strangers who learn to feel it as a common identity based on a shared historical, legal, or familial connection to a geographical space” (41). This relates to Wilton’s argument that a “shared sense of belonging and of connection to a particular place of nationalised land is learned” (79), and is reinforced consistently by social, cultural, and political processes which are controlled and determined by the dominant political group. Berlant states that citizenship is linked with the desire for belonging and a sense of security, and “in return for cultural, legal, and military security, people are asked to love their country and to recognise certain stories, events, experiences, practices, and ways of life as related to the core of who they are” (41). This reinforces the notion of a socially and politically

sanctioned and encouraged idea of a “core” self, which is bound up with place and belonging to a particular social group. It relies on the necessity of a collective acceptance of a narrative for that group, and an acquiescence to the rules and boundaries. While this can produce security for group members, it can also produce a sense of uncertainty and precarity.

Peter has carried these learned ideas with him since leaving Canada and is transmitting them to his daughters, who grow up living nomadic lives and will be adults when the political emphasis on multicultural becomes central to Canada in the latter half of the twentieth century. They will be “global citizens”, but through the influence of family traditions they will have internalised ideas about a unified “ordinary Canadian” identity and the necessity of maintaining a core home-place. Despite having been away from Toronto for nine years, they still refer to the city as “home”. In Peter’s descriptions of the family’s migrations, the only mention of the children is that they continued “throwing up foreign food” (SS 210), suggesting their inability to adjust and their suffering as a result of this nomadic life. Jennifer has a Canadian accent that is, Peter thinks, “nasal and flat. Where did she learn that voice? And why should this [Toronto] be home?” (SS 193) He does not reflect much on this “mystifying” issue and his involvement in it, and simply decides that “it must be in the blood” (SS 193). The children’s perspective is silenced and he takes no responsibility.

While White argues that human migration often results in “the calling into question of many of those aspects of identity that make up the individual’s personality and psychological self-image” (2), in this story the family’s nomadic placelessness, combined with Peter’s labelling of the places they move to as peripheral and unimportant, has resulted in his daughters’ inability to reinterpret “home” as anywhere other than Toronto and inability to experience a new “beginning”. Peter is an example of how Gallant’s “characters and cultures grapple with the past as it inhabits the present” (Besner, *The Light* x). The connection that Peter retroactively perceives with Agnes, which is based primarily on the sense of

comfort he obtained from the memory he appropriated from her, presents a possibility for “transformation” for Peter which is not taken up. He maintains a sense of victimisation and exile. His statement that “Peter lost Agnes [...] Peter is lost” (SS 212) is a recognition of a sense of loss, but it represents not so much a romantic interest in Agnes as the lost opportunity for renewed power and dominance that she has come to represent for him and his sense of unbelonging.

This learned sense of “ordinary Canadian” identity as superior is also explored in “The End of the World”, originally published in *the New Yorker* in 1967 and subsequently in a collection of the same title in 1974. Here, William travels from Montreal to France to see his dying father, who had an extramarital affair when William was a child and abandoned the family. The story highlights Gallant’s ongoing interest in how different places are categorised as peripheral or central, based on social and political hegemony. Kroetsch argues that “the margin, the periphery, the edge” is “where the action is” (24), while Hutcheon calls it the “place of possibility” (*Canadian* 2). However, like Peter in “Ice Wagon”, William is an “ordinary Canadian” who sees Canada –specifically Montreal – as central and France as peripheral. France is disordered and unstable after the war. The stories gestures towards English-French divides in Montreal and the growing unrest of the Quiet Revolution. William’s father’s decision to immigrate to France emphasises what William sees as his selfishness and peculiarity.

William resents the necessity for travelling out of Canada, arguing: “I wouldn’t say I hate it exactly, but I would never have come here of my own accord” (SS 347). Gallant’s distinctive ironic tone is effective here in highlighting limited and static ideas about national identity and place: “I never like to leave Canada, because I’m disappointed every time. I’ve felt disappointed about places I haven’t even seen” (SS 346). This takes a critical view of 1960s Canadian nationalism, and the “ordinary Canadian” endorsement of unnuanced ideas about places and peoples that have been designated as “Other”. The hospital in which

William's father is staying in France is severely run down and William sees this as affirmation of his views: "I saw beetles and cockroaches, and I said to myself, This is what a person gets for leaving home" (SS 348). However, the transnational movement results in a "transformation" for William because, by leaving home, he rediscovers his love for his father after he has died, though it is unclear whether this "transformation" will continue once William returns to Montreal.

Gallant also constructs characters that allow for an exploration of the experience of more permanent exiles and émigrés, and the fluctuation of Settler Canadian identity when displaced. Vijay Mishra states that diasporic people are "precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements" (1). Gallant's engagement with this demonstrates how a settler colonial reading of her stories can be combined with her translation of the Canadian Gothic back to European contexts. Here, memories and beliefs have been suppressed or repressed, and this connects with a sense of haunting and Bhabha's "unhomely". This is a postcolonial reinterpretation of the uncanny, referring to "a moment when the effects of history, or the violence of the past, erupt into the domestic space, effacing the boundaries between past and present, public and private" (Rudd 14). Rather than approaching these stories from the commonly-used psychoanalytic perspective (see work by Jennifer Murray or Sonia Mycak), this thesis focuses on the post-colonial unhomely to shine a new light on how these stories deal with the fluidity of place and identity.

Banished to "peripheral" locations, some voluntarily, some involuntarily, these characters are often troubled by anxieties that relate to their nomadism or exile. For example, in "New Year's Eve" (1970), also published in *The End of the World*, Colonel and Frances Plummer, who are English-Canadians living in Moscow, and have grown apart following the Colonel's infidelity and their daughter's death, are used to highlight differing viewpoints of

expatriate memory and identity. The Colonel believes that Frances does not wish to integrate into Moscow culture, and he has “grown accustomed to being alone among hordes of ghosts” (SS 362). These are not just the Russians, but all those born in the various countries where the Plummers have travelled, who speak “the ghost language” (SS 362). They are reminiscent of Mishra’s ghosts or spectres and demonstrate a subversion of the nationalist depiction of “ordinary Canadian” hegemony. Here, the Colonel is the Other, the exile.

The “ghosts” are also projections of the Colonel’s experience of expatriation, and highlight how impermanent, foreign, and alien his existence in Moscow is. Gallant calls on the Canadian Gothic trope of the “dark city” which, according to Justin Edwards, is “a place that highlights disorientation, fragmentation, and alienation and reflects the emptiness of a contemporary sense of self that is dislocated from the homely sites of the nation” (xxxii). Gallant uses this to highlight her characters’ fears about a lack of belonging and “core” self. The Colonel eavesdrops on conversations among Russians and “it was as though he listened to stones, or snow, or trees speaking” (SS 364). While the Colonel is the one who does not “fit” in this story, he continues his learned behaviour of seeing anyone outside his in-group of “ordinary Canadian” as Other, against which he can continue to establish his identity as dominant.

This attitude is more prevalent in Gallant’s male characters, suggesting a gendering of the settler colonial mindset. In contrast to her husband, Frances’s identity is fragmented and multiple. This relates to her feeling of displacement and her suppressed trauma at the death of her daughter. She views herself as divided into two “twins”, who talk to each other “far more pleasantly than the whole of Frances Plummer ever talked to anybody” (SS 355). Frances rarely leaves the house and Amabel, a young friend of their daughter who comes to visit, “supposed that the Colonel’s wife had grown peculiar through having lived so many years in foreign parts. Having no one to speak to, she conversed alone” (SS 355). The connection between female characters, silence, and the domestic space suggests a sense of

confinement and limitation which can be connected to the larger heteropatriarchal culture, as emphasised by the Colonel's extra-marital affairs, which is considered further in Chapter 2.

The Plummers' experience of haunting is symbolic of a transnational fear of difference and the endurance of the Settler Canadian identity crisis even when "abroad". This links with the tradition of an "ongoing preoccupation with haunting in Canadian writing", which is bound up with settler colonialism and seeks to express "the legacy of the settler-invaders' long-standing desire to lay claim" to a specifically Canadian national identity rooted in the land (Goldman, *DisPossession* 5). In Canada at this time, the lack of a literary tradition was suggested through drawing on the notion of haunting. Earle Birney, in his poem "Can Lit" (1962), wrote that "it's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted", aligning with the idea of white Settler Canadians' self-perception being of "secondary or inferior status" in comparison to Britain and Europe, and a sense that "Canada was too 'new' to be sufficiently haunted" (Sugars and Turcotte xiii). This draws on English settler Catherine Parr Traill's comment in 1836 that Canada was "too matter-of-fact a country" for ghosts (qtd. in Goldman, *DisPossession* 3). The prevalence of ghosts in mid- to late-twentieth century Canadian writing suggests they are, "on the one hand, icons of national identity and, on the other, metaphors for the phantom nature of nationalist expression in a settler-invader context" (Sugars, "Haunted" 3). This is exemplified by the Colonel's interactions with the Russians in "New Year's Eve" and connects with the Settler Canadian preoccupation with rootedness in Canadian literature at the time. By the "settlement of the landscape with ghosts", Settler Canadians sought to provide "an urgently needed genealogical history in the here and now, a laying down of roots" (Sugars, "Haunted" 7). However, ghosts are also expressions of liminality and the experience of being "both rooted here and yet exist as a kind of foreigner" (Sugars, "Haunted" 4). This suggests the continuity and metamorphosis

of the victim mentality and Settler Canadian identity crisis over time and across national boundaries.

Gallant also deals with Canadians “at home” in Canada and suggests the possibility of exile and displacement there too. Her semi-autobiographical Linnet Muir short-story cycle (1975-1978), published collectively in *Home Truths* (1981) can be used to suggest that the short story is the ideal form for both the voluntary self-exile and the exile who desires to return home and cannot. The twentieth-century story cycle is particularly suitable for Gallant’s challenging of core identity and place of belonging as each story stands alone while remaining linked with the others, suggesting multiplicity and cohesion alongside difference. Lynch’s *The One and the Many* maintains that the short story cycle allows for “unity in disunity, reflecting a fragmented temporal sense, and incorporating a more authentic representation of modern sensibilities” (18). This is reminiscent of Kroetsch’s claim about Canada’s unity in disunity, as mentioned in the Introduction in relation to Trudeau’s claim about a lack of “cultural core” and Canada’s post-nationalism. This suggests a developing trend among the political and cultural hegemony about the necessity for caution when any search for “authenticity” is suggested. However, these trends can also be interpreted as broad gestures and statements which discount the ongoing minoritisation of those with hyphenated identities in Canada on a local scale.

Gallant’s stories provide examples of this through her characters. The Linnet Muir short-story cycle can be read as challenging the coherence of individual memory and the stability of a “core” self for “ordinary Canadians”, but also as challenging the unity and stability of national Canadian narratives and myths in a broader sense. The stories are told non-linearly through the perspective of Linnet as an older woman, reflecting on her childhood and early adulthood, and suggestion multiple fluctuations of self and “home” over time. When collected in *Home Truths*, the stories appear in chronological according to their publication in the 1970s: “In Youth is Pleasure” (1975), “Between Zero and One” (1975),

“Varieties of Exile” (1976), “Voices Lost in Snow” (1976), “The Doctor” (1977), and finally “With a Capital T” (1978). However, in Gallant’s *Selected Stories* (2004), the cycle is arranged according to Linnet’s life and the linear passage of time. This latter arrangement of the stories is meaningless, however, as the narratives fluctuate between Linnet’s childhood and adulthood as she narrates based on (potentially unreliable) memory. Taking into account the changing structure of how Canada has been interpreted as a nation, the stories highlight the significant changes taking place throughout the twentieth century and the changing attitudes to multiculturalism with the immigration of post-war refugees and the adoption of the world’s first multiculturalism policy in 1971 under the instruction of Pierre Trudeau. The stories are semi-autobiographical, as Gallant states that Linnet “isn’t *myself*, but a kind of summary of some of the things that I once was” (Hancock 88). Autobiographical writing, particularly by women, can allow for “narrative elasticities and subversive possibilities” (Smith, *Subjectivity* 23) with regard to challenging dominant heteropatriarchal narratives of “truth” and fixed ideas of identity and culture. This is particularly important for Settler Canadian constructions of national identity in the 1970s, when these stories were published. McWilliams argues that “narrative does not simply record biography or history but is capable of rewriting it” (15). It can allow for a strategy of resistance to imposed unifying myths by the dominant majority.

Home Truths is divided into two sections, “At Home” and “Canadians Abroad”, categorisation which Gallant has frequently explored in her previous stories and which have been inspirational for this thesis and its focus on place and belonging. The collection suggests that perceptions of “home” and “truth” are subjective, and that being both “abroad” and “at home” can contribute to feelings of exile and unbelonging. Gallant is consistently concerned with place, and particularly in these stories with the city of Montreal and the urban landscape, the “dark city”. The stories are “a reconstruction” of a mid-twentieth-century Montreal “which no longer exists” (Hancock 88). Gallant’s writing can be used to question

ideas of belonging and “home”, particularly because her own insistence on Canada as her home and “part of being myself” is contradicted by her questioning of “Canadian” as a category. As she tells Hancock, “there was no such thing as a Canadian until about 1935. You were whatever your father was” (97). This suggests a developing Canadian nationalism even before World War II, alongside a heteropatriarchal structure.

However, the presentation of Canadian identity was changing while Gallant was growing up. She reflects on this in her Linnet stories when, in “In Youth is Pleasure”, the narrator remembers her nomadic childhood as she attended school the U.S. as well as Canada and states:

In those days there was almost no such thing as a “Canadian”. You were Canadian-born, and a British subject, too, and you had a third label with no consular reality [...] In Canada you were also whatever your father happened to be, which in my case was English. He was half Scot, but English by birth, by mother, by instinct. I did not feel a scrap British or English, but I was not American either. In American schools I had refused to salute the flag. (*SS* 711)

This suggests that the construction of the “ordinary Canadian” identity, as discussed in relation to Mackey in the Introduction, is a reaction against the imperial and colonial dominance of Settler Canadians. Their construction of Settler Canadian identity as “simply ‘Canadian’”, “unmarked, non-ethnic” is in opposition to the “marked” and “ethnic” groups that they have subjugated and silenced. This points to the prevalence of the victim mentality, and the sense of displacement instilled into Settler Canadian children in the early to mid-twentieth century. As well as the prevalence of British colonialism and imperial power, it also suggests the perception of Canada as inferior to the U.S. The young Linnet initially views New York as superior, calling it her “deliverance” (*SS* 714) from the confinement and social judgement of Montreal. She depicts the journey across the border into Canada as a change “from prosperous to shabby, from painted to unpainted, from smiling to dour. I was entering a poorer and a curiously empty country, where the faces of the people gave nothing away” (*SS* 713). However, she was perceived in America as “someone from the backwoods” (*SS*

711), a phrase which echoes the text by Parr Traill published in 1836. This can be read as suggestive of the ways in which early settler writing – particularly by women writers – was influential in the formation of a national narrative for Settler Canadians which persisted into the twentieth century. Also in Gallant’s story, a teacher at one American school asks: “What do they major in up there? Basket weaving?” (SS 712), which points to the institutional perpetuation of this U.S.-Canadian power dynamic and the policing of perceptions of national identity. When considered on a local scale, it provides an insight into the widespread maintenance of perceptions of Canada’s national inferiority.

The inter-generational transmission of anxieties about belonging is also demonstrated in this story as, when she first returns to Montreal from New York, Linnet literally carries her father’s English past in the form of an Edwardian picnic hamper which he brought from England twenty years before. It had “been with [her] since childhood, when his death turned [her] life into a helpless migration” (SS 711). This idea of helpless migration connects with Peter and his daughters in “The Ice Wagon”, suggesting Gallant’s continued preoccupation with this idea and another way of considering the link between the nuclear family and the heteropatriarchal nation. As discussed in the Introduction, Millet refers to the father as the head of the patriarchal family which symbolically stands for the male dominance of the patriarchal nation-state. In this story, his loss causes a destabilisation in the daughter’s sense of place and belonging within the family and therefore the nation. Linnet seeks to uncover the truth about her father’s death, which she was never told as a child. She seeks to move “home” to Montreal and “a new life and a dream past” (SS 717).

Like the Plummers in “New Year’s Eve, Linnet is haunted by the past, by what Mishra calls “spectres”. In “Voices”, the narrator’s memories of dreamlike childhood Saturday afternoons, which are bound up with her father in the urban landscape, “have turned into one whitish afternoon, a windless snowfall, a steep street” (SS 701). The tense shifts as the narrator allows the past, as Besner puts it, to “inhabit” (*The Light* x) the present:

“I will never overtake this pair. Their voices are lost in snow” (SS 701). Gallant again uses the Canadian Gothic “dark city” but this time it is “at home”. Linnet is used to highlight the possibility of remaining haunted by the past, by a sense of loss, despite having returned home. Without the father present in Montreal as a method for her to “place” herself within her family (which has since disintegrated as her mother remarried and she is an only child), she feels nomadic and exiled. The story can be read as highlighting how insecurity of place is instilled in Settler Canadians from childhood.

Revisiting her former home is so disconcerting to her that she must repress the memories of it: “In that drowned world, Sherbrooke Street [where her family lived] seemed to be glittering and white; the vision of a house upon that street was so painful that I was obliged to banish it from the memorial” (SS 714). She refers to her life in Montreal as one of “exile” (SS 723). Despite having returned to Sherbrooke Street, it has changed over time, making it both familiar and strange. This uncanniness is used by Gallant to connect the internalisation for “ordinary Canadians” of the fear of unfamiliarity with the fear of “the breakdown of a stable identity” (Edwards xxxi). Linnet’s return to Montreal evokes a sense of the “unhomely”, and the Canadian Gothic tradition of depicting anxiety about roots and belonging as connected to the domestic space. The house thus becomes a method of representing settler unease, a theme which will recur throughout this thesis. According to Edwards, “the metamorphosis of home ground into foreign territory [...] disturbs selfhood by erasing the space upon which identity comes to rest” (xxxii). Edwards is paraphrasing a line from Atwood’s novel *Surfacing*. This suggests that, though she was living in Paris, Gallant was tapping into a broader culture of investigating these themes in Canadian literature at the time. These connections are further explored in Chapter 5 through Atwood’s short stories.

Individual freedom is directly linked with identifying a place of belonging and sense of self in these stories. According to Dahlie, “as long as the dislocated individual continues to be at odds with both the world he [sic] has rejected and the one he [sic] has moved into,

he [sic] remains spiritually and intellectually an exile” (*Varieties* 4). Despite having returned home, Linnet “is effectively homeless”, her “dreamlike visions” a “reminder of her status as an outsider looking in” (von Baeyer 194). However, the story presents the possibility of gaining freedom from the confining and haunting past. Linnet refers to childhood as a “prison” (SS 715), and now that she is eighteen seeks a life in which she was “solely responsible for my economic survival” (SS 711), swearing that she will “never be helpless again and that I would not let anyone make a decision on my behalf” (SS 713). She is used by Gallant to suggest that freedom can be gained through a reinterpretation of “home” without the patriarchal father figure at the centre, of home not as a static entity but as an imagined idea that is open to reconstruction in accordance with individual “transformation”. However, the narrator’s almost obsessive remembering and reconstructing of this past into narrative suggests that despite attempts to reinterpret “home”, exile may be “a permanent condition characterised by dislocation, alienation, and dispossession” (Dahlie, *Varieties* 4). Besner argues that Linnet travels “home from exile into identity” (*The Light* 139). However, this is impossible when the exile continues “at home” and there is no “core” identity. This can be connected with the sense of settler unease and insecurity in relation to identity and place, and the persistence of the victim mentality, which were prominent concerns in Canadian literary and political discourse at this time.

These stories propose that “the condition of being dispossessed is as common at home in Canada as it is among Canadians abroad” (Howells, *Private* 94). Yet, in “Varieties of Exile”, the young Linnet is depicted as feeling “entirely at home with foreigners, which is not surprising – the home was all in my head” (SS 261). Her identification with “foreigners” and her self-reported socialism is based on romanticised ideas about a post-war society of equality and acceptance of difference, defined through her rejection of what she calls “nationalist pig-headedness” (SS 743). Gallant is drawing on transatlantic preoccupations at the time relating to anxieties about the breakdown of national boundaries and a sense of

disquiet about the Other, the construction of which varies depending on the dominant perspective. This story is clearly critical of nationalism, not just in Canada but on a broad scale. Nonetheless, it also highlights Linnet's privileged position as an "ordinary Canadian", who constructs war refugees arriving in Canada based on what she has read about them in books. She sees the refugees "as prophets of a promised social order that was to consist of justice, equality, art, personal relations, courage, generosity" (SS 743). Nevertheless, as the narrator elucidates, her younger self's viewpoint suggests the naivety and hubris of her youth, and her idea that her exile – as a middle-class English-Canadian – is the same as the exile experienced by war refugees.

Linnet is represented as becoming increasingly influenced by Canadian nationalism, which suggests that her attitudes and behaviours are the effects of heteropatriarchal hegemonic power structures. This occurs in parallel with changes in Montreal, as it becomes "a completely other city" (SS 758), more cosmopolitan. Linnet subsequently loses interest in the refugees, who were "going through a process called 'integrating'. Some changed their names. Others applied for citizenship. A refugee eating cornflakes was of no further interest" (SS 758). Gallant is subtly tracing political, cultural, and social changes in Montreal during and after the war. Through Linnet's position of privilege and her self-focussed narrative, she can be read as representing an "ordinary Canadian" attitude towards Canadian identity and belonging at that time. Her internalisation of the legacies of settler colonialism is integral to this, specifically the construction of her identity as "Canadian" in opposition to Others, and an ingrained sense of superiority and entitlement without empathy with the actual experiences of the refugees. This kind of sharp critical tone is part of what made Gallant less attractive to contemporary Canadian audiences, in comparison to Munro or Atwood.

Gallant also explores the British imperial perspective which categorised Canada as peripheral and inferior to Britain through Linnet's ambiguous relationship with English "remittance man" Frank Cairns. He is a nomadic figure struggling to find a sense of

belonging in Montreal. The Statute of Westminster was passed in 1931, granting Canada (almost) full legal autonomy. Yet at the time when this story is set, in the middle of the war, Canada was still viewed by Britain as inferior. This perspective was assumed by Settler Canadians, and many English or Scottish-Canadians saw Britain as their “home”, though many of them had never, or rarely, been there. Whereas Gallant’s Settler Canadian characters Peter and William, discussed above, are depicted as viewing Europe as a place of exile, Frank is presented as feeling exiled in Canada. This suggests that constructions of hegemony are contextually variable. Linnet states that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the term “remittance man” was one “of abuse all over the Commonwealth and Empire” (*SS* 273). They were “superfluous sons” (Zeuhlke 20) sent away from England by aristocratic fathers. Because of changing social and cultural conditions in Britain, many second sons suddenly had no potential career prospects, and were exiled and banned from returning. The sense of exile described in this story in relation to the remittance men, specifically to Frank Cairns, is implicitly linked with the Settler Canadian victim mentality and the construction of Britain as an ancestral “home” prior to the growth of Canadian nationalist sentiment in the 1960s.

In “Varieties”, the older narrator Linnet sees similarities between the exile experienced by her younger self and that experienced by Frank, which is also implicitly to the refugees’ displacement. The young Linnet who, the story implies, is naïve and incapable of self-reflection, describes the remittance men as being “like children waiting for the school vacation so that they could go home, except that at home nobody wanted them” (*SS* 268). As with Peter and his daughters in “Ice Wagon”, this sense of exile and liminality in Canada is passed on to the remittance men’s children, born in Canada but imbued with an English or Scottish heritage and “taught that the past is better than now, and somewhere else is better than here” (*SS* 270). Frank says of Canada, “you can’t make a move here” (*SS* 751), suggesting his perception of the country as a place of confinement and limitation and, also

like Peter, highlighting a desire to claim back a sense of personal success which is linked to family, wealth, and status.

The sense that this cannot be achieved in Canada links with what Linnet sees as the remittance men feeling “obliged to live over and over until they died the first separation from home” (SS 268). The narrator Linnet’s depiction of her younger self’s unified categorisation of the remittance men and the refugees based on her own stereotypes and assumptions suggests her socialism and sense of connection with “foreigners” was always partly imagined. Linnet becomes more “patriotic” (SS 754) as the war continues, which implies a growing trend towards nationalism and “Canadian patriotism”, which she states is “always anti-American in part” (SS 754). She describes American tourists arriving in Montreal, complaining about Canadians as ungrateful because “Canada was thought to be a recipient of American charity” and about this, the narrator states, Canadians “were, and are, enormously touchy” (SS 755). This points to the development of Canadian nationalism in reaction against American imperialism, which grew stronger as the twentieth century wore on. This is investigated further in relation to Atwood’s stories in Chapter 5.

A connection is made in the story between the state of exile as connected with youth and imagined ideas, rather than with a particular place. “Transformation” is not linked with movement and migration here. Frank goes to war and is killed. The narrator states that during war-time “in Canada it was not done to speak of the missing” and she “forgot him. He went under” (SS 758). This implies that forgetting was a socially and politically-sanctioned process allowing for post-war suppression of a traumatic past. This was encouraged not just in Europe, as discussed in the Introduction through Biess’s theories, but in Canada as well, suggesting a transatlantic, cross-cultural authorizing of forgetting at this time. This kind of forgetting – attempting “to exclude the memory from awareness” (Anderson, “Incidental Memory” 217) – is a method of “controlling what we remember” and a “psychological defence mechanism that banishes unwanted memories, ideas, and

feelings into the unconscious in an effort to reduce conflict and psychic pain” (218). These “repressed contents” may “pop up again” (219). In “Varieties”, the narrator Linnet claims that, once she “let go” of the past, “there was scarcely ever a mention” (SS 723). Yet her use of the word “scarcely” suggests that it was not forgotten completely.

This destabilises Linnet’s reliability as a narrator, and undermines her claim that “the past, the part I would rather not have lived, became small and remote, a dark pinpoint” (SS 715). She states that this process of repression is “another variety of exile” that “seemed quite right and perfectly natural” (SS 758), providing evidence of the effects of the workings of dominant power structures on individuals and communities. The stories suggest a culture of silence and non-communication among “ordinary Canadians” in Montreal at this time – highlighted through Linnet’s relationship with her parents and the breakdown of her family structure – which relates to the broader state-sanctioned construction of national mythologies in order to maintain the idea of Canadian national unity during and after the Second World War. The following section continues this investigation of the transnational anxieties about identity and belonging after the war, the learned strategies of coping with the past, and the covert processes of dominant power structures which are often represented as individual freedoms and choices.

(ii) The Paris Stories

In many of Gallant’s stories, characters often “have erected barriers between themselves and an alien environment” (Gadpaille 38), and they display a persistent fear of difference and the unknown. Her Paris stories highlight her ongoing preoccupation with exile and urban “dark city” spaces, and demonstrate her transference of Canadian Gothic themes onto a city that has been considered a creative artistic hub in Europe. In her Paris stories, Canadian or American characters are often used to explore the influence of popular and romantic narratives and myths about Paris, and the possibility of freedom and transformation available

there, as well as the experience of exile. Some characters are English, representing the fading power of the British Empire. Some are French or German and are used to explore connections between anxieties about identity and place in post-war Europe and in Canada. These European characters suggest that, although a sense of unbelonging and anxiety about the past can relate to colonial legacies and their institutional, social, and cultural instilment and perpetuation among “ordinary Canadians”, these characteristics are not exclusive to those with a colonial past, and can also be traced to a twentieth-century sense of disquiet about the maintenance of a “core” self and place of belonging during and after the Second World War and the political promotion of selective forgetting and a focus on positivity.

An early story, “The Other Paris” (1953), depicts an idealistic middle-class American woman living in Paris whose desire for a “core” sense of identity and belonging contributes to her loneliness and isolation. Gallant herself states that after moving to Paris, she realised that “every idea I’d had about Paris turned out to be wrong” (Hancock 96). This story draws on her own experience, depicting Carol’s idea of Paris as based on American films and television and narratives about romance and a sense of freedom or escape. The effects of overarching dominant cultural production on individual behaviour and attitudes are highlighted here. Carol wants to discover the “secret” Paris and “forget all her disappointments” (SS 104). When her notions of romance are challenged, she quickly changes her view, arguing that “Paris was not the place” she thought it was, though “perhaps it had been, fifty years ago, or whenever it was that people wrote all the songs” (SS 107). There is a sense of post-war fragmentation and disorganisation, and Carol displays the same sense of superiority shown by Peter in “Ice Wagon” and William in “The End” in her construction of Europe as inferior. This time Paris is compared with New York: “I wish I were home. I wish I were in my own country, with my own friends [...] I’m tired of the way everything is here – old and rotten and falling down” (SS 110). Like Linnet, Carol is blind to the difficulties experienced by war refugee Felix and others like him in the city. She brings

with her a U.S. imperialism, instilled with an even greater sense of superiority than is the case for Gallant's Canadian characters, though it is bound up with the ingrained idea that success means marriage and social status. Her American fiancé Howard represents the security of self and place that Carol, as a young woman from 1950s middle-class America, has been taught to seek. More discussion on the gender and power issues here occurs in Chapter 2.

The fear of difference and the desire for secure boundaries recurs here as Carol, who represents the socially dominant group, Others Felix as an exile who does not "fit". This is a "strategy" for dealing with her own precarious sense of identity. However, as with Linnet's perception of Frank in "Varieties", Carol briefly looks beyond constructed differences of national identity and class and sees similarities between Felix and herself as two individuals experiencing a sense of displacement and alienation in a city that seems to reject them. However, Carol starts to feel that she is "floating away from everything familiar and safe" (SS 110). Her sense of stability and security are dependent on being Howard's wife and moving back to New York, so she tells herself that Felix is a "hopeless parasite" (SS 117). This suggests the influence of dominant cultural and political myths on individual "choices".

Felix is an example of one of O'Connor's "outlawed figures". Odile, Carol's Parisian friend and Felix's lover, tells Carol that "poor Felix doesn't belong in this world [...] He should have been killed at the end of the war" (SS 113). Like Linnet and the refugees in Montreal, Carol is depicted as failing to recognise the political reality experienced by Felix. Non-communication is again presented as an issue, and in one of the few conversations that Carol has with him, he points out the problem with American newspapers reports that European war refugees in Paris have found "new life away from old cares" (SS 115), which Felix tells her is inaccurate. As Robin Cohen argues, identity is often influenced by the idea that "you know who you are only by knowing who you are not" (1). This "Us" and "Them" mentality is motivated by a fear of difference and the unknown, and by the notion that "they" have a culture or an identity incompatible with ours" (Cohen 199). Carol decides that Felix

and Odile lead a disgraceful life as unmarried lovers in a “slummy quarter of Paris” (SS 117) and imagines a memory of Paris that she will remember once married and back in New York:

Soon, she sensed, the comforting vision of Paris as she had once imagined it would overlap the reality [...] She would forget the rain and her unshared confusion and loneliness, and remember instead the Paris of films [...] and there would be, at last, a coherent picture, accurate but untrue. The memory of Felix and Odile and all their distasteful strangeness would slip away [...] After a while, happily married, mercifully removed in time, she would remember it and describe it and finally believe it as it had never been at all. (SS 117)

Transnational hierarchical constructions of place become evident here, as the wilderness/civilisation divide is translated to an Old-World/New-World context, suggesting that interpretations of centre and periphery are variable and interpretative. The individual reconstruction the past, as prompted by clandestine political policing, is a strategy developed to avoid memories that create unease and a sense of instability and unbelonging. Carol represents a privileged position in which this decision to forget, or misremember, is possible. It suggests the power of American popular culture, including films and magazines, and the widespread social and cultural reinforcement of such narratives.

This examination of ideas about exile and displacement continues through another example of O'Connor's “outlawed” or “submerged” characters, Ernst from “Ernst in Civilian Clothes” (1963), published in *The Peggintz Junction* (1973). Ernst is a German prisoner-of-war who has returned to Paris after serving in the French Foreign Legion. Because of the traumatic effects of the war, he feels alienated and dislocated; he lacks belonging and a sense of identity and has reconstructed his sense of self around his clothes. He “feels so conspicuous in his civilian clothes, idling the whole day, that it would not astonish him if some civic-minded and diligent informer had already been in touch with the police” (SS 272). To combat his sense of displacement, he wears his brown military boots, which are “unsuccessfully camouflaged for civilian life with black Kiwi” but which “make him seem anchored” (SS 272). Stripped of his imposed identity as a soldier, “his life is an endless leave without the hope and the dread of return to the barracks” (SS 272). He is incapable of

communicating with almost everyone, silenced and shamed by his complicity in a violent past. The story can be read to suggest that the notion of a single, stable identity is impossible, particularly in times of great social and political upheaval such as after the Second World War.

When Ernst's physical place and circumstances changed – when the war ended – he lost not just his identity as a soldier but also, due to post-traumatic stress, his memories of where he came from. Gallant takes the approach of depicting Ernst, not with a focus on his involvement with the Nazi regime, but on the “small possibilities” (Hancock 41) for Fascism that Gallant suggests anyone could potentially embrace. This is part of Gallant's examination of what Biess calls the “continuities” (2) of Fascism in post-war Europe. In contrast to the linear and concrete sense of American identity displayed by Carol, which is regulated and reinforced by American political and cultural practices and narratives, Gallant depicts the boundaries between national identities in Europe at this time as crumbling and indecipherable. Ernst “does not know if he is German or Austrian. His mother was Austrian and his stepfather was German” (*SS* 273) but he does not know where he was born. He arbitrarily decides his birthplace was Mainz, and that “everyone is lying” so “he will invent his own truth” (*SS* 283). This points to the overarching post-war authorization of collective forgetting as a strategy to cope with the past, which occludes individual traumas and uncertainties.

The trauma of the destabilisation of the self and loss of “core identity” is linked here with the myth of stable “truth” as Ernst asks himself if it is “important if one-tenth of a lie is true? Is there a horror in a memory if it was only a dream?” (*SS* 283). Memory and truth are highlighted as just as precarious and interpretative as dreams. Lacking the proper documentation and clearance to return to Berlin, Ernst lingers in Paris. Like Felix, he is an exile, rootless, and can be linked with the “spectres” and liminal ghosts explored above. Because his memory is compromised, his identity rests on his papers, and this is a source of

anxiety in a chaotic post-war Germany: “What is Ernst, if his papers mean nothing?” (SS 273); “Without papers and arms he walked as if in a fever, asking himself constantly what he had forgotten” (SS 282). Ernst’s desperate digging through his partially forgotten memories is an attempt to piece together the fragments of the past, suggesting that connections can be made between the questions of belonging connected with the Canadian settler colonial past and the questions of belonging relating to the violence and trauma of the Second World War and the subsequent narratives constructed to deal with it. As with Felix, Ernst can be interpreted as challenging the notion of a core identity by deciding what his own home, nationality, and memories will be.

Also set in Paris, the story “Questions and Answers” was originally published in *the New Yorker* in 1966 and was not included as part of a collection until *In Transit* in 1988, a title which aptly describes Gallant’s persistent focus on issues to do with exile and nomadism. This story focuses on the relationship between Romanian émigrés Amalia and Marie with regard to issues of citizenship which, according to Berlant, can be a relationship between “strangers” who develop a “common identity” based on a mutual “connection to a geographical space”. Many of Gallant’s characters discussed thus far are shown to experience problems in this process of learning such a common identity. In this story, the third-person narrative states that “all expatriates in Paris [...] are concerned with the reactions of total strangers” (SS 260). There is a persistent insecurity about belonging, as the characters are depicted – like Ernst – as waiting for citizenship documentation that has not materialised. This indicates that state control over such experiences of insecurity about place is a transnational, cross-cultural issue.

In this story, Amalia and her husband Dino borrowed money from Marie to move to Paris years ago and never repaid her or sent for her. Now Marie has come to Paris herself. While Amalia and Dino, as Gadpaille states above, “have erected barriers between themselves and an alien environment”, Marie integrates more easily in Paris, suggesting her

ability to develop a common identity and citizenship. Romania became involved in the Fascist regime during the war and participated in the Nazi genocide of Jewish people. This implicitly informs the sense of fear and insecurity that motivates these characters, and the lack of communication between them. Marie is irrationally perceived by Amalia as a threat because she “might pull Amalia and Dino back and down to trouble with the police, which is to say the floor of the sea” (*SS* 265). Linnet is also depicted as using the analogy of submersion in relation to her repression of Frank’s death, the idea that he “went under” in her consciousness (*SS* 758). In “Questions and Answers”, the past and the experience of exile is linked with being drowned. While Amalia considers herself “an old expatriate” who “knows how to breathe underwater”, she sees Marie as being “too old to learn” and belonging to “irrecoverable time” (*SS* 263). This is similar to Odile’s description of Felix in “The Other Paris”, suggesting a form of Othering, a distinguishing between “Us and Them” in order to create a more secure identity through opposition, comparison, and subjugation. Amalia and Dino are proud of being what they call “pure Romanian”, in the sense that there “is not a drop of foreign blood in any of them” (*SS* 263). They believe this despite the fact that in Paris they themselves are foreigners. Marie in turn sees Amalia as in danger ““of suffocation”” (*SS* 271) due to her entrenched views on unified national identity and her stifling relationship with Dino, which connects with the themes explored in “The Other Paris” in relation to Carol and Howard and the overarching transnational dominance of heteropatriarchy.

Marie is depicted as breaking through “Us and Them” boundaries in Paris, of refusing the Othering of Parisians as “foreigners” and “ghosts”. Instead, she seeks to develop a sense of community and shared space in this city. This allows Marie to exist, in the present, without the émigré’s fear of instability. Her perspective is used to depict Paris not as a “dark city” but as a place of freedom and possibility, the city that Carol was searching for. Marie “falls in love with the sight of the Notre Dame”; and observes that “everything is

gold but the sky, which is mauve, and contains a new moon” (SS 269). Gallant uses Marie to challenge the necessity of being “rooted” to a core home-place. Marie suggests the possibility of forming new experiences of belonging as she is granted more permanent documentation to stay in Paris and the possibility of migration to America (implicitly perceived as superior, in accordance with Old World-New World narratives). Gallant indicates that the non-communication between Amalia and Marie could be healed as they prepare a meal together and Amalia laughs “into the past as if she were no longer afraid of it” (SS 268). But, like Carol, Amalia ultimately sides with Dino, who is familiar and secure, despite the suggestion that he is controlling and dominating. Amalia rejects the potential “transformation”. She and Dino want Marie to “admit you are no luckier than we are, that every move was a mistake, that you are one of the dead. Be one of us, and be loved” (SS 271). The experience of being exiled, previously depicted as being a spectre or ghost, is reformulated here as the dominant, hegemonic position, the one to which Marie should aspire. It is the in-group, the way in which she can “fit”. Such shifting interpretations of belonging and commonality are strategies of coping with this insecurity of identity, which Gallant suggests is a cross-cultural post-war issue.

The problem of the “Us and Them” mentality and the fear of difference is also explored in “From the Fifteenth District” (1978), published in a collection of the same name in 1979. Here, Gallant again draws on the Canadian Gothic tradition and transplants it to a European context as death again becomes a metaphor for the experience of exile. As with the Colonel’s perception of the Russians as ghosts in “New Year’s Eve”, and Amalia and Dino’s view of émigrés as “the dead”, this story posits Othered characters as ghosts who are themselves ironically subject to “an epidemic of haunting” (SS 511) by the living. In doing so, this story encourages the reader to question the reasons behind exclusive ideas of difference and Otherness. For example, an émigré character named Mrs Ibrahim, who was living in awful conditions with her husband and twelve children, has died and is now haunted

by Dr Chalmeton and Miss Alicia Fohrenbach, the doctor and social worker assigned to her case. Gallant's formal reporting style includes conflicting reports from the doctor and the social worker that highlight ineffective political arguments which maintain social and class divisions. This allows for a subversion of the reader's expectations as the horror of haunting is replaced by the horror of the normalised reactions of the living towards émigrés and refugees, the construction of Others and the exile of those who do not "fit" with the dominant culture.

Gallant highlights the institutional reinforcement of such social divisions and their destructive and potentially deadly results as Miss Fohrenbach states that "the District could not resettle a family of fourteen persons who were foreign-born when there was a long list of native citizens awaiting accommodation" (SS 513). Evoking language used by the Nazis about the Jewish people during the war, Gallant points to the ways that ideas of citizenship can be contorted in order to maintain social boundaries, as Miss Fohrenbach reports that Dr Chalmeton told her there was "no way of helping these people. Even the simplest rules of hygiene are too complicated for them to follow. Wherever they settle, they spread disease and vermin" (SS 513). This is Gallant's most overt challenge to nationalistic identity labelling and exclusionist "Us and Them" thinking.

Conclusion

Gallant's Paris stories tend to suggest a focus on nationalistic "purity", on a conception of inclusion based on citizenship and "blood", and on self-definition through the Othering of minority groups or figures. However, characters such as Ernst also demonstrate the arbitrariness of national identity definitions, and Carol's experiences in Paris highlight how definitions of "foreignness" shift depending on place. Gallant's Canadian stories are critical of the "ordinary Canadian" nationalism developing in the 1960s and 1970s. She was ahead of her time in her depiction of the victim mentality and the desire for

rootedness in urban spaces, breaking away from the Settler Canadian tradition of writing about roots in connection with the Canadian wilderness and the North, which is discussed in relation to Munro and Atwood. Gallant was also ahead of her time in investigating the development of post-war transnationalism and multiculturalism, the blurring of constructed boundaries of identity and place, and the positives as well as the negatives in the construction of the “global citizen”.

Gallant also highlights how limiting and unsettling ideas about the necessity for a core home-place and identity are transferred through families, within communities, and through popular culture. This is often depicted as contributing to conflicting perceptions of self for her characters. For example, Peter in “Ice Wagon” refers to the idea of passing traits and attitudes on to his daughters “in the blood”, and yet he demonstrates a sense of unease about his ancestry and his place within his family legacy. This is linked with the broader institutional and state-sanctioned perpetuation of the victim mentality and a sense of insecurity about place, allowing for continued political control of individual and collective behaviours and attitudes.

Both the Canadian and Paris stories focus on the theme of exile and demonstrate how displacement and alienation can occur whether characters are placed “at home” or “abroad”. Experiences of exile that transcend national boundaries can be discerned through Gallant’s European, Canadian, and U.S. characters. Self-perceptions of dislocation and unbelonging occur in Europe due to the war, in Canada due to the settler colonial past. Gallant touches on Canadian mid-twentieth-century anti-Americanism – not only through Carol but also through Linnet.

Through the individual narratives of specific characters, Gallant’s stories can be used to trace changes in English-Canadian conceptions of Canadian national identity during and after the Second World War, and a connection can be drawn between her European characters and her Canadian characters’ self-construction of identity based on the Othering

of those they perceive as different or outsiders, what O'Connor calls "submerged population groups" or "outlawed figures". This persistent fear of Others relates to Gallant's evocation of the Canadian Gothic genre, and her transposition of it from Canadian urban landscapes to European urban settings, particularly to Paris as the "dark city". A sense of unease about the past is implied here through the depiction of ghosts and the trope of haunting. This relates to white, middle-class characters who are overly reliant on nationalistic and limited definitions of identity and "home", and who construct their dominant identity by subjugating others.

Characters who persist in seeking coherent identities, memories, and a place to call "home" are more likely to continue to experience feelings of exile and displacement, as are characters who construct ideas of personal success based on ancestry and tradition or money and status. In allowing for a positive and progressive unsettling of accepted notions of boundaries, the stories suggest a restructuring of the notion of "home" that is more fitting for a transnational, globalised existence. They suggest that citizenship relates not just to legal status or to "blood" ties, but to *learning* to belong in a particular place with particular people.

The next chapter investigates the ways in which transformations of identity are also bound up with gender inequalities and patriarchal structures. Focussing on Gallant's German and Riviera stories, the following chapter explores how the notion of disunity and constructed boundaries between social, cultural, political, and psychological constructions of gender identities – often based on fear of difference – occur cross-culturally and highlight differences but also similarities between social and cultural groups.

Chapter 2

“Subversive Possibilities”:

Gender and Identity in Mavis Gallant’s *Riviera* and German Stories

Introduction

Together with exploring changing ideas of national identity and belonging during the mid to late-twentieth century, Gallant’s stories also investigate gender inequality, particularly the social and political policing of femininity. Though many of Gallant’s stories are set in the 1940s and 1950s, prior to the development of Second Wave Feminism, many were written in the 1970s and 1980s and examine several of the key ideas suggested at the time for the liberation of women from patriarchal structures, including the radical feminist notion of completely rejecting men, heterosexual marriage, and motherhood as a strategy of resistance and a method of securing women’s equality.

These issues are also in evidence in Gallant’s Canadian and Paris stories, as discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to identity and exile. For example, in “Varieties of Exile”, Linnet Muir refers to married women in 1940s suburban Montreal as “Red Queens” (SS 744), drawing on Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). She imagines wives as Red Queens who are “chasing after other people and minding their business for them” (SS 744). There is a life she wishes to avoid, having seen them “wearing housecoats” in their front gardens and she worries about sounding that way herself in the future, “so shrill, so discontented” (SS 744). She views having children as “a cruel waste of possibilities” in terms of her personal freedom, though she “would never have voiced this to anyone, for it would have been thought unnatural, even monstrous” (SS 744). Through oblique references to Linnet’s eventual marriage, Gallant highlights the contradictions inherent in constructions of femininity, in which Linnet can secure a kind of freedom through marriage that she was

not granted as a single woman at the time – freedom from social judgements and criticisms in relation to failure to adhere to expected norms – especially as her husband was fighting in the war and is absent, both from the narrative and from the character’s life. Linnet can be read as example of what Butler calls “subversive possibilities” (42) from within this patriarchal expectation, with patriarchy defined according to Ann Oakley as “the mechanisms, ideology, and social structures which have enabled men throughout much of human history to gain and to maintain their domination over women” (33). The discontent Linnet mentions relates to Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the notion that mid-twentieth-century Western society “does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfil their potentialities as human beings” (Friedan 68). She must instead seek fulfilment through “the only channels open to her: the pursuit of sexual fulfilment, motherhood, and the possession of material things” (Friedan 274). The young Linnet has learned that to voice her desire to reject motherhood would be thought, as mentioned above, “unnatural” and “monstrous”. This labelling highlights the effects of heteropatriarchal culture and the confinement of women to “natural” roles, an issue which will be examined repeatedly through this thesis.

These stories can be used to provide examples of how “gender is a sociological concept” and masculine and feminine are “*social* rather than natural categories” (Jackson and Scott 14, emphasis in original). They can be used to highlight the policing of women and the appropriate “doing” of gender, including the expected role of the wife as mother, nurturer, and carer. Heteropatriarchal structures taught women to be “angel in the house” figures, which was a British Victorian term coined by Coventry Patmore in 1854 to describe the perfect combination in a woman: passive, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious. It was the notion of “woman as moral guardian of the hearth” (Nicholson 33).

When applied to women, nurturance embraces a love of children, a desire to bear them and rear them, and a disposition that leans towards a set of traits that are not

gender-specific: warmth, tenderness, compassion, sustained emotional involvement in the welfare of others. (Brownmiller 172)

Many of Gallant's stories are set directly after the war, a time when there was an ideological "reaction against the move towards sex equality in favour of a reaffirmation of traditional gender roles" (68). However, Gallant was writing the stories from within the midst of Second Wave Feminism and her short fiction suggests the early germination of these questions about gender and power in her female characters. Gallant, writing from Paris, was reacting to social and political changes in Canada at the time, and the growing freedom and political consciousness among middle-class "ordinary Canadian" women, as influenced by political discourse but also by women entering the labour force and the widespread availability of contraception and the development of "a collective gender consciousness which came to characterise 'second wave' feminism" (Howells, *MA* 15). A problematic aspect to this "collective consciousness", however, is the inevitable exclusion of women and voices that are deemed not to "fit" (Dallos and Dallos 22) with the dominant majority.

This disunity in approaches to feminism is also considered throughout this thesis. This is important because women as well as men perpetuate limiting expectations of femininity. Butler highlights how the normative behaviours socially, culturally, and politically ascribed to femininity include being both a "good mother" and "heterosexually desirable" (*GT* 199). She states that women are forced or coerced to abide by impossible gender roles, and that this "produces necessary failures" (*GT* 199). Linnet's lack of "natural" maternal instinct is one such failure, for which she would be socially sanctioned. According to Oakley, "there is no such thing as the maternal instinct. There is no biologically based drive which propels women into child-bearing or forces them to become child-rearers once the children are there" (199). However, women are taught to believe that motherhood is natural as part of the "disciplinary project of femininity" (Bartky 283). Punishment for transgression against these norms takes the form of social judgement and possibly exile. However, these

expectations are organised so that women are “destined in some degree to fail” (Bartky 283), leading to feelings of shame becoming part of women’s self-identity and thus allowing for the maintenance of heteropatriarchal dominance. Butler draws on Michel Foucault, who claims that these failures are encouraged by politically dominant groups for continued control to be exercised over individuals and groups which are perceived to fall outside of “normal” gender identities, thereby maintaining discrete gender roles and norms. According to Foucault, this became the norm in the seventeenth century and has continued in various forms since:

It was essential that the state know what was happening with its citizens’ sex [...] Between the state and the individual, sex became an issue, and a public issue no less; a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses, and injunctions settled upon it (*History* 26).

This connects with the quote from Pierre Trudeau, cited in the Introduction, that the Canadian state had “no business in the bedrooms of the nation”. However, Foucault argues that such focuses “on sex did not multiply apart from or against power” but “as the means of its exercise” (*History* 32). While making well-advertised political gestures towards separating the state from “private” gender and sexuality behaviours in the heteronormative domestic space, the control over these behaviours continued and gender identity continued to be regulated, along with national identity in Canada. This was ongoing while Gallant was writing these stories, from her outsider’s perspective in Paris. Because her exiled “outlawed” characters can be European, British, American, or Canadian, they provide different ways of considering these issues while incorporating a transnational, cross-cultural perspective.

Issues of confinement and silencing of women can be explored through Friedan’s argument that “thousands of women” around the time of the Second World War were “lulled into a false sense of security in their comfortable concentration camps” (275). It is against this clandestine incarceration that Gallant writes. Her female characters are regularly depicted as having a level of success or failure in their lives relative to their conformity to

the rules of the feminine mystique. These characters highlight how a woman at this time was socially and politically indoctrinated – through the family, friend groups, popular culture, institutions such as schools, and the state – to link her sense of self and place with marriage and motherhood, with domestic space, and with the proper presentation of her body in order to appropriately sell herself on the “marriage market” (Bromberg 13). These characters provide examples of Butler’s suggestion that, by engaging in activities that differ from or challenge gender norms, the “natural” gender rules and categories can be exposed as “a regulatory practice of identity” (*GT* 44), taken up by hegemonic power groups. The stories explore female characters’ relationships to their environment – often an “alien environment” in which they feel a sense of exile – as connected with misogynistically limited economic and occupational status and bodily autonomy (through the learned expectation of motherhood as natural and inevitable).

Gallant also incorporates female characters who are represented as choosing or causing their own victimisation. Because of this, critics such as Janice Keefer have claimed that although Gallant rejects “the traditional choices and limitations associated with female experience”, she “cannot be described as a feminist” (25). By this logic, to be a feminist writer Gallant must depict women as simply victims of male dominance. Keefer argues that this also relates to Gallant’s reticence in relation to overt political activism as an author in the public sphere. Keefer states that readers, who inhabit “a world profoundly altered by the advent of feminism, may find themselves vigorously dissenting from the restricted possibilities she offers her female characters, the limited strengths and abundant weaknesses with which she hampers them” (29). However, this position suggests a unified perspective on feminism and an omission of the ongoing reality of patriarchal powers and limitations which are enacted upon women. According to Keefer, the majority of Gallant’s female characters “merely flutter and rattle round a pre-established void” (29) without much personal freedom or responsibility. This links with Gallant’s idea of the “locked situation”,

discussed in Chapter 1, and while some female characters remain limited and confined, and *are* victims of male dominance, some have the potential to gain a greater level of power and freedom. In other words, some engage in “subversive behaviours” within the restrictions of patriarchal structures and suggest the possibility of individual choice despite social and political policing. This usually occurs when the character is depicted as developing more nuanced ideas of feminism and gender equality, suggesting Gallant’s reactions against feminist discourse of the time. Gallant’s feminism works by exposing the ongoing issue of women’s subjugation rather than concealing it through the suggestion that inequality is a thing of the past. Her narratives also allow the reader to engage with the stories and their political meanings without excessive instruction on her part, facilitating nuance rather than didacticism so that the reader can bring their own interpretation of feminism to their reading of the story.

As a writer, Gallant was subject to this ongoing gender inequality. For example, reviews of her work in the 1960s and 1970s highlight gender-biased expectations placed upon female writers at this time. Robert Taubman in 1965 describes her as “‘unsatisfactorily intelligent’, and ‘heartily dislikeable’” (qtd. in Keefer 35), while William Pritchard in 1973 wrote that her fiction is “‘too clever, too oblique, too arty for its own moral and human good’” (qtd. in Keefer 35). George Woodcock in 1978 claims that her writing is “‘in no way male and ideological’” but is “‘feminine and intuitive’”, while Robertson Davies states that “‘nowhere in Gallant’s work do we find those traditional “feminine” qualities of tenderness, nurturing, circumspection, and deference belonging to the proper lady and the woman writer’” (qtd. in Keefer 37). Even Robert Weaver, important promoter of the Canadian short story, states in 1974 that Gallant demonstrates a detachment from her characters, showing “‘a kind of gloating nastiness’” (qtd. in Keefer 37). This argument that Gallant’s tone is “‘detached’” and “‘disinterested’” (Keefer 64) from her characters is common among her critics. For example, Schaub argues that Gallant’s ironic and sharp observations are

“detached” and “disparaging” (*Mavis* 244). This suggests the ongoing prevalence of imposed expectations of femininity – including the notion of women as caring and emotional – which Gallant’s writing seeks to deconstruct.

Her use of language tends to be ironic, her tone deadpan, and her word choice succinct. Keefer adheres to difference or gynocentric feminist arguments in claiming that Gallant fails to seek forms of expression “free of all patriarchal taint, expressive of unlimited possibility, either beyond gender or else wholly expressive of the biological rhythms and psychological givens of female existence” (58). This perspective conflates gender – the socially, culturally, and politically instilled practices of femininity and masculinity – with biological male/female existence. Gallant’s characters highlight the ways in which women continue to be limited by patriarchal constructions of femininity. Suggesting that women could gain equality through using the female body denies the fact that the female body is continually being controlled and policed under the male gaze. According to Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze, “in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed” (837). This gaze has also been institutionally and socially ingrained in women. The policing is conducted by women onto each other, and has been internalised by women so that they monitor and sanction themselves.

However, according to Butler, “the very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms” (*GT* 2). There is no possibility of finding language that is freed from patriarchy because, as per Butler’s theory, human beings in Western cultures are discursively produced subjects in a system that is rooted in patriarchal power from which language cannot be separated. Butler argues that gender is “the discursive/cultural means by which ... ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive’, prior to culture” (*GT* 10). She states that the idea of individual gender identity as natural, coherent, and continuous is part of the “socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility” (*GT* 23). Butler states that women are “constituted” by the language of “the very political system that is

supposed to facilitate [their] emancipation” (GT 3). She argues instead for considering behaviours with “subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself” (GT 42). Examples of such behaviours are enacted by some of Gallant’s female characters.

The perception that there is a “core” self that is “beyond gender” is challenged by Butler, who argues that gender should be considered “as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices” which “construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self” (GT 188). This links with national identity, which is constituted through narratives that are passed down from generation to generation. However, following Butler’s line of argument, the existence of gender *precedes* national identification because people “become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility” (GT 22). According to Sara Salih, “although we ‘become’ our genders, there is no place outside gender which precedes this becoming” (21). An individual’s gender identity is “the effect rather than the cause of the sequence of acts which give it the appearance of substance” (Salih 91). The Red Queens to which Linnet refers are an *effect* of the persistence of patriarchal reproductions of expectations of femininity. The reconceptualisation of gender norms as an effect, or evidence, of the perpetuation of patriarchal power “opens up possibilities of ‘agency’ that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed” (Butler, GT 201). Many of Gallant’s female characters display subversive behaviours and demonstrate the possibility of agency within existing power structures. This is evidence of Gallant’s feminist approach and her nuanced perspective on the fluidity of identity, which contrasts with reductive feminist arguments of the time and their focus on the victimisation of women without enough recognition of the overarching power structures.

Gallant’s stories also point to the reality of mid- to late-twentieth century women’s subordinated experience. Her stories demonstrate examples of the deconstruction of the

idea of the coherent “person” through her depiction of female characters who “fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined” (Butler, *GT* 23). Feminine and masculine genders are expected to be “expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (Butler, *GT* 24), and when this does not take place – and examples of this occur in these short stories – the naturalness of sex and gender is threatened and destabilised. These destabilising figures are “spectres of discontinuity and incoherence” and are both “prohibited and produced” by hegemonic structures (Butler, *GT* 23). This can be linked with the Canadian Gothic genre and the liminal ghosts and exiled figures described in Chapter 1, suggesting that representations of exile can be connected to both national and gender identity.

This resistance occurs in Gallant’s short fiction through challenges to the expectation of the “good wife and mother” and the idea that motherhood is “an institutional rather than an instinctual reality” (Salih 27). Oakley states that a “good” woman is socially and politically depicted as synonymous with a mother who is “domesticated and non-sexual”, while a “bad” woman is “the non-mother, desired because she *is* sexual” (197). Pathogenicity was “attached to women’s deviation from conventional wife and mother roles” (Oakley 70). If a woman’s place is constructed as in the home, and the home is seen as “a source of stability, reliability, and authenticity” which links with the idea of a nostalgic wife-mother figure which is always of the past, “a stable symbolic centre – functioning as an anchor for others” rather than experiencing thoughts and feelings for herself, and the “identities of ‘woman’ and of ‘home-place’ are intimately tied up with each other” (Massey 180).

While in Chapter 1 the institution of the family was explored in relation to the transmission of national identity norms from parents to children, this also relates to the inter-generational communication of gender identity norms. The family is “a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole” (Millet 33). Father characters – as the patriarchal head of the family/state – continue to be important to

young female daughter characters' developing conceptions of self-identity, power, and freedom. Millet states that gender identity development "which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender" and the child must "satisfy the demands which gender places upon one" (31). While the father is an important influence, these stories demonstrate that mother characters are also significant particularly to young female characters gender development. Dryden argues that "the institution of marriage" and the notion of "good" motherhood is based on the idea that "selfish behaviour is much more acceptable in a man than a woman" (149). These short stories depict mother characters whose selfish behaviour is sometimes represented as a failure teaching their daughters to challenge femininity expectations. However, sometimes it is represented as a "subversive" act that challenges the necessity for women to be caring and nurturing, and to constantly value their family more than themselves.

(i) The Riviera Stories

The Riviera is depicted by Gallant as a place of exile, and her representations of English expatriates suggest the decline of British imperialism and the Empire. This can be linked with growing Canadian nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. These stories draw less from the Canadian Gothic tradition and her use of the "dark city" as Gallant does not apply this to rural landscapes and small towns on the Riviera. However, her stories are always bound up with memory and haunting due to transnational movement as well as a sense of exile, personal loss, and trauma after the war.

In contrast to the power of British settler colonialism "at home" in Canada, these British colonists are part of a deteriorating transnational system whose power is failing. While British settler colonialism worked to occupy the land and eradicate, control, and replace indigenous peoples in Canada, here Gallant's British characters represent the "foreigners"

and “outlaws”, one of the “submerged population groups” that O’Connor associates with the short story form. Although they, like Peter in “Ice Wagon”, maintain a sense of superiority and privilege due to their declining wealth and imagined or outdated social status, they are now without much political power, particularly as the realities of Second World War become increasingly more apparent and threatening to them. As well as continuing to include evolving issues of rootless and homeless existence, these characters are also used to represent changing attitudes towards feminism and gender roles during the mid- to late-twentieth century and the possibility of “subversive” behaviours by female characters to challenge confining or silencing expectations of femininity.

“An Unmarried Man’s Summer” (1963), published in *The End of the World* (1974), is set after the war is over, and examines the idea of marriage and family as a desirable goal. Walter, an English former soldier injured in the war from an upper-middle class family whose wealth has declined, creates a “mosaic picture” (SS 285) of family life, which seems inaccessible to him due to his implied homosexuality and the restrictions of the time. His imagined family life contrasts with the stories he creates about his past to entertain the British colonists of the French Riviera and earn his keep. He relies on their good opinion as he is dependent on them for a place to live. His invented past also contrasts with the heteronormative family of his sister Eve, who comes to visit. According to Foucault, political and social control of the family requires a subjugation of “all wayward or unproductive sexualities” (*History* 45). This includes homosexuality but also women who are sexually active without becoming mothers. This was instilled in Walter through his father, who told him that (heterosexual) “parenthood is sacred” (SS 285). While the story is told through Walter’s perspective, the limitations placed on Eve in relation to her role as mother and wife are continually interrogated.

Accepted ideas of feminine gender identity produced as an effect of the policing of the female body can be discerned through the depictions of Eve as “a giantess [...] Jolly and

loud. It had been said in their childhood that she should have been a boy” (*SS* 289). Their mother regretted that Walter was beautiful, and Eve was not, because ““what good is beauty to a boy?”” (285). This links with what Butler calls “the boundaries of the body as the limits of the socially hegemonic” (*GT* 179). Politically dominant discourses endorse the necessity of heterosexuality and appropriate femininity for women, that which leads to marriage and reproduction. This is considered a more socially and economically stable process than homosexual and non-reproductive relationships. As this story suggests, the assumption is that girls require beauty in order to find a mate and reproduce; men do not require beauty because their socially attractive attributes relate instead to money, status, and power. Eve describes being jealous of Walter’s education: ““They wouldn’t do it for a girl. Ah, how I used to wish we could have exchanged” (*SS* 294). Walter has fought in the war, travelled, worked in a bank, acted; he has known a level of freedom and independence denied to Eve, who instead got married and had two children and no experience outside of this is constructed for her in the story. The irony rests on Walter’s “unmarried” status, as the title implies, which suggests a lack of success that also relates to his homeless, rootless, nomadic existence.

This story highlights Gallant’s implicit engagement with feminisms of the time. For example, gynocentric feminism “argues for the superiority of the values embodied in traditionally female experience” (Young 174), including “the promotion of life” (178) and “the capacity to nurture and a sense of social cooperation” (179). A criticism of this can be read through this story, in that it actually adheres to the limitations imposed on women under patriarchal structures. Such constructions of femininity are “based on mothering, physical attractiveness, lower expectations of achievement and independence than men” (Dallos and Dallos 19). While gynocentric feminism had some positive influences in terms of literature, sociologically and politically it also harks back to the “angel in the house” and continues to confine women to a unified and limiting set of gender-based expectations.

However, in Gallant's story, the "sacredness" of the motherhood role is questioned through Eve's relationship with her children. She is not the ideal "good wife and mother" who continually attends to her family, nor is she "bad". The family are returning to England from South Africa, where their farming exploits have failed (one of many failed exploits). The children, Mary and Johnny, are angry at this forced migration. Eve tells Walter: "We've taken them away from their home. They don't think anything of the idea. They'll get over it" (SS 290). As a character, she both demonstrates and challenges the symbol of the "angel in the house". She leaves most of the children's care to Angelo, though she takes over the running of the domestic space. The ingrained expectation of the organisation of gender roles is acknowledged as the narrative states that Angelo "took all his orders from Eve now. There had never been a discussion about it; she was the woman of the house, the mother" (SS 295). Oakley argues that "mothering" – the desire to nurture and care for children and the family overall – is "seen as an essential ingredient [of femininity], its absence pathogenic, threatening the whole purpose of the family – the production of healthy children" (69). This label of pathogenicity is a form of control over women's choices and limitation of behaviours. The woman is expected to "act as the provider of emotional warmth and stability for the whole family, to maintain good tension-free relationships between family members, to keep the family together" (Oakley 180). Eve's emotional detachment from the children is at odds with her expression of a desire for this role, as she claims she "had never wanted to be anything except a mother, and she would protect anyone who wanted protection – Walter as well" (SS 297). This is because "femininity is constructed in a way that defines the work of caring for other family members as womanly" (Connell 134), and Eve has been taught – particularly through the institution of the family – that she should want to be a mother figure. Foucauldian perspectives identify "the imposition of discipline upon the body with the operation of specific institutions, e.g. the school, the factory, the prison" (Bartky 285). This story demonstrates how "the desire for motherhood is culturally induced, and the ability to

mother is learnt” (Oakley 199). Eve is shown to contradict the idea of nurturing and motherhood as “natural” when, before they depart for England, she suggests to her husband that they leave the children somewhere for a week while they move. Eve’s non-conformance to some expected feminine norms can be read as a challenge to the idea that rejecting the nurturer/carer is pathogenic. It is an example of the “subversive confusion” (Butler 46) of gender rules which highlight the social and political construction of gender norms and thus their instability and mutability.

In addition, the depiction of Eve’s relationship with her daughter Mary highlights the inter-generational perpetuation and familial and institutional engendering of femininity norms which are restrictive. Eve calls Mary a “seething mass of feminine wiles. She’s always after something” (*SS* 290). This is a warning to Angelo, who must “watch himself” with Mary because she is too “clever”, too sly, and will trick him in some way: “She thinks about what she wants and then goes after it without saying anything. It’s a game. I tell you, she’s feminine. More power to her. I’m glad” (*SS* 290). Eve connects Mary’s “power” with sexuality, self-interest, and a constructed idea of femininity. She denies Mary’s intelligence, self-confidence, and drive to achieve her goals. Eve represents the internalisation of patriarchal constructions of femininity in women, and the perpetuation by women (including mothers to daughters) of the link between femininity and sexuality as the only source of a woman’s power. Children, Connell states, “have gender norms vehemently imposed on them long before they are capable of reproducing” (81). This teaches them that gender is biological and natural, and here specifically that femininity requires regulation.

Eve is also depicted as connecting marriage and reproduction with successful femininity, suggesting that Mary could “become an old spinster with a pussycat” (*SS* 295) if she does not comply. Caroline Ramazanoglu states that the nuclear family – heterosexual parents, one man and one woman, and one or more children – is socially and ideologically portrayed in Western cultures as “natural, prestigious, and desirable” (148). Mary, however,

is described as resistant to these norms. She feels that cats – in comparison with people – are appealing because they “don’t care what you think” (SS 295), suggesting her rejection of the importance of “fitting” with social expectations of gender. Mary’s resistance is also connected with silence and covertness. She is one of numerous young female characters in Gallant’s stories who use silence to challenge entrenched and limiting notions of femininity and gender identity. Such characters also appear in Munro and Atwood stories, and as they react to developing feminist attitudes in the 1960s and 1970s.

“In the Tunnel” (1971), also published in *The End of the World*, continues this exploration of gender role expectations. Set in Nice, the story features a young Canadian, Sarah, who is a similar character to Linnet but with a more romanticised view of love. The story questions the Second Wave feminist idea that love and romance are in opposition to women’s freedom and sense of independence. According to Millet, writing in 1969:

The concept of romantic love affords a means of emotional manipulation which the male is free to exploit, since love is the only circumstance in which the female is (ideologically) pardoned for sexual activity [...] Romantic love also obscures the realities of female status and the burden of economic dependency. (37)

Through Sarah’s relationship with English expatriate character Roy Cooper, who invites her to stay with him in his rented house outside the city, this story can be read as an investigation into this feminist perspective.

The influence of father characters recurs here and can be used to explore the idea of the heteropatriarchal family as representative of the nation, combined with Gallant’s implicit reactions to contemporary feminism. Sarah’s relationship with her father has a significant influence on her relationships with men, and she hears his voice in her head when she makes decisions. This is suggestive of the internalisation of patriarchal views, with the father symbolising both dominance in the patriarchal of the family and the patriarchal state. The relationship with Roy is partly depicted as a relationship between Roy and Sarah’s father, a transaction between men. For example, when Sarah tells Roy about her father’s belief that

she has been getting involved with ill-suited men, Roy tells her: “I’m your father’s man” (SS 372). Sarah’s own perspective is obscured by the dominance of these male characters, and the story traces her attempts to regain her autonomous point-of-view.

The denial of Sarah’s autonomy and freedom is portrayed when Roy first approaches her and expects her to explain herself while refusing to provide any information about himself. He questions her right to freedom of movement and independence: “Who was she to frown and cross-examine, she who wandered around eating pizzas alone?” (SS 371). However, while Sarah complies with patriarchal expectations of femininity, she also engages in “subversive” behaviours and challenges imposed power structures by making decisions based on her own curiosity and desires. The move to Roy’s house is “her most important decision, for it supposed a way of living, a style” (SS 373), that is, living with and engaging in a sexual relationship with a man while unmarried and potentially subject to social judgement. She reflects that “no girl she knew had ever done quite this” and wonders “what her father would say” (SS 373), though she is not concerned or threatened by this. This highlights the emerging feminist movement at the time, and the construction of Sarah as a character who has the potential to challenge patriarchal dominance.

The story can be read through a combined examination of issues of transnational belonging, gender, and exile. Once at Roy’s house, “The Tunnel”, Sarah meets his friends, the Reeves, an older English expatriate couple, who fascinate her due to their imperialist mindset. The story deals with the radical feminist notion that love – or “the idea that she was in love” – distracts Sarah from her intention to “study expatriates at first hand” (SS 379) and causes her to lose the critical and analytical language she learned from the married academic she was seeing back in Canada, whom her father nicknamed “Professor Downcast”. Having this language is essential to the development of Sarah’s sense of self because it allows her to analyse and describe her experience, and gives her power. Gallant suggests that using language in this way is essential for women to challenge the imposed

systems and norms that confine and limit them. Butler states that language in Western culture is “an open system of signs by which intelligibility is insistently created and contested” (*GT* 198). The fact that this language has been transmitted to Sarah through a patriarchal figure – her older, married, academic ex-boyfriend – suggests Sarah’s resistance *within* hegemonic power structures. The loss of this language suggests that the unquestioned idea of love within the patriarchal system limits the individual’s power to challenge patriarchal structures, and the freedom for her identity to continually develop and change. The story proposes that Sarah’s youthful attachment to her father and to “home” in Canada, combined with the limitations that the “idea of love” effects on her behaviour and attitudes, contribute to an underestimation of the power she has in the Riviera for developing her own sense of self and freedom. Power, according to Connell, is “the ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood” (107). Sarah’s thoughts and behaviours are dominated by male characters in this story. However, Sarah is shown to engage in what Elshtain calls “*informal* female power” (116), acts which “undermine” expectations of femininity and male power dynamics. These challenge “*formal* male power” which is sanctioned by the structural and institutional power of patriarchal culture (116).

Like many of Gallant’s characters discussed so far, Sarah is an English-Canadian from a privileged, middle-class background, and has been taught to expect a certain level of power in her experiences. However, “The Tunnel” becomes a metaphor for patriarchal power and the continued limitations enacted upon women in relation to expectations of adherence to the domestic nurturer/carer role. Roy signifies a broader social, cultural, and political ideal of hegemonic masculinity that demands perfection from women which is unachievable. For example, when Sarah hurts her foot while doing domestic chores, Roy sees her as imperfect and thus disposable. His attitude towards her changes, incorporating overt power and dominance displays: “Just do as I say, for once” (*SS* 386). He symbolises the punishments enacted on women who inevitably fail to embody these expectations.

Sarah's idea of marriage, and the domestic duties she takes on while in "The Tunnel", are the effects of instilled and learned gender roles and femininity expectations, what Connell calls "emphasised femininity", a patriarchal structure that supports "compliance with [women's] subordination and is orientated to accommodating the interests and desires of men" (183). Hegemonic power, through the "organisation of private life and cultural processes" (Connell 184), supports "the maintenance of practices that institutionalise men's dominance over women" (185). "Compliance" is constructed in patriarchal hegemonic structures as feminine, in combination with "fragility" and "ego-stroking" (Connell 187), and "nurturance and empathy" (188). Butler argues that "the injunction *to be* a given gender produces [...] a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated" (199, emphasis in original). As demonstrated here through Roy and Sarah, it is impossible to adhere to all required standards of femininity.

Failure is unavoidable, ensuring the punishment and thus control of women. Although it takes Sarah a long time to leave, and she still seeks Roy's approval despite his sexist and authoritarian treatment of her, she is depicted as gradually finding "the forgotten language" (SS 385) required to describe her experiences. When she realises that Roy and the Reeves's niece Lisbet were secretly sexually involved, she describes herself as "the victim" but still feels "guilty and maimed" (SS 394). This idea of self-blame and perceiving oneself as a victim recurs repeatedly in the stories of all three authors in this thesis. This idea of feminism has endured, as suggested by the comments from Janice Fiamengo mentioned in the Introduction. Naomi Wolf states that "victim feminism" is "a composite" formed by "the aversion to power of the radical left; the identification of women and nature popularised with the 'cultural feminism' that came of age in the 1970s" (*Fire* 156). Wolf's description of this brand of feminism includes the belief that "men are responsible for hierarchy, and hierarchy is the original sin of all social organisation. Women are not hierarchical but egalitarian [...] Men want to dominate and separate; women want to communicate and

connect” (157). This is the gynocentric feminist approach of assigning stereotypical and unifying traits. It suggests that women are “naturally” more caring, nurturing, and emotional, and more apt to construct systems of equality. It “reinforces stereotypes” including “aspects of women’s traditional sphere” which have been “most exploited” by patriarchal structures including reproduction, motherhood, and domesticity (Young 185).

Victim Feminism, Wolf argues, “harks back to a myth of origin”, a past “in which women were worshiped, ‘female values’ predominated, and war was unknown” (157). In this perspective, power is linked exclusively with men and hierarchical structures, the idea that “men want to dominate and separate; women want to communicate and connect” (Wolf, *Fire* 157). However, the gynocentric feminist rejection of power as male and hierarchical means that men continue to hold the “most institutionalised power” (Young 185). It suggests the need for women to gain power through “subversive” strategies and to engaging in discourses traditionally dominated by male power. In Gallant’s story, Sarah’s use of the language from Professor Downcast is an example of this. While Sarah is represented as constructing herself as a victim, she also demonstrates a subversion of this, and highlights changing notions of women’s power, sexual freedom, and identity as attitudes towards feminism change throughout the 1970s. The narrative switches to suggest an older Sarah, recalling these events, and the story ends with the suggestion that she has become more likely to take a position of power in romantic and sexual affairs and implies that love, sex, and relationships with men do not preclude women from a sense of independent self-identity and freedom, despite the ongoing existence of patriarchal power structures.

Both “An Unmarried Man’s Summer” and “In the Tunnel” examine gender identities and experiences of belonging on the Riviera many years after the war. But in several of her Riviera stories, Gallant deals with gender roles during the war and demonstrates forms of resistance to them using female characters. Set in 1939, “The Four Seasons” (1971), published in the collection *From the Fifteenth District* (1979), sees an exploration of family and

motherhood, as well as class inequalities and the remnants of the British Empire. The Unwins are English expatriates on the Italian Riviera, unwitting supporters of Mussolini and, like Eve and Walter in “An Unmarried Man”, financially unsuccessful. Mrs Unwin is shown, like Eve, to lack the “maternal instinct” and the nurturer/carer role is redistributed to a young Italian native, Carmela. Mrs Unwin is distrustful of Carmela, who represents the possibility of gaining power through silence, having learned English in secret. Like Mary in “An Unmarried Man” and Sarah in “In the Tunnel”, Carmela represents potential changes in power and authority for women.

The metaphor used by Amalia in “Questions and Answers” comparing gaining success as an exile to knowing how to breathe underwater is repeated here, and for Carmela this means that, “among the powerful and the strange, she would be mute and watchful” (SS 39). This is a “subversive” strategy, against the Red Queen power of Mrs Unwin, who is depicted as selfish, especially as Fascism begins to grow and the regime of the internment of Jewish people becomes evident. Gallant integrates these gender inequality issues with harmful nationalist perspectives and “Us and Them” thinking in the story as the border between Italy and France is closed, and people are allowed to go to where the Jews are being held, “to look at them through the fence” (SS 58). The Unwins are “proud that this had not taken place in their country – at least not since the Middle Ages – but it might not be desirable if all these people were to go to England now” (SS 58). Within the historical context of this nationalism, racism, and impending genocide of Jewish people, Gallant explores characters on a small scale, and the ingrained problems of gender inequality that continue despite political events.

Mrs Unwin is used to depict the idea of gender as an effect of what Butler calls the “received meanings” which are instilled in women. The character highlights the expectations of the mother role as nurturer/carer and “angel in the house”, at which Mrs Unwin fails. However, her failure is based not only on her selfishness and her imperialist, classist beliefs,

but also on the narratives and values that have been socially, culturally, and politically instilled in her. This includes the expectation that she must conform to femininity norms appropriate for a wife and mother, and that she should consider herself as weak and a victim. For example, when she learns that her children – a boy and a girl – and Carmela are all undernourished, she declares: “I was too old [...] I had no right to bring these maimed infants into the world” (SS 45). However, despite her flaws, Mrs Unwin is depicted sympathetically, as the story suggests that she is an alcoholic and feels a sense of confinement in her role as wife and mother. Mrs Unwin tells Carmella that female experience is the same as “being tied” and, as with the Linnet Muir stories discussed in Chapter 1, this confinement is linked with restrictive nationalism, as Mrs Unwin tells Carmella: “No escape from it – marriage, childbirth, patriotism, the dark” (SS 48). There is a sense that Carmella is of a new generation and her use of language and silence highlights an increased sense of power and independence. However, Carmella is also from a poor family in a rural Italian village. As the Unwins evacuate to England, without paying her, she must return to her village as, in the background of the story, the war escalates. This suggests that, despite individual behaviours in relation to gaining power and autonomy, overarching political events can take place over which there is no control.

The Riviera is often depicted as a place of uncertainty for female characters. However, Gallant’s critical eye tends to shift away from natives of the area and towards British expatriate characters who maintain a sense of status and privilege based on perceptions of ancestry, national identity, wealth, and personal success. Gallant tends to deconstruct these factors and reveals them, together with gender identity, as precarious and constructed fictions. In “The Moslem Wife” (1976), also in *From the Fifteenth District*, Netta and Jack Ross are married first cousins of English descent living in pre-war southern France, running a hotel owned by Netta’s family. Their lives are disrupted by the war, but also by Jack’s infidelities and his decision to go to England, and subsequently America, with another

woman. Having known each other as children from 1920, and been married in 1932, Netta and Jack are together a long time before the outbreak of the war and this separation. Their relationship both confirms and challenges ideas about marriage and gender roles. The story explores definitions of success as gendered, as well as the gender-biased social judgements and punishments exerted when individuals fail to “fit” with dominant gender expectations. The tourists and expatriates in the hotel gossip that Netta does not need a husband, suggesting that because she has money and owns the hotel, she is self-sufficient. As explored in “An Unmarried Man”, Netta’s lack of beauty is perceived as a failure to adhere to the requirements of a woman who wants to secure a marriage. According to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, individual bodies are used to maintain “order and discipline” (136). This is especially relevant to women’s bodies. The commonplace occurrence of social judgements based on interpretations of beauty mean that punishments for failing to “fit” with femininity expectations are “not simply imposed from ‘above’ but are shaped, maintained, and enacted locally in the interactions between people in various groups, relationships, and families” (Dallos and Dallos 21). Therefore, the individual, specifically here the female body, is “one of the effects of power” (Barker 28).

The institution of the family is one of the sites in which this power is imposed onto female bodies. This story highlights the influence of the patriarchal father on a daughter character. Marriage is viewed by Netta’s father as a contract based on financial benefit and the continuation of the family bloodline. He tells her it is “a parched arrangement, intolerable without a flow of golden guineas and fresh blood. As cousins, Jack and Netta could not bring each other anything except stale money” (SS 7). They do not have children but are depicted as enjoying sex, and are thus a challenge to the institutional strategies designed to regulate them, demonstrated here through the patriarchal father character. Foucault argues that institutions, such as the patriarchal family, regulate the refusal of “unproductive activities” and “casual pleasures” (*History* 36) and sanction “a sexuality that is economically useful and

politically conservative” (*History* 37). According to Foucault, marriage in the nineteenth century was “under constant surveillance” (*History* 37). If individuals broke these “rules of marriage”, they faced “condemnation” (*History* 38). This story demonstrates how such surveillance was not just state-perpetuated but also conducted by one’s social group, as the tourists at the hotel gossip about their behaviour. As well as displaying racist and stereotypical assumptions about what it means to be a “Moslem Wife” – with “Moslem” defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as the “formerly common but now old-fashioned, increasingly rare, and sometimes offensive variant of Muslim” – these are also “participants in a collective project in which the power of men and subordination of women is sustained” (Connell 108) and the punishment of those who “fail to ‘do’ their gender correctly” (Salih 93).

This Foucauldian perspective however “does not explain why women have so generally lost power in sexual relationships” (Ramazanoglu 156). In “The Moslem Wife”, Netta’s actions are subject to a greater level of criticism than Jack’s, despite the widespread belief that he was engaging in extra-marital affairs. According to Oakley, “in a gender-differentiated society, one of the most important ways of conforming as an adult involves conformity with the standards of one’s gender role” (85). Although Netta is ridiculed for being a “Moslem wife”, she is also expected to accept Jack’s cheating and to take care of him in order to abide by the “good” wife and “angel in the house” role. Netta is represented as simultaneously following, and contradicting, this role. Gallant’s stories suggest that it is “possible to subvert, disrupt, and refuse” (Salih 3) the effects of ingrained gender behaviours and attitudes. Netta engages in a “*discontinuity*” (Butler, *GT* 192) of gender acts through a “failure to repeat” expected gender behaviours, which “exposes the phantasmic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (Butler, *GT* 192). She is outspoken and self-possessed, but she also abides by limiting “feminine” ideals of submission and docility which are constructed under patriarchal structures as “more rational and safer”

(Oakley 85). Therefore, it appears that equality of power and independence between Netta and Jack is “hampered” through Netta’s own “choice of traditional feminine” roles (Oakley 85). This idea of personal agency is also a recurring theme in the stories of Munro and Atwood as these authors respond to changing ideas of feminism and gender equality. Their stories highlight the need for women to take personal agency and responsibility. However, they can also be used to question the extent to which this is possible under the continuing confines of hegemonic power systems. These “choices” are actually patriarchally-regulated “failures” in women’s adherence to impossible standards of femininity, which in turn continues their subjugation.

Netta is presented as having power in the story as she takes over the running of her father’s hotel, destabilising the stereotype of man-as-worker, woman-as-homemaker binary because she provides their source of income. However, this status is also precarious because the hotel was inherited, and thus she has no agency in relation to this power. In fact, there is a sense of confinement due to family expectation and limitation of her ability to choose another path or to move to another place. She is confined to the role of nurturer/carer. Her role as “angel in the house” is exaggerated as she and Jack live in the hotel and she is expected to take care of him and the hotel’s occupants. Her dissatisfaction with this role is bound up with ingrained ideas of marriage and motherhood, despite her subversive behaviours. The narrative states that Netta had “up to now never shown a scrap of maternal feeling over anything”, and that Jack “couldn’t abide” children (SS 4). However, the inclusion of the term “up to now” suggests Netta’s dissatisfaction. This story is weighted with a sense of repressed unease that is connected with the political reality of the impending war and with the interpersonal issue of Netta discovering Jack’s infidelity.

Netta demonstrates “subversive” behaviours. In contradiction to the “good wife” norm, Netta thinks that, “if Jack were to die she would search the crowd of mourners for a man she could live with. She would not return from the funeral alone” (SS 24). Once Jack

leaves, Netta demonstrates strength and independence, and engages in other sexual relationships. Jack becomes repressed or submerged in her memory, “a restricted area”, but in the everyday life of the hotel “there was only Netta. Her dreams were cleansed of him” (SS 25). The narrative then jumps forward in time, stating that Netta does not try to contact Jack for the five years he is gone. In a letter she composes but does not send to him, she describes the evacuation of the hotel in June 1940 and her return in October, the Italian occupation of the area, the subsequent German occupation, and the violence involved. After the war, Netta discovers that Jack has been living with another woman, who he calls his wife, in America. Netta interprets this as her release from any obligation to him. She admits that “the absence of Jack was like a cancer which I am sure has taken root, and of which I am bound to die” but demands: “Well, what would you like me to do? Sit here and cry?” (SS 31) When Jack returns finally, unapologetically, she feels “intense revulsion” and realises that this revulsion is a form of “freedom” from the obligations of the relationship (SS 33). While Netta experiences flashbacks to the horrors she witnessed during the war, Jack “lightly” says that he “was too preoccupied with you to manage another life. I couldn’t see myself going on and on away from you. I didn’t want to grow middle-aged at odds with myself” (SS 34). This links to Dryden’s comment, mentioned above, that selfish behaviour more is acceptable for men.

Netta identifies the construction of marriage as a transaction, and of the expectation of her subservient role, recognising “that he would make her his business, if she let him” (SS 35). She lets herself “be held, [her] steps be guided” (SS 36). Besner argues that she reassumes “the mantle of the Moslem wife” as Jack’s offer includes “the comfortable undertow of habit” (“A Broken” 89), suggesting that she chose the victim position because it is easier and safer in terms of social expectation and conformity to gender requirements. This links with Friedan’s “feminine mystique”, which encourages women to “ignore the question of their identity” (63) and base their existence on being a wife. However, if as Butler argues, gender

is “an effect rather than the cause of the sequence of acts which give it the appearance of substance”, Netta can be read as demonstrating the effects of hegemonic power. Despite her “subversive” behaviours, including a refusal to crumble after her husband leaves and her continuance of an independent sexual and individual existence, even throughout the violence and horror of the Second World War, her submission to Jack represents the ways in which women have been taught to act and think.

“The Remission” is another Riviera story which depicts female characters who highlight or present “subversive possibilities” against the “received meanings” of femininity. The story focuses on Alec and Barbara Webb and their three children, Will, James, and Molly, an English family who have moved to the French Riviera because Alec is terminally ill. Published in 1979 in *The New Yorker* and collected in *From the Fifteenth District* in the same year, the story is set in approximately 1952. Alec is another patriarchal father figure. He exercises control over his family but because he is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and an unspecified terminal cancer, he needs his wife to look after him. Yet he “lacerated” (SS 213) his children’s lives by forcing them to move from England to the South of France. The inclusion of a similar plot-point in “An Unmarried Man”, published sixteen years prior to this story, suggests that Gallant continued to attend to themes of exile and migration throughout her writing career, as well as fraught relationships between parents and children and how regulated identity and gender norms are passed from one generation to the next.

The “good” wife and mother role is examined in this story through Barbara who, like Mrs Unwin, is constructed to criticise mothers who “fail” to adhere to this role. However, she also demonstrates how the *appearance* of selfishness as an *effect* of the patriarchal gender roles enforced on women in her position at that time. Like Walter and Eve in “An Unmarried Man” and the Unwins in “The Four Seasons”, Alec and Barbara come from a tradition of middle-class English imperialism and colonialism, and like Peter in “Ice Wagon”,

their status and success rests on their family's wealth, which has long since diminished. Barbara is contrasted with the character of Alec's sister, who is financially independent, but is considered by Barbara to be unsuccessful because "girls were expected to get married" (SS 216). Barbara sees her as having a "compressed existence" and the sister is "sacrificed" so that Alec and his family can rent a villa on the Riviera (SS 217).

Barbara, depicted as incompetent at managing the house and her children, sunbathes on the balcony and imagines how the gardener would perceive her if he looked up from his work. Displaying the kind of selfishness demonstrated through Jack in "The Moslem Wife", Barbara thinks about her own happiness and not about her husband or children. She is used to challenge the expectation that women "abdicate their personhood for the sake of their maternity" (Oakley 68). The story indicates that Barbara participated in this abdication while they lived in England, but the move to the Riviera, as well as the influx of money from Alec's sister, has allowed her more freedom, and Alec's illness gives her freedom to develop a new curiosity about her sexuality and desires. At the time of this story's composition in the 1970s, feminist critics had "identified the family as the strategic site, the key to the oppression of women" (Connell 110). Barbara is an example of engagement in "subversive" behaviours due to taking on the kind of selfishness that is socially accepted in a man – as will be explored further in Chapter 4 in relation to Munro's characters – including having an affair with another man, Wilkinson, while her husband is ill, which contradicts the "angel in the house" nurturer/carer role and suggests she is a "bad" mother, and thus a "bad" woman who has failed to "do" her gender correctly.

Barbara, like Netta, has power on a micro level in the domestic space. Barbara loves Alec and also resents him for his patriarchal dominance over her. She sees the 1950s as a new decade, similar to Linnet's socialist hope that the post-war years would bring a renewed society. Barbara believes Alex has "no foothold" now, while she "had been made for her time" (SS 218). However, while this relates to Elshtain's point about women's "informal"

power, which can be a method of covert rebellion against dominant power structures, a distinction must be made between “the *global* or macro-relationship of power, in which women are subordinated to men in the society as a whole, from the *local* or micro-situation in particular households” (Connell 111, emphasis in original). While Barbara has some power in managing household affairs, the overarching financial power rests with Alec, who continued “laying down the law as long as he was able” (SS 248). This patriarchal power is then taken up by her brothers when Barbara’s debts run too high. Alec’s death provides her with freedom from his dominance, but her sense of power and self-identity is bound up with the house, and she is indebted to Wilkinson for it as he facilitates its ownership to be transferred to her after Alec’s death. She has transferred her sense of obligation from one male character to another. However, she is also depicted as challenging expectations of femininity, as she equates the value of her children with the house: “Alec gave me three children. Eric gave me Lou Mas” (SS 248). This contradicts the “angel in the house” norm and she is judged by the local community of British expatriates what is deemed to be her “unnaturally” selfish behaviour.

Gallant’s stories suggest ways in which a “heterosexual woman is sexualised as an object in a way that a heterosexual man is not”, meaning that “promiscuous sexuality” is rewarded in men and criticised in women not because men have “greater desire” but because they have “greater power” (Connell 113). While Jack in “The Moslem Wife” was still held in high regard by the hotel occupants despite his affairs, Barbara is socially condemned for her affair with Wilkinson, which is considered a “blazing scandal” (SS 234) in accordance with the ingrained expectation that she should be prioritising her husband and children. This is to do with the fact that “femininity is constructed in a way that defines the work of caring for other family members as womanly” (Connell 134). Failure to sufficiently care for her family means that Barbara is “monstrous” and Other than a “normal” woman. Connell states that the community’s conduction of this social “policing” is due to their participation in “a

collective project in which the power of men and subordination of women is sustained” (108). Barbara’s children’s awareness of her relationship with Wilkinson “seeped through the house” like “a damp chill” and results in them “withdrawing” from their mother (*SS* 236). Butler states that societies “regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right”, thus correct adherence to gender norms is a “strategy of survival” (*GT* 190). This theme of survival is important in Settler Canadian literature, as will be discussed further in relation to Atwood’s stories.

She seeks sexual validation through the inscribed codes of femininity, while simultaneously challenging these codes through her refusal of the “good” wife and mother role. For example, a doctor character arrives for Alec, and through her interaction with him, Barbara’s ideas of sexuality and beauty are used to highlight the contradictions between her destabilisation of patriarchal culture and her regulation within it: “She saw, in the way he looked at her, that she had begun her journey south a wife and mother whose looks were fading, and arrived at a place where her face seemed exotic” (*SS* 219). This suggests her internalisation of the male gaze and the misogynistic binary of wife/mother and sexual object/lover. She measures her worth through her physical appearance and sexualises herself through his imagined gaze. The text suggests that this is the effect of her socialisation through gendered language into a gendered identity.

Like Sarah and Mary, Barbara’s daughter Molly is another young female character by Gallant who challenges the previous generation’s constructions of femininity. Molly displays a desire to question gender norms and expectations. She refuses to just pass the time “while waiting for someone to marry” (*SS* 224). While Barbara’s selfishness is represented as a possible “subversive” behaviour, she does not attempt to help her daughter gain power or a sense of self within patriarchal structures. Like Peter in “Ice Wagon”, she passes on confining and inhibitive identity norms to her daughter. For example, when Molly develops breasts, Barbara does not try to speak openly with her about her sexual development and Molly is

confronted with controlling and policing power of the male gaze: “She went about with her arms crossed [...] Up in the town there was always some man staring” (*SS* 227).

Barbara engages in victim blaming and contributes to the toleration of such misogynistic behaviours when, after Molly begins menstruating, Barbara tells her: “‘Now Molly, you are to keep away from men,’ as if she weren’t trying to” (*SS* 228). This, Butler argues, is “a conflation of the category of women with the ostensibly sexualised features of their bodies and, hence, a refusal to grant freedom and autonomy to women as it is purportedly enjoyed by men” (*GT* 27). Molly’s brothers are not challenged by Barbara about how to avoid engaging in sexist and misogynistic actions towards women and to evaluate their own participation in patriarchal culture. Additionally, Molly is not encouraged to challenge the socialisation of women according to these confining femininity expectations, but to submit to them unquestioningly and to maintain a subservient position. This relates to what Salih describes as the process of “girling”, which begins with the discursive construction of the girl at birth, through the pronouncement “it’s a girl”, and is “reiterated over time so that the ‘natural effect’ of sex and gender is reinforced and/or contested” (7). This links with Oakley’s contention that certain actions – acting, speaking, dressing appropriately – are “items of rewarded behaviour that compose a girl’s socialisation” (235). Barbara’s reaction to Molly’s social experiences of misogyny, and her perpetuation of femininity norms as Molly’s mother, contribute to the control and confinement of Molly’s movements and behaviours. While her brothers cycle their bicycles with freedom, Molly begins avoiding male attention by staying in the house doing domestic chores. This suggests that “the attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a social control on identity” (Massey 179). This is an example of how these stories demonstrate the effects of patriarchal power.

At her father’s funeral, Molly makes the decision to emotionally detach from her mother and brothers. After the burial, their English expatriate neighbour Mr Cranefield tells

her: “When you grow up you will be free”, but Molly decides that “there was no freedom except to cease to love” (SS 246). This suggests a generational difference between Molly and her mother. It can be read as suggesting that the character would be an adult during the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s and highlights the genesis of radical feminist ideas, including the necessity for women to reject men, heterosexual relationships, and motherhood in order to gain freedom and independence.

(ii) The German Stories

According to Doris Wolf, Gallant was interested in writing about the role of women in relation to “the emergence of a Holocaust memory within Germany” (“Beyond” 2) in the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1930s Depression, many German women supported Hitler’s idea of a “return to traditional German values represented in the three K’s triarchy: Kinder, Küche, and Kirche (children, kitchen, church)” (Wolf, “Beyond” 6). This contrasts with the Weimar Republic’s “new woman”, created after World War I, which sought equality for women especially in relation to employment, education, and voting rights. The Nazis supported the promotion of more “traditional” values as they were perceived to be safer, more moral, more controllable. This was also linked with a decline in birth rates and a consistent patriarchal connection between women and their “obligation” to procreate and to prioritise family life. According to Wolf, this coincides with the “Nazi dream of a closely-knit community” (“Beyond” 7), which collapsed after World War II when millions of East Germans migrated to West Germany between 1945 and 1950. However, what remained was “lingering traces of ideological superiority and policies that pitted German against German” (Wolf, “Beyond” 7). After the war, the government “maintained conservative policies” in relation to women and, in “reconstructing the bourgeois nuclear family structure” (Wolf, “Beyond” 10) articulated the necessity of the stay-at-home mother. Motherhood was constructed as a “political duty” for women, “the work that women owe to the state because

of their sex” (Bock 24). From the 1950s in Germany, policies and structures were introduced to support motherhood including prenatal care and child allowances. Government-supported radio programmes promoted “good parenting as part of good citizenship” and advertisers focused on “women as homemakers and consumers” (Smith, “Introduction” 3). Gallant engages with these issues in her German stories, suggesting transnational patriarchal structures and the post-war cross-locational regulation of identity in relation to “the pressing need for cultivating harmonious and cooperative citizens” (Shapira 71).

Women who supported the Nazi party before and during the war were often constructed in post-war German narratives as “the passive ‘other’ to the active male subject” and were “considered and considered themselves victims of an overtly patriarchal Nationalist Socialist Party and thus guilt-free in relation to its crimes” (Wolf, “Beyond” 2). There is a nostalgic image of a women and mothers “untouched by their historical setting”, remaining “beyond good and evil – presenters of love, charity, and peace, no matter what the social or moral environment” (Koonz 4). However, many were “active participants in the regime” (Wolf, “Beyond” 2). This idea of female victimhood can be linked with the victim mentality, which can be read both in terms of Canadian national identity and feminine gender identity. This is a Canadian literary theme popular while Gallant was writing these stories from Paris, suggesting her translation of this issue to a European setting. While exile and anxiety about belonging is demonstrated in Gallant’s Canadian and Paris stories, her German stories suggest the possibility of the victim mentality as not exclusive to Canada and as potentially linking with post-war trauma and a persistent sense of being haunted by the past. These stories also suggest how the victim mentality highlights the perspective of women within the patriarchal structure. They can be linked to Regan’s notion that the Canadian short story form after World War II was used to highlight how the family and the individual symbolise broader issues relating to the nation. It can also be linked with Millet’s argument that the family as a patriarchal institution can be used to represent the patriarchal state.

Gallant's stories challenge the feminist perspective, supported by critics such as Fiamengo as quoted in the Introduction, that women should be depicted in fiction as victims of male dominance and patriarchal structures. These stories contest such unified viewpoints, arguing for the complexity and fluidity of power dynamics. Elizabeth Schneider, whose work focuses on instances of abuse perpetrated by men against women, suggests that "feminist work has too often been shaped by an incomplete and static view of women as *either* victims *or* agents" (387, emphasis in original). She argues that "an exclusive focus on women's victimisation" provides an incomplete picture and is "limiting" because it ignores women's agency and active behaviours (387). Dividing experience into "victimisation" and "agency" is "overly simplistic" and fails to "take account of the oppression, struggle, and resistance that women experience daily in their ongoing relationships" (Schneider 389). Overemphasising the idea of women's victimisation within patriarchal culture works to "undermine" women's "strength and capacity" (Schneider 395). These stories explore such issues about victimisation, highlighting domestic settings and supposedly "feminine" roles and relating them to questions about the broader construction of "Us and Them" exclusionist thinking, the fear of difference and processes of Othering, and a sense of insecurity about boundaries and belonging. Gallant's writing uses individual characters and "everyday living" (Hancock 100) to investigate the possible motivations for the development of Fascism and connect it with "continued fascist sentiments in domestic spaces after the war" (Wolf, "Beyond" 3).

An example is "O Lasting Peace", published in *The Pegnitz Junction* in 1973, which is set in a Bavarian city, possibly Munich, and depicts a Hilde as constructing herself as a victim and "angel in the house" who has given up her life to look after her family. Her father has left and lives in Berlin with a new partner, and Hilde sees herself as the only one who can look after her depressed mother, her irrational aunt Charlotte, and her sly uncle Theo. Hilde works at the Civic Tourist and Travel Bureau and is initially depicted as the replacement

patriarchal head of the family, in absence of her father: “They depend on me! Without me they would be beggars, outcasts!” (SS 315). She is also expected to be a replacement mother figure. For example, on Christmas Eve, “one by one they fall asleep in their chairs. I wake them up and send them off to bed while the late news predicts the next day’s weather” (SS 322). While she takes on this nurturer/carer role with her family, she is also racist and uncaring to post-war refugees: “We have East German refugees in the next apartment [...] They have wormed their way into everything” (SS 316). As in “From the Fifteenth District”, the refugees are Othered as “these people” (SS 321), highlighting Hilde’s fear of difference, self-construction of identity in opposition to subjugated Others, and desire to maintain power through the preservation of their suppression. She constructs herself as a figure of dominance and strength, claiming: “The tourist office could not manage without me” (SS 317). She rejects a male customer’s attempts to “play at being friends” (SS 318) and asserts her authority over him. Like the selfishness displayed by Barbara in “The Remission”, her coldness and confidence – more socially tolerated and expected from men – contradict the caring/nurturer motherly role.

However, the story highlights ways in which – despite the development of Second Wave Feminism in the 1970s – gender inequality continues to exist. It suggests that female characters should not be presented as victims or active agents without registering the fluctuation between these two positions and the acknowledgement that the binary presents a notion of identity that is too coherent and unified. Hilde’s power and authority become implicitly undermined as the story continues. Hilde is used to invite the reader to question the issue of the ongoing subjugation of women directly: “Now consider my situation: eighteen years with the Civic Tourist and Travel Bureau, passed over for promotion because I am female, surrounded at home by aged children who can’t keep their own histories straight” (SS 324). As well as this state-sanctioned institutional example of gender inequality, the continuation of patriarchal power with the institution of the family and on an inter-

personal level is also highlighted. While at the beginning of the story her uncle Theo was depicted as being “scared to death” of her (*SS* 314), his socially and politically empowered patriarchal dominance and misogynist attitude becomes clear when Hilde relates that, “without my consent, without even asking me, Uncle Theo advertised for a husband for me” (*SS* 325). This suggests the continued objectification of women and the evaluation of a woman’s worth through the “marriage market” (Bromberg 13), and this is a transaction between men.

Theo advertised her as “youthful”, “gracious”, “modern”, and “delicate” (*SS* 325). One man eventually answers the ad and Theo invites him to inspect Hilde, who sees him “through a fog of shame” (*SS* 325). She is both outraged by her family’s behaviour and distraught by the idea that they do not need her to take care of them: “How would you pay the rent here without me? Don’t you understand that I can’t leave you?” (*SS* 326). While not wanting to abandon her mothering role in the family and the level of power and status it brings, she simultaneously wants to run after the potential suitor “screaming ‘Come back!’” (*SS* 326). Wolf argues that Hilde is “domineering” and “inspires anxiety and terror” in the other family members, and that power and racism “infuse the present domestic space with the metaphorical blood of the past” (“Beyond” 7).

While Wolf states that Hilde’s status as the bread-winner allows her to turn “the apartment into a prison” and exert control over her family, Theo’s “status” (*SS* 323), as male and an ex-POW camp guard, covertly and insidiously allows him to dominate and control her: “If authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say that the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity” (Connell 109). Hilde is thus used to highlight the effects of what Butler calls the “received meanings” of gender socialisation. Though she has taken on the father role as the head of the household, she feels she must also adhere to femininity expectations which include the mother/nurturer/carer role – from which she gains “informal” or “local” power within the

family – as well as the expectation that in order to be a successful woman she should marry and be desired by men. And while she feels a sense of confinement in the domestic space with her family, she wants to maintain her sense of power there and thus rejects the possibility of marriage, while simultaneously feeling the desire for freedom which she has been socialised to believe can only be obtained through marriage. This suggests that despite her strong and assertive behaviour in the earlier part of the story, she is revealed to also be a victim of patriarchal culture which links successful femininity with marriage.

The links between women's freedom and independence and post-war Fascist "continuities" are also explored in "An Alien Flower" (1972), which was published in October by *The New Yorker* while "O Lasting Peace" was published in January, also collected in *The Pegnitz Junction*. The themes in these two stories are strongly connected as an exploration of gender and power inequality within the domestic space for female characters and state-sanctioned "formal" patriarchal power within post-war German society. Set in Cologne, "An Alien Flower" is narrated by Helga, who is depicted as remembering the events of the story. She is used to describe a state-sanctioned regime of repression in relation to the horrors of the war, presenting an image of a Gothic "dark city". The characters are haunted by "a joint past" which "lay all around us in heaps of charred stone. The streets held down a ghost, or a frozen life, or a dreadful secret. No one was inferior, because everyone was. A social amnesty had been declared" (SS 327). Despite this notion of equality, Helga and her husband Julius are depicted as constructing their sense of identity through the Othering of other characters and a continuation of the "Nazi obsession with superiority" (Wolf, "Beyond" 8).

The story's depiction of "informal" female power by Helga in the domestic space can be explored in contrast with the "formal" male patriarchal power displayed by Julius. Helga is presented as attempting to be the stereotypical "passive model wife" but displays a "sense of powerlessness" (Wolf, "Beyond" 7). Like Hilde in "O Lasting Peace", Helga

reinforces her local, micro level of domestic power and status as Julius's wife and Roma's mother by subjugating another female character, Bibi. Bibi has less power because of her poverty and, like many other Gallant characters, her precarious status as a post-war refugee without documentation and secure place of belonging. However, when Julius discovers that Bibi has an aptitude for science and takes her on at his company, Bibi gains more power and status within the patriarchal structure, controlled by Julius, which is representative of the broader political and social structure on a transnational level. As with Jack and Netta in "The Moslem Wife", Helga worships her husband, and his extra-marital affairs are evident to the reader before they are acknowledged by the character. She demonstrates the effects of institutional and social reinforcement of patriarchal power through revering her husband despite his mistreatment of her: "I knew that Julius lied sometimes, but so do all divinities" (SS 331). She relies on him to provide her with a new sense of freedom, security, and identity which, for her, is bound up with obtaining a "new, beautiful house" (SS 331). She contends that this would allow them to move forward as a family and "not live among ashes forever" (SS 331). This compares with Barbara in "The Remission", who relies on a male character to "give" her a place of belonging and security, which is symbolised by the house.

For Helga, the house represents safety from the threat of Others. Her repression of the Fascist past is combined, through the character of Bibi, with constructions of femininity and confinement for women in marriage: "Our marriage was our house. I said to myself, Here we are together in the fortress. The bodies pile up outside. Don't look at them" (SS 342). Helga's sense of self and belonging is bound up with her position as wife and mother, and the metaphor of the house suggests the threat to the nuclear family, a kind of "garrison mentality" which might maintain her status against the changes she realises are coming: changes to her marriage, changes to gender roles, and changes to German society as the twentieth century continues.

Julius's "privileged position allows him to continue to construct her insecurity and disempower her" (Dryden 142). Helga's portrayal of subservience to Julius is implicitly linked with a continuation of the pre-war German social norm of women accepting "their second-class membership in Hitler's regime for the promise of a prosperous future and domestic sphere under their control" (Wolf, "Beyond" 8). Helga is willing to submit to Julius to obtain her own house and her own level of informal, local power. Her "momentary desires for escape are always tempered with thoughts of her house" (Wolf, "Beyond" 9). In this way, Gallant suggests that "ordinary women followed the Nazi Party out of self-interest" (Wolf, "Beyond" 9) and "opportunism" (Koonz 5) suggesting that men can be just as selfish as women and that "natural" gender characteristics are a myth.

Because Helga has been socialised to value her existence in relation to her success at being a wife and mother, she is "afraid of being thought too stupid for Julius, and unworthy of being his wife" (*SS* 330) and attempts to educate herself by reading in case Julius would "find me dull and leave me behind" (*SS* 329). Like Barbara in "The Remission", Helga is used to explore ideas of freedom for women. Wolf argues that Gallant is encouraging women to "shake off their desire for the cherished myth of motherhood and womanhood" in order to "face their own relationship with the vexed and painful question of moral accountability" for Germany's past and the potential "repetition of past patterns in the present" ("Beyond" 15). This suggests that constructed myths of motherhood and femininity regulate women in their self-perceptions and broader considerations of political structures, the nation, and post-war trauma and shame. This is an example of Gallant's "locked situation" which, for female characters, is often bound up with restrictive gender roles. Most characters fail to break out of the "locked situation", including Barbara, Hilde, and Helga. For each character, the house is both a place of confinement and freedom in relation to these gender roles. Helga recalls thinking, after learning about Julius's affair, "*now I am free*" (*SS* 332, emphasis in original). However, the story suggests that Helga continues to tolerate Julius because marriage and

ownership of the house puts her in a more powerful social and political position in an informal and local sense.

Some of Gallant's younger female characters represent the development of feminist perspectives throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, such as Molly in "The Remission". These characters symbolise young women dealing with instances of misogyny after the war who would be young adult women by the time Second Wave Feminism was at its height in the 1970s, when Gallant was writing many of these stories. An important instance of a female protagonist who overtly challenges patriarchal systems is Christine in Gallant's "The Pegnitz Junction" (1973), published in the collection of the same name, though its length could allow for it to be called a novella rather than a story. It is "her most sustained study of the forms in which recent history has haunted the West" (Besner, *The Light* 67). As her most formally postmodern work, this story includes multiple unexplained changes in narrative perspective and an avoidance of conclusions or clarifications. Like many of Gallant's stories, "The Pegnitz Junction" deals with characters who are "native exiles"; these are Germans who feel "most displaced at home" (Besner, *The Light* 70). Here, Christine visits Paris with her lover Herbert and his young son Little Bert, though she is engaged to another man. Most of the story takes place on a train, which they take from Paris to Berlin, via the Pegnitz Junction. It is an ambling, disjointed journey, encumbered with unnecessary complications, and is symbolic of Biess's point about post-war state-sanctioned encouragement – in Germany and transnationally – to keep moving forward and detach from the past. This connects with the patriarchal dominance of masculinity, which is demonstrated through Herbert in the story as constructed in relation to detachment, linearity, and rationality, while femininity is demonstrated through Christine as emotional and nostalgic. However, these gender stereotypes are gradually deconstructed as the story continues.

As illustrated through stories by Munro and Atwood, the train journey is an important metaphor in depicting experiences of liminality, dislocation, and potential transformation. According to Besner, the “train’s meandering course” is symbolic of the “general aimlessness of contemporary German culture” (*The Light* 82) and Christine’s “failures to act reflect a general cultural inertia” (83). This story uses Christine to examine changing perceptions of femininity and feminism, exploring the demands placed upon women and the difficulty for a woman to claim autonomy within existing patriarchal structures. Gallant also calls for the continued depiction of nuanced and complex characters, rather than representing women as invariably capable of removing themselves from the “locked situation” and becoming strong and completely free from gender inequality. Herbert is revealed as weak and pathetic. However, he also displays authoritarian and dominating behaviours in relation to Christine and his son, which have been instilled in him through patriarchal structures. These behaviours are highlighted here as ridiculous, for example, he refuses to buy food or drink for them to eat before taking the train back to Berlin, which results in a long, hot, arduous journey with no food or water. Descriptions of Herbert’s power and the use of the train and post-war landscape combine to suggest a sense of confinement for Christine, which is symbolic of potential restrictions imposed on her through the expectation of her adherence to the “good” wife and mother, nurturer/carer role.

At just twenty-one years old, Christine initially perceives this trip to Paris with Herbert as “a major part of her emancipation” (SS 518). The story suggests she is at a crossroads – symbolised by the Pegnitz Junction – where she must get herself out of the “locked situation”. Christine understands that Herbert is testing whether she would make a good mother for his son. She sees Little Bert as spoiled and has no interest in taking on the mother role, deciding that she “would never marry Herbert – never. Not unless he placed the child in the strictest of boarding schools, for Little Bert’s own sake” (SS 523). Wilkshire

states that “one might expect the narrative to centre on the choice she will presumably have to make” (892) between Herbert and his son, and her fiancé. Instead the story focuses on Christine’s inner world and the problem she describes as “interference” (SS 545), which is Christine’s apparently supernatural ability to “hear” other people’s thoughts. Gallant states that this is “a kind of magic”, a “short circuit” (Hancock 123), representing the possibility of breaking through the non-communication between people. Nevertheless, this ability places Christine “in a stereotypical female role: that of the sensitive, intuitive woman, listening to the difficulties of others without speaking of her own” (Wilkshire 900). It places her in a role of silence and inaction. For example, when Herbert tells Christine that she is overdressed and suggests she reads philosophy only to impress her fiancé, she “smiled without replying” (SS 523), continuing to read without directly challenging him. However, this can be interpreted as an engagement in “subversive” behaviour and a strategy of resistance to Herbert’s power, as according to Butler, femininity is constructed through the language of the patriarchal system. Butler advocates for the use of “subversive” strategies within the patriarchal language. Christine shows that silence can be constructed as such a strategy.

Despite this, the “interference” is so distracting to Christine that she is incapable of making a decision about Herbert. Like Barbara in “The Remission” and Helga in “An Alien Flower”, Christine clings to him regardless of his misogyny, suggesting a fear of the unknown, of change, of taking personal responsibility: “She did not wish to lose him. She *was* afraid of choosing” (SS 547). However, this fear is an effect of learned femininity norms, and Christine is also depicted as a “defiant and rebellious character” (Wilkshire 900). For example, when the train conductor attempts to assert excessive authority over Christine and Little Bert, the same authority shown by their hotel porter in Paris who abruptly evicted them from their room (to which Herbert complied without resistance), Christine calmly tells the conductor: “Please lower your voice [...] We have every right to sit where we choose” (SS 569). However, she oscillates between embracing her ability to demonstrate authority,

and a sense of insecurity and self-doubt. When Bert asks her what they will do next she says: “I don’t know [...] Go out, or wait here. I’m sorry to be so uncertain” (SS 573). This points to the effects of patriarchal structures on women, and the internalisation of their lack of agency and autonomy, and how this is made to seem like individual choice or failure on the woman’s part.

Christine highlights the fluctuation of women between victim and agent. She refuses the nurturer/carer role and “the easy equation of woman with mother” (Wilkshire 900), and the responsibility it entails. She continues to use silence as a form of resistance. When Herbert asks if she thinks Bert deserves a comic book, she refuses to reply: “She was not the child’s mother. She would not be drawn” (SS 557). However, while Christine will not become a substitute mother for Little Bert, she enjoys reading to him and inventing stories for him, suggesting the power she derives from creating narratives and moving *beyond* the act of silence. This also points to the notion – as will be discussed further in relation to Atwood’s stories – that women do not have to reject motherhood to be feminists. However, while Schaub argues that, by the end of the story, Christine “starts acting as a real mother would” (*Mavis* 244), the narrative refutes the idea of imposed expectations of what a “real mother” should be, and the implication that it is a standard of success to which women are expected to aim. When left alone with Bert at the Pegnitz Junction, Christine does develop a connection with him, telling him “I suppose we seem like a funny-looking pair” and that they must “never leave each other” (SS 568). She reads to him and feels his “comforting breath on her arm” (SS 568). This is a level of emotional connection that Christine does not share with Herbert. It suggests her ability to be caring and nurturing without necessarily falling into the Red Queen role. Christine is thus used simultaneously to suggest that women can be nurturing and caring but can also resist patriarchal and misogynist dominance, as the story Christine tells Bert is one that Herbert previously forbade her from telling. She proceeds to tell it on her own terms, to “have the last word” (SS 568), again rejecting the

idea of silence and using language and narrative (as will be discussed further in Chapter 6) to assert her own power and sense of autonomy.

Conclusion

Through thinking about gender identity as an effect of social, cultural, and political influences and pressures, Gallant's characters point to the ways in which women continued to be confined to a subjugated social position, despite the development of the Second Wave Feminist movement. These stories focus on how relationships between individual characters can be interpreted as symbolic of broader social and political power imbalances. Gallant consistently highlights the need to challenge unified definitions of feminism and restrictive gender roles and expectations, which dominant hegemonic structures reinforce so that failure is inevitable and presented as individual self-victimisation. Continued control and subjugation of women is thus guaranteed. The stories emphasise the importance of resisting the representation of female characters in the stories set in the 1970s as free from patriarchal control. It suggests the necessity of recognising that the patriarchal system endures and that women must engage in "subversive" behaviours within it. Gallant's female characters are often doubly dislocated through these unfair gender roles and through a sense of exile and rootlessness or displacement. Many characters are outsiders existing in an alien environment or are constructed as exiles despite being "at home". As a Canadian living in Europe, Gallant uses her characters to suggest a mid- to late-twentieth century cross-cultural transatlantic, and often repressed, sense of unease about the past and belonging. The following chapter returns to Canada and focuses on how Alice Munro's short fiction can be read to investigate an (often unacknowledged) anxiety about Settler Canadian self-identity and belonging during and after the Second World War.

Part II: Alice Munro

Chapter 3

“This world is a wilderness”: Belonging in Alice Munro’s Short Fiction

Introduction

The majority of Gallant’s stories explore the theme of exile both at home and abroad, and while she used Montreal and Toronto as settings she often focused on a transatlantic examination of belonging. In contrast, Alice Munro’s stories primarily concentrate on the small town in South-western Ontario in the mid-twentieth-century and can be used to suggest that exile occurs for characters who leave “home” and for those who remain. Many of her stories look at the “return” of a female character who left and examine the social judgments and policing of national and regional identities and the maintenance of constructed boundaries. Perceptions of success and failure are bound up with wealth and status, but also with place and movement. These characters demonstrate a persistent fear of the loss of a “core” identity and sense of belonging, which results in alienation. This can be linked to a transnational post-war anxiety about place and the self at this time. It also relates to the political and social perpetuation of the victim mentality as part of “ordinary Canadian” identity in order to maintain social control and the regulation of a nation identity which is perceived as constantly in crisis.

Failure is particularly expected, and orchestrated, for female characters, who are often doubly exiled due to gender as well as place. The possibility of gaining freedom from confining social norms and expectations is a persistent issue in these stories, and freedom is sought by these characters through movement, through escaping from home, and sometimes through returning home as constructions of home are shown to shift and change over time.

Many characters demonstrate a fear of difference and the unknown, and there is a socially and institutionally perpetuated sense that rootedness might be more secure and stable than nomadism. Gallant's "locked situation" is relevant here and bound up with struggles for the maintenance of Settler Canadian power and dominance within a potentially threatening landscape. This is similar to what Munro calls her exploration of "*restricted* lives and people" (Hancock 204, emphasis in original), which is bound up with the small town and her examination of "parochialism" (Staines, "From Wingham" 8), particularly through characters who leave and return or those who do not "fit" with the local rules and expectations. Her primary focus is on female characters. According to Howells, "urban and small-town fiction" in Canada at this time tended to engage with the Canadian wilderness as a "metaphor or symbolic space for the exploration of female difference" (*Private* 16). This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

In Munro's depictions of place and identity, the settler desire for what Atwood calls "cultural authenticity" (*ST* 10) is evident, a desire to feel "rooted" and legitimate in this landscape. Cox argues that, "because the land itself is so vast, northern, and cold, it is unimaginable, and this inaccessibility is also extended to concepts of home and self" (*AM* 5). This relates to Munro's description of her "home-place", Huron County in South-western Ontario, which serves as inspiration for many of her stories, as "absolutely Gothic" (Gibson, *Eleven* 248). Munro links this with the issue of rootedness:

It's a very rooted kind of place. I think the kind of writing that I do is almost anachronistic, because it's so rooted in one place, and most people, even people my age, do not have a place like that anymore, and it's something that may not have meaning very much longer. (Gibson, *Eleven* 248)

The idea of rootedness connects with the desire for "cultural authenticity", and Settler Canadian desire for a "cultural core" through narratives and myths about the wilderness and the North. The identity of the "ordinary Canadian" is continually constructed in opposition to the "ethnic" Other.

This wilderness-civilisation boundary was transferred to Canada from British imperialist narratives in which, as Joep Leerssen points out, “the humans who are native to this wildness/wilderness” are constructed as “savage” (28), and are assigned “an inferior, subordinate position in the order of things” in order for “English hegemony” to be “presented as a civilising mission” (29). Boundaries remain important because a consistent factor across different colonial and imperial projects is that “the expansion of the power of the state goes hand-in-hand with a denigration of the people who dwell at its uncultivated, uncontrolled frontier” (Leerssen 28). Atwood also refers to the Canadian North as “a place with shifting boundaries. It’s also a state of mind. It can mean ‘wilderness’ or ‘frontier’” (*ST* 10). In Canada, the narrative of settler victimisation is based on subjugation by Britain, the U.S., and the Canadian wilderness itself.

Munro’s stories can be read through a settler colonial theoretical perspective to suggest the entrenchment of these ideas in relation to “ordinary Canadians” in rural South-western Ontario, which relates to Mackey’s findings, as discussed in the Introduction. Mackey argues that these myths of Settler Canadian alienation and domination in the wilderness are “extremely paradoxical [...] since it is itself a perspective of a coloniser, a settler, not one who is colonised” (48). Munro’s stories focus on local communities and inter-personal relationships rather than the larger political structure. She did not want to “play the role of public writer” (McIntyre 64). In the introduction to her *Selected Stories* (1996), Munro states: “I keep an eye on feminism and Canada and try to figure out my duty to both” (ix). Her engagement with feminism is investigated in Chapter 4. Her characters are constantly depicted as reacting to broader systemic issues and her writing is “linked to her cultural heritage, her personal circumstances, and the political and economic contexts that shaped the publishing and literary worlds in the post-World War II era” (McIntyre 52). These characters are Settler Canadians who occupy a contested landscape, and are examples of the effects of the state-sanctioned continuation of the victim mentality and the power and racial

issues involved in this. Mackey states that, “although they may have felt lost and victimised by the environment or the Empire,” Settler Canadians are “representatives of the colonial power that victimised Native people” (49). Munro’s stories can be used to consider how this victimisation is occluded from twentieth-century cultural and political discourse.

In 1951, around the same time Gallant left Montreal for Paris, Munro left the University of Western Ontario, got married, and moved to Vancouver. After her divorce in 1972, she returned to Ontario and remarried. Thacker states that Munro’s stories “have been rooted in her autobiographical home place of Huron County” (*Reading* 202). This move back “home” coincided with her growing popularity in the U.S. and her regular publication in *The New Yorker*, assisted by her literary agent Virginia Barber (though she did not publish with the magazine as exclusively as Gallant and thus the publication details for each story are noted here in relation to Munro’s published collections only). She has, over time, become widely acknowledged – by critics such as Robert Thacker and Coral Ann Howells – as one of the best short story writers in the English language, particularly with her winning of the Nobel Prize in 2013.

When Munro began to be published more broadly in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a “nationalistic fervour” in Canada and a “concern about the growth of a definable Canadian literature” (Thacker, “Critical Reception” 32). Critics and reviewers celebrated writing with “typically Canadian preoccupations” (Hammill 11). Unlike Gallant, Munro has “not suffered much from the cultural question or puzzlement about the ways in which her works are recognizably Canadian – or not” (Levene 142). Munro’s writing could be viewed by critics as regional and used for the political purpose of the strengthening of a “Canadian” identity. Frye claimed in 1971 that the question of Canadian identity “is not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question” (*Bush* i) and that “the tension between this political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality is the essence of whatever the word ‘Canadian’ means” (iii). However, national unity is also an imagined idea, and Munro’s stories can be used to

challenge binary categorisations of nation and region, city and country, civilisation and wilderness. While it is true that she is “less concerned with Canadian nationalism than with writing about individual women’s lives” (Beran, “Margaret” 92), her work highlights how power is enacted upon individuals. Her stories are thus both local and regional *and* transnational.

In an interview for *The Paris Review*, Munro links the rural Ontario landscape with her writing, stating: “I couldn’t possess any other landscape or country or lake or town in this way” (McCulloch and Simpson). Like Gallant’s stories about Montreal, the communities Munro explores are often structured on religious and national or ancestral boundaries: Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, or Calvinist heritage from Scotland, Ireland, England, the Netherlands, and Germany. Her characters display a rigid sense of unified identity based on social codes and the desire for a stable “cultural core” and sense of roots. Munro claims that people are basically the same throughout their adult lives and “there is some root in your nature that doesn’t change” (Gzowski). This idea of continuity and rootedness links with Robert McGill’s argument that Munro consistently focuses on the “anti-epiphany”, which is “a denial of development, an assertion of continuity over change” (“Personal Development” 144). This points to a desire for stability and security that can be linked with “ordinary Canadian” identity. Munro can be viewed as conforming to this, though her stories also highlight instances where it is challenged. It is a suggestion of the endurance of dominant power structures and the ways in which they influence individual behaviour and attitudes.

Chapter 1 considered Gallant’s use of the Canadian Gothic genre in relation to urban locations, emphasising transnationality and exile. While Munro also writes about cities, her primary focus is on rural landscapes and small-towns, and she connects with the specific genre of the “homegrown” Southern Ontario Gothic (Sugars and Turcotte xvii), in which “narratives of haunting and trauma are found within specific time frames, contextualised by actual events, and precisely located within the boundaries of home and nation” (Kulperger

105). The term “Southern Ontario Gothic” was first used by Timothy Findley in *Eleven Canadian Novelists* (138). It draws on the British Victorian Gothic themes of confinement, illness, madness, secrets (particularly family secrets), fear of the wilderness, social oppression, the irrationality of civilised institutions, the domestic, and transgressive behaviour (Hepburn and Hurley 593). It “combines realistic settings, usually small towns mired in moral hypocrisy and the threatening otherness of the wilderness, with more conventional Gothic ingredients” (Wynne-Davies 21). It ties in with the broader genre of the Canadian Gothic, which was used to implant a “rooted cultural tradition, thereby contributing to an emergent national consciousness that was founded on a form of constitutive haunting” (Sugars, “Introduction” 4).

4). Munro relates her writing to that of Southern American writers such as Eudora Welty, Flannery O’Connor, and Carson McCullers, stating her affinity for these women who “could write about the freakish, the marginal [...] I came to feel that was our territory” (McCulloch and Simpson). This suggests a link between gender and place in her writing, and her interest in marginal existence, which connects with Frank O’Connor’s “outlawed figures” and the exiles explored in Gallant’s stories. Munro states that her stories are similar to Flannery O’Connor’s with regard to combining the Gothic genre with “biblical images” and a “sense of family” and “the grotesque” (Hancock 204). The grotesque “emphasises incongruity, disorder, and deformity” (Northey 7). Munro uses these techniques to unsettle expectations about national identity and place. However, she does not include much detail about the legacies of settler colonialism in her stories and believes that, in comparison with the American South and the stories of Flannery O’Connor, in South-western Ontario “the racial thing is a big thing that isn’t there” (Hancock 204). Thus, the stories can be read on two levels in relation to place: the issues Munro deals with directly and the issues that are relatively absent.

There is a tradition in Canadian literature of “the enclosed community [that] defines itself against the surrounding wilderness” (Howells, *Private* 16). Marilyn Simonds argues that

“place creates a here and there. The possibility of travel, of movement into the unknown” (27). Many of Munro’s characters demonstrate a fear of the unknown and of difference, which is bound up with an imagined or socially or politically constructed boundary, and with the implicit construction of settler identity and belonging in relation to the “ethnic” Other and the uncivilised wilderness. Munro often constructs a boundary between the domestic space, the house, and the wilderness, and then disrupts and destabilises this boundary. As with Gallant’s stories, the house is used to demonstrate characters’ fears of the loss of a “core” self and home-place, and a desire for security and stability. Munro denies constructing houses as “symbolic of anything” (Hancock 211), and yet they appear regularly in her work and often connect with the experience or attitude of their occupants. This suggests the Settler Canadian unease in the landscape and repressed sense of exile. In these stories, houses are no longer “garrisons where families have an existence presumed safe from intrusions by the inimical aspects of the wilderness or other outside threats to Canadian ideals of peace and order” (Beran, “Margaret” 102) and by “upsetting the boundaries, the stories also destabilise the nationalistic imaginary” (103). This links with Millet’s argument about family as representative of the nation, and in Munro’s stories this is explored within the domestic space of the house in rural and small-town settings. Through her incorporation of “iconic” Canadian images of “the wilderness”, Munro’s short fiction can be used to challenge learned myths and narratives about “the imagined nation” (Beran, “Margaret” 103), which have been imposed by the dominant culture.

In a geographical sense, “wilderness” has been defined from an “ordinary Canadian” perspective as “wild uncultivated land, which in Canada includes vast tracts of forest with innumerable lakes and also the Arctic North” (Howells, *MA* 21). The wilderness has been interpreted as empty, a “space outside civilised order and Christian moral laws, the place of mysterious and threatening otherness” (Howells, *MA* 21). However, Heather Murray argues that in both English-Canadian and Quebec writing, there is a “flexible” interpretation of

“wilderness” so that wilderness can mean “rural or cottage or near-woods settings seen as substitutes for the wilderness” (74). Murray refers to them as “pseudo-wilderness” locations, substitutes for “‘real’ wilderness”, and states that “wilderness in Canada is where you make it, or where you imagine it to be. It is not a place, but a category, defined as much by absences and contrasts as by positives and characteristics” (75). The pseudo-wilderness allows for the construction of a closer connection between the Settler Canadian and the inaccessible and mysterious wilderness. It is “a continuum of land and land values ranging from the city to a ‘real’ wilderness” and “may function as a ground for transcendental experience even when a true wilderness is available or accessible” (Murray 75). Murray states that, in Canadian fiction:

the city is often the eventual (or inevitable) end for the characters, and those characters may briefly visit or contact the wilderness proper, but the action takes place most frequently on that motivating and mediating middle ground which often substitutes for the wilderness itself. (76)

She argues that in many Canadian fiction writings, “the city is a place of bound possibility, the pseudo-wilderness provides a field of transition and change, and the wilderness itself is a place of freedom” (76). The “borderland territory” (Howells, *Private* 17) between the small town and the pseudo-wilderness is also used in Munro’s stories to examine ideas about belonging and the self in relation to a particular home-place. While specific engagement with settler colonialism is, for the most part, excluded, Howells argues that Munro’s characters suggest the idea of “a more shifting concept” of identity and belonging “without fixed boundaries, something for which ‘wilderness’ would be an appropriate analogy” (*Private* 25). In these stories, exile can occur in the city, the small town, or the rural landscape and pseudo-wilderness – which is labelled here as “(pseudo)wilderness” when characters are depicted as interpreting it as actual wilderness space – and is represented as dependent on an ingrained sense of the Settler Canadian victim mentality and an identity in crisis.

(i) The House as “Home” and Symbolic of Identity

While Munro engages with mythologies of the wilderness and the lakes in South-western Ontario, such as the idea of the wilderness as unknowable, her stories also work to “enlarge the imaginary by redefining boundaries to include multiple times and a universe of locales” (Beran, “Margaret” 97). She uses the landscape to explore issues of identity and belonging which branch out beyond the setting of the story, but which also deal specifically with South-western Ontario towns and countryside. For example, “The Shining Houses” from Munro’s first collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), examines a rural town undergoing modernisation and expansion, and within this context a settler desire for belonging can be discerned. The story highlights the settlement of the land over time and points to the ongoing continuities of a settler colonial mindset, concealed behind ideas of progress and renewal. This can be linked to a broader requirement for individuals to conform or “fit” with the dominant majority, and a contemporary desire for a unified and progressive Canadian identity. The local community in this story want to force an elderly female character, Mrs Fullerton, to vacate her property because its dilapidation contradicts their idea of what the town should be and how their houses should look. Mrs Fullerton is constructed as having a deep connection to this landscape and to her house, which is a kind of refuge for the story’s central character, Mary, from the new neighbourhoods springing up in the area:

When Mary came out of this place, she always felt as if she were passing through barricades. The house and its surroundings were so self-sufficient, with their complicated and seemingly unalterable layout of vegetables and flower beds... Here was no open or straightforward plan, no order that an outsider could understand; yet what was haphazard time had made final. The place had become fixed, impregnable, all its accumulations necessary, [...] there to stay. (*Dance* 22)

The house, and land around it, is chaotic, unplanned, the opposite to expected ideas of “settlement”. In contrast, the newer houses are all uniform, planned, and controlled, though and the renaming of the neighbourhoods using “shining” names suggests a desire for connection with nature, such as “Heather Drive” and “Garden Place” (*Dance* 22). However, the story also implies that they have been constructed through a form of violence against the

landscape: “The new, white, and shining houses, set side by side in long rows in the wound of the earth” (23). This highlights the ongoing colonisation of the land, which is concealed beneath a veneer of advancement and a utopian Canada. The houses are “painted in shades of blue, pink, green, and yellow, all fresh and vivid colours” (23). The bulldozers involved in their construction “had come in to clear away the bush and second-growth and great trees of the mountain forest; in a little while the houses were going up among the boulders, the huge torn stumps, the unimaginable upheavals of that earth” (23). Drawing on mythologies of the masculine control of the landscape, as discussed in the Introduction, Munro describes the men on a Saturday working with “competitive violence and energy” in “clearing off and burning torn branches and brush” (23), reconstructing the landscape into “green terraces” and “shapely flower beds” (24). The new houses are contrasted with Mrs Fullerton’s house, which seems more “natural” to the landscape.

However, Mrs Fullerton’s house is not immune from complicity in the legacy of settler colonialism. While not addressing this issue directly, Munro does challenge the boundaries between wilderness and civilisation, suggesting that Mrs Fullerton’s house is linked with “the old wilderness city that had lain on the side of the mountain” (*Dance* 24), the remains of which can still be seen. Some of the “surviving houses” still exist between the new houses, “dark, enclosed, expressing something like savagery in their disorder and the steep unmatched angles of roofs and lean-tos; not possible on these streets, but there” (24). Munro evokes the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition to deconstruct settler relationships with the landscape, suggesting that interpretations of civilisation and wilderness, order and chaos, are transient and subject to changing social and political constructions. While the persistence of this disorganised older settlement is a rebellion against the new wave of control and organisation that produces an artificial sense of belonging based on imposed ideas of unity, both settlements are an imposition on the landscape and a form of settler colonialism. The new wave of settlers suggests the repeated patterns of erasure and control

of the past, as they justify their ostracization of Mrs Fullerton. As a member of the community states: ““She’s been here forty years, now we’re here [...] So it goes”” (*Dance* 27). Although Mrs Fullerton is a white settler, she has been deemed not to “fit” with the dominant group. However, the community’s behaviour towards her suggests an ingrained sense of unease in this landscape, and the necessity of the stabilisation of identity and place by Othering a less powerful “outlawed” figure.

Similarly, in “Boys and Girls”, the house is used to explore constructions of boundary between civilisation and wilderness, and the continuation of settler colonial legacies. The father character is a fox farmer who sells pelts to the Hudson’s Bay Company or Montreal Fur Traders, which harks back to the settler past and the use of the land as a product. The companies give him “heroic calendars” with stereotypical images of Canada that focus on the “cold blue sky and black pine forests and treacherous northern rivers” and the “plumed adventurers” who “planted the flags of England or of France” as well as “magnificent savages” who “bent their backs to the portage” (*Dance* 111). This highlights the concealment of endurance of settler colonial processes and the sanitisation of the past through clichéd and seemingly innocuous images.

The father’s work skinning fox pelts takes place in the cellar of their house, and suggests an invasion of the interior, domestic space by the “wilderness”. The narrator’s mother objects to the work being done indoors because of “the strong primitive odour”, which “penetrated all parts of the house” (*Dance* 112). However, the young female narrator is not concerned by it and links the smell with the comfort of the Christmas season. She does not perceive the wilderness as threatening. As discussed in relation to Gallant, the father-daughter relationship remains important, linking the interior, domestic, “private” life of the family in the house with the broader structure of the nation and the wilderness. This story suggests the transmission from father to daughter of a desire for cultural authenticity in the Canadian landscape. However, the farm is a pseudo-wilderness space, and the settler

desire for rootedness is based on narratives and mythologies of wilderness which are not really available to them. The farm becomes a pseudo-wilderness in their efforts to secure a sense of belonging.

The metaphor of the house as linked with a desire for rootedness is also explored in “The Peace of Utrecht”, which is “an important milestone in the transformation of [Munro’s] personal experience into fiction” (May, *CI* 22), and is a significant example of Munro’s depiction of exile for characters “at home”. In this story, Helen returns to her home town of Jubilee after the death of her mother from Parkinson’s disease. The family is used again to consider broader issues in relation to Settler Canadian national identity, particularly in relation to the desire for a “cultural core” rooted in a specific home-place. The family home is presented as a place of female confinement relating to a sense of duty, especially for Helen’s sister Maddy, who stayed home as their mother’s carer. Helen is presented as experiencing guilt and shame for having moved to Toronto, and the story examines rural-urban divides through Helen’s “return” home.

In the context of mid-twentieth century Canada, this story suggests that “home” can be a “source of *safety or terror* but also simultaneously a place of *safety and terror*” because the “same geographical place could embody diverse and contradictory histories and meanings not only for different people but also for the very same person requiring constant negotiations” (Farahani 241, emphasis in original). Helen had to make this journey home regularly while at university, a return which always brought her “a queer kind of oppression and release” (*Dance* 191). Her sister Maddy also used to make the same journey regularly four years earlier, and Helen is used to question if constructions of home are learned through family relationships, if it is “possible that children growing up as we did lose the ability to believe in – to be at home in – any ordinary and peaceful reality” (*Dance* 191). This implies that the family and the house are defining factors in personal development, suggesting a desire for rootedness and implying that being “at home” is symbolic of a sense of stability

and security. According to Thacker, this is an example of how Munro is “defining character through place” (*Reading* 57). As argued by Berlant in relation to belonging and citizenship, the connections between people and place are learned. Although ideas of the need for “home” and a stable “core” identity continue because they are maintained by the dominant culture, they are not natural or fixed. They are the effects of hegemonic power on the individual.

While the connection between identity development and movement is a significant aspect of Munro’s stories – as is discussed further below – Munro also “deals extensively with the people who stayed behind” (Weaver, “Society” 393). In contrast to Gallant, Weaver argues that Munro is focussed on “the psychology of persisters, not with that of transients” (397). Maddy is one such “persister”. The house continues to be a place of confinement for her, despite their mother’s death, and this is contrasted with Helen’s apparent freedom in having moved to Toronto and set up a new “home” and a new family (despite the suggestion of her divorce). Through Helen, freedom is constructed as only available through leaving home and through rural to urban migration. This was a contemporary issue as, “by the 1970s, less than a third of the population of Canada lived in the country” (Simonds 31). The urban-rural divide is not just a feature of Canada but is a transnational issue. According to Raymond Williams, “the contrast of the country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society” (289). This story presents an example on a local level of the “ordinary Canadian” crisis of identity, and the sense that characters are seeking a more stable sense of self and control over their experiences, which is bound up with place. Helen tells Maddy to “take your life” and “go away, don’t stay here” (*Dance* 210), suggesting that “life” can only be found elsewhere, implicitly in the city. Helen reacts against the idea of an Edenic rural existence, which is what “the pocket novels are saying about small towns” (*Dance* 194). This suggests a sense of nostalgia about rural life, and the idea that this “cultural core” could be found there. Veracini

argues that the “ordinary Canadian” desire for authenticity and legitimacy is bound up with a “a return to the land, but also a return to an Edenic condition” (206). This is a myth that has been socially and culturally learned and politically perpetuated through, for example, the calendars mentioned in “Boys and Girls” depicting beautiful rural landscapes as being foundational to “Canadian” identity.

Munro writes “both critically and appreciatively” (Weaver, “Society” 395) about the rural values of small-towns in Ontario. Weaver states that “small-town Ontario values inhibited risk and non-conformity” (385). Helen perceives herself and Maddy as superior to the “locals”, having promised themselves “much bigger things than Jubilee” (*Dance* 194). Helen is positioned as an Outsider, having made a home in Toronto, and through her Munro portrays an “Us and Them” mentality, a focus on difference, and the importance of place as a shaping factor on identity, as Helen is critical of Maddy’s efforts “to belong with these people” and Maddy’s development of “the harsh twang of the local accent, which we used to make fun of” (*Dance* 192). One of Munro’s “major contributions to an understanding of the culture of rural and small-town Ontario has been her obsession with the values that have anchored people to a limited area, to conformity” (Weaver, “Society” 385). However, through her return, Helen’s sense of identity is destabilised, and her isolation made clear.

This destabilisation of identity is bound up with the changes in the house and the family (suggesting a link with a destabilised Canadian national identity). Evoking the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition, Munro depicts family home in “The Peace of Utrecht” as a physical manifestation of the disintegration of the family and a sense of trauma about the past:

The red brick of which the house is built looked harsh and hot in the sun and was marked in two or three places by long grimacing cracks; the verandah, which always had the air of an insubstantial decoration, was visibly falling away. (*Dance* 197)

Helen catches sight of her own image in the hallway mirror. It has changed into “the reflection of a thin, tanned, habitually watchful woman, recognisably a Young Mother”, while

before it was “a commonplace pretty girl, with a face as smooth and insensitive as an apple” (*Dance* 197). This scene suggests an uncanny fragmentation of the self and the house is made “unhomely” through the changes that have occurred.

A connection between the house and the desire for a core and stable identity and place is also evident in the title story, “Dance of the Happy Shades”, in which the mothers of the rural town where the story is set are invited to the yearly children’s piano recital at the house of Miss Marsalles. This house is used to demonstrate continuities of colonialism, as “Mary Queen of Scots hangs tremendous on the wall” (*Dance* 217), demonstrating the character’s allegiance to her Scottish heritage, which is reminiscent of Gallant’s characters who are always harking back to their British ancestry. Miss Marsalles gives the children books that link with the settler colonial past, a desire for connection with the Settler Canadian construction of the wilderness. The books, including titles such as “*Northern Lakes and Rivers, Knowing the Birds, More Tales by Grey-Owl, Little Mission Friends*” (*Dance* 216, emphasis in original), are “stiff-backed, unread, brand new” (215), suggesting that these stereotypes and mythologies about Canada are now unpopular and unread, but also that they are still being printed and Settler Canadian legitimacy in this landscape is still being institutionally, socially, and culturally perpetuated.

One such construction is that of the legitimacy of Settler Canadians in the landscape through narratives and myths which are represented as long-standing and traditional. They highlight an enduring desire for “cultural authenticity” (Atwood, *ST* 10), and often involve the appropriation of aspects of Indigenous Canadian cultures. Such myths are preserved to conceal the ongoing reality of settler colonial legacies of the dominance of “ordinary Canadians” through the subjugation and Othering of “ethnic” groups. An example of this is the story of “Grey Owl”, as mentioned in one of the book titles, who was an Englishman who posed as a Native Canadian for most of his life. Atwood states that this highlights an “urge to claim kinship, and to see wilderness as salvation” (*ST* 4). Through the figure of

Grey Owl and his “longing for unity with the land, his wish to claim it as homeland” (*ST* 70), the settler desire for belonging and insecurity about place is suggested.

Although Munro rarely directly deals with settler colonialism and macro discussions of hegemonic power, she makes references to it throughout her short fiction. One clear reference occurs, for example, in “Mischief”, which is part of the short story cycle *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), published outside of Canada as *The Beggar Maid*. In this story, Rose’s husband Patrick makes an overt reference to First Nations peoples while the couple are at a party. His comments are implicitly criticised by Rose, from whose perspective the narrative is written:

‘Take them away from their parents as soon as they’re born and put them in a civilised environment and educate them and they will turn out just as good as whites any day.’ No doubt he thought he was expressing liberal views [...] ‘Their own culture is done for [...] They want to be civilised [...] They have to be dragged kicking and screaming into the twentieth century’. (*TBM* 133)

These claims, which horrify Rose and have a significant impact on the eventual break-up of the marriage, highlight the settler colonial mentality of dominance and control, the learned imperial notion of white superiority and the necessity to civilise the native “savages”. It suggests an “Us and Them” binary and the readiness to use violence and force, including the institutional cultural genocide conducted according to the instructions of the British Empire.

Although these overt references to racial inequality and settler colonialism are rare in Munro’s stories, she continually deals with Settler Canadian perceptions of place and identity, as is evidenced in her other collection of linked stories, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). The first story in this collection, “The Flats Road”, uses the young Del Jordan to explore the “ordinary Canadian” desire for belonging. This is connected both with the town, Jubilee (same as in “The Peace of Utrecht”), and with their family farm on the outskirts of the town. Del’s interactions with her father’s farm hand Uncle Benny highlight the settler desire for authenticity in the landscape and the imperialist claim to dominance. Uncle Benny claims ownership of the land, stating: ““You kids want to splash in the mud and scare off the

fish you go and do it someplace else, get off my riverbank” (*Lives* 1). Del believes it is “not his” but “ours”, belonging to her family (1), suggesting her learned belief of their rightful ownership of the land. Similarly, Benny can be read as presenting a settler colonial perspective:

The river and the bush and the whole of Grenoch Swamp more or less belonged to him, because he knew them, better than anybody else did. He claimed he was the only person who had been right through the swamp, not just made little trips in around the edges. (*Lives* 1)

This assumption that before him the land was empty and untrodden ties in with the effacement of Native populations, the construction of the land as empty. This is because “in order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there” (Tuck and Yang 6) and if the space is “conceptualised as vacant and free”, this “masks” the eradication of indigenous people (Bateman and Pilkington 1). Benny’s assertion of power on a local level can thus be interpreted as symbolic of the hegemonic Settler Canadian power.

This story also looks at the issue of the wilderness-civilisation boundary, depicted here between Uncle Benny’s house and the Jordan house, between the bush and civilisation, and the bush and the swamp. These are hierarchical classifications, based on class but also on the landscape itself and levels of “wilderness”. Again, the house is significant as an indicator of the connection between place and identity, as Benny’s house is described as part of the landscape, similar to Mrs Fullerton’s house in “The Shining Houses”:

Away at the edge of the bush – the bush that turned into a swamp, a mile further in – was Uncle Benny’s house, tall and silvery, old unpainted boards, bleached dry in the summer, and dark green blinds, cracked and torn, pulled down over all the windows. (*Lives* 2)

While Gallant’s use of the Gothic genre relates to urban spaces and the “dark city”, Munro employs the Southern Ontario Gothic in relation to rural landscapes. The bush around Benny’s house is a pseudo-wilderness because it suggests the possibility for settler

connection with the wilderness while still being constructed through their “ordinary Canadian” perspective.

This wilderness-civilisation boundary is also explored in “The Flats Road”. Del’s family home is in a liminal position at the edge of town, marking the point at which “town had ended” (*Lives* 5). Del perceives the town as full of “civilised desirable things”, including “birdbaths” and “flower borders” (5), which suggests wealth and status. This is contrasted with the Flats Road, which lies “between fields ragged with weeds” where houses are “set further apart and looked in general more neglected, poor, and eccentric than town houses would ever be” (5). The Flats Road challenges boundary lines. It “was not part of town but it was not part of the country either. The curve of the river, and the Grenoch Swamp, cut it off from the rest of the township, to which it nominally belonged” (*Lives* 5). Del thus grows up in a place that troubles the boundary between perceived civilisation and wilderness. She develops a sense of exile, and self-perception as an outsider. This contributes her attempts to understand issues of belonging and identity in Jubilee. The transmission of perceptions of belonging and identity from parents to children recurs here as Del’s conflicted feelings about the town-country divide are inherited from her mother. For Addie Jordan, “as soon as her feet touched the town sidewalk [...] a sense of relief, a new sense of consequence flowed from her” (*Lives* 7). Addie wants Del to be clear that they don’t live on the Flats Road but “*at the end* of the Flats Road, as if that made all the difference” (7, emphasis in original). This suggests Addie’s belief that the town is superior to the (pseudo)wilderness. She demonstrates the effects of “ordinary Canadian” power systems which regulate ideas about identity and place and imperialist attitudes about the civilisation-wilderness binary.

This story also examines the contrast between the small town and the city, as Uncle Benny goes to Toronto to try and find his wife Madeline and her daughter. He is afraid to go, because of “the alien places” that the trip “would take him into” (*Lives* 21). This movement signals a lack of control for Benny, which contrasts to his self-perceptions about

his power and place in the bush at the outskirts of Jubilee. Through Benny's description of feeling dislocated in Toronto, Munro explores the contrast between the rural landscape and a "different landscape – cars, billboards, industrial buildings, roads and locked gates" in which it is possible to "be lost" (*Lives* 25). This is an "imaginative transformation" of the city and an "updating of wilderness as myth or metaphor" (Howells, *Private* 17), which implies that the concept of "wilderness" as a place of freedom or exile can also apply to urban space.

Myths about wilderness and its relationship to Settler Canadian identity are also explored in "Heirs of the Living Body" through Uncle Craig's narrative of historical "facts" about daily life in Jubilee. Craig shows the young Del a photograph, featuring:

a log house which had stood on the site of this large and handsome, ordinary brick one. That picture seemed to have been in another country, where everything was much lower, muddier, darker than here. Smudgy bush, with a great many black pointed evergreens, came up close around the buildings, and the road in the foreground was made of logs. (*Lives* 24)

Craig tells her that in the late-nineteenth century, by the time he was born, "all that bush you see in the picture would be gone. That road would be gone. There would be a gravel road" (*Lives* 25). This suggests that the "settling" of the land was a peaceful and natural process of development without any violence or consequences for the environment or for Indigenous Canadians. This demonstrates a "strategy" for coping with the settler colonial erasure of minority voices and a desire for national unity: "It was not individual names that were important, but the whole solid intricate structure of lives supporting us from the past" (*Lives* 26). Del is used to highlight a form of resistance to this dominant narrative. She rebels against Craig's desire for unity and coherence, and an overt reference is made to the connection between this micro-history and the macro-history of Canada as a nation: "It was the same with the history of the county, which had been opened up, settled, and had grown, and entered its present slow decline" (*Lives* 27). The "living body" of the title refers to the town itself and its narrative, which Munro constructs as integral to Del's identity development and her self-perception. As an "heir" of it, Del can fight the stagnation by

challenging Uncle Craig's depiction of the town in his manuscript. In allowing it to be destroyed – an incident about which she feels “satisfaction” (*Lives* 53) – Del rejects Craig's limited depictions of the town and its inhabitants. Munro suggests that the dominant patriarchal narrative can be challenged by “subversive” acts, and that exclusive definitions of what it means to be Canadian are built on “ordinary Canadian” fears of difference and the “ethnic” Other.

Constructions of the South-western Ontario small town continue to be unsettled throughout Munro's work. Thacker proposes that the Ontario town is an “archetype” that has “become urban and sophisticated” but still “believes itself rural and simple” (*Reading* 45). He argues that this is “an inherited presence” which “remains central” in Canadian literature (Thacker, *Reading* 46). This town archetype can be read as reflective of anxieties about Settler Canadian identity and belonging as changes take place during the late-twentieth century in Canada. For example, in “Spelling” from *Who Do You Think You Are?/The Beggar Maid*, Rose's observations after returning “home” to Hanratty are used to highlight the results of the gentrification of small town in this region that has taken place over the twentieth century: “West Hanratty had got itself spruced up with paint and aluminium siding; Flo's place was about the only eyesore left” (*TBM* 180). Flo is Rose's stepmother, and her house mirrors Mrs Fullerton's house in “The Shining Houses” in its failure to become “spruced up” in accordance with progress, and is now “an eyesore” (*TBM* 180). Like Helen in “The Peace of Utrecht”, Rose associates this house with a sense of confinement that is bound up with both her family and life in the small town, and has not returned for two years. She refers to it as “Flo's house”, but when she steps inside she thinks of it as “Home” (*TBM* 183). Having returned, Rose, like Helen, is reminded of the limiting rules of South-western Ontario towns based on class, status, and personal success:

If you stay in Hanratty and do not get rich it is alright because you are living out your life as was intended, but if you go away and do not get rich, or, like Rose, do not remain rich, then what was the point? (*TBM* 184)

This connection between place and status or class is also evident in Gallant's Canadian stories, suggesting a persistent anxiety about maintaining a secure home-place in connection with perceptions of personal success and the desire to "fit". It highlights the influence of social judgements in enforcing conforming behaviours and points to the endurance of the victim mentality.

"Who Do You Think You Are?", from the same collection, also suggests Munro's emphasis on rural Ontario towns and the social policing of "pretensions" (*TBM* 27), on the stereotypically Protestant ethic of self-inhibition and "precaution" (198). The title of the story is a term used by a teacher when Rose is perceived as showing off (*TBM* 200), highlighting the institutional perpetuation of restrictive attitudes and values. Rose is depicted as combatting this through developing "nomadic tendencies" but she also "has a strong local attachment and a profound unease about her past so that she is always going back to revisit the sites of old traumas" (Howells, *AM* 63). Rose has moved many times, but she perceives Hanratty as her place of origin. This is highlighted through her partially imagined connection with Ralph Gillespie, an old school mate who stayed in Hanratty and lives what Rose perceives as an unsuccessful life, as with Helen and Maddy in "The Peace of Utrecht". As discussed with Gallant's characters in Chapter 1, this limits Rose's ability to develop a sense of belonging in another place. The story "constructs a concept of the self which, though it evades definition, may be located in relationship to community" (Howells, *AM* 64). Ralph acts as her "mirror image" which grants her "forgiveness" for the "transgression" of leaving Hanratty and disobeying social and familial expectations (*AM* 64).

Many of Munro's stories – particularly those written later – present living in a small Ontario town as positive and fulfilling rather than restrictive. For example, in *The View from Castle Rock* (2006), Munro includes some stories that were written upon her return to Huron County following her divorce in 1972 which, Munro states in the Foreword, are not memoir

but “were closer to my own life than the other stories I had written” (*The View x*). The second section of the book is called “Home”, which is reminiscent of Gallant’s section “At Home” in *Home Truths*, highlighting a continued preoccupation with the theme for both writers. There is a specific story in this section entitled “Home”, where the narrator returns to the family house after being away. Like Helen, she also had to take three buses to get home while she was in college and associates this with a sense of displacement. However, now that she has returned, looking out of the bus window, she acknowledges her affection for this landscape and its “unremarkable scenes” and states that “the countryside here is what I most want to see” (*View* 286). Until recently, the narrator used to live “more than a thousand miles away and would go for years without seeing this house” (288). She states that, while far away, she thought of the house as “a place I might never see again and I was greatly moved by the memory of it. I would walk through its rooms in my mind [...] when I was far away” (288). The family she recalls has disintegrated since her mother’s death and father’s remarriage. The changes in the family are reflected in changes in the house and they present the possibility of the destabilisation of the self: “The wooden kitchen table that we always ate from, and the chairs we sat on, have been taken to the barn” (287). The house has been modernised – suggesting a connection with “The Shining Houses” and “Spelling” – and the boundary between it and the landscape has been fortified, as the kitchen window no longer opens onto “the bush of golden glow that was seldom cut back and that covered both bottom panes” (289). Like other female characters in Munro’s stories, this narrator sought connection with the rural landscape around the house, and the disconnection between house and landscape signifies a disconnection: with the past, the family, and her former self. This can also be connected with changing ideas about Canadian identity and a movement towards a progressive, modern, urban-centric Canada.

Like Helen and Rose, because the narrator in “Home” moved away, she perceives herself as an Other and exile, despite having returned. The relationship between father and

daughter recurs as central here, and links with the disconnection between city and rural town as the narrator believes that from her father's perspective, she is "now a city person" (*View* 289). Identity is perceived as being determined through place. The narrator sees the landscape as beautiful now, but this differentiates her from the locals. The house is used to identify this difference in character, as she notices that the rooms "are not designed to take advantage of the out-of-doors but, if possible, to ignore it [...] People who openly admired nature – or who even went so far as to use that word, *Nature* – were often taken to be slightly soft in the head" (*View* 288, emphasis in original). While observing changes to the house, the narrator states that she does not "lament this loss as I would once have done" (*View* 289), feeling less connected with this house now as "home" after she has made another home elsewhere. This is exemplified in her interactions with her father. She believes – perhaps wrongly – that he expects "some foolishness" from her over the changes made to the house: "I feel obliged to hide from him the fact that the house does not mean as much to me as it once did, and that it really does not matter to me now how he changes it" (290). However, while she presumes that the father expects that by returning to this house, she would return to her younger self, the narrator implies a possible *disconnection* between place and self and a detachment from the past: "I don't tell him that I am not sure now whether I love any place, and that it seems to me it was myself that I loved here – some self that I have finished with, and none too soon" (290). Like Gallant's Linnet Muir, there is a sense of escape from childhood into adulthood which is linked with movement away from home and the creation of a new home elsewhere. This story suggests the passing on of identity norms from parents to children, and the power of the institution of the family in perpetuating restrictive ideas about belonging and having a "core" self and home-place.

However, her father's illness means that she is obliged to return somewhat to this past life. She works in the barn and experiences a distinct sense of anxiety linked with returning to this place and staying for longer than expected: "Something about my life seems

to have slipped out of control. I don't feel so sure that it is just a visit. The buses that run from place to place no longer seem so surely to connect with me" (*View* 311). She feels a sense of confinement and lack of power: "Time and place can close in on me, it can so easily seem as if I have never got away, that I have stayed here my whole life" (312). This is connected with an imagined alternate version of herself, "like one of those misfits, captives – nearly useless, celibate, rusting – who should have left but didn't, couldn't, and are now unfit for any place" (312). This is an example of Munro's subtle use of the Southern Ontario Gothic to suggest a sense of the uncanny and the unhomely, to deconstruct ideas about the stability and security of identity and place.

Despite this sense of confinement, the narrator in "Home" is deeply attached to this landscape. This is also the case for the narrator of "What Do You Want to Know For?", as she and her husband explore the local countryside and discover a crypt they have never seen before. The narrator begins to research settler life in the area during the nineteenth century. The title of the story reflects the attitude of the library staff towards her questions about this. They are puzzled at why one might be "*just interested*" (*View* 326, emphasis in original) in the past, suggesting a propensity towards selective forgetting and the social and institutional policing of access to historical records about the past with regard to questions of place and landscape. The narrator's perspective can be read as representative of Settler Canadian "strategies" for coping with the past, suggesting that Canada is post-colonial now and that a kind of Edenic renewal has taken place:

In country like this the trend is no longer towards a taming of the landscape and a thickening of population, but rather the opposite. The bush will never again take over completely, but it is making a good grab. The deer, the wolves, which had at one time almost completely disappeared, have reclaimed some of their territory. Perhaps there will be bears soon, feasting again on the blackberries and thimbleberries, and in the wild orchards. Perhaps they are here already. (*View* 327)

This is a hopeful suggestion that the landscape can recover from the effects of settler colonialism. However, it continues the concealment of the continued dominance of “ordinary Canadians” over “ethnic” Others and the land and its resources.

Such “strategies” are also evident in “Working for a Living”. The first-person narrator is drawn from Munro’s father, according to the Foreward (*View* ii) and his experiences of Huron County when Canada “was not yet 50 years old” (*View* 127). This character can be used to consider narratives and myths about the wilderness constructed from a settler perspective, and a related desire for authenticity and legitimacy in this landscape. As he grew up, the narrator’s father “began to spend more and more time in the bush” (129). He admired literary figures such as Robinson Crusoe and has a romantic perception of surviving in the wilderness. He had read Fenimore Cooper and “absorbed the myths or half-myths about wilderness that most of the country boys around him knew nothing about” (*View* 131). This links with the “non-indigenous desire to ‘play Indian’” which is “actually a fundamental condition of life within settler colonialism as settlers continually seek to capitalise on what they understand as their country’s own ‘native’ resources, which include Indigenous cultures and peoples themselves” (Arvin 19). Atwood writes about “the desire among non-Natives to turn themselves into Natives; a desire that becomes entwined with a version of wilderness itself”, a view of wilderness as “the repository of salvation and new life” (*ST* 43). Narratives about the North become conflated with the pseudo-wilderness, a place offering freedom which is accessible to Settler Canadians who view it in terms of romanticised and racially exclusive literary narratives. Those “country boys”, if they came from rich families, “would navigate the rivers of the Far North with Indian guides” but “people eager for this experience of the wilderness would drive right through our part of the country without noticing there was one bit of wilderness there” (*View* 131). The stories mentioned in the text are by white men, one American, one English. These

narratives highlight the ability of male characters to maintain power within a “wild” landscape.

“Working” is critical of the early settlement of the land, when “the progressive thing to do” from the settler perspective was to straighten creeks and “make them run like tame canals between fields” (*View* 130). This is seen by the narrator as “the masculine approach to the land” which was “managerial, dictatorial” (*View* 130). In contrast, “only women were allowed to care about landscape and not to think always of its subjugation and productivity” (*View* 130). However, the narrator’s paternal grandmother highlights the ability of women to be “knowledgeable” (*View* 133) about the land, suggesting that it is possible to both maintain a position of power in relation to gender and a position of care and understanding in relation to place. This links with the gendering of the landscape in Settler Canadian narratives asserted in the Introduction, and the heteropatriarchal drive to exert control and power over the (pseudo)wilderness. It suggests an anxiety about belonging in this landscape and a learned desire to maintain rigid boundaries of self and place, which will be discussed further in the following section.

(ii) “Borderland Territory” and Boundary Issues

Munro’s stories deal with the ways in which movement and the blurring of boundaries is connected with freedom while the small town is linked with confinement. “Walker Brothers Cowboy” in *Dance of the Happy Shades* highlights a Settler Canadian uncertainty about place – what Simonds calls the fear that the landscape might have “shifted in the night” (26) – as the father and daughter characters go to out “see if the lake’s still there” (*Dance* 1). This relates to a sense of precarious identity and the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition, which is bound up with the “borderland territory” between the small town and the (pseudo)wilderness. As they walk, the daughter character describes how “the town falls away in a defeated jumble of sheds and small junkyards, the sidewalk gives up and we

are walking on a sandy path with burdocks, plantains, humble nameless weeds all around” (2). Munro uses both the realistic context of the 1930s Depression and the literary and metaphorical trope of the Gothic wilderness in her description of the town and surrounding landscape, which seems drained of its energy, symbolic of the settler fear of a threatening wilderness against the boundary of civilisation.

Munro’s stories often focus on local distinctions between town and countryside, and the rituals and categories that have been constructed for each place. When the father explains to the narrator about the glacial construction of this landscape, the narrator tries to picture the existence of an unoccupied landscape: “I try to see that plain before me, dinosaurs walking on it, but I am not able even to imagine the shore of the Lake when the Indians were there, before Tuppertown” (*Dance* 3). The narrator is disturbed – “appalled” (3) – by the insignificance of settler existence in this landscape. This taps into the “still-persisting pioneer imaginaries” and the perception of “Canadian lake country [as] wilderness, feared but available for taming” (Beran, “Margaret” 94). It can be read as demonstrating the influence of Moodie on Munro’s writing. In *Roughing It in the Bush*, for example, Moodie states: “The wide river, flowing rapidly between its rugged banks, rolled in inky blackness beneath the overshadowing crags; while the waves in mid-channel flashed along in dazzling light, rendered more intense by the surrounding darkness” (31) This obsession with an unknowable and potentially threatening landscape is clear in Munro’s stories. Atwood’s interpretation of Moodie in *Journals*, published two years after Munro’s *Dance of the Happy Shades*, also reflects this connection between an empty and ancient landscape and the sense of settler transience and impermanence. Atwood’s character Moodie describes how “forgotten birds/ tremble through memory, ripples across water/ and a moon hovers in the lake/ orange and prehistoric” (*Journals* 38). In Munro’s story, the narrator’s sense of the landscape as empty has been socially, culturally, and politically instilled and reinforced through the settler colonial agenda of “strategy” of repression of the past. This father-

daughter relationship is another example of identity norms being transferred within the family. Though the father instils a sense of connection with the landscape, rather than a desire to claim and control it, he also imparts an anxiety about place and belonging. Munro draws attention to this issue, pointing to the complexities and contradictions of settler engagement with myths about the land and its occupation. However, by not acknowledging what happened to “the Indians”, she also contributes to a national and international image of Canada that occludes the violence and Othering of “ethnic” minorities in the settler past, and its ongoing legacies.

Nonetheless, the implied anxiety about place is always present in Munro’s stories. When the narrator and her father and brother journey into “the back country” (*Dance* 3), there is a gradual amplification of unease, disguised through the perspective of the child narrator, as the border between civilisation and wilderness becomes blurred:

No roads paved when we left the highway. We have to roll up the windows because of dust. The land is flat, scorched, empty. Bush lots at the back of the farms hold shade, black pine-shade like pools nobody can ever get to. (*Dance* 7)

This blurring is suggestive of an instability of identity as demonstrated through the father character, a kind of “cowboy” figure, a romantic figure of the open wilderness who challenges norms and boundaries, roaming beyond the “frontier” of the landscape known to the young narrator. His impromptu visit to Nora, an old girlfriend, links with his rebellion against the defined boundaries symbolised by the company’s expectation for him to remain within a specific geographical area, and his desire for freedom which could be within reach in the (pseudo)wilderness space of the rural countryside. This suggests he too has been influenced by the myths of wilderness described in “Working”, and points to the absorption of these “ordinary Canadian” narratives through cultural influences.

Munro links her characters to local communities but also to the landscape from a pre-historic, geographical perspective. The narrator compares her father’s past with the landscape, both unknowable to her, “darkening and turning strange, [...] ordinary and

familiar while you are looking at it, but changing once your back is turned, into something you will never know” (*Dance* 18). This evokes a sense of the uncanny to suggest the precarity of “ordinary Canadian” identity and place in this landscape so that “her father shifts too, with the landscape” (Simonds 27). The “uncanny quality of Gothic” is bound up with the “transgression of boundaries” (Howells, *MA* 63) both of identity and place, suggesting potential transformation. It highlights “what is hidden, secret, repressed, and which is threatening precisely because it is still alive and blocked off from consciousness though ready to spring out, transformed into some monstrous shape [...] both familiar and alien to us” (Howells, *MA* 63). The story explores the narrator’s “dawning perception of the multiple geographies hidden within her familiar world” (Howells, *AM* 16). As with Gallant’s young female characters, this narrator suggests the possibility of greater acknowledgement of the complexities and contradictions of Settler Canadian identity and place in this landscape.

Changes (and continuities) from one generation to the next in relation to perceptions of identity and place are also explored through Del’s relationship with her mother, Addie, in *Lives of Girls and Women*. As with Helen in “The Peace of Utrecht”, in “Princess Ida”, Addie is used to suggest the construction of boundaries and their relationship to the self. Through Addie’s work selling encyclopaedias and “going on the road” (*Lives* 63), she seeks personal independence. However, she is limited by the social judgements from people in the town as she travels “all by herself” (64) and seems like “a wild-woman” (64). This points to the endurance of imperialist constructions of the wilderness-civilisation binary and its use for the social regulation of identity and belonging. Addie would prefer to live in a city like Toronto, and is depicted as an outsider in the town. When returning from a trip to sell encyclopaedias, upon reaching Jubilee Addie states: “Yonder lies the metropolis”, and this attitude has a significant influence on Del:

By these words, whether weary, ironic, or truly grateful, Jubilee seemed to me to take its being. As if without her connivance, her acceptance, these streetlights and

sidewalks, the fort in the wilderness, the open and secret pattern of the town – a shelter and a mystery – would not be there. (*Lives* 68)

This suggests that Addie also believes in the wilderness-civilisation binary, and is passing on mythologies about the settler colonial past to Del. The Flats Road is “an uncivilised world that Addie rejects on behalf of herself and her daughter” (Purdham 110). In moving from this road into town with Addie – which implies the breakdown of the family as her father and brother remain on the farm – Del takes on her mother’s imperialist attitudes and begins to “praise wholeness, regularity, and order” (Purdham 110). This is an example of how belonging is learned. If the family links with the nation, this suggests destabilisation and a lack of unity, challenging contemporary ideas about a stable “Canadian” national identity.

Addie rents a house on River Street. But the family house on the Flats Road still holds an appeal for Del, as it is connected with the landscape, suggesting her learned desire for belonging through an authentic connection with the (pseudo)wilderness:

I missed the nearness of the river and the swamp, also the real anarchy of winter, blizzards that shut us up tight in our house as if it were the Ark. But I loved the order, the wholeness, the intricate arrangement of town life, that only an outsider could see. (*Lives* 69)

This desire for order indicates a drive towards control, which is contrasted with the uncontrollable Canadian weather and landscape, an ingrained Settler Canadian narrative. This also suggests Del’s claim to what has been constructed as masculine control of the land, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. In town, Del’s self-perception as an outsider is influenced by her mother. However, according to Cox, “Del yearns for the security of the herd, even though she sees through the herd mentality” (*AM* 24). She begins to observe the structure of the town like a writer. Her noting of the significance of the street names allows for a questioning of the concealed history of the town: “Going home from school, winter afternoons, I had a sense of the whole town around me, all the streets which were named River Street, Mason Street, John Street, Victoria Street, Huron Street, and strangely, Khartoum Street” (*Lives* 69). The combination of English colonial names, with the name of

Lake Huron and the Huron peoples, originally the Wyandot peoples before they were renamed by French settlers, highlights the settler colonial history of the town and its continuing but repressed presence. This provides evidence of the ways in which the erasure of indigenous communities is masked by “drawing on the societal structures and culture of the homeland and renaming territory after familiar places or figureheads” (Bateman and Pilkington 1). It suggests Munro’s engagement with these issues, though she does not focus on them so they could pass unnoticed particularly by her international readers.

However, Munro highlights the transgression of boundaries and the anxiety about Settler Canadian identity can be observed through her stories. In the title piece, Del refers to grass, dirt, and trees that “pushed in on the town from every side” (*Lives* 155). There is a sense that the wilderness is encroaching on the town and that the townspeople repress this because they cannot control it. The desire expressed by Del and Addie for control links to the learned myth of the “fort in the wilderness”, the garrison mentality. Del is an “ordinary Canadian” who has been taught to view the (pseudo)wilderness as a place of either potential freedom or danger. The narrative that the wilderness is monstrous and malicious is a settler myth which implicitly links with settler unease and an underlying feeling of exile in this occupied land. In “Epilogue: The Photographer”, Del discusses the process of transforming the real Jubilee and its inhabitants into characters for her Victorian Gothic novel (suggesting the relevance of the British Gothic genre to issues of place in Canadian, which is addressed in Chapter 5 relation to Atwood). Writing this novel allows her to “see Jubilee so plainly” (*Lives* 244). This perception of the town can be interpreted as Del’s method of dealing with the settler colonial past. It means exerting control over the town through her writing, a form of power which is a “strategy” for dealing with the unknown. She describes people’s lives in the town as “dull, simple, amazing, and unfathomable – deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum” (*Lives* 249). Atwood suggests that this “juxtaposition of ‘caves’ and ‘linoleum’” highlights “the idea of domesticity as simply a thin overlay covering a natural, and wild,

abyss”, and “the suggestion that you can pave the wilderness over” and “make it into a kitchen” (*ST* 108) implies a breakdown in constructed boundaries between civilisation and wilderness, the invasion of the house by the wilderness, and the challenging of the “fort in the wilderness” and “garrison mentality” myths.

Munro continues to explore boundaries and borders in “Royal Beatings” from *Who Do You Think You Are?/The Beggar Maid*:

In Hanratty the social structure ran from doctors and dentists and lawyers down to foundry workers and factory workers and draymen; in West Hanratty it ran from factory workers and foundry workers down to large improvident families of casual bootleggers and prostitutes and unsuccessful thieves. (*TBM* 6)

Rose places the family based on where their store is in West Hanratty which, like Del’s house on the Flats Road, is in “borderland territory”, “on the straggling tail end of the main street” (*TBM* 6). Rose’s sense of “belonging nowhere” is similar to Del’s feeling of being “an exile and a spy” in Jubilee (*Lives* 141). The notion of exile “at home” recurs in “Half a Grapefruit”, where Rose is depicted as trying to “fit” at the high school in Hanratty. For her, “differences soon became evident, between town and country” (*TBM* 40). Like Gallant’s Linnet and her New York teacher’s perpetuation of stereotypes about Canada, the teacher here contributes to the “rough sort of segregation was maintained, voluntarily in the classroom” (40) between town children and country children through having them state what they have for breakfast, thereby implying what the family can afford and suggesting that country families are less civilised. Rose, like Del, perceives the town and its occupants as superior: “West Hanratty was not represented, except by her. She was wanting badly to align herself with towners, against her place of origin, to attach herself to those waffle-eating coffee-drinking aloof and knowledgeable possessors of breakfast nooks” (*TBM* 40). She tells stories to Flo, and these narratives suggest a fluidity of identity for Rose which is dependent on her movement between the two different parts of town: “The change in Rose, once she left the scene, crossed the bridge, changed herself into chronicler, was remarkable” (*TBM* 42). She is

another young female character who suggests a progression away from ingrained ideas about the necessity of a stable “core” self and home-place.

Rose’s transgression of boundaries is similar to a scene in “Wigtime” from *Friend of My Youth* (1990), in which Margot and Anita traverse boundary lines between the town and “borderland territory” on the town’s outskirts. This can also be read as a challenge to Settler Canadian constructions of (pseudo)wilderness and the “garrison mentality” myth:

The town, with its buildings, streets, and interposing routines, was set up like a barricade against the stormy or frozen-still world they’d woken up in. Of course their houses were barricades, too, and so was the store, but those were nothing compared to town. A block inside town, it was as if the countryside didn’t exist. The great drifts of snow on the roads and the wind tearing and howling through the trees – that didn’t exist. In town, you had to behave as if you’d always been in town. (*Friend* 252)

Munro provides an example here on a local level of the overarching “ordinary Canadian” desire for belonging and security within an unknowable wilderness. She combines a focus on boundaries and a fear of difference with hierarchical categorisations of place. Though Munro does not really engage with issues of race, she displays constant awareness of the ways in which identity and place have been constructed through narrative, particularly the wilderness-civilisation binary.

Similarly, in “Chance”, the first of the three linked “Juliet” stories in *Rumaway* (2004), Juliet travels on the bus from Vancouver to Horseshoe Bay and is surprised by how quickly “you pass from city to wilderness” (*NSS* 218), which is contrasted with the school where she was teaching, in which the grounds were “sheltered and civilised, enclosed by a stone wall” (*NSS* 218). This evokes the “garrison mentality” myth and the creation of towns for Settler Canadians who work for companies which benefit from the mining of resources from the land:

The towns where the bus stops are not organised towns at all. In some places a few repetitive houses – company houses – are built close together, but most of the houses are like those in the woods, each one in its own wide cluttered yard [...] No paved streets, except the highway that goes through, no sidewalks. (*NSS* 218)

Juliet is just twenty-one years old, and this can be read as an example of how narratives and myths about the wilderness-civilisation binary endure and are learned by “ordinary Canadians”. They are applied during Settler Canadian interactions with the (pseudo)wilderness, though Juliet remains detached from the landscape as she observes it only through the bus window.

This engagement and detachment is also apparent in “Wild Swans”. Rose, while taking her first solo train journey from Hanratty to Toronto, is depicted as “extraordinarily happy” (*TBM* 60) while looking out the train window. In Gallant’s stories, the train journey allowed for explorations of exile and the destabilisation of identity and place in relation to the broader national context. In Munro stories, it is used to suggest that this destabilisation can be positive, that freedom can be gained through movement. “Wild Swans” sets up the distinction between “here” and “there”, emphasising Rose’s delight to be away from “home” and from the overly rigid limitations of Hanratty. This is highlighted through her reactions to, and perceptions of, the landscape: “The trees and bushes seemed to have a paler bark than they did at home. Even the sunlight looked different” (*TBM* 61). This construction of difference is suggested as positive.

Rose moves several times to different regions of Canada and her movement “allows her to change and reinvent her identity” (Cox, *AM* 31). Her multiple identities as an actress relate to multiple movements and the various places she sets up as home. Munro’s stories can be connected with Gallant’s as both suggest that the notion of a “core” and fixed identity and place is an “ordinary Canadian” construction that can be rejected. However, in “Mischief”, Rose’s “geographical and social migration also brings a crippling instability” (Cox, *AM* 32). The desire for stability of place has become entrenched since her childhood experiences in Hanratty. However, it is contradicted by her urge to move. Cox states that Rose “has difficulty making herself a home anywhere, and in making permanent relationships” (*AM* 32), but it is this homeless, rootless, nomadic existence, based on her

early sense of exile and lack of “fit”, that gives Rose a developing experience of freedom. She is “choosing freedom by embracing contingency” (Cox, *AM* 33). Through this character, and her “homes” in both rural and urban areas, Munro presents a departure from the wilderness-civilisation binary. By interpreting Rose as “permanently in transit” (Cox, *AM* 34), the stories can be read as a challenge to rootedness and the construction of a stable “home” as a measure of success.

This idea of permanent transit in contrast with a stable home-place is also explored in “Train”, from Munro’s final collection *Dear Life* (2012). Jackson, one of Munro’s few male characters, is returning to his Ontario home-town from the Second World War and jumps from a train to avoid going back and marrying his fiancée. According to McGill, trains in Munro stories “strike an affinity with the short story form” in relation to “fleeting” experience (McGill 137). This story can be used to consider the idea of exile as a choice and the effects that a rejection of a “core” home-place can have on the self. Munro’s depiction of Jackson as an individual character is also a broader comment on Settler Canadian identity, and a preoccupation with imagined boundaries between civilisation and wilderness. For example, after he jumps from the train, and once the noise of it “has been swallowed up”, Jackson realises that there is “plenty of disturbance here and there, a shaking of the dry August leaves that wasn’t wind, the racket of some unseen birds chastising him” (*Dear* 176). The (pseudo)wilderness is threatening and potentially deadly, giving an impression of confinement. His perceptions of it are self-relational and highlight his hubris as he believes the birds behave in response to him. This story links back to Atwood’s *Journals* and to early settler narratives and myth-making. In *Journals*, Moodie describes how “the rocks ignore [...] the forest can still trick me”, and she is “watched like an invader/ who knows hostility but not where” (21). This resonates with narratives of the pseudo-wilderness. Munro’s story depicts Jackson as believing that freedom is available for him, as a white Settler Canadian male, in an Edenic landscape.

The story suggests post-war transnational links as, like in Gallant's "Ernst in Civilian Clothes", Jackson is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and a sense of anxiety about his identity and place of belonging. While he remains emotionally detached, the landscape evokes unease in him, which relates to his discomfort in this "uncivilised" space. While just a few moments before he was like Juliet or Rose, detached from the landscape by the boundary of the train window, now this has been unsettled and the pseudo-wilderness and its animals are "asking for your attention in a way they never did when you were sitting on the train and just looking out the window" (*Dear* 177). Munro links this unsettled boundary with the wider context of post-war Settler Canadian national identity and Jackson can be read as an example of the effects of the "regulatory practices" of hegemonic power on the individual. He has learned to be anxious about his sense of self and place in this landscape. He imagines the birds asking: "What are you doing here? Where are you going? A sense of being watched by things you didn't know about. Of being a disturbance. Life around coming to some conclusions about you from vantage points you couldn't see" (*Dear* 177). Munro uses the Gothic uncanny to suggest Jackson's ingrained fear of the unknown and discomfort now that he is away from civilisation. The railway track suddenly seems to Jackson:

to have reverted from its normal purpose of carrying people and freight to become a province of wild apple trees and thorny berry bushes and trailing grapevines and crows – he knew that bird at least – scolding from perches you could not see. (*Dear* 177)

The repetition of this idea of being unable to see suggests a kind of "symbolic blindness" (Wilson, "Blindness and survival" 177), which will be discussed further in relation to Atwood, and is bound up with uncertainty about his identity. It suggests his inability to recognise his inherited desire for "cultural authenticity" in this landscape and his failure to gain it. It also suggests his status of being in a "locked situation", as a war veteran attempting to escape his traumatic past through repression and physical nomadism.

While many of Munro's female characters, such as Rose in *Who*, connect movement with personal independence, Jackson seeks freedom through self-exile without a destination in mind. When he comes across Belle and her house, it is like the "fort in the wilderness", a new "home" that Jackson can fix up, take control over, where he can find security. He ends up staying for seventeen years. Belle mirrors Maddy in "The Peace of Utrecht", a young woman who stayed at home to care for a sick mother, who never left and is afraid to leave now that the mother has died, "scared of uproot" (*Dear* 185). Their relationship is not romantic but mutually beneficial. However, Jackson's detachment is highlighted when Belle is receiving cancer treatment at a Toronto hospital. She repeatedly expresses a wish to go "home", but Jackson leaves her, resuming his nomadic tendencies.

He becomes the caretaker of a building in downtown Toronto. The coincidental appearance of his former fiancée sparks a memory in which the story reveals that Jackson was abused by his stepmother, and the story suggests he implicitly links this with his lack of ability to maintain a "core" home and self. As a teenager, "Jackson did not want to go home. Why not? Because his stepmother was there, he said. He hated his stepmother" (*Dance* 210). A failed sexual experience with his fiancée before the war, which is implicitly connected with trauma from this abuse, made him decide "that a person could just not be there" (*Dance* 215). When his fiancée reappears in Toronto, his repressed shame about his relationship with her, and with his mother, makes him detach again, deciding that the past could be "locked up" (*Dance* 215). This "locking up" perpetuates his "locked situation" and is combined with movement, as he leaves his job as caretaker and "got on the train" (*Dear* 215), travelling to another town. The character challenges "a common developmental narrative in which aging involves the acquisition of knowledge" (McGill 147). Instead, time passes within the narrative and the character shows no growth. While the story suggests that Belle's "rooted" life having stayed at home was one of confinement, it also proposes that Jackson's "rootless" movement is confining too, suggesting that exile is possible in either circumstance and that

connection to place is learned through inter-personal – and importantly familial – relationships.

These ideas about boundaries between civilisation and wilderness, and the self and Other are “continuities” that are explored throughout Munro’s oeuvre. “A Wilderness Station” from *Open Secrets* (1994) also examines these themes in connection with settler colonial anxieties about place. According to Howells, this story is linked with “Heirs of the Living Body” from *Lives* and “A Stone in the Field” in *The Moons of Jupiter* (1978), which are Munro’s “pioneer narratives” in that they look “back into the history of settlement in Canada West in which Munro’s own ancestors participated” (Howells, *AM* 124). These stories link with, and present a challenge to, pioneer texts from early female settlers, such as Moodie and Parr Traill. Munro’s depictions of pioneer life focus on “the untold stories” (*AM* 125) of women’s experiences during the early settlement of Canada. She “reconstructs the local history of place” through fictional characters (*AM* 125), employing an epistolary form to examine “the status of wilderness as Canadian cultural myth” (*AM* 126). In this story, Annie McKillop is transported from a children’s home in Toronto to marry Simon Herron in Carstairs, North Huron in 1852. The story is told through letters and the recollections of Simon’s younger brother George, who describes settler life in Huron County in the mid-nineteenth century, and the ways in which he and his brother sought to tame the landscape and build a house, having come “to clear themselves a piece of land and get possession of it” (*Open* 301), suggesting translation of the colonial, imperialist mindset to Canada from Britain and the learned idea that they have a right to claim this land.

Annie’s sense of confinement and fear, first due to the threat of violence from Simon, then from George, results in a blurring of boundaries between house and landscape: “I didn’t stay in the house where he could find me and when I gave up sleeping inside and slept outside I didn’t have the dream [of being murdered] so often” (*Open* 314). The landscape provides refuge and freedom for her: “It got warm in a hurry and the flies and

mosquitos came but they hardly bothered me. I would see their bites but not feel them, which was another sign that in the outside I was protected” (314). Howells argues that Annie becomes “at home in the wilderness” (*AM* 126) and, like Del’s mother Addie, becomes “a kind of wild woman” (*AM* 127) for whom the “real threats” are not “from nature but from men” (*AM* 128). Atwood suggests that Munro’s stories explore “what happens when women writers choose the wilderness as a locale” (*ST* 4). Howells argues that the male view of the wilderness in this story is a place of “geographical and spiritual exile”, while Annie “journeys through the wilderness towards a promised land” (*AM* 129). This evokes an image of a utopian Edenic landscape available to settlers in the wilderness and proposes a problematic binary in which men are associated with power and control in the landscape, and women with nature and life-giving. While Frye’s idea of the “garrison mentality” is associated with male patriarchal fear of the threatening wilderness, Munro highlights how women’s narratives about the wilderness are “a conscious policy of resistance to male authority and violence” (*AM* 128). The male discomfort with Annie displayed in this story points to a fear of the disintegration of the boundary between interior domestic space and exterior “masculine” (pseudo)wilderness, as is discussed further in Chapter 4.

The story is also a Gothic murder mystery. George is an unreliable narrator, stating that Simon is killed by a falling tree, though it was George who killed him after Simon became violent. Annie confesses to the murder to seek refuge at Walley Gaol because she also fears violence from George. The desire for power and dominance of the settler colonial mentality is connected again with masculinity, and the repression of women’s freedoms and voices. For example, Annie’s point-of-view is suppressed by historical, patriarchal “fact”, as suggested in “Heirs”. Once in prison, Annie’s voice continues to be suppressed as her story is told through correspondence between two men, reverend Walter McBain in North Huron and a clerk, James Mullen, in Walley. McBain states that “the deterioration of her property showed the state of her mind and spirit [...] When I visited her the door was open and it

was evident that animals came and went in her house” (*Open* 302). They are terrified at the idea of the transgression of concrete divisions between civilisation and wilderness and use Annie as a method of asserting their authority and imagined control over the wilderness. The endurance of this heteropatriarchal dominance in Canada can be discerned through the continuation of such power inequalities of identity, gender, and place.

This civilisation-wilderness boundary is evident as the title of the story comes from a quote used by McBain in his final letter to Mullen before his death. This letter highlights his anxiety over his sense of self and place in this landscape: “*This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed, but the move will be out of one wilderness station unto another*” (*Open* 306, emphasis in original). This suggests a lack of belonging and an inability to negotiate the landscape. Drawing on the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition, Munro depicts the landscape, from McBain’s perspective, as unwaveringly bleak: “Nothing but trees to choke off every exit and icy bog to swallow man and horse” (*Open* 306), suggesting a kind of purgatorial exile. In contrast, Mullen tells him that “the town has grown so civilised that we forget the hardship of the hinterlands” (*Open* 308). This preoccupation with boundary is depicted by Munro as persisting across time and in different communities. For example, “Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage” from a collection of the same name published in 2001, also highlights this divide between town and countryside.

While “A Wilderness Station” is set in the mid-1800s, “Hateship” is set a century later. Here, when Johanna mentions wanting to travel from a town in South-western Ontario to the Saskatchewan town of Gdynia (a name inspired by a Polish city), the station agent tells her that “towns out there, they’re not like here. They’re mostly pretty rudimentary affairs” (*NSS* 5). However, while the narrative emphasises his “ordinary Canadian” xenophobia, when Johanna actually arrives in Gdynia, “there did not appear to be a town [...] There was a discouraging lack of formality, or any sort of organisation, to this place” (*NSS* 41). This suggests the endurance of the “ordinary Canadian” desire for civilisation and control of the

land. It highlights the persistence of the regulation of identity in relation to place, and the perpetuation of the “Us and Them” perspective. It also suggests the developing victim mentality in relation to Canadian multiculturalism, and the Othering of people and places that are deemed not to “fit” with the dominant culture.

Conclusion

Munro’s stories suggest the persistence of pioneer and settler colonial depictions of the Canadian (pseudo)wilderness as deadly, unknowable, and empty, and also as a place of potential freedom where a sense of “core” self can be recovered. Her focus on characters who move from one place to another suggests the possibility of multiple selves and homes, and a challenge to the myths and narratives of gaining a sense of authenticity and legitimacy through connection with place. The persistence of links between a stable and knowable self and home-place with personal success and status highlight an ongoing settler anxiety that is bound up with Canada’s often repressed colonial past and postcolonial present. The characters’ sense of insecurity about place and identity is evident in the hierarchical depictions of belonging in relation to city and country, civilisation and wilderness. Munro’s inclusion of characters who are exiles and do not “fit”, who come from “borderland territories”, suggests a challenge to these ingrained boundaries.

The father-daughter relationship highlights how restrictive ideas about “ordinary Canadian” identity are learned within the family, and speaks to the overarching desire for unity in relation to Canadian national identity. However, the persistence of the victim mentality suggests that the regulation of identity continues in a clandestine way, which is not always evident to individuals on a local level. It suggests that the sense of “ordinary Canadian” victimhood is being maintained by unseen forces. Social order is maintained by the suggestion that “failure” is always present in relation to achieving a coherent sense of identity and belonging in the landscape.

The suggestion of female characters' connection with the (pseudo)wilderness suggests a gendering of the landscape and an association between masculinity, the nation, and control that is overcome through women's "natural" and feminine rejection of power and hierarchy. There is a suggestion that femininity is more connected with the land and closer to Indigenous Canadian perspectives:

Whereas nation-states are governed through domination and coercion indigenous sovereignty and nationhood are predicated on interrelatedness and responsibility. In opposition to nation-states, which are based on control over territory, these visions of indigenous nationhood are based on care and responsibility for land that all can share. (Smith, "American" 311)

Despite this, it is problematic to simply associate the desire for control and dominance of the wilderness with male characters and a peaceful connection with wilderness with female characters. Thus, as well as investigating changing, and enduring attitudes towards Canadian national identity, Munro's short fiction also examines changing attitudes towards feminism in the latter half of the twentieth century, as is investigated further in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

“A Watcher not a Keeper”: Gender Identity in Alice Munro’s Short Fiction

Introduction

Many of Munro’s stories set during the mid- to late-twentieth century can be considered in terms of changing attitudes to gender and power. Catharine MacKinnon argues that hierarchies of power produce “categorical distinctions” and “differences” (“Difference” 248) between people. The opposite to hierarchy, she argues, is equality, and this relates to issues of gender and national identity. Questions of equality and gender are both questions about “the distribution of power, specifically of male supremacy and female subordination” (“Difference” 347). Munro’s stories highlight the restrictive effects of the policing of gender and the necessity of adherence to “gender scripts”, which are “a set of stereotypes of men as strong, competent, breadwinners, unemotional, confident, and protective” while women are “emotional, soft, nurturing, beautiful, and needing to be protected” (Dallos and Dallos 108). Her short fiction examines gender identity in connection with place, suggesting that “ordinary Canadian” narratives about the (pseudo)wilderness are bound up with gender inequalities. The connection between the claiming of the (feminine) land with dominant masculinity is destabilised through Munro’s stories which, though not overtly political, can be used to investigate political issues through her representations of inter-personal relationships and power dynamics.

Gender classifications and hierarchies occur “within a complex matrix of institutions and practices” and these classifications have “a profound effect on an individual” (Haslanger 17). The disciplining and sanctioning of members of a social group for failure to adhere to accepted norms and values is perpetuated on a local level, as per Connell’s argument in Chapter 2, in communities and internally by the individual. It is also performed on a macro,

national or global level through cultural discourse and hegemonic political or governmental sources and institutions. Munro constructs the local level as symbolic of the global level, and particularly looks at the ways in which power dynamics are gendered within families, with family members also perceivable as citizens of the Canadian nation. While “power within families” has often “not been recognised as such, because it has been perceived as natural or benign” (Okin 17), Munro’s stories provide an opportunity to explore how “the heteropaternal organisation of citizens into nuclear families, each expressing a ‘proper’ modern sexuality, has been a cornerstone in the production of a citizenry that will support and bolster the nation-state” (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 14). These characters display the effects of the state-sanctioned regulation of identity. The maintenance of the victim mentality, based on the “failure” to achieve a “core” self and home, preserves a controllable unified Canadian national identity. This can be linked with the perpetuation of contradictory and impossible standards of femininity, at which women are destined to fail, thereby preserving heteropatriarchal hegemony.

Munro’s stories highlight how “the gender issue [...] conditions women’s relation to culture and history”, and this is bound up with other issues such as belonging, “through which identities are constructed and reconstructed” (Howells, *Contemporary* 2). Challenging the notion of the “core” self, many of Munro’s female protagonists are represented as maintaining multiple identities and must constantly balance tensions between their roles as lover, wife, mother, and often artist with a learned requirement for a stable self and home, through which they can define their level of personal success. Howells argues that there are “close parallels between the historical situation of women and of Canada as a nation”, and links problems of patriarchal power over women with “Canada’s attitude to the cultural imperialism of the United States” (*Private* 2) and its European heritage. Munro’s explorations of changing attitudes towards and interpretations of feminism can be linked to a broader trend in twentieth-century Canadian women’s fiction “as an index of crises and shifts in

Canada's evolving narrative of nationhood" (Howells *Contemporary* 2). But despite the successes of the Women's Liberation Movement "with regard to things such as divorce laws, abortion rights, and the availability of contraception, society has remained fundamentally sexist" (McGill 147). It remains the case that the "disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere" (Bartky 285). These stories suggest that the restrictions placed on women under heteropatriarchal dominance have been internalised by women, and victimisation appears like the individual woman's "failure" to "do" her gender correctly. Munro presents female characters who are victims of these "regulatory practices", and some who challenge them by engaging in what Fiamengo calls "risky behaviour", as cited in the Introduction.

The issues discussed in Chapter 3 are relevant here because "settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process" (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 8). "Ordinary Canadian" myths about the wilderness relate to the white male Settler Canadian's desire for freedom and a "return" to a utopian, pristine landscape through which they can exert control and dominance. By the late 1980s, post-colonialism and post-feminism had become part of Canadian cultural discourse. In 1987, Howells referred to "Canada's recent emergence" from "the colonial mentality" (*Private* 3), emphasising the endurance of the victim mentality in relation to British colonialism and U.S. imperialism. She links this victimisation and Settler Canada's "sense of marginality" (2) with the position of women in the struggle to "challenge traditions which have marginalised and excluded them from power" (*Private* 3). Feminist criticism at the time constructed women "as victims" (Schneider 387) of patriarchal power. Munro's stories suggest that this approach is simplistic. In the 1970s, Atwood held the view that "Canada as a whole is a victim" (*Survival* 35). According to Beran:

Since *Survival's* publication in 1972, perhaps in relation to Atwood's theory and no doubt in reaction to the feminist movement in general, an enhanced awareness of victimisation and power has been reflected by many Canadian women writers of fiction who have presented complex images of women as powerful. ("Images" 55)

Chapter 2 explores how Gallant's characters can be used to question this presentation of women as powerful. In this chapter, Munro's stories are interpreted to suggest that women are both powerful *and* victims of heteropatriarchal dominance, because to ignore the latter would be to deny the contemporary political and cultural reality. Munro offers contradiction and nuance to feminist arguments that tend to seek unified or concrete answers. Her female characters highlight potential "subversive" strategies for resistance to hegemonic power while engaging in behaviours which place themselves in positions of victimisation. However, the stories also provoke questions about whether behaviours and attitudes which seem subversive or rebellious are in fact permitted and controlled by hegemonic power as another form of regulation within the dominant social and political structure.

Munro's stories explore the ways that female bodies are socially and politically constructed, sanctioned, and confined under the label of "feminine". She investigates the limitations that patriarchal structures have forced upon female freedoms. Her characters highlight "the repetitive and stultifying demands that middle-class rural Canadian society makes of its women" (Birkenstein 214) and highlights how women's subjugation "is political and its politics construct the deep structure of society" (MacKinnon, "Difference" 249). Munro does not have an "overt feminist agenda" but is adept at "dismantling the operations of our patriarchal culture" (Redekop xii). She depicts these equalities in a more direct and concrete way than the inequalities resulting from "ordinary Canadian" dominance in relation to place and belonging. Some of Munro's characters remain in a "locked situation", demonstrating what Butler describes as the effects of the institutional, political, and social indoctrination of heteropatriarchal gender roles. These characters propose the necessity of continually re-evaluating what it means to be feminist and the extent to which patriarchal norms are still accepted and perpetuated, often more clandestinely than ever.

During the years after the Second World War, in which many of these stories are set, the "cult of domesticity" was pervasive and the "baby boom" was strong (McIntyre 58).

Middle-class Canadian women were no longer required to work and were expected to be in the home taking care of the children and their husband. However, there was a “growing anxiety about the fragility of the family, which was associated with a growing rate of divorce”, among other factors (Shapira 73). The “angel in the house” role emerges in Munro’s stories as a way for women to be confined to the home during this time. It is a symbol of morality and comfort around which the nuclear family can situate itself. Munro exists within a community of twentieth-century Canadian women writers, including Gallant and Atwood but also Jane Urquhart, Carol Shields, and Joy Kogawa, who write about the “debilitating effects of enclosed or limited emotional and physical spaces in the lives of women” and the “complications of family”, which influences “the identities of women – largely as someone’s mother, daughter, wife, and sister” (Pearlman 3). These roles are always relational, depriving women of individual power and freedom, and promoting self-victimisation and compliance with the policing of the self and other women in alignment with patriarchal restrictions and rules.

Fiamengo and Lynch (2017) refer to Munro’s “matter-of-fact portrayal of the realities of sex and the body”, including what they call the “betrayal of the maternal impulse” and the “remorseless necessities of female desire” (6). She does not, they argue, flatter “feminine sensibilities” or pander to “sentimental (or radical feminist) conceptions of female (or childhood) innocence” in her portrayal of “women who betray their husbands without regret, who abandon their children for a romantic fantasy” and “live with the pain” (6). Underpinning these statements are assumptions about feminine “gender scripts”. These are “culturally acquired characteristics of femininity which are rendered as biologically determined” (Löschigg 61), including the “good” wife and mother, the irregularity of women “remorselessly” betraying their family, and the expectation for women to be selfless and put their family before their own desires. Munro’s stories challenge the very existence of the maternal impulse, feminine sensibilities, and female innocence, ideas which are socially

constructed and reinforced through continued practice and are thus not inherently “right” or “natural”. Munro states that when she was growing up in South-western Ontario in the 1940s, “everybody” was part of the “structured society” of heteropatriarchy, but:

In the actual society I grew up, if anyone had asked me, ‘Would you rather be a boy or girl?’, I would have opted to be a girl. And for the very reason of more freedom. I felt that it was easier for me to do what I wanted because I was a girl, and it didn’t matter about girls. (Hancock 223)

This highlights the potential for “subversive possibilities” within existing power structures, but it does not allow for the possibility of effecting change in those structures.

“Subversive” behaviours are difficult when faced with powerful forces of institutional and social “girling”. In an interview with Barbara Frum, Munro states that in high school, she “wanted to be an ordinary girl” and to be “attractive to boys”, to “get married, to get a diamond”, which she had learned were “signs of being a fully okay kind of woman” (qtd. in Ross 20). For her, creative activity became a method of contesting these conventions. However, she did get married and have children and, in contrast to Gallant, who perceived family as an obstacle to maintaining the freedom to write and live on her own terms, Munro “has used her life as daughter, wife, suburban home-maker, and mother as raw material” (Ross 20). When she married James Munro and moved to Vancouver, it was still the early 1950s, “before the era of reliable birth control” and it “wasn’t an option” not to start a family (Ross 52). As Munro tells Joanna Beyersbergen in 1974: “I’m just so terribly glad I had my children when I did [...] Yet, I have to realise, I probably wouldn’t have had them if I had the choice” (qtd. in Ross 52). While the previous three chapters have focused on the father-daughter relationship, for Munro, the mother-daughter relationship was “an obsession” (Hancock 104), particularly as Munro’s mother died from Parkinson’s Disease when she was relatively young. This can be used to explore processes of “girling” and gender identity development. The possibility of choosing to have both personal independence as a woman and to have a family is a central issue in feminist debates in the latter half of the

twentieth century, as Chapter 6 highlights. Munro's stories explore the lack of choices available to women earlier in the century, and the ways in which women's lives were determined, on an everyday level, by what was considered gender appropriate behaviour.

(i) Social Constructions of Femininity and Beauty

Chapter 3 discussed the house as a place of confinement in relation to themes of belonging and socially-imagined boundaries. In this chapter, the house is linked with confinement specifically for female characters in relation to learned and policed gender roles and the regulation and sanctioning of deviation from those roles. "Boys and Girls" from *Dance of the Happy Shades* can be used to investigate how young girls are taught feminine "gender scripts" within the nuclear family. The female narrator, who lives in a South-western Ontario rural area in which her father owns a fox farm, is denied participation in farm-work – which she enjoys – because of processes of "girling". This is initiated and continually reinforced by her mother.

Examinations of gender and national identity combine here as the story provides an example of the "ordinary Canadian" emphasis on boundaries: civilisation and wilderness, and the house and the farm outside. The mother has learned this boundary segregation, with the interior as female space and the exterior as male. While Chapter 3 explored how settler mentalities and relationships with the (pseudo)wilderness are passed on from father to daughter characters, here the mother perceives this gender boundary as an appropriate "script" which she must pass on to her daughter. Many female characters in Munro's stories are confined to domestic interior space. While "ordinary Canadian" narratives and myths depict the wilderness as "alien territory" or a "site of freedom" (New, *Land Sliding* 6), or both, it is men who are expected to venture into it.

This is emphasised in this story through the father character's calendar from the Hudson's Bay Company or the Montreal Fur Traders, which evokes imagery, according to

Goldman, of “nature being conquered by male adventurers” and territory being “claimed and controlled” (“Penning”). Goldman states that this suggests that the father is both the patriarch of the exterior farm space and the interior domestic space, highlighting that the “enclosure of the foxes’ bodies with the bodies of the other [family] members [...] replicates our forefather’s enclosure of the feminine wilderness” (“Penning”). Families are “where, through gendered parenting, we *become* our gendered selves, which are later reinforced in social institutions such as schools, workplaces, [and] the media” (Okin 18, emphasis in original). These institutions are also demonstrated in these stories as reinforcing ideas of place and national identity. The family is connected with the Canadian nation, as Munro combines investigations into belonging and boundaries with the regulation of gender identity.

The mother character adheres to these boundaries and does not leave the house unless conducting outdoor domestic chores. When she does the daughter-narrator states that she “looked out of place, with her bare lumpy legs, not touched by the sun” (*Dance* 116). The young girl has already internalised the male gaze and the social judgement of the female body in relation to “feminine” standards of beauty. She has also learned the association between women and interior, domestic space. However, she does not yet relate these judgements to herself; she does not see herself as the same as her mother, who is “out of place” on the farm. Goldman links the enclosure of the animals with the confinement of the girl to the house, in which she feels threatened, and “the mother treats her daughter as a fellow prisoner” (“Penning”). However, like Barbara in Gallant’s “The Remission”, the mother maintains “informal” power on a local level. The narrator must try to escape from her mother’s attempts to confine her to the house: “As soon as I was done [with household chores] I ran out of the house, trying to get out of earshot before my mother thought of what she wanted me to do next” (*Dance* 116). Vanessa Guignery writes that “while femininity is challenged by characters who subvert the accepted codes of nature and gender, [...] most

mothers in the collection abide by their traditional gender roles” and, in doing so, ascribe for their daughters “a place, an identity, and a destiny” (17). This story demonstrates the young female narrator’s “subversive” strategies against this inscribed place.

By blurring “the frontier between inside and outside”, Munro refuses the idea of “sexual opposition between men and women” (Ventura 83), reinforcing the argument that natural biological or genetic essentialisms in relation to women and femininity or maternity are “fictions” (Haslanger 22). The narrator sees no reason for her confinement to domestic chores, which seem “dreary” while “work done out of doors, and in my father’s service, was ritualistically important” (*Dance* 117). No one explains why her reassignment to the house must take place, creating conflict between her and her mother (a theme which runs throughout Munro’s stories). The narrator calls her “my enemy”, while her mother feels like she does not have “a girl in the family at all” (117). The narrator perceives her mother as “plotting” in order “to try her power” (118). As a result, the house becomes a place of confinement and the landscape a place of freedom, for in the house, the narrator “no longer felt safe” (119). This can be linked to Annie in “A Wilderness Station” as explored in Chapter 3, and a female character’s claiming of “masculine” (pseudo)wilderness space.

Through exploring these mother-daughter relationships, these stories highlight gender as an effect of heteropatriarchal power, and the ways in which “failures” in “doing” femininity appropriately are generated to maintain hegemonic structures and systems of power. These mother-daughter relationships can also be used to examine how the mothers’ desire to keep this “informal” power – as suggested through the Red Queens in Gallant’s Linnet Muir stories – prevents progression for daughter characters, so that both remain in a “locked situation” within the overarching heteropatriarchal structure. These mother characters highlight Wolf’s argument that it is contradictory to perceive “good”, “feminine” power as based in communities without acknowledging that “bad”, “masculine” power – hierarchical and dominative – “mirrors the way women hold power within the family

structure” (*Fire* 162). Wolf argues that the current patriarchal system benefits from the regulation of women into “a tradition of nurturing” as it “discourages women from appropriating the power of the political and financial world” (160), which links with Butler’s argument that women need to engage in “subversive” behaviours from within the patriarchal system.

Language is one element that produces these effects of regulated gender. For the narrator here, “the word *girl* had formerly seemed to me innocent and unburdened, like the word *child*” (*Dance* 119, emphasis in original). However, as the story progresses it starts to mean a set of behaviours and attitudes. Language socialises individuals into discrete gender roles. This relates to Salih’s description of “girthing”. The narrator learns the “gender scripts” that suggest men and women have “natural” positions of power, “men protective/women dependent and needing protection” (Dallos and Dallos 109). These discourses “fuel a wide set of practices and structures that embody and maintain these differences, in the family, work, and leisure activities” (Dallos and Dallos 109). Munro depicts “characters who successfully or unsuccessfully attempt to escape these either/or patterns” and uses her protagonists to “question and rebel against restrictive concepts of femininity” (Löschigg 61). In relation to “Boys and Girls”, Goldman argues that “the act of naming becomes another form of enclosing” (“Penning”) and the reinforcement of an association between femininity and failure. The narrator realises that “a girl was not, as I had supposed, what I was; it was what I had to become. It was a definition, always touched with emphasis, with reproach and disappointment. Also it was a joke on me” (*Dance* 119). Through this construction of identity through language, gender is reinforced using “practices which are both normative and regulative – and hence coercive and constraining” (Jackson and Scott 17). The narrator’s correct understanding of the differentiation between sex and gender is socially supplanted by incorrectly applied language and categories from the adult world, where “girl” is confused with “feminine”, a gender identity that she is obliged to assume. This is the “paradoxical

nature of her own self as defined by the adult world: she is rejected by her brother and father because she is a girl, and by her mother and grandmother because she is not enough of a girl” (Dahlie *AM* 17). This is an example of the inevitable “failure” and the social policing of gender in the family, which ensures women’s subjugated position and self-criticism. It teaches her, in turn, to internalise this male gaze, and thereby perpetuates heteropatriarchal power.

Freedom and confinement are highlighted as binary oppositions that are part of the gendering process, with freedom becoming less available to girls the more they are subjected to “girling”. In this story, the narrator states that, although for a while she “kept [her]self free” (*Dance* 119), her decision to free her father’s horse, who was going to be shot, provides evidence to her father that she lacks the emotional detachment and strength which he sees as a part of farming life and, implicitly, constructions of masculinity that are bound up with the (pseudo)wilderness. Having displayed emotionality, she is deemed inferior and “only a girl” (*Dance* 127), and “to be a girl also means to be excluded from ‘male’ responsibilities, a freedom which comes with implications of an inferior status” (Löschigg 63). Both the girl and the horse, who is found by her father and shot anyway, are assigned a seemingly inescapable fate. The fate of the horse contradicts Munro’s suggestion in the Hancock interview that girls have freedom or power in any real way; it suggests “the illusory nature of freedom in a world of experience and obligations” (Dahlie, *AM* 18), particularly for women.

Once the process of “girling” begins to be instilled, the effects of it are displayed through the narrator. Like many of Munro’s young female protagonists, she is a creative story-teller. But her fantasies of her own imagined achievements, bravery, independence, and agency transform throughout the course of the story to highlight the internalisation of beauty rituals as she begins to fantasise about “combing my hair and wondering if I would be pretty when I grew up” (*Dance* 126). Her fantasies with herself in the hero role transform into dreams of being rescued. This highlights the success of the “girling” process engineered by

her mother, but it is met by her father with “disgust” and “resignation” (*Dance* 127). The policing of gender roles and the maintenance of “necessary failures” is thereby demonstrated and can be considered in terms of the broader patriarchal structure. According to Bartky, “the absence of formally identifiable disciplinarians and a public schedule of sanctions only serves to disguise the extent to which the imperative to be ‘feminine’ serves the interest of domination” (286). However, Goldman points out that because the story is told from the perspective of the narrator recalling her childhood there is a suggestion that she “continues to resist and criticize the patriarchal system which names her” (“Penning”), highlighting the possibility of “subversive” behaviours.

Processes of “girling” are examined in many of Munro’s stories, including “Changes and Ceremonies” from *Lives*. Del states that “the things [boys] said stripped away freedom to be what you wanted, reduced you to what it was they saw, and that, plainly was enough to make them gag” (*Lives* 115). This highlights the construction of gender through peer groups as well as in the family. The boys have learned to behave this way too, but Munro’s focus is on femininity construction. When they begin to date, the story highlights how girls are shamed if they are deemed to have engaged in socially unacceptable behaviour. Del’s friend Naomi, as taught by her mother, claims that (possibly non-consensual) sex between two teenagers they know resulted in the girl having to leave town because she had “disgraced herself” (*Lives* 132). When Del protests that “it wasn’t all her fault”, Naomi responds that “it’s always the girl’s fault ... A boy can’t help himself” (132). While Beran contends that Munro depicts women’s lives and “ways in which they are victimised” (90), Munro’s stories also portray female characters as possessing power in subtle ways that are not often acknowledged due to the pervasive dominance of patriarchal social and political structures.

Munro tells Hancock that in relation to feminism there are “no lessons *ever*” in her stories and that when she began writing *Lives*, it “didn’t cross my mind that I was writing a feminist book [...] It just occurred to me once that I wanted to write the kind of thing about

a young girl's sexual experience that had often been written about boys” (Hancock 223, emphasis in original). The women-as-victims stereotype is both demonstrated and challenged in *Lives* when Mr Chamberlain masturbates in front of Del. This story can be read as engaging with feminist criticism at the time, which emphasises “the exclusivity of women’s victimisation” and denies “women’s participation and pleasure as sexual actors” (Schneider 391). Del is a victim of his behaviour but is also curious and aroused by her desire for sexual experience and knowledge.

Anne Quindlen writes in *The New York Times* in 1994 that victim feminism has been criticised by those who argue that “the point of the women’s movement is to make women feel powerful, strong, in control of their own lives.” However, she makes the point that “Valkyrie Feminism”, the idea of women as conclusively strong and powerful, “coexists uneasily with the facts of our lives”, and she maintains there should be a combination of both approaches in developing women’s feelings of power but acknowledging that women can be easily perceived, or perceive themselves, as victims because “by any statistical measure, they so often are” (Quindlen). The argument that it is unbeneficial for women’s equality if they are perceived as simply victims without power, or if power is associated only with masculinity, hierarchy, and dominance, is reflected in Munro’s “Changes and Ceremonies”. Mr Chamberlain is in a position of power due to his age and sex, and engineers a series of situations to obtain sexual satisfaction for himself, each resulting in Del being physically reminded of his power. However, while Del is only a teenager, Munro depicts her as an active participant in these interactions. After the initial incident of touching her breast, Del purposefully “made it easy for him to do something again”, and his touching of her is “brutal as lightning” (*Lives* 135). Fiamengo states that Munro “seems to deliberately side-step a standard feminist perspective. Where is the outrage? Where is the detailing of the effects of sexual abuse on the young girl? Where is the stress on the power imbalance? It doesn’t seem to be there” (“RE: Alice Munro”, 13 Dec. 2016). However, this is Munro’s

reaction to unified notions of victim feminism at the time, and a claim to power for women that disregards the need to depict female characters as either victims or strong women.

Del is depicted as perceiving the experience with Chamberlain as a “contemptuous breakthrough in a world of decent appearances” (*Lives* 135), a rebellion against the confines of her life as a young woman in a small South-western Ontario town. She “is not the unwilling victim” (Glover 46), but Munro also suggests that her ideas are based on imagined fantasy and she is too young to connect Chamberlain’s actions with the reality of the violence of rape. This is emphasised through her connecting these experiences with the landscape. When they are in the car together she thinks: “The countryside I knew was altered by his presence, his voice, overpowering fore-knowledge of the errand we were going on together” (*Lives* 140). As with Gallant stories such as “In the Tunnel”, Munro examines how erotic desire can be restrictive for female characters and their sense of self and place: “For a year or two I had been looking at trees, fields, landscape with a secret strong exaltation” but she “could not do it when I was with anyone, of course, and now with Mr. Chamberlain I saw that the whole nature became debased, maddeningly erotic” (*Lives* 140). Howells states that “the equivalence between the female body and landscape is a familiar trope in women’s writing and one that Munro has used suggestively” (*Contemporary* 65). For Del, the landscape relates to secret sexual experience, with the “ploughed fields beyond rearing up like shameless mattresses” (*Lives* 140). Unlike the narrator in “Boys and Girls”, Del is depicted as perceiving herself as “the heroine of her own story forging her own identity” (Howells, *Private* 75). This is a “subversive” strategy of resistance by Del in the form of “guerrilla warfare practiced within the bounds of social conformity” (Howells, *Private* 75). Although Del *is* the victim of sexual assault, she is repositioned in the story as a symbol of agency. She represents the possibility of being both victim and agent simultaneously, as argued in relation to Schneider in Chapter 2, which is the reality of women’s lives in contemporary patriarchal culture.

Munro also reacts to the radical feminist idea that all aspects of traditional constructions of femininity must be rejected, as must relationships with men, marriage, and motherhood. In Chapter 3, Del's mother Addie is explored in relation to the transmission of anxieties about place from mother to daughter. Addie tries to impart her radical feminist views to Del. However, for Del, both "her mother's repression of femininity" and the "traditional gender scripts" of femininity are "too reductive" (Löschigg 63). Her mother's decision to leave the Flats Road, the family home, and her husband and son, and move to Jubilee suggests a rebellion against gender role expectations. Addie perceives herself as part of a time of change: "All women have had up 'til now has been their connection with men", with "no more lives of our own, really, than domestic animals" (*Lives* 147). According to Munro, Addie is "an old-fashioned feminist" who perceives the situation as "oversimplified" (Hancock 214). She does not allow for nuance or individual variation in relation to what is considered "feminine" or how women should behave in relation to men.

The story suggests inter-generational differences between mother and daughter as Del rejects this perspective, with the implication that it replaces one form of control and limitation with another. Addie advocates the refusal of sexual experience for women in order to avoid being left with what she calls "the burden" (*Lives* 147), by which she means children and the "angel in the house" role. Thus, Addie constructs women as victims and, as Wolf argues, posits "old habits of ladylike behaviour that were cloaked in the guise of radicalism" (*Fire* 156). Munro states that Addie "totally disregards sexual passion" (Hancock 214) and that her intention was to depict Addie's vision as "inadequate" (215). Addie constructs a binary opposition between intelligence and education, and "sexual passion" as she encourages Del to "use your brains. Don't be distracted" (*Lives* 147). However, Del is used to represent changing attitudes towards feminism. She interprets this advice as perpetuating the idea of women as victims only, which is "handed out to women, to girls, advice that assumed being female made you damageable" while men could "take on all kinds of

experiences and shuck off what they didn't want and come back proud. Without even thinking about it, I had decided to do the same" (147). This is a "subversive" act, an appropriation of traditionally masculine power and agency.

A similar instance occurs in "Wild Swans", when Rose is sexually assaulted by a minister on the train to Toronto. Like Del, Rose links sexual encounters with potential violence and domination and has "a considerable longing to be somebody's object. Pounded, pleased, reduced, exhausted" (*TBM* 63). This can be connected with the victim feminist argument about the internalisation of the victim mentality for women. However, it can also suggest a resistance to this victimisation as Rose, like Del, has a desire to "see what will happen" (*TBM* 75). The power dynamic is problematic because Rose is also a teenager, but Munro suggests that, despite the fact that this is a sexual assault, the situation is complicated because Rose has a level of control. She is described in the story as both "victim and accomplice" (*TBM* 77). This links with the statement from Lynch and Fiamengo regarding Munro's challenge to uncomplicated notions of female "innocence". Here, the depiction of Rose's thought processes indicates her rebellion against the socially-instilled idea that she *should* be "innocent": "While her legs stayed crossed she could lay claim to innocence [...] Her legs were never going to open. But they were [...] Invasion, and welcome" (*TBM* 76). Munro is posing questions about "the extent to which women condone male transgression" (Cox, *AM* 97), while also using Del and Rose to highlight the possibility of rejecting the necessity of women's avoidance of sexual experiences to protect themselves from possible danger. They discard notions of shame and guilt for women in relation to sexuality. They refuse the idea of traditional femininity as weak, victimised, or innocent. In addition, through the depiction of Rose's sense of obligation to "claim innocence", the story also suggests the "girling" process which – as depicted through Del's mother and her friend Naomi – imbues girls with a sense of shame and blame for sexual desire, and ties in with the patriarchal expectation and production of women's "failure" to adhere to all of the contradictory aspects

of femininity. The idea that “women condone male transgression” is a form of blaming women for what Butler calls an effect of their gender socialisation. The issue of personal responsibility is central here, as the story provokes questions about the extent to which women have freedom and agency within the heteropatriarchal “regulatory practices” of identity.

This issue of choice in relation to the victimisation of women is addressed repeatedly in Munro’s stories through her female characters. Another example is Juliet’s reference in “Chance”, from *Runaway* (2004), to “going out with the visiting nephew of her thesis adviser last year and being broken into – you couldn’t call it rape, she too was determined – late at night on the ground in Willis Park” (*NSS* 232). Or in “Hateship”, where Sabitha tells Edith about one of her cousins being pressured into having sex with a boy on a boat at the lake because he “threatened to push her out until she agreed to let him do it. So it wasn’t her fault” (*Hateship* 37). The language mirrors conversation between Del and Naomi in *Lives* and is almost identical to the scene in “How I Met My Husband” from *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974). In the latter, Edie recalls creating fantasies with a friend which involved being “out in a boat with a boy and he wouldn’t bring you in to shore unless you did it, or what if somebody got you trapped in a barn, you would have to, wouldn’t you, it wouldn’t be your fault” (*Something* 68). There is almost thirty years between the publication of *Something* in 1974 and *Hateship* in 2001, suggesting the “continuities” in Munro’s work and her continued focus on young female characters battling with the imposition of patriarchal gender expectations. It also indicates the enduring relevance of issues of patriarchal power and the subjugation of women.

Female sexual desire was, and is, regulated through social disapproval and shaming. The perpetuation of gender norms in which femininity means subordination and victimisation links with the suggestion that the only way these characters can express sexual desire is through fantasising about a situation in which they have no agency and are thus

relieved of the socially, politically, and institutionally ingrained sense of shame. Part of this shame is highlighted through an association between sex and silence. For example, Edie's experience with Chris – “he did some other things, not bad things or not in a bad way” (*Something* 71) – is vague because, even years later, she is still unable to express it through language due to social limitations and ingrained shame.

More direct instances of rape and sexual abuse are concealed and repressed in other Munro stories, relating to the issue of personal agency and victimhood expressed through female characters. For example, in “Friend of My Youth”, it is suggested that Robert rapes Ellie while he is still engaged to her sister Flora. This collection overall is an attempt at “writing against the erasure of women's history and the suppression of women's voices” (Howells, *AM* 101). The story is told from a combined perspective of the narrator and her mother and is set in the early twentieth century in rural Ontario. Ellie's rape, marriage, and subsequent miscarriages are examples of the burden to which Addie refers in “Lives”. Social judgements in their community suggest that this is Ellie's punishment for being “a wild tease, a long-haired, impudent, childish girl full of lolloping energy” (*Friend* 9). This links with the construction of “ordinary Canadian” identity in accordance with the wildness-civility binary and with the appropriate “doing” of gender under patriarchal femininity expectations. It highlights the regulation of identity in relation to both gender and place.

Rather than protecting her sister, Flora abides by their extremist Presbyterian religious rules and is silent about Robert's actions. The punishment is for Ellie alone, who “was meek now, no longer flailing or crying. She let Flora fix her up, she let herself be married, she was never wild from that day on” (*Friend* 10). There is little empathy displayed for Ellie, by both Flora and the narrator's mother, who are critical that “Ellie could not do her own work” and that “her numb silence passed off, and she became a complainer” (11). It is unacknowledged that, having failed to adhere to norms of femininity in which she should produce children and care for the family and the household, Ellie is now a prisoner in her

house, marriage, and – because of the lack of approval of birth control and the implicit suggestion of the husband’s right to marital rape – her own body. When Ellie gets cancer, Flora nurses her, but the horror of Ellie’s situation is not discussed. Munro draws on the Southern Ontario Gothic genre here, which can be used to “deal with the uncertainties surrounding the nature of authority and the law and changing attitudes towards sexuality, society, and family structures” (Rudd 10). The story reveals issues of silence, non-communication, and the repressed, and how the house can become “unhomely” through restrictive femininity expectations.

Changing attitudes to feminism are highlighted as the narrator wonders, decades later, about Robert’s experience. She perceives him as the imprisoned one. When recounting the story, her mother – reflecting the language used by Naomi and Sabitha as teenagers – states that he “started everything, in secret. He *did it to Ellie*” (*Friend* 22, emphasis in original). This suggests that silence about rape and sex continues into adulthood, reducing the power of female characters. The narrator’s mother emphasises the injustice of Robert’s actions, but the narrator finds her words “simply exciting” (*Friend* 22). She states that she “didn’t feel any decent revulsion or reasonable indignation. I refused the warning. Not even the fate of Ellie could put me off. Not when I thought of that first encounter – the desperation of it, the ripping and striving” (*Friend* 22). As with Del and Rose, this suggests a resistance to victimisation through making “risky choices” with “bad men”, as Fiamengo states. MacKinnon states that, when it comes to sex, women’s “subordination is eroticised in and as female; in fact, we get off on it to a degree” (“Desire” 260). This indicates that it is not a “subversive” behaviour but another form of identity regulation. MacKinnon argues that “femininity as we know it is how we come to want male dominance, which most emphatically is not in our interest” (“Desire” 260). The narrator in “Friend” enjoys the idea of subjugation, linking it with sexual liberation, and with resistance to the notion of women as victims of male dominance: “I teased myself with the thought of a man’s recklessness and domination”

(*Friend* 22). No clear answer is provided about these “risky choices”. However, Munro is suggesting that unified ideas of what it means to be feminist must be challenged, and that “subversive” feminist acts are possible from within ingrained heteropatriarchal norms. These behaviours do not break out of the dominant power structure, but they *do* reject the notion of the woman’s unquestioned role as diligent wife, mother, and carer, and emphasise women’s sexual desire.

However, Munro always presents contradictions. For Del, for example, “even as she craves self-abandonment [through sexual experiences] she realises it is only a dream from which she must escape” (Howells, *Private* 83). It is a fantasy connected to her self-development and depicted as preceding her eventual decision to leave Jubilee and to use the town and her experiences in her writing, suggesting a connection between gender identity and ideas of belonging. Del’s first sexual relationship is with Garnet French in “Baptizing” and, like the incident with Chamberlain, it is linked with place. There is an urban-rural divide, and their sexual encounters always take place out of town in a partially imagined utopian landscape “where there was perfect security” (*Lives* 181). The ending of the relationship is also connected with the landscape, and the country-town boundary crossing which signals a fluctuation of identity. Del states that as she “walked on into Jubilee I repossess the world”, one which is “unconnected to the life of love, uncoloured by love” (*Lives* 199). She begins to feel like “my old self again – my old devious, ironic, isolated self – beginning to breathe again and stretch and settle” (*Lives* 199). As with Gallant’s characters, such as Sarah in “In the Tunnel”, love is connected with a temporary loss of self and loss of place. Del rejects “that old romantic plot of a woman’s transformation through sex” (Howells, *Private* 84), the narratives and fantasies learned through the process of “girling”. Many of Munro’s protagonists “share that sense of self-possession that comes when love is over” (Howells, *Private* 81). They illustrate the fluidity of “women’s vacillations between complicity with and resistance to” (*Private* 84) what Löschiigg calls the “fairy-tale pattern” (62), which is “based

on the assumption of women being the weaker sex” (64). Despite going through the motions of this break-up, Del quickly sets her mind to getting a job and leaving Jubilee, resolving to “get started on my real life” (*Lives* 201). As with Sarah in “In the Tunnel”, this suggests that Del will be undamaged by these events, and also relates to the issue of movement and the possible transformation of identity.

As discussed in relation to “Train”, “Wild Swans”, and “Providence”, Munro investigates issues of personal agency and gender roles through placing of characters in the liminal space of the train. Set in 1965, “Chance” from the “Juliet” stories, explores these ideas. Juliet is writing her doctorate on Ancient Greek Mythology and recalls her professors’ concern that, being a girl, she was likely to get married and:

[...] waste all her hard work and theirs, and if she did not get married she would probably become bleak and isolated, losing out on promotions to men (who needed them more, as they had to support families). And she would not be able to defend the oddity of her choice of Classics [...] in the way a man could. Odd choices were simply easier for men, most of whom would find women glad to marry them. Not so the other way around. (*NSS* 220)

Munro has a talent for broaching multiple issues simultaneously: sexism, classism, and presumptions about gender roles. This story is set in 1965 and highlights the institutional perpetuation of the control and subjugation of women, the unequal occupational gender divides, and the presumption that success for women relates to their marital status first and their career second. This indoctrination of “gender scripts” is demonstrated through the depiction of Juliet’s reactions to other characters. For example, she moves seats on the train in response to unwanted communication from a male character, even though it inconveniences her, displaying the same attitude which prompts Rose to initially be friendly to the minister on the train in “Wild Swans”: “Be available, be friendly [...] that was what you learned in a small town and also in a girls’ dormitory. Be accommodating to anybody who wants to suck you dry, even if they know nothing about who you are” (*NSS* 223). The ideal of femininity incorporates “a value system of niceness” (Brownmiller 5) and what she

learned through the process of “girling” while at “home” in a small town. The agency Juliet is depicted as displaying through her decision to travel to the house of the man she meets on the train (Eric, from Whale Bay, north of Vancouver) and to wait for him when she gets there, is superseded by her inaction once he returns. She slips into the victim mentality and the ingrained ideas of femininity and subjugation: “He advances on her and she feels herself ransacked from top to bottom, flooded with relief, assaulted by happiness” (*NSS* 243). The language reflects the narratives of Del and Rose in their fantasies, suggesting that such desires for dominance occur in Munro’s female characters, from childhood to adulthood. This points to the ongoing covert socialisation of girls to want and expect male dominance and female subordination.

Similar language appears in “Hateship”, which is set in the mid-1950s. This story also features a train journey, suggesting movement and the crossing of boundaries that are bound up with place and gender identity. Johanna takes a train based on a letter which she believes is from Ken Bourdeau, whose daughter and father she has been looking after in a small Ontario town. The letters were actually written by the daughter Sabitha and her friend Edith. The language the young girls use suggests the socialisation of women into expecting and wanting male dominance, similar to Juliet above, and to the language used by Del, Rose, and the narrator in “Friend”. Edith, posing as Ken, writes to Johanna of “how I would like to crush you in my arms” (*Hateship* 40). Johanna is represented as perceiving this as romantic and equivalent to a marriage proposal. This prompts her to take the train to Saskatchewan. Johanna’s acceptance of, and suggested desire for, this language and the gestures behind it suggests the persistence of women’s subordination into adulthood. These repeated instances of the same narrative highlight Munro’s lasting fascination with this issue, and how interpretations of it change as attitudes towards feminism change over time.

Munro repeatedly presents female characters who are both agents and victims. For example, Johanna is depicted as asserting power and authority over the station agent as she

organises the train to Saskatchewan, a scene that can be connected with Christine in Gallant's "The Pegnitz Junction". The station agent perceives her as failing to "do" femininity correctly. She lacks the aspects of femininity he expects: beauty, uncertainty, gratitude, subservience, niceness. He thus perceives her as desexualised, comparing her to "a plainclothes nun he had seen on television" (*Hateship* 7). This links with what Atwood calls the "Angel/Whore split so popular among the Victorians" (*CP* 171), emphasising the transnational transfer and persistence of imperialist gender norms as well as those relating to national identity. Millet also refers to the perpetuation of distinctions "between whore and matron", in which the "whore" is constructed as enviable due to her "freedom, adventure, and contact with the great world", while the "matron" is enviable due to her "'security' and prestige" (Millet 38) in marriage, with this emphasis on "security" as an indication of the destabilisation of the institution of marriage. This regulatory binary of feminine identity recurs repeatedly throughout these stories, emphasising women's inevitable failure to abide by the contradictory expectations of patriarchal "gender scripts".

Johanna's authority with the station agent is contrasted with her critical self-perception when she goes to Milady's to buy a dress for her imagined marriage to Ken. The "dreamy colours" of the dresses are linked with women's "expectations" and "preposterous hope of transformation, and bliss" (*Hateship* 8). The shop-owner is an example of this, fantasising about being rescued by a man – highlighting the prevalence of the "fairy-tale pattern" – and sacrificing her own comfort for the sake of standards of fashion and beauty that adhere to patriarchal norms. She is "dressed in a black suit with glittery buttons. High heels, thin ankles, girdle so tight her nylons rasped, gold hair skinned back from her made-up face" (*Hateship* 8). This suggests the regulation of femininity through the internalised male gaze, and demonstrates the effects of "girling" on adult women.

Johanna can also be used to examine the learned "angel in the house" role. She voluntarily cleans Ken's furniture, which is symbolic of the work that women impose on

themselves in relation to caring for the needs of others and domestic chores. When, upon arriving in Gdynia, Johanna finds Ken in need of a carer and house-keeper, she immediately fills this role, taking on the same jobs she carried out for her previous employer. The narrative briefly shifts into an omniscient perspective to note: “You could say a case like his was right up her alley” (*Hateship* 53). Women are allotted, and take on, caregiving roles because “men have valued [women] according to the care [they] give them” (MacKinnon, “Difference” 348). However, Munro demands that her reader acknowledge the complexity of identity. Johanna undertakes the “angel in the house” role, but she is also self-assured. She instigates this new life with Ken by making the journey to Gdynia. She decides that they will move to British Columbia and that with the furniture – which she made fit for purpose and transported – they “have got all we need to furnish a home” (*Hateship* 52). Although she is still bound by patriarchal expectations of femininity, she controls the development of her life with Ken. This suggests a form of local or “informal” power which, Munro suggests, can exist despite the victimisation of women through male dominance. It points to the development of forms of power by women through the mid- to late-twentieth century.

This idea of victimisation is also explored through female characters who wait for contact from male characters. For example, in “How I Met My Husband”, fifteen-year-old Edie, who works as housekeeper for a middle-class family in post-war rural South-western Ontario, waits for contact from airplane pilot Chris Watters, “till it came to me one day there were women doing this with their lives, all over” (*Something* 76). Munro highlights the character’s choice that “if there were women all through life waiting, and women busy and not waiting, I knew which I had to be” (*Something* 76). She chooses to marry the post-man, and this decision is depicted as practical and positioned in opposition to love and passion, which she must now “pass up and never know about” (76). This suggests the radical feminist viewpoint represented by Addie in *Lives*, and though it is an exploration of personal agency for a female character, it is what Wolf calls “old habits” of regulated femininity “in the guise

of radicalism” (*Fire* 156). It is a requirement of the correct “doing” of her gender – according to the norms of the 1950s – that she get married, and in order to gain “informal” power in that situation she rejects the “bad” man, to use Fiamengo’s term, and his connection with sex and passion. She thus exchanges one form of confinement and regulation for another.

Rose also oscillates between victim and agent in “Simon’s Luck”. She initially perceives herself as under the control of her lover, Simon. She traces this back to her relationship with Patrick, in which she learned to become “the beggar maid” in alignment with Patrick’s image of her as an inspirational and beautiful mythic lady, similar to “the angel in the house”. He saw Rose as socially inferior to him and financially dependent on him: “Never since Patrick had she been the free person, the one with that power; maybe she had used it all up” (*TMB* 210). Rose represents a questioning of contemporary gynocentric feminist attitudes from the 1970s. She sees having the freedom to make her own choices as synonymous with having power over a man, though feminist perspectives at the time argued that women were naturally more egalitarian and peaceful than men. Rose claims power over Patrick in “The Beggar Maid” when she ends their relationship and then reverses her decision, only to finally end it again many years later. Beran states that Rose’s treatment of Patrick “contrasts vividly with traditional images of women as nurturing, healing, reconciling enemies, giving life” (“Images” 59). Munro challenges these restrictive definitions of feminism, depicting Rose as rejecting the victim role in her subsequent relationship with Simon, and refusing the “waiting” to which the narrator refers in “How I Met My Husband”. This decision is bound up with movement, as she impulsively travels across the country seeking renewal and transformation. The story suggests that Rose has learned from the power imbalances in her past relationships and now seeks to avoid her ingrained response to a man’s rejection of “watch-pot thinking” (*TBM* 208). This refers to waiting for him to contact her, and perceiving herself as victimised. This movement from Ontario all the way to Vancouver suggests agency and freedom as “never since Patrick had she been the free

person, the one with the power” (*TBM* 173). This can be read as a “subversive” behaviour that challenges the regulation of gender appropriate behaviour.

Rose’s impulsive travel is different to Juliet’s or Johanna’s because her movement means travelling *away* from the relationship into the unknown. However, the difficulty of escaping confining femininity norms and learned behaviours is highlighted in the story when she reaches Manitoba and stops at a restaurant, and she does her hair and make-up and “put on that distant, dreamy, short-sighted look women wear when they think some man may be watching them” (*TBM* 211). Despite the distance Rose has travelled, she imagines Simon’s gaze on her and alters her behaviour and appearance accordingly. Patriarchal culture has developed so that the male gaze “resides within the consciousness of most women: They stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other” (Bartky 283). This means that the woman’s sense of self “as a distinct and valuable individual” depends on how she feels she is perceived by others, and what she knows how to do in abiding by the rules of femininity (Bartky 286). It is too simplistic to argue that Rose represents a woman who engages in self-victimisation because this behaviour is *learned* and is an *effect* that has been produced through politically and institutionally-sanctioned behavioural and psychological doctrines. Her cross-country nomadic movement suggests the difficulty – perhaps the impossibility – in escaping this form of control and limitation for women, which is not an issue for male characters such as Jackson in “Train”. However, Rose is depicted as gaining a sense of freedom “with distance” (*TBM* 211). Like Del, this freedom is connected to the landscape and, as she travels Rose discovers that “the world had stopped being a stage where she might meet him, and gone back to being itself” (*TBM* 212). Munro repeatedly returns to this theme, the idea that “love removes the world from you” (*TBM* 212). This question is also posed by Gallant through characters such as Molly in “The Remission”: whether women must “cease to love” in order

to obtain personal independence and power, and whether hegemonic power structures continue to act on them regardless of such choices.

This is also examined in “Bardon Bus” from *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), which is set in Toronto, a rare example of a Munro story set in an urban space. While characters like Del and Rose are used to investigate victimisation and power in relation to a relationship break-up in a rural landscape, this story explores how the narrator’s break-up is bound up with the city. She is staying with her bohemian friend Kay in an apartment on the corner of Queen Street and Bathurst. The narrator’s experience is juxtaposed with Kay’s who, when in relationships, adopts “an air of cherished helplessness, appalling to behold” which is followed by “the struggle either to free herself or to keep him from freeing himself”, and the narrator points out that “in none of this is she so exceptional. She does what women do” (*Moons* 116). Another example of this self-victimisation occurs in “Accident” from the same collection, when Frances is waiting to hear from her married lover Ted after the death of his son. The language mirrors descriptions by Edie in “How I Met My Husband”, as Frances waits for contact from her lover: “Every morning she walked to the post office and there was nothing from him” (*Moons* 96) and thus “torture[s] herself” (*Moons* 97). These characters are in a “locked situation”, and while they appear to choose to perceive themselves as victim, this behaviour is an effect of the dominant power structure.

Issues of power and victimisation in “Bardon Bus” are also explored through the ingrained expectations of femininity that are bound up with physical appearance and sexual attractiveness. The character of Dennis is used to suggest the harmful potential of the “fairy-tale pattern” and romance narratives. He proposes that these are evidence for the “natural” restriction of women’s choices as they age, and the connection of women’s worth with their physical attractiveness and sexual desirability in accordance with patriarchal standards of femininity: “It’s in all the novels and it’s in life too. Men fall in love with younger women. The new marriage, new babies, new families” (*Moons* 121). The narrator, rather than

challenging him, demonstrates her belief in “natural” sex roles, stating that “it’s probably biologically correct for men to go after younger women. There’s no use whining about it” (*Moons* 121). This highlights how gender inequality has been internalised by women, and points to the self-policing and disciplining of the female body by women. Rather than questioning Dennis’s comments, the narrator goes shopping because she “suddenly can’t bear” (*Moons* 124) her own clothes. In her criticism of her own body, she reflects the idea that the female body must abide by unrealistic standards of a constructed femininity.

These ideas about aging and the internalised male gaze also occur in “Lichen”, from *The Progress of Love* (1986). Changing attitudes to feminism can be observed through these stories, as Munro highlights the complexity of gender and power issues. The character of Stella harks back to Mrs Fullerton in “The Shining Houses”. Her garden is an Edenic space which is invaded by her ex-husband David and his new partner Catherine. The landscape is linked with Stella’s female body as the story is initially told from David’s perspective and male gaze: “There is nothing underneath these clothes, as far as he can see, to support or restrain any part of her” (*Progress* 32). By not abiding by the restrictive rules of femininity, David views her appearance as a sign of wildness and lack of control – which is bound up with the landscape around her house – and sees her body as purposeful slight against himself and other men:

There’s the sort of woman who has to come bursting out of the female envelope at this age, flaunting fat or indecent scrawniness, sprouting warts and facial hair, refusing to cover pasty veined legs, almost gleeful about it, as if this was what she’d wanted to do all along. Manhaters, from the start. You can’t say a thing like that out loud nowadays. (*Progress* 33)

This attitude highlights the unified stereotype of radical feminism which demands the rejection of men and any beauty norms that are considered to conform to and therefore strengthen patriarchal femininity standards. Failing to adhere to norms of femininity “is to appear not to care about men, and to risk the loss of their attention and approval. To be insufficiently feminine is viewed as a failure in core sexual identity, or as a failure to care

sufficiently about oneself” (Brownmiller 3). David’s use of the term “the female envelope” connects gender norms with biological sex, naturalising these socially-constructed expectations and patterns of behaviour. It proposes that being confined in an “envelope”, being “restrained”, is a right and natural condition for women, and that Stella maintaining a desire to break out of this “all along” is deceitful and devious towards him. It also links with the settler colonial mentality discussed in Chapter 3 and the learned connection between masculinity, the wilderness, domination, and control.

From a postcolonial perspective, the female body, “like the land itself, is invariably seen as sublime and dangerous, empty and wild and, in either case, requiring the taming and penetrating effects of masculinist imperialism” (Kulperger, “Familiar” 111). Despite the fact that it makes Stella less physically comfortable, he is pleased when she later “put on a brassiere” and the strap “is visible, biting the flesh of her shoulder” (*The Progress* 37). His comment that this sexism is no longer socially acceptable – with the implication that this is another a wrong perpetrated against him, personally – links with similar social restrictions on unacceptable behaviour or speech such as ageism, racism, or xenophobia and also with the endurance of the victim mentality in “ordinary Canadian” masculinity. It signifies that the perpetuation of gender inequality has not disappeared but become more covert, uncommunicated but maintained in thought and clandestine action, by both men and women, making it more difficult to challenge.

This gender inequality is bound up with capitalism and the commercialisation of the female body. Women’s internalisation of the male gaze is further explored in “Lichen” when Stella and David observe Catherine as she sits on the beach: “She could be posed for a picture. She might be advertising something, Stella thinks – either something very intimate, and potentially disgusting, or something truly respectable, and rather splendid, like life insurance” (*The Progress* 39). This suggests the ubiquity of use of the female form for public consumption, regardless of context, and the ways in which people impose their own

perceptions and expectations onto the image of a woman. Through the regulation of femininity, patriarchal rhetoric can label women as “disgusting” or “splendid”, and the woman has no control over these arbitrary distinctions.

A woman remains within patriarchal social structures as long as she “cannot escape seeing herself as she is seen” (Redekop 18). In “Lichen”, David shows Stella a photograph of his “new girl”, Dina, whose pubic hair Stella describes as “like lichen” (*Progress* 41). Dina’s body is discussed before she is named by David. The praising of Dina and her body as wild, something needing to be tamed, is at odds with David’s criticisms of Stella, suggesting that wildness is permissible in women only when they are young and sexually appealing to a man (consider the fate of Ellie in “Friend of My Youth”). According to Susan Sontag, “to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and therefore, like power” (2). Photographs imply possession and objectification of what is photographed. Another example of this occurs in “Carried Away” from *Open Secrets* (1994), where Jack Agnew asks Louisa to send a photograph of herself to him while he is fighting in the First World War. When he returns, the power dynamic between them is unequal because he knows what she looks like. She becomes conscious that he could be watching her, and the story depicts the power of the (internalised) male gaze and its ability to control women’s freedoms and movements.

This social judgement of women based on their appearance recurs consistently in Munro’s stories. The propensity for women to feel shame at their lack of adherence to femininity norms “is a measure of the extent to which all women have internalised patriarchal standards of bodily acceptability” (Bartky 286). In “Simon’s Luck”, Rose imagines that Simon would one day reject her because her body would start to age, and she “would have to be ashamed of, burdened by, the whole physical fact of herself, the whole outspread naked digesting putrefying fact” (*TBM* 210). In contrast, “his body would not be in question, it never would be” (*TBM* 210). These characters highlight how women have internalised the

idea that “a gendered body often means a sexualised body, a body disciplined into a sexually ‘attractive’ appearance and demeanour. This performance of sexual desirability is often equated with ‘female sexuality’” (Jackson and Scott 15) which is reduced to way a woman looks. Similarly, in “Lichen”, David’s physical appearance is undescribed. But his sexism stems from his own fear of aging. David is with Catherine because she is young. He was attracted by her “remnants of girlishness” but she “had aged since then” (*Progress* 34). David infantilises both women.

This attitude aligns with the idea, drawing on Beauvoir, that “a woman is appraised first *as a woman*” (Young 176, emphasis in original). Success for a woman is based on her relationship to that the definition and whether she is perceived – by others and herself – to conform to “the requirements of feminine attractiveness, is indifferent to them, or rebels against them” (Young 176). There were women in the 1960s and 1970s who resisted the rise of feminism, arguing that women “dress well and do their hair to please themselves, not because men require it of them” (Young 179). However, because the male gaze has been internalised by women, and because patriarchal social and political structures are still dominant in Western societies, a woman who abides by accepted femininity norms and who is considered physically beautiful is likely to be more socially successful, when success is quantified in terms of employment and interpersonal relationships (Bartky 283). Munro’s stories can also be used to challenge the idea of what success means to different female characters. She challenges the imperative to only portray “strong” and successful female characters, which denies the ongoing existence of gender inequality.

This is evidenced in “Memorial”, which engages with the feminist debates of the 1970s and complicates the “Angel/Whore” binary. Eileen is positioned in opposition to her sister June, who is efficient, pragmatic, and non-sexual while Eileen is divorced, sexually active, and lives a more nomadic and less controlled life. She sees herself as “a hospitable woman, particularly when drunk” (*Something* 259). Munro deconstructs the “Angel/Whore”

binary through the character of Eileen and her perceptions about the female body. Eileen has sex with her sister's husband at his request, in an effort to comfort him at their son's funeral. Through her, Munro highlights the ideas about the female body explored in "Simon's Luck" and "Lichen":

A woman's body. Before and during the act [men] seem to invest this body with certain individual powers, they will say its name in a way that indicates something particular, something unique, that is sought for. Afterwards it appears that they have changed their minds, they wish it understood that such bodies are interchangeable. Women's bodies. (*Something* 261)

Through Eileen, Munro questions whether women remain victims in sexual relationships while patriarchal power acts on them, including the (internalised) male gaze and the objectification of the female body, as well as its commodification and its "use". Eileen offers the reader the chance to question how feminist ideas of sexual liberation can progress beyond the reality of the continuation of male hegemony and the fact that men "invest" the woman's body – divested of an individual self – with power only while it is beneficial, after which that power is removed, and women's subordinate position restored. Eileen is depicted as less successful than her sister in accordance with expected social norms – wealth (and thus power), marital status, security – though both are depicted as lacking control and autonomy.

The narrator's aunt Beryl in "The Progress of Love" can also be used to examine the link between expectations of feminine beauty and personal success. To the narrator, Beryl's physical appearance acts like a disguise, what Redekop refers to as "camouflage" (11): "She was so noisy and shiny, so glamorously got up, that it was hard to tell whether she was good-looking, or happy, or anything" (*Progress* 16). The narrator recalls watching Beryl style her hair, and notes that she "would be doing the same myself, a couple of years later" (*Progress* 17). The female body is influenced and moulded by women in a process of reproduction and "girling" that is passed on from generation to generation, enforced by "less explicit teaching" from "media images of perfect female beauty", which reinforce "a pervasive sense of bodily deficiency" for women (Bartky 283). The failure of women to be successful at "doing"

femininity rests not just on the inability to achieve an idealised standard of femininity, but also on the fact that success in presenting a beautiful body elicits not just praise and admiration but ridicule “for the triviality of their interest” in make-up and fashion (Bartky 284). This makes failures in some way inevitable, perpetuating male dominance and female subordination.

In “Dulse” from *The Moons of Jupiter*, Lydia categorises herself as worth less, or less successful, because she perceives herself as less sexually attractive to men now that she is older and divorced with two grown up children. Lydia is staying at a guest house on a trip to the Maritimes and is depicted as wanting to take time alone. Yet she ends up spending most of her time with the workmen also staying there. Her self-construction rests on how she perceives herself through the male gaze. This character is also adjusting to a romantic break-up and, when considering the power imbalance in her relationship with Duncan, she “asks herself what gave him his power? She knows who did. But she asks what, and when – when did all the transfer take place, when was the abdication of all pride and sense? (*Moons* 50). She recognises that “she made him a present of such power” (*Moons* 55). However, rather than arguing that Lydia simply makes herself a victim, Munro presents the impossibility of erasing the internalised male gaze and the associated self-criticism.

Some of Munro’s stories suggest a possible resistance to these limitations through creativity, for example, Del’s decision to use Jubilee to create a Gothic novel. Howells states that Munro examines the “dualities experienced by women artists whose creative powers conflicted with conventional feminine expectations” (*AM* 105). When ideas of success are socially determined by adherence to expectations of femininity, many of Munro’s female characters are depicted as being perceived as failures. For example, in “Lichen” Stella self-deprecatingly refers to herself as “quite the budding authoress” (*Progress* 35), but there is a suggestion that, because she lacks a new relationship, she has failed as a woman and is filling

her life with numerous distracting projects including housework, cleaning, and creativity as a way of exercising control and informal power.

In “Meneseteung” from *Friend of My Youth*, Munro presents a character who can be read as challenging this idea of failure. The story is narrated by a fictional historian investigating the life of a nineteenth-century poet named Almeda Joynt Roth from a town in “the wilds of Canada West” (*Friend* 51). Almeda is described as a “poetess” (*Friend* 50). For both her and Stella, the house is a place of safety, but both characters are also depicted as connected to the landscape. Through Almeda’s relationship with her neighbour, Jarvis Poulter, the story explores Almeda’s potential resistance to expected gender roles through her desire to maintain an independent and self-reliant relationship with the landscape despite the learned requirement that she get married. As explored with Del and Rose, she sees love and marriage as potentially disconnecting her from the landscape, which she would prefer to experience alone, without this “talk and preoccupations” (*Friend* 61). Her identity as “ordinary Canadian” and the complications of her relationship with the land are perceivable, as her poetry depicts early settler life and the claiming of the “raw countryside just wrenched from the forest” (61). However, the landscape is used as a method of defying male dominance and power as she rejects marriage to focus on her poetry. She writes a poem about the river, the Meneseteung, renamed Maitland (another example of the settler colonial erasure of First Nations peoples), the flow of which links with the flow of her menstrual blood. Through using her creativity to challenge femininity expectations, she represents a rejection of shame about the body that is imposed on women in order to strengthen hegemonic control and discipline. Almeda’s body thus becomes a “site of resistance”. Howells suggests that she “slips out of the safe spaces of home into the wilderness space of her imagination, escaping from the orthodox feminine role through writing” (*AM* 111). She proposes that Almeda became mentally unstable through overuse of laudanum and that “the wilderness has claimed another of its victim” (*AM* 111). A similarity can be discerned here

with Atwood's Moodie in *Journals* and the learned settler fear of the wilderness. However, this adheres to wilderness-civilisation, interior-exterior binaries, which are more likely to be challenged in Munro stories. Atwood argues that the wilderness is "refreshing" and "renewing" (*ST* 132) for the Almeda in Munro's story, and suggests that it detaches her from the socially constructed requirement to abide by gender norms. However, the idea of female characters, and female bodies, as more "naturally" connected to the (pseudo)wilderness highlights a problematic and oversimplified use of a gynocentric feminist approach which occludes women's capacity to exhibit a desire for power and control, as is discussed further through Atwood's stories.

(ii) Marriage and Motherhood: Questions of Confinement and Freedom

Munro deals with the victim/agent argument in relation to marriage and motherhood in mid- to late-twentieth-century Canada. Her interview with Beyersbergen, as discussed in the Introduction to this chapter, suggests that Munro viewed motherhood as restrictive for women during the 1950s, as indicated by Friedan's "feminine mystique". Munro states that women in working-class communities had power and that there was "no sense in [her] community of the women being victims of society or the men" (Hancock 223). However, her marriage to James Munro and relocation to Victoria, and then Vancouver, signalled a movement into a more middle-class, suburban life. This imbued her with informal power in the way Gallant's Red Queens had power, on a comparative and capitalist scale of success and appropriate femininity. However, it also sapped her of power on a practical level, as she states in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2005:

I found it hard to be young. When I was married in my twenties, I hated being regarded as 'the little wife'. You don't know what it was like then! I'd never even written a cheque. I had to ask my husband for money for groceries. (France)

Through her stories, Munro addresses these power issues. In conforming to "gender scripts" and the expectation for young women to get married and have children, her female

characters are evidence of the effects of hegemonic power structures. However, Munro's stories also provide characters who engage in "subversive" behaviours to challenge the victim/agent binary. Many of Munro's mother characters are "torn by competing but equally compelling needs for freedom and domesticity" (Murphy 14). As with Gallant's stories, these characters are not used to suggest that marriage and motherhood should be rejected, nor do they deny the controlling and confining effects of these institutional structures on women.

For example, in "Tell me Yes or No" the narrator compares the freedoms of young women in the 1970s (when the story was written) with the limitations imposed on women during the 1950s when the narrator was a young mother. While in her twenties, she "was sleepily rinsing diapers" and pushing a stroller "so habitually that without this prop my arms felt a disturbing lightness" (*Something* 124). She illustrates the propensity for self-victimisation: "We are pitied for this bygone drudgery [...] we pity ourselves" (*Something* 125). She states that there was comfort in these "ritual labours" (125), suggesting the control of women through the normalisation of habitual behaviours that contribute to this heteropatriarchal system. The collective dissatisfaction of 1950s housewives is complicated by women's learned desire for regulation and fear of self-autonomy, which highlights the effects of patriarchal power. The narrator refers to "the catalogue of delusions we subscribed to in the fifties" (*Something* 126), and states that there was something "appealing" in the "heaviness and docility, our love of limits" (126). This relates to Atwood's "Rapunzel Syndrome" and the depiction of characters who have internalised heteropatriarchal attitudes and behaviours to the extent that they impose confining and limiting norms on themselves.

Atwood identifies the "Rapunzel Syndrome" as a trend in Canadian literature for female characters to have "internalised the values of their culture to such an extent that they have become their own prisons" (*Survival* 209). The character is imprisoned, perhaps by a male character, and confined by "the attitudes of society, symbolised usually by her house and children which society says she must not abandon" (209). Atwood argues that "heroines

have internalised the values of their culture to such an extent that they have become their own prisons” (209). These rituals and habits are also explored in “Mischief”, when Rose and Jocelyn are in hospital after the birth of their children. The other women in the maternity ward are Red Queen figures, representing women in the 1950s who perceived feminists as trying to “devalue traditional womanhood” and who argued that “many women take pride in the homes they decorate and bring warmth to and regard caring for children as a noble vocation” (Young 179). Because abiding by these femininity norms conveys these women with “informal” power, challenging or deconstructing them “threatens women with a certain de-skilling” and “calls into question that aspect of personal identity which is tied to the development of a sense of competence” (Bartky 287). Many anti-feminists sought to protect the “traditional family”, which they perceived as under threat. However, the “naturalness” of the nuclear family is a twentieth-century myth. For example, prior to World War II, immediate family often included grandparents, aunt, uncles, and cousins (Nicholson 28). The North American 1950s heteronormative family developed due to “historically specific factors” (Nicholson 28), including losses suffered in WWII, the “baby boom”, and the development of suburban living. The nuclear family is an institution that is maintained due to political and social control and the suppression of non-productive sexual relationships, and links with the broader regulation of identity, in Canada and on an international scale.

In “Mischief”, Jocelyn displays a “subversive” challenge to restrictive contemporary expectations of domesticity and motherhood. While the other female characters discuss housework and how best to vacuum, she reads “as if she was in a library, at college, as if she was researching for a paper, and this world of other women had never closed down on her at all” (*TBM* 123). The response to Rose and Jocelyn laughing at these femininity norms and expectations is dismay and outrage as the female characters draw on the idea of the “good” mother, an identity which is constituted through selflessness and nurturing. Rose and Jocelyn are told that “if they didn’t stop the way they carried on they would sour their milk” (*TBM*

125), suggesting a connection between appropriate feminine behaviour and female biological functioning, and are “asked if they were fit to be mothers” (126).

Munro’s preoccupation with the expectations of motherhood persists over time. For example, in “Miles City, Montana” from *The Progress of Love*, she continues to explore what it means to be “fit to be a mother”. The narrator provides evidence of the internalisation of the male gaze and the association of sexuality with an unmarried woman, as explored in “Lichen”. Now she is a mother, she dreads becoming “the kind whose body sagged, who moved in a woolly-smelling, milky-smelling fog, solemn with trivial burdens” (*Progress* 90). Munro suggests that motherhood need not be like this, however. Just as Rose idealises Jocelyn in “Mischief”, the narrator in “Miles City” idealises “professional mothers” who are “indomitable” and maintain a sense of humour that sounds “clear above the milky fog” (*Progress* 90). These mothers have gained power through their careers, humour, and intelligence, suggesting that definitions of success can be varied. The narrator is presented as feeling unempowered in her role as wife and mother, as her husband chastises her for not putting lettuce in their sandwiches and tells her that she is “basically selfish and basically untrustworthy” (*Progress* 92). This is an accusation that she has failed to be a “good” mother and an “angel in the house”. The instance in which their daughter Meg is in danger of drowning while the narrator takes time to herself links with the idea that a mother wanting personal independence and freedom is selfish and deceitful, an argument which also occurs between Patrick and Rose in “Providence”, and Del and Garnet in “Baptising”.

This idea of bad motherhood is addressed repeatedly in Munro’s stories. Kruk argues that “gender scripts” relate to “the cultural constructedness of family roles” (35). The idea that women are “naturally nurturing and maternal” works to “construct norms then regulate how people ‘should’ act. So a woman who is not maternal is abnormal” (Dallos and Dallos 109). This issue is also investigated in the “Juliet” story “Soon”, which is set in the 1970s. Juliet returns home from British Columbia to rural South-western Ontario to visit her

parents with her daughter Penelope. She sees herself as a “bad” mother, influenced by the pragmatic gaze of her father’s housekeeper Irene. However, she is proud to be returning “home” and perceived as “like any other woman, pushing her baby. Concerned about the diaper soap” (*NSS* 254), rather than a doctoral student of Classics. This sets education in opposition to motherhood, and points to the social judgements and limitations of the small town. Another example of this occurs in “Providence”, where Rose’s daughter Anna lives with her briefly after Rose has left Patrick and moved to a small town in the Kootenay mountains. Rose tries to balance work, financial and physical independence, and an affair with a married man who lives in Calgary. However, Patrick suggests that Anna should return to Vancouver to live with him and his fiancé – described as “stable” – rather than “traipsing around with Rose in her new independent existence” (*TBM* 187). Patrick is used to suggest the patriarchal expectation for women to conform to appropriate feminine behaviours, which include the “angel in the house”, “good” wife and mother role, and exclude the desire for independence and sexuality. This aligns with a contemporary belief that “a lack of ambition [...] or a sacrificial willingness to set personal ambition aside” is “proof of the nurturant feminine nature which, if absent” suggests a flaw in “femaleness itself” (Brownmiller 172). This conflation of gender with sex is a regulatory practice which, through language, polices women’s conformity to patriarchal norms.

Rose conforms to these norms in “Mischief”, displaying the power of “girthing” and its effects on adult women. Despite Jocelyn’s “subversive” behaviour at the hospital, both she and Rose prioritise their husbands’ needs over their own. Jocelyn views women as “naturally” limited in their choices and men as superior: “These were the ideas of most well-educated, thoughtful, even unconventional or politically radical young women of the time. One of the reasons Rose did not share them was that she had not been well educated” (*TBM* 128). This emphasises the idea that patriarchal social and political norms are systemically ingrained in women through institutions such as schools and colleges. Part of Rose’s

“failure” as Patrick’s wife is her inability to maintain his grand house according to the “angel in the house” role. Jocelyn criticises Rose for her compulsive need to clean, suggesting that this represents an inability to deal with domestic disorder, which is a form of control over women. This link between housework, cleanliness, and organisation is relevant to many Munro stories, including “Boys and Girls” and “Hateship”, and is used to highlight control over women in the domestic space. In “Memorial”, for example, Eileen is differentiated from June based on sexuality, marital status, and motherhood, but also on the ability to keep an orderly house: “The kitchen, at a quarter past nine in the morning, was shining like the kitchen in an ad. The dishes were all in the dishwasher” (*Something* 243). Eileen does not own a dishwasher and does not know how to operate this one. This, combined with Eileen’s sexual relationships, results in her belief that, “compared to June, she did live irresponsibly” (243), and “while Eileen’s life took shape any way at all, blown apart by crises, deflected by pleasures, June’s life was built, planned, lived deliberately, *filled*” (248, emphasis in original). Life is “filled” by a husband, children, and domesticity. June’s method of dealing with the loss of her son is to occupy herself constantly with domestic chores and taking care of other people, in accordance with the “angel in the house” role.

Being in the house is juxtaposed with nomadic movement, and “the process of travel, involving as it does removal from quotidian obligations and attachments” can mean a movement towards “revelation” (Murphy 16), although family often “militates against change” (17) for female characters. Rose and Eileen are nomadic divorcees, freed from domestic duties. For the narrator of “Miles City”, as a mother, wife, and writer, movement suggests freedom – as symbolised by the road trip across Canada – while the house is a place of confinement: “In my own house, I seemed to be often looking for a place to hide – sometimes from the children but more often from the jobs to be done and the phone ringing and the sociability of the neighbourhood” (*Progress* 88). She seeks time and space to engage in her creative work as a writer, to be “a watcher, not a keeper” (*Progress* 88). Creative and

personal freedom are thus presented as oppositional to the demands of family and domestic life, and a “good” mother is expected to put the needs of her family first.

In “Winter Wind” from *Something*, the narrator’s mother is representative of a woman who fails to abide by the “angel in the house” role and fails to “do” her gender correctly. Her relatives show little sympathy for her Parkinson’s Disease, which is unnamed and undiagnosed. The young narrator has internalised these ideas about femininity, motherhood, and domesticity and recognises that her mother’s socially-determined failure rests on her inability to properly manage the domestic space. The narrator’s grandmother’s house is presented in opposition to this, a place of “all wood, polished, fragrant, smooth, cozy as the inside of a nutshell”, whereas “at home”, “dirt and chaos threatened all the time” (*Something* 224). The grandmother and grand-aunt demand “a report on our household routine. Had we got the washing done, had we got the washing dried, had we got the ironing done? The baking? My father’s socks mended?” (227). If her grandmother were to visit, the narrator would have to clean the house herself:

But I never cleaned thoroughly enough, my reorganisation proved to be haphazard, the disgraces came unfailingly to light, and it was clear how we failed, how disastrously we fell short, of that ideal of order and cleanliness, household decency, which I as much as anybody else believed in. Believing in it was not enough. And it was not just for myself but for my mother that I had to feel shame. (*Something* 227)

These ideas about “good” and “bad” motherhood are also examined in “The Ottawa Valley”. The narrator recalls returning as a child to her mother’s family home-place. In a gesture that abides by the selfless “good” mother script, the narrator remembers her mother removing a safety pin from her own slip so that the narrator could pin up her damaged underwear and avoid being embarrassed in church with her family. The older narrator is represented as feeling a conflicted combination of guilt and regret for not properly communicating her love for her mother, and infuriation with her mother as her Parkinson’s Disease developed. As a child, the narrator believed her mother “gave her consent” (*Something* 283) to the illness, engaging in a “display” of weakness in order to obtain sympathy and to enact “revenge”

(285). This represents the internalisation of expectations of “good” motherhood in the child, and the mother’s perceived failure to adhere to this role.

Munro’s continued fixation on this theme is evident in “The Love of a Good Woman” published in a collection of the same name in 2000, which focuses on Enid who is a housekeeper character, a “saint” (*Love* 44). However, the story challenges what it means to be a “good” woman as she is a nurse who falls in love with her patient’s husband Robert and may, the story suggests, have engineered the woman’s murder in order to replace her. Munro regularly depicts similar husband characters who care for, or perhaps just barely tolerate, a sick wife, including Robert and his wife in this story and Robert and Ellie in “Friend”. Carrington points out Munro’s repeated use of “prison metaphors” (187), in which mothers are confined to their houses due to illness. In “Soon”, Sam is depicted as resenting Sara for her failure to adhere to the “angel in the house” role. Like the mother in “Winter Wind”, Sara fails at domestic expectations. In contrast, Irene, according to Sam, is a “bringer of peace and order” (*NSS* 262) who “restored [his] faith in women” (*NSS* 262), suggesting that womanhood for him is bound up with this domestic order and control, which Sara has lost. Sam tells Juliet that he has:

come home to the washing machine in the middle of the kitchen floor and wet clothes all over the place. And some baking mess she’d started on and given up on, stuff charred to a crisp in the oven. I was scared she’d set herself on fire. Set the house on fire. I’d tell her and tell her, stay in bed. But she wouldn’t and then she’d be all in this mess, crying. I tried a couple of girls coming in and they just couldn’t handle her. So then – Irene. (*NSS* 261)

There is little compassion for the sick mother character. Sara recognises her own failure, stating: “What a useless piece of goods I am” (*NSS* 263). She perceives herself as a form of property, whose worth is dependent on her ability to observe this “good” wife and mother role. This suggests the successful and continued concealment of the overarching hegemonic structure, and women’s internalisation of “failures” in conforming to femininity expectations as an individual problem rather than a systemic issue.

In contrast, the narrator of “The Moons of Jupiter”, Janet, is used to explore selfishness in a mother character. She is taking care of her father before what is likely a terminal operation and recalls an incident in Vancouver when doctors feared that her own daughter, Nichola, had leukaemia:

There was a care – not a withdrawal exactly but a care – not to feel anything much. I saw how the forms of love might be maintained with a condemned person but with the love in fact measured and disciplined, because you have to survive. (*Moons* 230)

This is a form of self-protection, the same kind employed in many Munro stories by daughters towards their mothers, such as with Helen and Maddy in “The Peace of Utrecht”. But here is an example of how a mother applies this self-protection to a daughter, which is considered selfish by characters such as Andrew in “Miles City” and Patrick in “Providence”. “Good” mothers are supposed to prioritise the needs of others over their own, especially their children. The relationship between Janet and Nichola is a precursor to Munro’s more detailed exploration of a similar relationship, between Juliet and Penelope in “Soon” and “Silence”. Both instances see the daughter drawing away, emotionally and physically, due to coldness and selfishness shown by the mother. In “Silence”, Penelope’s disappearance is attributed – through social judgement represented through the character of Joan from the Spiritual Balance Centre – to Juliet’s failure to deliver the appropriate nurturing, especially after Penelope’s father’s death. Juliet does not try to seek out Penelope. Many years later, she encounters an old friend of Penelope’s and learns that her daughter is living “way up north” and has five children. As with Janet’s decision about Nichola in “The Moons”, Juliet decides:

[There] was nothing to worry about, or hold herself in wait for, concerning Penelope. Penelope was not a phantom, she was safe, as far as anybody is safe, and she was happy as anybody is happy. She had detached herself from Juliet and very likely from the memory of Juliet, and Juliet could not do better than to detach herself in turn. (*NSS* 293)

Nonetheless, the narrative suggests that Juliet will continue to wait. In comparison to instances of female characters “waiting” for men and romance, this waiting becomes Juliet’s life. The title, “Silence”, is ironic because this is what many female Munro characters seek,

such as in “Miles City”, and because silence can be a form of resistance to patriarchal power. It is also ironic that Penelope is presumably named after the wife of Odysseus in Greek Mythology (the subject of Juliet’s abandoned doctoral thesis), who waited twenty years for her husband’s return. Penelope appears to reject this connection and redirects the waiting back on to her mother. There is a sense that this waiting is Juliet’s punishment for lacking the selflessness required to be a “good” mother, for “lacking in motherly inhibitions and propriety and self-control” (NSS 293). Munro does not provide answers on this, but emphasises the complexities in identity construction in relation to femininity and motherhood.

Munro has continued to write about mothers throughout her career. “Dimensions” from *Too Much Happiness* (2009) was published when Munro was seventy-eight years old and highlights the psychological depth that Munro’s writing has developed in relation to her characterisation and descriptions, as well as the way perceptions of gender inequality have changed over time. In this story, Doree’s submissiveness to her abusive and murderous husband Lloyd is displayed through her subtle repetition and reproduction of Lloyd’s opinions. Her psychologist Mrs Sands also influences her self-perception and self-construction, suggesting the social, familial, patriarchal, and institutional indoctrination of appropriate femininity. Doree’s own narrative voice is largely absent until the end of the story. Lloyd’s control over her is depicted through ideas of “good” and “bad” motherhood, from her failure to breast-feed to his demand that she home-school the children. After a particularly bad confrontation with Lloyd, Doree goes to her friend Maggie’s house for comfort and Lloyd later tells police that he murdered the children “to save them the misery [...] of knowing that their mother had walked out on them” (*Too Much* 17). The story suggests that Doree is in danger of forgiving Lloyd while he is in prison for the murders. However, Munro proposes that she could have found a method of subverting Lloyd’s control in helping with a car accident on the side of the road, through recognition of her own autonomy

and the idea that she has the power to save someone's life. This can be linked to "gender scripts", such as the connection between femininity and life-giving, caring, and nurturing, but it also suggests a powerful display of autonomy which is separate from her husband's control. It suggests a "subversive" act that overturns her ingrained perception of herself as a victim.

Conclusion

While many characters in these stories depict the confinements and limitations associated with motherhood and marriage in the mid- to late-twentieth century in (Settler) Canada, several of Munro's female characters are also used to suggest the possibility of challenging ingrained and internalised "gender scripts". Munro refuses the "Angel/Whore" binary and complicates the idea of the "good" wife and mother, suggesting that there are limitations to both roles, and that heteropatriarchal power continues to generate its effects despite perceptions of "informal" power on a local level. These stories can be read in relation to the idea of the victim mentality, with self-victimisation being revealed as a result of the ways in which gender identity is constituted through patriarchal structures. These ideas of victim/agent and dominance/subjugation relate to inequalities of gender and of national identity, as explored in the following chapter in relation to Atwood's stories and the pseudo-wilderness.

Part III: Margaret Atwood

Chapter 5

“Survive what?”: Representations of Belonging in Margaret Atwood’s Short Fiction

Introduction

Margaret Atwood has been described as being “above all else, Canadian” (Staines, “Margaret Atwood” 12). However, her short fiction challenges the idea of rootedness to a particular place and questions it means to be “Canadian”. Howells states that Atwood’s writing “is grounded in a strong sense of her own cultural identity as white, English-speaking, Canadian and female; but she also challenges the limits of such categories” (*MA* 2). Atwood’s stories change over time from a Canadian nationalist perspective to a more interrogative and deconstructive critique of unified national narratives and mythologies. However, like Munro, she could do more in her short fiction to highlight how the political perpetuation of “ordinary Canadian” dominance, which endures in spite the image of Canadian multiculturalism and openness to diversity. Atwood’s stories are useful in connecting anxieties about the fragmentation of a “core” individual identity and an imagined collective white Settler Canadian national identity. The stories can be used to demonstrate the ongoing regulation of identity, as discussed through Mackey’s arguments in the Introduction, and to indicate the preservation of the victim mentality and the illusion of a constant identity crisis in order to maintain the power of the state over identity and culture.

Atwood played a significant role in the “renaissance” of Canadian literature in the 1960s (Pache 121), as the desire for a coherent Canadian national identity gained strength. Her writing “has accompanied, and indeed stimulated, the process of literary emancipation and diversification that characterises the Canadian situation” (Pache 121). The “Canadian

situation” refers to the narrative of Settler Canadian subjugation by Britain and the U.S., as well as the developing emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. McWilliams states that “the fashioning of identity in [Atwood’s] early fiction” was “influenced by her formative experiences as a writer at a time of radical cultural change in Canada” (2). Atwood is considered an “interpreter of her country’s culture, first to Canadians themselves in the 1970s and since the 1980s as an increasingly popular spokesperson for Canada around the world” (Howells, “Introduction” 3). This is a label not awarded to, or sought by, Gallant or Munro. In the 1970s, Atwood became “a prominent figure in cultural politics”, as a “founder member of the Writers’ Union of Canada” as well as sitting on the editorial board for Anansi Press in Toronto (Howells, *MA* 5). Unlike Munro and Gallant, Atwood took an active and conscious part in the formulation of a Canadian literary canon, and a Canadian national identity, initially domestically and then on an international scale: “She argued that her role as an artist was to be a mouthpiece, principally so that the government voice was not the only one which resonated outside Canada” (Macpherson 15). One significant problem with this is the focus on white Settler Canadians and the generalisation necessary for the creation of a unified “culture”. Howells acknowledges Atwood’s limitations in this role as “mouthpiece”, stating:

[Atwood’s] representation of Canada is a combination of documentary realism and imaginative interpretation from her own perspective as a white anglophone Canadian woman living in Ontario. She is not an immigrant or a Native Person, nor from Western Canada or Quebec, any of which would make a difference to her representation of Canadianness. (*MA* 11)

Atwood prioritises “the writer’s political responsibility, the duty to bear witness” (Wynne-Davies 40). While she cannot “represent” “ethnic” minorities, her short fiction does not draw enough attention to the ongoing social and political inequalities and problems with belonging in Canada, particularly for her international readership.

While Atwood’s novels are widely discussed and acclaimed, her short stories are regularly “passed over in survey works on her writing, have been treated as preparatory

exercises, or simply as less important than her major novels and poetry collections” (Nischik, “MA’s Short Stories” 145). However, Atwood’s stories require more critical attention because themes of national identity and gender (as considered in Chapter 6), which critics have concentrated on in relation to her novels, “are also present in her short fiction” (Sturgess 87). These stories “engage with nationalist and feminist agendas” and “challenge preconceptions of gendered or Canadian identity” (Wynne-Davies 18). The creation of complex characters and situations is often sacrificed for her political goals. This is particularly evident when her stories are compared to those of Gallant and Munro. Macleod, for example, claims that “an Atwood story rarely slows down long enough to saturate a scene with the kind of detail we find in Munro” (437). Yet when exploring Atwood’s oeuvre in relation to issues of Canadian identity and belonging, her stories are perhaps the most relevant form, especially when considered in the context of Canada as a fragmented settler colonial country. Wisker writes that in Atwood’s fiction overall, there are “consistent themes” of “survival and the wilderness” (53). Her main themes include “the politics of power”, “identities in conflict”, and “the assumption of victimhood”, as well as Canadian nationalism and anti-Americanism (Macpherson 87). Towards the latter half of the twentieth century, the political climate and branding of Canada began to depict nationalism as “dated” (Goetsch 177), and it was replaced by multiculturalism. However, these stories can be used to highlight the endurance of nationalist ideologies and the perceived victimisation of “ordinary Canadians”.

The influence of these politically, socially, and institutionally-perpetuated mythologies is evident in Atwood’s description of her childhood in rural Ottawa and Northern Quebec (she did not move to Toronto until 1946, when she was seven) as “woodsy, isolated, nomadic” and her claim that it is “what the glossy magazine ads say Canada is supposed to be like” (Staines, “Canadian Context” 12). Atwood “inherited” the cultural myth of the Canadian wilderness from a white Settler tradition, including the

influence of “explorers’ narratives, animal stories, woodcraft and survival manuals” (Howells, *MA* 22). Howells states that Atwood’s upbringing prompted her construction of “literary figurations of the wilderness as unexplored natural environment, a territory without monuments or landmarks, emptied of signs of human presence. Signs of aboriginal presence were indecipherable and, therefore, invisible” (“It all depends” 49). Atwood’s earlier stories sometimes contribute to the perpetuation of tropes and narratives that align with settler colonial legacies and the national narrative constructed by figures such as Moodie, Parr Traill, and the Group of Seven. However, her later stories shift towards deconstructing problematic and patriarchal constructions of the “wilderness” from a settler perspective.

Atwood’s writing is both influenced by and presents a challenge to these female Settler Canadian creative figures of the past. According to Wisker, Atwood is “a postcolonial writer” in that she critiques the methods by which dominant cultures “overtake and erase the ways and values of other cultures” and “emphasises the importance of cultural differences and diversity” (2). However, in her early short fiction, this relates to Settler Canadian domination by Britain and the U.S. rather than to settlers as the dominating group. Howells argues that Atwood’s writing highlights the “often contradictory representations” of English-Canadian cultural nationalism and the “more complex articulations of Canadian multicultural differences in the late 1980s and 1990s” (*MA* 12). This links with McWilliams’s claim that Atwood “does in fact carefully address the marginalisation and typecasting of First Nations people in *Survival* and *Strange Things* and her work proves politically sensitive in this way” (51). Atwood’s writing highlights the influence of early pioneer women writers, particularly Moodie, but also demonstrates an interrogation of their legacies and the settler colonial project in which they were complicit.

Her short fiction, however, excludes much detail about the enduring legacies of settler colonialism and racism against First Nations peoples. While it is true that her work exposes “popular national myths” that are “in urgent need of revision” (Howells, *MA* 12),

particularly in relation to the wilderness, her short fiction often fails to address the complex regulatory practices of identity and the maintenance of dominant power structures in Canada. Although her writing “deals constantly with social structures, beliefs and regimes which select insiders and outsiders, and so provides insights into what it means to be disempowered and marginalised”, it is fair to say that “postcolonial Others are generally underplayed in her work” (Wisker 191). In *Strange Things*, Atwood writes, in her customary wry tone:

The anti-appropriationists have argued that non-Native writers have no right to write as if they were Natives, or even to write about Native issues, or even to put Native characters into their books (which would, of course, render Native people invisible or non-existent in the work of non-Natives). (44)

Despite Atwood’s apparent disagreement with this, when she does include Indigenous Canadians in her short fiction they are not as significant as Settler Canadian characters and are used to highlight settler anxieties about belonging. Although Atwood is right to be aware of the problematic appropriation of Indigenous themes and myths, she also poses the question: “Who qualifies as Native? After four centuries of inter-mingling [...] many Natives are more white, genetically, than they are Native” and “many white Canadians claim, as a matter of pride, some ‘Indian blood’” (*ST* 45). Atwood tends to be provocative and her perspective is often dismissive of potential difference and variation for the sake of her broader argument, which differentiates her from Gallant and Munro.

Both urban and rural locations are used in Atwood’s short fiction, and she regularly explores the connection between “ordinary Canadian” identity and the wilderness-civilisation binary. Over several decades, Atwood has explored “the wilderness as Canada’s emblematic geographical space and as cultural myth” (Howells, *MA* 7). Howells calls this “the most significant element in Atwood’s construction of Canadian identity” (*MA* 21). Her early writing identified “survival and endurance as key symbols of Canadian literature and culture” (McWilliams 2), but the changes in her approach to the wilderness theme are

important to consider as they “reflect changes in Canadian narratives of national identity” (Howells, *MA* 7). Hatch warns that to state that wilderness is her “main theme” (180) is an overestimation and that while she draws on her childhood experiences in the North and the bush, her work is “essentially urban, often intimately connected with the geography of Toronto” (181). Her use of Toronto in her stories is “autogeographical”, relating to “her desire to depict a particular moment and place in time as accurately as possible” (Cooke 22). Depictions of Toronto often relate to the Gothic trope of the “dark city”, as discussed in relation to Gallant’s stories and its use for representing a character’s dislocation and exile.

Atwood applies themes of the Gothic wilderness to urban Canadian spaces. Her use of the Canadian Gothic tradition suggests her participation in a genre that translates tropes and myths from the British Victorian Gothic to a Canadian context. In her essay “Canadian Monsters” (1977), collected in *Second Words* in 1982, Atwood writes that “the North, the Wilderness, has traditionally been used in Canadian literature as a symbol for the world of the unexplored, the unconscious, the romantic, the mysterious, and the magical” (*SW* 232). She became well-versed in these myths early on, as her incomplete doctoral thesis was entitled “English Metaphysical Romance” and focussed on “the gothic fantasy novels of the nineteenth century” (Mead). Wisker argues that Atwood’s “extensive use of the Gothic and her version of postcolonial writing enable an undercutting of controls and constructs, the ‘grand narratives’ which maintain constrained versions of identity, power, and culture” (9). This chapter considers the extent to which Atwood undercuts these “grand narratives”, and the effectiveness of this against the state-sanctioned domestic and international discourses about Canada’s post-colonialism and post-nationalism.

Her earlier nationalist prose and poetry writings, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), *Surfacing* (1972), and *Survival* (1972), focus on “the ‘Malevolent North’ as an important motif in Canadian literature” (McWilliams 41). Dvořák argues that Atwood consciously writes about “how a settler nation like Canada has constructed its differentiation from Great Britain

through totem transfer, a process of identification with the indigenous cultures of its New World space” (“Margaret Atwood’s Humour” 122). However, *Journals* contains “no direct approach to the issue of the seizure of native land” (Hammill, “Margaret” 53), and the Afterword claims: “We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here” (*Journals* 62), which elides the indigeneity of First Nations peoples. Atwood’s short fiction is often bound up with a “sense of location” and realism (Howells, *MA* 11), and “in the Canadian critical tradition landscape has always been closely associated with identity” (Djwa 22).

This is highlighted in Atwood’s *Journals*, *Survival*, and *Surfacing*. These texts demonstrate Atwood’s continued preoccupation in her writing, across genres and forms, with the effects of the Canadian landscape on the imagination, and the cultural implications of settler colonialism, particularly for female pioneer women and Settler Canadians. Sherrill E. Grace states that “Atwood brings [Moodie] back from the dead to tell us a story about who we are as Canadians – and how we should behave” (147). According to Hatch, “Atwood suggests that the ghosts of Mrs. Moodie still inhabits Canadians in their struggle to be a part of the natural world – even though most Canadians now live in urban centres (perhaps *because* most Canadians live in urban centres)” (190, emphasis in original). This gestures towards a sense of settler alienation and displacement in the “new” landscape and ties in with the myth of the white Settler desire to find a sense of place through connection with the wilderness (most likely the “pseudo-wilderness”).

Furthermore, in her novels, Atwood continues to interrogate Settler Canadian authenticity. For example, in *The Robber Bride* (1993), Atwood critiques Settler Canadian assumptions about belonging and the desire for an untainted and innocent sense of place. The novel “looks into the life stories of three white Canadian women born during World War II, growing up and still living in Toronto in the 1990s” (Howells, “*The Robber Bride*” 90). Atwood employs these three characters – Roz, Charis, and Tony – and the character of Zenia, to uncover “hidden histories” of “cultural displacement, split subjects, dislocated

identities, reinventions and renamings, a pervasive sense of otherness and not belonging” (“*The Robber Bride*” 90). These are precisely the themes explored in Atwood’s short fiction, from the 1970s to the 2000s. Thus, across literary forms, Atwood “deconstructs myths of white English Canadian authenticity, showing how difference is a crucial factor in any identity construction” (“*The Robber Bride*” 90).

It is worth considering this crossover between Atwood’s thematic focus in her novels and her short fiction, and how it changes over time. In *Surfacing*, for example, Atwood begins her examination of father characters which she continues in her stories, as this chapter explores. In the novel, the father character wants to “live in isolation as a return to the pre-first-contact past, when the landscape was pristine and the ideologies of the first settlers were those of people fleeing the religious intolerances of Europe. This is a desire for the initial colonizers to engage in a pre-colonial past” (Rudd 74). The mythology of the settler desire to return to an imagined Edenic utopia can be discerned here, as investigated above through Munro’s work. This connects with the settler desire for indigeneity and a sense of belonging in the land, to replace Indigenous Canadians. *Surfacing* is concerned with breaking down “beloved myths about the wilderness”, seeking to demonstrate that “Canadians have been fully complicit in the destruction of the land” (Hatch 192).

Atwood’s ability to present these issues to Settler Canadian audiences was a significant element in the Canadian cultural nationalism of the late twentieth century. However, *Survival* was criticised for being “reductive and brash” and critics “disliked what was perceived as Atwood’s flippancy” (Macpherson 16). It is a “flawed” and “naïve attempt at representing a national literature and culture according to a notion of unified national character” (McWilliams 44) that was popular at the time. She was attempting to “fill” the “supposed emptiness” of Canada’s literary and cultural history “by exhuming ghosts and providing evidence of a past, a history, and thus a culture” (Goldman, *DisPossession* 7). This meant the lack of recognition of settler colonial processes and wrongs perpetrated against

Native Canadians, and the description of a victim mentality that ignored the settler victimisation of “ethnic” Others.

In 1977, five years after *Survival*, Atwood states that “the digging up of ancestors, calling up of ghosts, exposure of skeletons in the closet” is motivated by “a search for reassurance”, a desire to feel sure “that as a culture we are not as flat and lacking in resonance as we were once led to believe” (“Canadian Monsters” 231). This highlights Atwood’s changing approach to Canadian nationalism and a more critical eye towards its mythologies about the wilderness. It can also be linked with the regulation of identity and culture through the idea of Settler Canadian victimisation under British and U.S. imperialism. Atwood’s short fiction can be used to explore the perpetuation of the victim mentality, and an ongoing sense of insecurity for “ordinary Canadians” in both urban and rural locations. The stories propose that the learned settler desire for a “core” identity and stable home that is “rooted” in place through social, familial, and cultural connections is a “regulatory practice” that results in a continual “failure” to achieve a sense of belonging. These stories are firmly based within their twentieth-century context of developing Canadian nationalism and collective efforts to cope with the Second World War, as well as growing environmental concerns and multiculturalism, the emergence of feminism, and an increasing awareness the wrongs of Canada’s settler past and its continuing legacies in the present. As explored with Gallant and Munro, many of Atwood’s characters do not “fit” with the dominant culture, or engage in “subversive” behaviours to challenge it and are exiled as a result.

(i) Unstable Homes and Unstable Identities in Two Stories from in *Dancing Girls*

Atwood’s first collection, *Dancing Girls* (1977), represents individual identity fragmentation as symbolic of the fragmentation of Canadian national identity, and the ways in which this is bound up with the house. The significance of houses was explored in Chapter 3 in relation to Munro’s representations of changes in the individual, the family, and the

nation. The crisis at the heart of these stories is a fear of instability, drawing on the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition, and a desire for coherency of self and belonging. This collection was published in the same year that Atwood published her essay “Canadian Monsters”, mentioned above, in which she describes the Settler Canadian “search for reassurance” and desire for “ancestors”. Considering that she published *Journals* in 1970, and *Surfacing* and *Survival* in 1972, these stories suggest her continued preoccupation with these ideas during this period.

While *Dancing Girls* has not been explored in relation to the links between the house and the self, in relation to Atwood’s collection *Moral Disorder* (2009) Wisker states that “houses are significant” (167) and “represent identity and place, a sense of history still alive” (169). When discussing Atwood’s novel, *The Blind Assassin* (2000), Eleonora Rao links the house with the idea of unstable “home” and states that this “precarious figuration of home parallels the representation of nation and issues of national identity” in Canada (100). Atwood investigates “metaphorical exile” and interrogates “what or where it is to be at home, the place of inheritance, where one belongs”, and how this relates to “implications of stability and security” (Rao, “Home and Nation” 103). In relation to *The Robber Bride* (1993), Rao refers to the importance of “rootlessness” as a central motif and the depiction of characters who feel like “foreigners in their home country” (103). Rao does not address Atwood’s short fiction. However, these issues are integral to Atwood’s stories, as they are to Gallant’s and Munro’s. Places of residence are often depicted as affecting and reflecting the identities of their occupants. But while Munro’s stories are primarily set in houses or farms in small rural Canadian towns, Atwood’s stories are set either in the Canadian wilderness (often a pseudo-wilderness) or in cities, usually Toronto. These urban locations become “dark cities” through Atwood’s use of Gothic tropes to explore “ordinary Canadian” fears about belonging and identity.

The story “Polarities” from *Dancing Girls* suggests a sense of confinement in the Canadian Gothic “dark city” through depictions of the characters’ apartments. It focuses on two characters, Morrison and Louise, an American and a Canadian. She is possibly Québécois, which suggests Atwood’s interest in the “Quiet Revolution” in Quebec in the 1970s, the desire for secession, and the potential fragmentary consequences for Canadian national unity (Durocher and Millette). These two characters are colleagues based at an unspecified Canadian university, possibly in Edmonton (Nischik, “MA’s Short Stories” 148). Atwood proposes a link between Settler Canadian unease about place and U.S. dominance and power. At this time, Atwood often spoke “against the political, economic, and cultural dominance of the U.S.A” (Nischik, “MA’s Short Stories” 148). The story can be read as implying that Canada is not exempt from a colonial past. Louise tells Morrison that ““*the city has no right to be here. I mean, why is it? No city should be here, this far north; it isn’t even on a lake or an important river, even. Why is it here?*”” (*Dancing* 60, emphasis in original). This relates to Edmonton’s position as an early trading post for the Hudson’s Bay Company and its participation in settler colonial processes (HBC Heritage). The story can be read as calling attention to the settler claiming of the land, and it highlights an anxiety about the characters’ legitimacy and “right to be here”. It suggests a link with Atwood’s depiction of Moodie in *Journals*, in which Moodie states, “Turn, look down:/ there is no city; this is the centre of a forest/ Your place is empty” (61). An ingrained and persistent sense of settler displacement is being referenced here, connected with early women pioneers and writers and the formation of Canadian literature and national identity.

On the walls of Morrison’s apartment are murals which he suspects were painted by Native Canadian former tenants. His impulse to paint over them suggests a “strategy” of coping with colonialism through erasure of the past. This links with the arguments discussed in Chapter 1 and 3 about the connections between settler colonial and post-war “selective forgetting”, and the desire to move forward and leave the past behind. Morrison represents

U.S. dominance over Canada but can also be read as depicting the Canadian dominant culture's drive to repress the violence of the settler colonial past in Canada, a "masculine" controlling and regulating of space and a yearning for "cultural authenticity". His relationship with Louise forces him to confront how unsettled and fragmented identity and belonging is, and this is emphasised through their "homes". She visits him at his apartment, and when she leaves he is depicted as returning to the living room "with a sense of recapturing lost territory" (*Dancing* 62), as he seeks to maintain control and power over his "home" and therefore his sense of self. Louise also invites Morrison to see her apartment, and this highlights the learned desire for a "core" and stable home-place as it is part of a house that "Morrison found spiritually depleting [...] They were the houses of people who did not expect to be living in them for long" (*Dancing* 53). Nomadism is related here with the Gothic "dark city", the winter weather, and a sense of confinement as Morrison describes how basement apartments instil in him with panic: "He would never survive a winter buried like that or closed in one [of] the glass-sided cardboard-carton apartment buildings" (*Dancing* 53). Because Morrison is American, this suggests that such unease points to a transnational heritage of anxiety over rootedness and fear of exile, which can be linked back to Gallant's characters examined in Chapter 1, and also how anxiety about "survival" in Canada is depicted as transmittable to anyone who travels there.

The space of Louise's apartment highlights the character's identity fragmentation but also represents the desire for national unity, her drive to "put the country together" (*Dancing* 70). With its decoration drawn from various cultures and groups, "pieces of which had been cut out and pasted onto one another" (*Dancing* 54), the apartment is a symbolic mirroring of "the Canadian mosaic", which is a "model of Canadian multiculturalism" (Kuttainen 2). Using these two characters, Atwood explores the popular contemporary idea that Canada is "culturally schizophrenic, split between French and English influences in its language and history, and very closely affected by the U.S." (Wisker 6). She investigates the possibility of

the loss or disintegration of the “core” self, “leaving a self that is broken into a series of alien, displaced, transformed, mutated, multiple, and unstable fragments” (Wynne-Davies 19). This is an enduring fear, as demonstrated in the Introduction through claims by Rudd and Mackey that “ordinary Canadians” believe that a Canadian “cultural core” has been destabilised by migration and multiculturalism. Kroetsch states that Canada is “held together” by the “absence” of a “centre”, and that “this disunity is our unity” (31). Critical discourse like this can be linked with Trudeau’s arguments in 2015 that Canada is “post-national” because it does not have a “cultural core”. These can be read, in light of Atwood’s stories from the nationalist period of the 1970s, as “regulatory practices” in which the identity “crisis” is maintained through the implicit perpetuation of such anxieties among “ordinary Canadians”, within the rhetoric of Canadian progressiveness and multiculturalism.

These preoccupations with unity are evident in this story. Through Louise’s apartment, Morrison is depicted as perceiving “the same unity in diversity he had found in the motels on the way across [from Toronto], the modernish furniture, the conventional framed northern landscapes on the walls” (*Dancing* 54). Atwood is drawing on politically and socially-perpetuated myths and images of Canadian national unity, such as paintings by the Group of Seven, that traverse regional boundaries from the eastern urban city to the westerly “frontier”. Through this hotel room, she brings the supposedly public and political into “private”, domestic and mundane living space, suggesting that even temporary places of residence are constructed as “homes”, but they “enact the very homelessness they pretend to relieve” (van Herk, “Hotel Hades” 145). They mirror ingrained perceptions of collective identity and the “ordinary Canadian” learned fear of exile regardless of whether one is “at home”.

Louise is used to explore narratives about the fragmentation of a unified Canadian identity. Drawing on Frye’s theory in *The Bush Garden*, Sturgess contends that “Louise’s madness comes from her inability to answer the question ‘where is here?’ which is presented

as coterminous with ‘who am I?’” (88). Louise becomes more erratic as the story progresses, driven by the desire to create unity, both in the private space of her home and in the public space of the city. Louise projects this onto Morrison, writing that he is “not a complete person” and that he must “surrender his role as a fragment and show himself willing to merge with the greater whole” (*Dancing* 69). This suggests a concern about “placing” oneself, and thus “placing” the nation. However, rather than representing a stable and whole self, Nischik argues that Morrison is “a classic representation of the schizoid personality” (“MA’s Short Stories” 147). Nischik’s definition is based on a psychiatric text popular at the time by Ronald D. Laing entitled *The Divided Self* (1960). Nischik states that Atwood, who likes to be at the head of the cultural zeitgeist, “took up” (146) the contemporary theories of schizoid and schizophrenic personality disorders in her writing. Atwood is also drawing on the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition, the related fear of the precarity of identity, and the possibly of the “core” Canadian identity disintegrating. The idea of the “splintering self” in Canada “is a gothic presence” that “uncannily represents” the self and the nation “as vulnerable to ruptures and divisions” (Edwards xxiv). Rudd also links the Canadian Gothic genre with “an instability of identity, expressed as cultural schizophrenia” (70). Atwood uses individual characters to explore broader political and national issues, and while they are grounded in contemporary events, a continuing anxiety about the potential fragmentation of self and place is evident.

Morrison is imbued with a sense of “self-deception or symbolic blindness” (Wilson, “Blindness” 177), which can be linked to precarity of place and identity, and to contemporary critiques of American imperialism and colonialism against Settler Canadians. Louise’s incarceration due to her apparent “madness” draws on Victorian Gothic tropes of female confinement under masculine control and links to a settler colonial, heteropatriarchal dominance over less powerful groups: women and “ethnic” Canadians or those with hyphenated identities. In one of the few overt references to socially-ingrained inequality for

Native Canadians in Atwood's stories, the sight of Louise – drugged up and subdued – sparks a memory for Morrison of “an Indian woman he had seen”, surrounded by “a group of self-conscious, sniggering men”, and “Morrison, against his will and appalled at her, the men, and himself, had joined them. She was naked to the waist when the police got there” (*Dancing* 72). Morrison is thus also used to critique Canadian settler colonialism and highlights questions of personal responsibility.

The issue of victimisation is linked with personal responsibility and is an important inquiry in Atwood's stories. Morrison is described as forgetting about the woman immediately. It is possible that the story *performs* the repression and collective forgetting of Settler Canada's historical and continued wrongs against Indigenous Canadians by only obliquely alluding to these realities and then “moving on”, which is part of the state-sanctioned “strategy” of selective forgetting. However, this is a subtle and ineffective method of dealing with the settler colonial past, which many Canadian and international readers might not notice, especially as at the time of publication discussions of the wrongs against Indigenous Canadians were less prevalent in mainstream media, as they have been with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“TRC”) and the “National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” (“Find the Truth”). Morrison's desire for dominance means that he is more attracted to Louise when she is “a defeated formless creature on which he could inflict himself like a shovel on earth, axe on forest, use without being used, know without being known” (*Dancing* 73). The language used here suggests Atwood's critique of U.S. imperialism towards Canada, but it can also be read in relation to the Settler Canadian “masculine” claiming of rightful dominance over the land and the people who lived there.

Morrison is depicted recognising his desire for dominance, which evokes a sense of dislocation and alienation for him in this place, and he is described as feeling “oppressed by himself and by the building, the prison he had just left” (*Dancing* 73). He is an exile in both

the city and the countryside, which is demonstrated when he and Louise go to the zoo twenty miles outside the city. In contrast to Munro's Del, Rose, and Almeda, who feel connected with the landscape, Morrison feels "that the land was keeping itself apart from him, not letting him in; there had to be more to it than this repetitive, non-committal drabness" (*Dancing* 55). While this suggests the potentially problematic and gynocentric idea of female characters as more "naturally" more connected with the Canadian landscape, the suggestion with Atwood's story is that Morrison is more like Carol from Gallant's "The Other Paris", an American who feels excluded from her surroundings.

However, while Gallant took a transatlantic, transnational approach and transplanted Canadian Gothic themes to a European setting, Atwood's focus here is on exile specifically in the Canadian "wilderness". Sturges argues that "'polarity' cannot but bring to mind cold, isolated Arctic outposts on the margins of white, urban civilisation", which "is significant since the action is concerned with urban space" (88). However, the boundary between city and wilderness is blurred as Morrison drives out of town, "through the clenched landscape", contrasting it with the "accommodating hills east and south, back in that settled land which was so far away it seemed not to exist. Here everything was tightlipped, un giving, good for nothing, and nothing" (*Dancing* 73). The "wilderness" here is a pseudo-wilderness, as can be discerned through Morrison's encounter at the zoo after Louise's confinement to a mental-health institution. Morrison is doubly exiled as what Hatch calls a "city person" (193) and an American. This story suggests his unease in this landscape, though he seeks a sense of freedom and identity in it. This is borne out through his interaction with the old couple at the wolf pen, who mirror the wolves in their grey coats. Atwood draws on myths of the wilderness as feminine and threatening to male invaders, as the old woman symbolises the Canadian wilderness which is accessible in this pseudo-wilderness space. Forcing him to recognise his own status as a settler and an American, she asks if he is "from around here":

In the corner of his eye, the old woman swelled, wavered, then seemed to disappear, and the land opened before him. It swept away to the north and he thought he could see the mountains [...] then forest upon forest, after that barren tundra and the blank solid rivers, and beyond, so far that the endless night had already descended, the frozen sea. (*Dancing* 75)

Atwood draws – rather uncritically – on narratives and myths about the Canadian wilderness to demonstrate Morrison’s exiled status as an American in this landscape. He is depicted as viewing both the rural and urban landscape as potentially under threat by natural Canadian forces that he cannot control:

[He] imagined the snow rising up, sweeping down in great curves, in waves over the city, each house a tiny centre of man-made warmth, fending it off [...] Poor Louise, he saw now what she had been trying to do: the point of the circle, closed and self-sufficient, was not what it included but what it shut out. (*Dancing* 74)

This evokes Frye’s idea of the “garrison mentality” and the colonial desire to creating boundaries against a threatening wilderness. This draws on imperialist wilderness-civilisation binaries as this fear relates to domestic family life, to the house, the “home”, and its potential disintegration into something chaotic, uncontrollable, and uncontained. The wilderness is perceived simultaneously as a place of potential freedom and legitimacy and also as threatening and malevolent. These are ingrained nationalist narratives which Atwood critiques more in her later stories.

This imperialist mindset displayed by Morrison is also explored from the perspective of a female character, Ann – a Canadian living in the U.S. – in the titular story “Dancing Girls”. Here, issues of transience and exile are examined when a “new man” of unspecified nationality is Othered by Ann and her landlady Mrs Nolan in a bedsit in Boston. Gallant’s stories such as “The Other Paris” and “Questions and Answers” are relevant here as Ann is depicted as seeing the bedsit as containing an “ever-shifting population of hopeful and despairing transients” (*Dancing* 201). The bedsit is a transient “home”, “haunted by domestic illusion” (van Herk, “Hotel Hades” 143). It suggests feelings of confinement in the “dark city”, as Atwood applies Canadian Gothic tropes to an American setting. Ann feels sense of

“foreignness” and exile as a Canadian and has sympathy for the “new man”, but she does nothing to help him or to communicate with him. Like Gallant’s Linnet, Ann displays an “ordinary Canadian” hubris in presuming that she and the man have similar experiences of Othering:

Such failures, such paralysis, were fairly common here, especially among the foreigners. He was far from home, from the language he shared, the wearers of his native costume; he was in exile, he was drowning [...] She could see he was drowning but there was nothing she could do [...] All you could do for the drowning was to make sure you were not one of them. (*Dancing* 205)

This links with Gallant’s ideas about the experience of exile as connected to drowning. It suggests the learned “ordinary Canadian” victim mentality, which has endured despite Ann’s transnational movement, and which she is projecting onto this man. Ann can thus be read as an example of the effects of political, social, and cultural “regulatory practices” of identity.

This regulation is bound up with urban space. Boston is depicted as a Gothic “dark city” and is contrasted with Toronto, where “you could walk all over the city, well, almost anywhere, and never have any trouble” (*Dancing* 200). However, Ann also believes in the narrative of Canada as provincial, and in the superiority of the U.S., suggesting that contradictory ideas of identity and place can be learned and displayed simultaneously. Ann is studying to be an architect and “intended to be so well-qualified, so armoured with qualifications, that no one back home would dare turn her down for the job she coveted. She wanted to rearrange Toronto. Toronto would do for a start” (*Dancing* 202). Being educated in Boston, she believes, will make her superior to any architect educated in Canada.

Ann displays a colonial attitude in her vision for her new Toronto. With language that evokes ideas of power and authority, she draws on myths about the settler nostalgic desire for a return to a prelapsarian landscape, and ideas about the wilderness as unpolluted and pristine. This links with Atwood’s depiction of Moodie in *Journals*. For example, in “Dream 1: The Bush Garden”, Moodie states: “I stood once more in that garden/ sold, deserted and/ gone to seed/ [...] When I bent/ to pick, my hands/ came away red and wet/

In the dream I said/ I should have known/ anything planted here/ would come up blood” (*Journals* 34). Frye refers to this poem in the Preface to *The Bush Garden* in 1971 and the fact that he “pilfered” the phrase for his own book, noting that *Journals* is “rich in suggestive phrases defining a Canadian sensibility” (*Bush* x). Atwood and Frye held similar ideas in many respects in relation to Canadian identity during this time. Mount writes about this in his “Elephants are not Giraffes” interview with Atwood, who was Frye’s student at Victoria College at the University of Toronto in the 1950s. Mount refers to their shared “interest in the Canadian identity, and a tendency to see identity as divided, schizophrenic” (63). Atwood’s ongoing preoccupation with this is apparent across all genres of her writing, but her short fiction presents a unique opportunity to explore how it changes in reaction to shifting social and political contexts.

Lebihan addresses the notion that Atwood uses her characters to argue for “the attempt to achieve a kind of pre-Edenic state of metaphysical self-identity through colonialization” (28), arguing that Atwood critiques myths of Settler Canadian national innocence. She is critical of the white settler “desire to return” to an “original” state of “national unity” (Rudd 71). In the “Dancing Girls”, Ann envisions “beautiful green spaces, with water flowing through them, and trees” (*Dancing* 203). She dreams of an urban cityscape that incorporates idealised images of the Canadian wilderness and, importantly, “her green spaces were always empty” (*Dancing* 203). The city then becomes a pseudo-wilderness, a space in which settler-invaders believe an enhanced connection with the wilderness is available to them, and thus a sense of freedom and authenticity and indigeneity in the land, and a sense of ontological security. The city “has become the unexplored threatening wilderness” (Howells, *MA* 23). It also takes on these idyllic elements and transforms from a place of alienation and dislocation to a place of sublime freedom and pastoral utopia. This highlights Ann’s drive towards the control of space and the forging of a utopian image of Canada, which continues to be evident in cultural and political discourse.

An example of the narratives and mythologies of Canadian multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity is Ann's memory of a poem – "Foreign Children" by Robert Louis Stevenson – in the *Golden Windows Reader* (written by Laura E. Richards and published in Boston) which refers to "Little Indian, Sioux, or Cree" children, and suggests that they would rather be "me", the speaker, who is a white child. Atwood writes about being taught this poem, as Canadian schools at that time were "still bastions of the British Empire" (*SW* 376). This suggests the continuation of the British imperialist agenda and the institutional ingraining of white settler hegemony in Canadian, and American, children at this time. Ann can be read as an example of the effect of this indoctrination. However, by the end of the story, her imagined "green, perfect space of the future" is "cancelled in advance" because "it was already too late" (*Dancing* 211). This suggests that such policies and narratives of white dominance are now obsolete. In her final dream about this imagined paradise, the fence Ann had previously installed – suggesting the "garrison mentality" and the security of boundaries – is now gone, "and the green stretched out endlessly, fields and trees and flowing water, as far as she could see" (*Dancing* 212). The "new man" and the other exiled "foreigners" from the bedsit are all present, wearing their "native costumes" (212). The pastoral landscape is now transferred to the city, where all social groups coexist peacefully. This links with developing state-sanctioned narratives about Canadian multiculturalism, urbanisation, and progress as the twentieth century continued. However, Ann's new vision is a veiled continuation of a white settler colonial perspective, in which she imposes her assumptions about the identities of those she has Othered. This story thus provokes questions about the branding of Canada for international audiences and the concealment of ongoing racism towards "ethnic" peoples, under a veneer of utopian progress and tolerance of diversity.

(ii) Father Characters and the Pseudo-Wilderness in *Bluebeard's Egg*

The father-daughter relationship has been explored in relation to Gallant and Munro as a method of depicting the transmission of “ordinary Canadian” anxieties about identity and place from one generation to the next. The father is symbolic of the patriarchal nation-state, and exerts dominance and control over the young female characters. In “Hurricane Hazel” from *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983), Atwood presents a father-daughter relationship which can be used to consider the relationship between Settler Canadians and the landscape. The possibility of creating a connection with the land that is not based on dominance and control is explored through the young female narrator, who remembers a summer spent with her family when she was fourteen “in a one-room cabin, on a hundred acres of back-concession scrub farmland” (*Bluebeard’s* 31). The father character is responsible for their pseudo-pioneer lifestyle. He worked “in the forests on the north shore of the St Lawrence, where he was doing some exploration for a pulp-and-paper company” (*Bluebeard’s* 33). The narrator admires her father’s adventures and successes against the hardships of the Canadian wilderness. However, the reference to the pulp-and-paper industry suggests the father’s complicity in settler colonial practices, as the industry – dominated by settlers – profits hugely from the use of environmental resources obtained through the occupation of Native Canadian lands. Nischik’s argues that, in the stories in *Bluebeard’s Egg*, “individuals are seen as part of their surroundings, and operating as members of specific groups” (“MA’s Short Stories” 148). This problematic settler colonial aspect of the family’s existence in this landscape could go unnoticed, particularly for international audiences, as the focus is on how the family lives in apparent harmony with the landscape.

The daughter imitates her father in her interactions with the landscape. A contrast between interior and exterior space is set up as, like the narrator in Munro’s “Boys and Girls”, the young daughter prefers to explore the landscape rather than to be in the house doing domestic chores. She finds “what I thought of as the pioneer’s house, the real one, though it was nothing now but a square depression surrounded by grass-covered ridges” (*Bluebeard’s*

35). Unlike Morrison in “Polarities” or Ann in “Dancing Girls”, she does not try to lay claim to the landscape or control it. While her brother, if he had found the pioneer’s house, “would have drawn a map of it”, she “merely wandered around” (35), she finds pleasure in exploring the landscape. Her experiences in this rural space are contrasted with those in Toronto, which are bound up with confining and limiting social and gendered norms and expectations, as examined in Chapter 6.

Atwood is drawing on the myth that Settler Canadians can find freedom in the pseudo-wilderness and escape the confines of the “dark city”, so that the pseudo-wilderness becomes the expected “space of freedom from social constraints” (Howells, *MA* 21). Hatch argues that fear of the wilderness is “an urban phenomenon of the twentieth century” (193). This contradicts the critical perspective that “from the beginnings of first contact and settlement in Canada, gothic projections onto the landscape were prevalent” (Sugars and Turcotte xi) and the proposal that literary representations of the Gothic wilderness are “used to express the settler-invader’s alienation from the New World territory that had been appropriated by illegitimate means” (Sugars and Turcotte xii). Hatch, however, states that settler writings “up until the 1940s” portray the wilderness as “an opportunity” (193). However, the two ideas exist simultaneously: the fear of the wilderness and the view of it as a place of freedom and renewal. Hatch argues that Atwood’s continued depiction of the need for white Settler Canadians to gain a “closer connection to the land” is an unconscious exaggeration of settler alienation and unease “in order to valorise her own belief that one needs to merge with the natural landscape” (193). Atwood is politically engaged and conscious of environmental issues. These stories explore how she uses the father-daughter relationship to explore these issues and suggest the necessity for a reconsideration of settler engagement with place in Canada.

“In Search of Rattlesnake Plantain” depicts another father-daughter relationship in which the father character seeks to negotiate the landscape in a less dominating way, and the

daughter internalises this attitude. As in “Hurricane Hazel”, this family is used to being in the forest. The narrator has been there many times before: “This patch of woods, with its long vistas and silent pillars, always gives me the same feeling: not fright, not sadness; a muted feeling. The light diffuses here, as though a window high up, in a vault” (*Bluebeard’s* 229). This imagery suggests a sense of confinement, linked here with a rural space rather than the urban spaces of “Polarities” and “Dancing Girls”. Like several young female Munro characters, the narrator demonstrates a sense of awe and respect for a landscape she knows she cannot control or fully grasp, an inherited attitude from her father.

The family are reliant on her father’s sense of direction and knowledge about the woods. Atwood draws on the Southern Ontario Gothic to demonstrate myths of the malicious wilderness:

We aren’t on a path of any sort, and the trees close in and begin to resemble one another, as they have a habit of doing, away from human markings. But lost people go around in circles, and we are going in a straight line.” (*Bluebeard’s* 233)

After her father has the stroke, when he has an urge to “drive up north” (*Bluebeard’s* 236) because he “doesn’t like the place he finds himself in, he wants to be somewhere else. He wants out, he wants to drive, away from all this illness” (237). This connects with the idea that a sense of masculine self can be recovered in the wilderness, through freeing himself from the home. The narrator has learned about the (pseudo)wilderness from him, suggesting a deconstruction of the landscape as an exclusively masculine space. In contrast to the character of Joanne, who symbolises the Settler Canadian use and appropriation of the land, the narrator knows which logs to step on in order to avoid falling in water as they journey through the bush. While Atwood is arguing for greater respect for and knowledge of the Canadian bush, she is also implying the legitimacy of this family’s presence in this landscape and the father’s explorations of the North. This story proposes that they understand the land and thus have “cultural authenticity”.

Similarly, in “Unearthing Suite”, the language used implies the endurance of the father character’s presence in the (pseudo)wilderness, if only in the narrator’s memory: “There he goes now, in among the trees” (*Bluebeard’s* 267). He is conscious of nature around him that “are invisible to others but which he knows all too well are lurking up there among the innocent-looking leaves” (*Bluebeard’s* 267). Unlike Jackson in Munro’s “Train”, this father character is presented as understanding the landscape and its potential dangers. He moves “among the trees” but does not disturb them: “He leaves no stone unturned; but having turned it, to see what may be underneath [...] he puts everything carefully back” (267). He is a Christ-like figure, an educator, with a group of children following him; to them he is “better than magicians, since he explains everything” (267), suggesting a transmission of his views to the next generation. The narrator states that “he wants to see, he wants to know, only to see and know” (267). She suggests that he does not maintain a dominating, colonial attitude towards claiming the landscape, and just wants to learn about it. She seeks to authenticate his presence in this landscape by implicitly connecting him with what she thinks of as an Indigenous Canadian attitude, suggesting the settler desire to be made indigenous, to “play Indian”.

“Hurricane Hazel”, “In Search of Rattlesnake Plantain”, and “Unearthing Suite”, all propose that this interaction of father characters with the wilderness is “affable” (*Bluebeard’s* 268) and without the settler colonial drive to control and claim, as suggested through Morrison and Ann in *Dancing Girls*. There is only one reference to previous occupation by Indigenous Canadians. When the narrator of “Unearthing Suite” takes her children for a walk in the forest, following the trail “blazed” by her brother thirty years ago (which contrasts with her father’s approaching of moving “among” the trees) she points to “an old tree bent when young into knees and elbows” and tells the children “the Indians did that”, but she admits that “like most history, [this] may or may not be true” (*Bluebeard’s* 278). When the children ask if the “Indians” were “real” and “alive” (278), the narrator does not respond,

highlighting the propensity for white Settler Canadians to detach from what happened to the “Indians” who used to live on this land. This also underscores how Indigenous Canadians have been mythologised and relegated to a nostalgic past, and how these narratives have been institutionally ingrained in younger generations. This passage suggests a Settler Canadian anxiety about authenticity, a sense of guilt over the occupation of the land and forced displacement of Indigenous Canadians, and a Gothic manifestation of haunting as a result.

While Atwood may be presenting a critique of these perspectives, the references are brief and oblique. This is significant because many of Atwood’s international readers are unfamiliar with Canadian political and social histories and divisions, or with the treatment of Indigenous peoples by white settlers. When *Bluebeard’s Egg* was published in 1983, the legacies of this structure were ongoing. For example, the last federally-funded residential school for Indigenous Canadian children only closed in 1996 and former Prime Minister Stephen Harper only issued a formal apology in 2008 (Miller). The branding of Canada as multicultural, tolerant, and progressive, proposed through political and cultural discourse as discussed in the Introduction, simultaneously works to occlude these facts. By only making oblique and brief references to these issues Atwood, as the “mouthpiece” for Canadian literature to international audiences, participates in this occlusion.

(iii) Authenticity and the Questioning of Canadian Wilderness Mythologies:

Wilderness Tips and Moral Disorder

Atwood’s *Wilderness Tips* (1991) is a more critical collection with regard to the perpetuation of the dominance of “ordinary Canadians” through learned narratives and myths. It links an “overt reference to Canadian landscape” to “images of dominance and submission” (Macpherson 88). It “was given the kind of reception – not only in Canada, but also abroad – usually reserved for the author’s novels” (Nischik, “MA’s Short Stories” 150).

It has been described as marking the start of Atwood's "post-nationalist phase" (Rao, "Home and Nation" 101). Her themes "have become increasingly global" (Wynne-Davies 2), particularly in relation to issues of place and the environment. Like "post-colonial", the term "post-national" refers to an awareness of the continued power of nationalism while also striving towards a more international or transnational perspective, as discussed in Chapter 1. Atwood continues to explore themes of Canadian identity and place, but she investigates them from a broader perspective, incorporating some transnational perspectives to examine issues of exile and lack of "fit" as well as the anxieties about ancestry and tradition.

Some critical perspectives on this collection demonstrate the persistence of a nationalist interpretation of what "Canadian" means and suggest that Atwood participated in constructing a unified Canadian literature and is now disseminating it to an international audience. For example, York argues that "in *Wilderness Tips* an identifiably Canadian voice addresses an international audience, arguing for our shared recognition of complicity in her strong warnings against global pollution as wilderness recedes into myth" (48). This suggests a sense of nostalgia associated with the "wilderness" and glosses over the settler colonial mythologizing of the landscape and the creation of narratives about obtaining freedom in what is actually a pseudo-wilderness. Nischik argues that *Wilderness Tips* "demonstrate[s] how 'Canadian' a writer Margaret Atwood is, in spite of her cosmopolitanism", due to her focus on conveying "specifically Canadian characteristics to an international audience" and writing from a "firmly Canadian perspective" ("MA's Short Stories" 152). Nischik claims this is defined primarily by the "huge expanses of the Canadian landscape" and the "unexplored wilderness" (152). Nischik implies that ideas of a unified Canadian national identity exist, as do collective "Canadian" characteristics, defined primarily by the landscape and wilderness. This points to the enduring desire for a Canadian "cultural core", and the perpetuation of this myth in critical discourse. However, Atwood questions ideas about what being

“Canadian” means. In 1987, she asserted that writers and critics were no longer seeking “the gene for Canadianness” (“Introduction” xiii). Rao states that she has “argued against the importance commonly attributed to national identity for writers in postcolonial contexts” (“Home and Nation” 101). This highlights Atwood’s changing attitudes towards identity and place as Canada changed. While she continues to place her stories and characters in Canadian settings, she also explores the issue of rootedness on a transnational scale.

Despite this, Howells argues that “the key term remains for Atwood (as it has always been) ‘survival’ in a context of environmental change which is both ecological and ideological” (*MA* 165). Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, Atwood’s perspective on this has “grown bleaker” as her position as a Canadian nationalist has broadened in favour of a “transnational engagement with issues of environmental pollution” (Howells, *MA* 165). This “bleakness”, Howells proposes, is highlighted in this collection, where “the word ‘wilderness’ is still there, acknowledging the Canadian tradition out of which she continues to write” but she no longer sees it as “represent[ing] a distinctly Canadian national space” (*MA* 165):

[The wilderness has] become destabilised as the traditional marker of Canadian cultural identity in Atwood’s fiction. The forests are under threat and the New World wilderness myth has come under increasingly ideological pressure in postcolonial multicultural Canada, where traditional narratives of national identity are being revised. (Howells, *MA* 165)

The idea that this perspective is “bleak” suggests not just that Atwood’s writing begins to focus more on the damaging effects of environmental pollution and climate change (although the forests were “under threat” because pioneers arrived to claim and “settle” the land). It also relates to the settler fear of the loss of access to the wilderness and the related anxiety over the loss of a coherent Canadian identity. Howells’s perspective here emphasises the extent to which the British imperialist wilderness-civilisation binary has become ingrained in “ordinary Canadian” constructions of identity and place. *Wilderness Tips* critiques such assumptions about the “traditions” of the wilderness myth in Canada. Through reading

these stories, these revisions of myths about Canadian national identity are examined, but the clandestine endurance of such myths also becomes evident, connected as they are to Settler Canadian hegemony and the regulation of identity.

“The Bog Man” is set not in Canada but in Scotland. It explores the desire for Settler Canadian belonging and rootedness from a transatlantic perspective. The story focuses on the longing for ancestry and authenticity, which is constructed through partly imagined narratives and myths, as examined in Chapter 1. Julie is critical of the Scottish village she is visiting with her married archaeologist lover Connor, who is there to investigate a recently-discovered bog body. Coming from Toronto, Julie’s ideas about Scotland are based on national images and myths and she has unconscious expectations of an Old-World Gothic experience: “It was her first trip across the Atlantic Ocean; she wanted things to be old and picturesque [...] The fields were green, the sun shone, the stone circles were suitably mysterious” (*Wilderness* 91). She visits stone circles, and believes she feels “a connection with her ancestors” (92). This highlights a need for authenticity and a desire to be “placed” through a historic past. She does not, however, seek to actually learn about this place or the people who lived there. As demonstrated through “Unearthing Suite”, historical “facts” are often based on partially-constructed ideas about the past:

Her mother’s family had come from this part of the world, more or less; from somewhere in the north of Scotland. She liked to sit among the standing stones and picture her ancestors running around naked and covered with blue tattoos, offering cups of blood to the gods, or whatever they did. (*Wilderness* 92)

This can be linked with Munro’s “Heirs of the Living Body” and the unreliability of “facts”, or “What Do You Want to Know For?” and the absence of an “ordinary Canadian” drive to discover the details of the past in relation to belonging and identity. This is an effect of the power of political policing and the “selective forgetting” of the past, which prompts Settler Canadians to select “facts” about their ancestry and “forget” the unquiet settler colonial reality. Julie imagines these “ancestors” engaging in rites that are “bloodthirsty” and

“indecipherable”, and her imagined connection with them contributes to her sense of legitimacy and identity as a Canadian with Scottish heritage: “The blood made them authentic, as authentic as the Mayans; or at least more authentic than all that clan and tartan and bagpipe stuff, which Julie found tedious and sentimental” (*Wilderness* 92). She states that “there had been enough of it at her university” (92), which points to the institutional instilment of an anxiety about identity for Settler Canadians in the Canadian landscape, as discussed in Gallant’s Linnet Muir stories in relation to the remittance men’s children and the learned idea of British imperialism.

This unease about Settler Canadian identity and belonging is represented through the bog man in this story, who is linked with a Gothic unearthing of the repressed past. “Age of Lead” also explores this through the discovery of an explorer who was buried in ice for one-hundred-and-fifty years. He is perceived by Jane as monstrous and is described in accordance with the Gothic grotesque: “With these tea-stained eyes he regards Jane: an indecipherable gaze, innocent, ferocious, amazed, but contemplative, like a werewolf meditating, caught in a flash of lightening at the exact split second of his tumultuous change” (*Wilderness* 160). Jane notices that his arms and feet are bound and suspects this was done by his buriers out of fear: “You do that when you don’t want a person walking around” (167). Jane is projecting this monstrous quality onto him out of a sense of anxiety because, in her life in contemporary Toronto, “people were dying. They were dying too early” (172). She is nervous about environmental changes, hormones and pesticides in her food, pollution in the city and “concealed” toxic dumps in the countryside, “masked by the lush, deceitful green of waving trees” (172). The landscape and its resources are being used by humans for profit. However, at the same time, this (pseudo)wilderness seems threatening and malicious towards humans. The tone of the story becomes increasingly didactic, where the lead-poisoning of the Franklin Expedition is compared to the contemporary poisoning of the landscape, both in Canada and globally. Atwood’s writing contrasts in this way with Munro and Gallant, who

focus more on issues of identity and place through specific characters and detailed circumstances.

The Franklin Expedition – in which Captain John Franklin and his crew left England in 1845 on two ships, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, to discover the Northwest Passage in the Canadian North, and all eventually died in the attempt – is one of Canada’s most prevalent and enduring Gothic myths. It is a narrative where the white explorer is claimed and destroyed by the monstrous Canadian wilderness. Critics have drawn on the notion of the “splitting” or fragmentation of white Settler Canadian identity and, through employing Southern Ontario Gothic tropes, Atwood “has reinvented (or revived) Franklin as a part of the contemporary Canadian psyche that has split off and been repressed within the national consciousness” (Grace 149). This gestures towards the selective forgetting of the settler colonial past. Through using the Franklin myth, “she offers us a mirror in which we can contemplate a profoundly disturbing self-image” (Grace 149). The “us” refers to Settler Canadians, suggesting the persistence of the desire for a unified “core” self, the belief in a “national consciousness”, and the imperial and colonial mentalities of the Settler Canadian past and present. Atwood’s revival of Franklin links with changing ideas about identity in Canada, and a perception that while ghosts and monsters once provided a sense of authenticity and history in the landscape, as discussed in Chapter 1, they are now suggestive of the settler destruction of the landscape, as well as the hubris of Settler Canadians and their inability to negotiate the wilderness.

“Age of Lead” also points to how nationalist narratives are taught to Settler Canadians from childhood and implies the strength of institutional and political control over identity construction. Jane recalls being taught about Franklin and his crew while at school, “along with a lot of other doomed expeditions. Not many of those explorers seemed to have come out of it very well” (*Wilderness* 162). The Franklin story and others like it are part of the “regulatory practices” of identity on “ordinary Canadians”. Through using this story,

Atwood accentuates “the cultural construction of wilderness as white male fantasy by adopting two opposing versions of classic wilderness narrative: the heroic survival story and the story of disaster” (Howells, “Writing Wilderness” 11). These contradictory ideas, also explored by Munro in relation to the (pseudo)wilderness, demonstrate the arbitrariness of national identity and its construction in order to meet the requirements of the dominant culture.

This myth was also reinforced, the story suggests, through the placing of images of the two ships – the *Terror* and the *Erebus* (names perfect for a Gothic tale) – on stamps. The effects of this regulation of identity are displayed as Jane remembers that “the idea of exploration appealed to [her]” (*Wilderness* 162). While characters such as Ann in “Dancing Girls”, the narrator in “Unearthing Suite”, or Julie in “The Bog Man” seek a stable sense of identity and rootedness through ancestry and authenticity, this tradition of exploration contradicts the desire for *settlement* in that it presupposes movement, nomadism, insecurity, and the unknown:

To get onto a boat and just go somewhere, somewhere mapless, off into the unknown. To launch yourself into fright; to find things out. There was something daring and noble about it, despite all of the losses and failures, or perhaps because of them. (*Wilderness* 162)

This is a Settler Canadian romanticisation of these wilderness excursions, through a pseudo-wilderness space, as examined through Munro’s “Working”. The idea of nobility is reminiscent of the stereotypical settler perception of the “noble savage” and links with the imperialist wilderness-civilisation binary and the settler desire to “play Indian” to achieve a sense of “cultural authenticity”.

One of the most important Atwood stories for considering ideas of white settler authenticity in the Canadian wilderness is “Death by Landscape”, which incorporates traditions from the Southern Ontario Gothic in relation to notions of the civilisation-wilderness boundary, the Other and a fear of difference, the “unhomely” and a sense of

confinement, the fear of loss of a “core” self, and the literary tradition of imbuing of the landscape with ghosts and monsters in order to ground the settler into place. In this story, Lois remembers her time at a children’s summer camp when her friend Lucy disappeared during a canoeing trip. This is Atwood’s only story to give “sustained attention” to issues of settler colonialism, suggesting the institutional perpetuation of the appropriation of perceived First Nations traditions through these summer camps, “perhaps reflecting the altered cultural climate in Canada” in the 1990s and a growing awareness of “the marginalisation of native peoples” (Hammill, “MA” 54). These camps were common in the 1940s, when this story is set, and “they favoured Indian names” (*Wilderness* 111). This one is called Camp Manitou. To a young Lois, the camp “seemed ancient”, like it “must surely have been there always” when it actually “only dated from the first decade of the century” (112). This suggests a destabilisation of the constructed settler past in this place, which has been learned by the child through school, family, and social groups, as well as from a more government-sanctioned, political level of the branding of Canada.

Throughout the story, Atwood includes references to a sense of white Settler Canadian insecurity about indigeneity and an unease with the landscape. Drawing on settler mythologies about freedom and exploration of the Canadian wilderness, the children are taking a canoe trip into what their camp instructor calls “the trackless wilderness” (*Wilderness* 111). However, this is actually a pseudo-wilderness, a clearly defined and well-travelled route, which works to give the Settler Canadian characters a sense of connection with the landscape. At the camp, there is a longing for authenticity but an inability to achieve it, and a desire for a sense of rootedness in the landscape, like Julie’s feeling of “connection” with the Scottish standing stones in “The Bog Man”.

Atwood uses the Southern Ontario Gothic trope of installing ghosts into the landscape, but here she does this to challenge “traditional” wilderness narratives. Lois is remembering back to her childhood experiences at this camp and, like Jane in “Age of Lead”,

her ideas and memories suggest the extent to which cultural mythologies about the “monstrous” aspects of the Canadian wilderness, as well as the appropriation of, and desire to imitate, Indigenous Canadian cultures, have become entrenched in white Settler Canadian psychology. For example, she remembers that over the fireplace at the camp was a stuffed moose head named Monty Manitou which acts as a mascot and looks “carnivorous” (*Wilderness* 112), and before each canoe trip Cappie engages in a ritual which she believes is based on Indigenous Canadian cultures. She “painted three streaks of red across each of her cheeks with a lipstick” and “put a blue circle on her forehead with fountain-pen ink, and tied a twisted bandanna around her head and stuck a row of frazzle-ended feathers around it, and wrapped herself in a red-and-black Hudson’s Bay blanket” (117). This last detail is a clear critique by Atwood of the involvement of the Hudson’s Bay Company in settler colonial processes, and the connection between it and the mining of the Canadian wilderness for resources.

Atwood establishes how Indigenous Canadian cultures are “being distorted, trivialised, and turned into a game for white children” (Hammill, “MA” 56). The other camp counsellors follow Cappie’s lead, calling her “Chief Cappeosota”: “They all had to say ‘How!’ when she walked into the circle and stood there with one hand raised” (*Wilderness* 117). Cappie imitates how she believes the “Indians” speak, drawing on myths about the empty and unclaimed wilderness: “You go where no man has ever trod” (118). Cappie really “wanted to be an Indian. She wanted to be adventurous and pure, and aboriginal” (118). As Atwood implies with “The Bog Man” and “Unearthing Suite”, and as Munro describes in “What Do You Want to Know For?”, there is a tendency in these stories for Settler Canadian characters to be unconcerned with “consistency, or with archaeology” (*Wilderness* 119) when it comes to appropriating Indigenous Canadian traditions. The older Lois now finds this display “disquieting” because she “knows too much about Indians” (117): “She knows, for instance, that they should not even be called Indians, and that they have enough worries

without other people taking their names and dressing up as them. It has all been a form of stealing” (117). This is Atwood’s most direct reference to settler colonialism and the appropriation of Indigenous Canadian cultures. Yet it also implies that Indigenous Canadian “worries” are detached from the actions of Settler Canadians, and that Settler Canadian behaviours do not contribute to or cause the primary “worries” for Indigenous Canadians.

Like Jane in “Age of Lead”, Lois represents the effects of the institutional perpetuation of these settler colonial narratives, as she recalls that there was a time when she “loved” (*Wilderness* 118) the ideas of Indigenous Canadians to which Cappie subscribes. There is a sense of comfort and security for white settlers through the familiarity of these displays of mythologised Indigenous Canadian cultures, which are bound up with desires for belonging and the excitement and adventure that is supposed to be available to white settlers in the wilderness. Cappie tells them they “must follow in the paths of their ancestors” (118). The older Lois knows that her ancestors were not explorers but were English Protestants who “would never have considered heading off onto an open lake, in a canoe, just for fun” (118). Atwood is gesturing here towards the precarity of the wilderness “tradition” and indicating the constructed nature of this identity. However, as a child, Lois was also the product of the institutional dissemination of these regulatory narratives. Once out on the lake, she felt “as if an invisible rope has broken. They’re floating free, on their own, cut loose” (119). The use of the present tense suggests that Lois continues to remember this feeling. Its influence relates not just to Lucy’s disappearance but also to the instilled expectation of freedom available when in the “wilderness”, and an underlying sense of guilt, specifically here regarding Lucy’s death but also linking with the broader context of settler guilt. Lucy’s absorption by the landscape haunts Lois and is indicative of the haunting of Settler Canadians due to the occupation and use of the land. Lois’s guilt represents “the more general guilt of the colonising nation over the decimation of native culture and the seizing of their land” (Hammill, “MA” 58). When Lois is being questioned by Cappie, she becomes

a double of what she unconsciously thinks a drowned Lucy might look like: “Her face is bloated with crying, she’s seen that in the mirror. By now she feels numbed; she feels as if she has drowned” (*Wilderness* 125). This relates to the idea of drowning as symbolic of exile, as discussed above in relation to “Dancing Girls” and also Gallant’s stories in Chapter 1, suggesting a cross-cultural, transatlantic exploration of themes of dislocation and exile in both urban and rural landscape.

According to Atwood in *Strange Things*, published in the same year as *Wilderness Tips*:

[The appropriation of Indigenous Canadian traditions was] a feature of summer camps and of Girl Guide and Boy Scout groups in Canada well into the 1940s and 1950s. A great many children, over the space of fifty years, were invited to believe that they were metaphorically Indian, and to invest some of their own identity in this notion. (56)

She points out the hypocrisy that while this fetishization of Native cultures was ongoing, on a political level, “treaties were being violated, lands appropriated, rights denied” (*ST* 56). She argues that in some cases the encouragement of children to view themselves as partly Native assisted in greater empathy and less racism towards Indigenous Canadians because “it’s harder to collude in the destruction of a people and a way of thinking if you feel that this people and this way of thinking are partly your own” (*ST* 57). However, this argument is problematic as it demonstrates a naivety with regard to the dominant group’s drive to maintain dominance through the Othering of “ethnic” groups. “Ordinary Canadian” identity has been constructed in opposition to the Other, and fear of difference links with anxiety about the precarity of this construction.

In “Death by Landscape”, there is a repeated use of the word “nothing” as they look for Lucy, who has fallen off a cliff: “There was nothing” when Lois looked over the edge and “nothing answered” when the camp counsellors call for Lucy (*Wilderness* 124). The wilderness myth depicts the land as “actively hostile and actively able to find interesting and tormenting ways of getting its own back” (Howells, “MA and the Haunted North” 52). Their perception that they see “nothing” is based on their limited perspective as Settler Canadians,

and their limited understanding of the wilderness and its capabilities. This can be contrasted with Atwood's father characters who are more knowledgeable about, and connected with, the landscape. This evokes the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition of depicting the landscape as autonomous and malicious. In accordance with this tradition, the landscape can be read as answering their calls with a purposeful silence, and that Lucy's death occurred through its active and sentient will, a kind of retribution for white Settler misuse of the landscape and its resources. However, Atwood is now drawing on these myths and traditions not to perpetuate notions of a unified national Canadian identity but to question ideas of authenticity for Settler Canadians in the landscape.

This story also investigates the potential destabilisation of "home". Atwood shifts from exploring settler unease in relation to the (pseudo)wilderness to considering the possibility of exile "at home" in an urban space. In Lois's apartment, on Toronto's waterfront, the wilderness is kept at a distance and "the only plant life is in pots" (*Wilderness* 109), suggesting a desire for control of potential threat. The wilderness becomes "a state of mind", as discussed in Chapter 3. Of primary importance to Lois are her paintings, which are by members of the Group of Seven, depicting scenes that reflect her memory of the landscape where Lucy disappeared. There is "an element of parody" here as Atwood explores the Group's "role in constructing urban Canadians' idea of forest landscapes" (Hammill, "MA" 55). This relates to "Polarities" and Morrison's comment on the landscape paintings. The possibility of freedom that they represent is contrasted with the confinement of this living space. Hammill argues that the paintings are an "indication that the wilderness – and the uncanny – have invaded Lois's flat" and that Lois comes to "accept the wilderness" (Hammill, "MA" 59) as part of her identity. However, the idea that she has the option to simply accept it is a sign of white settler hubris and a presupposition of Settler Canadian dominance and power. Instead, the presence of the paintings in Lois's apartment can be read as reflecting the hypocrisy in "traditional" Settler Canadian representations of the wilderness.

They are a critique of the belief that freedom can be obtained through a (pseudo)wilderness space. In contrast to this idea of freedom, Lois's apartment represents confinement but also self-imprisonment and self-punishment. She feels a sense of "wordless unease" (*Wilderness* 110), and her home-place has become an "unhomely" space through the presence of these paintings. This is her form of self-castigation. Her repressed guilt about Lucy is symbolic of a broader guilt about the settler colonial past. Thus, while it initially seems that "the popular myth of wilderness is in place", it becomes apparent that "what looks like a shared frame of reference shows its cracks" (Howells, *MA* 33). The story indicates that "traditional" wilderness narratives were not "natural" and are subject to change as Canada changes. However, it also implies the continuation of ingrained Settler Canadian anxieties about having a sense of exile, even when "at home", due to the learned sense of a lack of authenticity and legitimacy in this landscape.

This notion of the "unhomely" is investigated in connection with representations of multicultural Canada in "Wilderness Tips". George is a Hungarian refugee, whose name the "ordinary Canadian" characters have anglicised because they can't pronounce it in its original form and don't try to. This alludes to the legacies of a settler colonial mentality despite the political and cultural discourse and propaganda about multicultural Canada. George values nationalist constructions of tradition, and the idea that this can provide a "core" self and stable identity that rooted in place. The symbol of this, for him, is his wife's family cabin, Wacousta Lodge, which he refers to as "his refuge, his monastery, his sacred ground" (*Wilderness* 199). George thinks that traditions are "thin on the ground in this country" and he pays "homage" to the lodge (*Wilderness* 200). However, the lodge is symbolic of settler constructions of the wilderness and, like the camp in "Death by Landscape", is not particularly old. Its "traditions" have been constructed through appropriating Native cultures and concealing this appropriation to legitimise their continued occupation of the land. George has learned the preoccupation with tradition while in Canada and has absorbed the

“ordinary Canadian” unease about the past. This desire for a tradition and ancestry links with Julie in “The Bog Man”. Atwood uses these characters to suggest the precarious and constructed nature of perceived ancestry. George has no ancestors in Canada and Julie does not know if her ancestors were even from that part of Scotland. This highlights the constructed nature of “roots”, the ways in which humans can construct a sense of place and belonging, and the cross-cultural, transatlantic possibility of exile.

While the standing stones in “The Bog Man” are thousands of years old, Wacousta Lodge was only “built in the first years of the century by the family’s great-grandfather, who made a bundle on the railways” (*Wilderness* 200). This demonstrates the relative newness of the building, and the fact that the family continues to benefit from processes of settler colonialism. George idolises the painting of the great-grandfather that hangs in the house, and bows to him superstitiously whenever he goes out the door. George sees him as an “ancestral totem” (201). Like Camp Manitou in “Death by Landscape”, the house emphasises this settler colonial past, containing decorative stuffed birds, a bearskin rug “complete with claws and head”, a miniature canoe, snowshoes crossed above the fireplace, and the “Hudson’s Bay blanket nailed to the wall” (202). This can be linked with Munro’s “Boys and Girls”, “Dance of the Happy Shades”, and “Working for a Living” to indicate continuities in fictional representations of these enduring settler colonial legacies and a consistent return to issues of belonging bound up with settler colonial origins in these authors’ stories.

In “Wilderness Tips”, the outdatedness of the “ordinary Canadian” “traditions” about the wilderness and is implied by the detail that the blanket is “beset by moths” (*Wilderness* 202). Yet these traditions are still maintained, specifically here through material items, representing the broader structure that contributes to the maintenance of the hegemonic system in Canada. This is demonstrated through the family as well as the house. They want the house and everything in it to stay the same. To them, it represents “a little

slice of the past, an alien past” (203), a quotation which inspires the title of this thesis. This is the white Settler Canadian past, alien because of its outdatedness, because of the family’s disconnection from it. It suggests the possibility of exile and the entrenched fear of a lack of “fit” (which can be connected both with national and gender identity). It is beneficial to the family to maintain these traditions because of their socially and politically dominant position. But Atwood suggests the destabilisation of this security – which was already precarious – through challenges from George (as a representative of emerging multiculturalism), through the family’s own hubris, and through the potential environmental disaster signalled at the end of the story due to settler use of the land and its resources.

Wacousta lodge is named after the historical romance novel *Wacousta* (1832) by Major John Richardson, which focuses on “an English aristocrat who has come to Canada and then gone Indian” (Howells, *MA* 34). Atwood uses Richardson’s novel to explore how Canada has changed, and concurrently to express “anxieties over the construction of a viable national identity” (Howells, *MA* 34). Like the bookshelf at the party at Miss Marsalles’s house in Munro’s “Dance of the Happy Shades”, the bookshelf in Wacousta Lodge is filled with texts that support the settler colonial Canadian national project. *Wacousta* has a cover with “an angry-looking warrior with tomahawk and paint” (*Wilderness* 208) and other books relate to the sea, the landscape, wild animals, imperialism, and a text which is itself called *Wilderness Tips*. The latter looks like a manual for Settler Canadians on how to “survive” in the wilderness, instructions which “were interspersed with lyrical passages about the joys of independence and the open air, and descriptions of fish-catching and sunsets” (*Wilderness* 208). Atwood uses this text for a metafictional demonstration of how the “traditions” to which George pays so much respect are “the invention of white male English-speaking colonialists who were fascinated by the wilderness with its alien forests and animals and its Indian lore” (Howells, *MA* 35). Atwood engages with the idea proposed by Hatch that the wilderness myth is not a “tradition” that relates to pioneers, but a construction invented

from a later urban perspective by twentieth-century white writers and artists. The inter-text *Wilderness Tips* is “Atwood’s own invention”, which “raises the question of what authenticity might mean when the tradition finds its most complete representation in a pastiche text which is indistinguishable from an original” (Howells, *MA* 35). In a rethinking of her earlier ideas about a unified Canadian national identity, this story suggests Atwood’s changed perspective, aligning with the view that “there never was a homogenous Canadian national narrative [...] and now its inauthenticities are being exposed under pressure of immigrant and Native voices claiming their right to participate in the new definitions of what being ‘Canadian’ means” (Howells, *MA* 37). Atwood has progressed to questioning the necessity of appropriating Indigenous traditions and destabilising the wilderness myth: “Living like the Natives in order to survive in the wilderness was translated into living like the Natives in the wilderness in order to survive. Survive what?” (*ST* 44). This is “a sharp self-commentary upon the relevancy” (Wynne-Davies 53) of *Survival*. It implies that there is no malicious wilderness to fear, and points to the invented nature of the Settler Canadian fear of a destabilised “core” identity and home. It also suggests that, as a theme, survival “fails to engage with a state that, by the 1980s, was beginning to respond to its own multicultural constituency” (Wynne-Davies 53). This literary and critical focus on the “failure” of a myth that has been propagated among “ordinary Canadians” for decades suggests that the “failure” is an individual or social issue rather than a state-perpetuated regulatory practice in order to maintain a unified “ordinary Canadian” identity based on a sense of disunity, a lack of cultural core. This has been revealed as a deep-seated fear and anxiety about a lack of belonging.

The modification of the victim mentality in response to multiculturalism is also explored in “Wilderness Tips”. Roland, George’s brother-in-law, is depicted as perceiving himself as a contemporary pioneer. He can be connected with the father character in Munro’s “Working” through his engagement with romantic narratives of the

(pseudo)wilderness and his white male fantasy about finding a sense of self and freedom there. He symbolises how “survival” in the wilderness has become “nostalgia for the past” (Wynne-Davies 52). He used to read the book *Wilderness Tips* as a child, through which he learned the imperial wild-civilised binary and a nostalgic sense of the “noble savage”:

There was a lot about the Indians, about how noble they were, how brave, faithful, clean, reverent, hospitable, and honourable. (Even these words sound outmoded now, archaic. When was the last time Roland heard anyone praised for being *honourable*?) They attacked only in self-defence, to keep their land from being stolen. (*Wilderness* 213, emphasis in original)

This suggests an “ordinary Canadian” self-construction in opposition to the “ethnic” Other, and reflects an “Us and Them” mentality that Roland, like Jane in “Age of Lead”, learned as a child. Roland is depicted as nostalgically relegating First Nations peoples to the past. He has an ingrained sense of Settler Canadian identity as deficient. However, his sense of unease about occupying this land and lacking a “cultural core” are repressed, and he refers to the land as “being stolen”, without acknowledging who did the stealing.

“Hack Wednesday” also engages with this questioning of Settler Canadians identity narratives. The story is set in Toronto, and the bitter winter and the urban cityscape combine to create a sense of confinement and the “dark city”. On the city streets, Marcia sees two homeless “Native Indians” and views them as looking “fed up. They’ve had it with this city, they’ve had it with suicide as an option, they’ve had it with the twentieth century. Or so Marcia supposes. She doesn’t blame them: the twentieth century has not been a raving success” (*Wilderness* 231). However, they are not given a voice and, like Ann in “Dancing Girls”, Marcia presumes she understands the two men’s experiences. Marcia and Roland both demonstrate a learned sense of “ordinary Canadian” dominance over Indigenous Canadians, which persists despite political claims of multiculturalism. Marcia is depicted as longing for a unified Canadian “cultural core”. When discussing Canada with her English friend Gus, she seeks to “construct for him the Canada of old”, with a desire to “make her country out as such a dour and Gothic place” (*Wilderness* 240). This relates to Gallant’s

comment about imagining that Canadian identity is in crisis because it sounds “tense and stormy and romantic”. Marcia’s views can be read as an effect of the ongoing maintenance of the victim mentality as connected with growing multiculturalism. However, Atwood only implicitly gestures towards these ideas, and this disguised call for a re-consideration of accepted ideas about Canadian identity is oblique enough to be missed by international and perhaps domestic readers.

Moral Disorder (2006) can be read as a continuation of the investigation into changing ideas about Canadian identity and wilderness in the new millennium. McWilliams argues that this collection of linked stories, with what is presumed to be the same central character, Nell, (though this is never confirmed), “offers a kaleidoscopic reflection of female coming of age” which relates to the “spatialization of experience” (127). Space and location are used to interrogate the wilderness myths and Settler Canadian identity. McWilliams contends that Munro’s *Lives* and *Who* are “precursors” (129) to this collection. She states that Atwood “has often been thought of as painting in broad brushstrokes, being concerned with the national rather than regional expression of Canadian literary identity, but *Moral Disorder* brings her closer to Munro’s finely written appreciation of the minutiae of lives” (129). However, Atwood presents characters with less detail and complexity, which is less effective at interrogating ideas about identity and belonging than the more refined and specific approach from Munro, and Gallant.

This collection presents a contemporary context, and Atwood “modifies and adjusts the assumptions of her earlier work” (McWilliams 129) in relation to the wilderness and survival. The structure is “experimental” and “deliberately” disordered (McWilliams 129). Kuttainen argues that the short story cycle allows for an investigation into Settler Canadian identity in relation to the “multiple and complex histories of migration and displacement”, “the appropriation of Indigenous lands and continued tense relations to Indigeneity”, and “the continuing effects of this legacy” (22). Atwood’s suggestion in *Strange Things* that

“survival” is no longer relevant to contemporary Canada is explored here as Nell and her lover Tig attempt to “survive” in rural Ontario. Problems they encounter are depicted as resulting from their lack of expertise and understanding in relation to the land. The landscape can be interpreted as a pseudo-wilderness space, in which these Settler Canadian characters want to access a sense of freedom and a nostalgic desire for a pioneer-like existence.

The house is again depicted as symbolic of the relationship between identity and place. In “Monopoly”, Tig owns a late-nineteenth-century farmhouse, and Nell reads about such farmhouses in *The Ancestral Roof*, a book written by Marion Macrae in 1963 (a time when Canadian nationalism was growing stronger). The title itself suggests a desire for ancestral rootedness in Canada. Nell initially thinks that “life on a farm represented some superior form of authenticity” (*Moral* 93). The book represents nineteenth-century British settlers as an authentic source of ancestry for Nell. However, her inauthenticity is shown as being based not on a settler colonial occupation of the land but on a rural-urban divide, relating to arguments made by Hatch and Atwood about the fear of the wilderness as constructed by city dwellers.

In “Moral Disorder”, they decide not to “move back to the city” as it is “just too beautiful up here” (*Moral* 116). They buy a run-down farmhouse from the mid-1830s, and the descriptions of it draw on Southern Ontario Gothic tropes of stagnation and confinement in the domestic space: “No one had lived in here for years. Dust and dead flies coated the windowsills” (*Moral* 117). The influence of Moodie’s *Roughing It* is evident as Atwood describes their attempts to understand this landscape, which repeatedly fail. For example, Nell tries to create a kitchen garden, but it keeps being destroyed by animals or the weather. She looks up to nineteenth-century pioneers who “had cleared the land” and survived in the “wilderness”, though “many of these people had never used an axe before they’d come” (*Moral* 121). This suggests a link with pioneering women of the past, such as Parr Traill, who published works such as *The Female Emigrant’s Guide* (1854), *Canadian*

Wildflowers (1868), and *Studies in Plant Life in Canada* (1885), texts which attempted to provide advice for British settlers trying to make a successful life in Canada (Fowler). It also connects with Munro's "A Wilderness Station" and the contemporary Settler Canadian nostalgic mythologizing about pioneer life. This indicates attempts by both Atwood and Munro to deconstruct and destabilise "traditional" myths about pioneer life in Canada, specifically through a gendered lens. Both Canadian and international readers are conditioned to view Canada in terms of its white male wilderness mythologies and its label of multiculturalism and openness to diversity. These repeated "failures" by female characters are, on the surface, individual problems but they are part of a hegemonic narrative about the masculine domination of the Canadian wilderness, while also implicitly critiquing pioneer women's complicity in this project. These connections gesture towards a continuing "Canadian" identity in crisis, through which Settler Canadians have learned to desire a sense of "cultural authenticity" in connection with the land.

The power of such narratives is indicated by Nell's comment that "in the end, we'll all become stories" (*Moral* 188). In "The Labrador Fiasco", another father-daughter relationship is used to examine the Settler Canadian creation of such stories about the wilderness as a "strategy" for dealing with the colonial past. The story presents a critique of the white male fantasy of wilderness. McWilliams states that representations of this fantasy are "reframed" here and "given a new meaning" (129). They are connected with changing attitudes to identity in Canada in the twenty-first century. The father's retelling of an explorer narrative "of endurance in the Bush" keeps him active as his health fails (McWilliams 131). The story links the wilderness with aging and with the fragility of masculinity, which is investigated further in Chapter 6.

As in "Wilderness Tips", Atwood uses an inter-text to demonstrate the power of stories in shaping her characters. Because the father is sick, the narrator's mother reads a familiar tale of an expedition in which two American explorers fail to "survive" when battling

against the Canadian landscape. Survival is reframed as not just physical but a state of mind. This is linked to perceptions of Canadian identity and ingrained notions of the victim mentality. The narrative depicts these explorers as outdated and exposes their desire for authenticity and legitimacy in connection with the land, and their need to prove their “manliness”. They would, the narrator states:

have been able to turn a neat, Kiplingesque paragraph or two on the lure of wild places, the challenge of the unknown. This was 1903, when exploration was still in vogue as a test of manliness, and when manliness itself was still in vogue, and was thought to couple naturally with the word *clean*. Manliness, cleanliness, the wilderness, where you could feel free. With gun and fishing rod, of course. You could live off the land. (*Moral* 191, emphasis in original)

The language used here satirises the white male fantasy of the wilderness, as the leader Hubbard seeks to “make his name” and “penetrate the last unmapped Labrador wilds” (*Moral* 191). The explorers planned to travel through “where the Indians congregated every summer for the caribou hunt” and then move on to “a Hudson’s Bay post” (*Moral* 191), a point that links back to “Wilderness Tips” as discussed above. Their white settler colonial mentality is clear, as Hubbard “planned to do a little amateur anthropology” while among “the Indians” (*Moral* 191). He has already planned the kind of photographs he wants to take, based on his ideas of what “Indians” would be like. He wants to document the “women with bead necklaces and gleaming eyes chewing the hide, or sewing it, or whatever they did. *The Last Wild People*. Something like that. There was a great interest in such subjects” (*Moral* 191, emphasis in original). However, the racism towards Indigenous Canadians does not stay within the bounds of the explorer tale; it is perpetuated by the narrator, who presumably is Nell, and by her father. This story can thus be read as a critique of Atwood’s earlier father-daughter relationships and the depiction of their “connection” with the wilderness.

The narrator is initially depicted as disparaging of these stereotypical tales, stating that stories like this are “supposed” to have “an old Indian who appears to the white men as they are planning to set out. He comes to warn them, because he is kind at heart and they

are ignorant” (*Moral* 191). He is supposed to warn the white men about the presence of “bad spirits”, and they are supposed to disregard his advice as “native superstition” (*Moral* 192). The “old Indian” in this particular explorer story “somehow got left out” so the narrator’s father “takes the part upon himself” (192). Like Cappie in “Death by Landscape” or Roland in “Wilderness Tips”, the appropriation here is not malicious from the character’s perspective but points to the ingrained settler colonial mentalities in white settlers, a lack of awareness, and a mistaken assumption of knowledge about Indigenous Canadians.

The indoctrination of these problems is highlighted when the narrator also engages in such generalisations. When her father claims that the “Indians” would not have travelled where the white men went, not because of “bad spirits” but because there would have been nothing to eat, the narrator says: “For the Indians it would have been the same thing, because where does food come from if not from the spirits? It isn’t just there, it is given; or else withheld” (*Moral* 192). As with “In Search of Rattlesnake Plantain” and “Unearthing Suite”, the narrator’s father is depicted as more in tune with the wilderness than these explorers. The narrator remembers a photograph of him when he went on such adventures: “He looks slightly villainous; like a pirate, or indeed like a northwoods guide [...] like someone who knows what he’s doing” (193). When he speaks about the north, “he speaks of it with admiration and nostalgia, and a kind of ruefulness” (197). But through the narrator’s perspective, he is criticised less than the explorers in the tale, because he is depicted as more connected with the landscape, despite his assumptions about Indigenous peoples and his appropriation of them. This suggests the resilience of settler colonial mentalities and the clandestine nature of their continuation.

The story additionally presents the endurance of anxieties about home and place when, as in “In Search of Rattlesnake Plantain”, the father’s health declines and he loses “his sense of where he is. From one minute to the next he has become lost” (*Moral* 201). He tells his daughter that he wants to “go home”. She recognises that “there’s no point telling him

that home is where he now is, because he means something else. He means the way he was before” (202). Home, then, is not a specific place or even multiple places. Like the concepts of wilderness and exile, it is a state of mind. Atwood thus highlights the continuation of “ordinary Canadian” unease about identity and belonging, and persistent – and learned – fear of instability expressed through narratives of shifting wilderness, exile, and unstable homes.

Conclusion

These stories suggest an increasingly critical attitude towards the legacies of settler colonialism in contemporary constructions of white English-speaking Canadian identities. They can also be read as presenting the continued silencing of Indigenous Canadian voices. While regulatory practices of identity are maintained, and the Canadian identity “crisis” is perpetuated through the continuation of the victim mentality, political and cultural discourse about Canada as multicultural, tolerant of diversity, and utopian society continue. Atwood’s tendency towards totalising gestures and her desire to make connections and grand statements can be less effective than the more localised approaches by Gallant and Munro in relation to the deconstruction of ingrained narratives of “Canadian” identity. Her strengths in questioning ideas about social and political power relate more to gender inequalities than to issues of place, and her work has been effective at critiquing gender norms, particularly during the latter half of the twentieth century in her engagement with feminist discourse.

Chapter 6

The “Angel/Whore” binary: Gender Inequality in Margaret Atwood’s Short Fiction

Introduction

Atwood’s short fiction emphasises the dangers of perpetuating reductive narratives about women’s victimisation by men. Her stories interrogate “ordinary Canadian” women’s multiple identity positions. They argue against women being “homogenised as good, or simply as victims” (MacPherson 20). Atwood states that “women as well as Canadians have been colonised or have been victims of cultural imperialism” (Davidson, “Where” 94). Her female characters can be viewed from multiple perspectives: as victims of British colonialism and imperialism and agents of settler colonialism in Canada; as victims of patriarchal subjugation, and agents of the perpetuation of internalised patriarchal power and sexist attitudes towards other women, particularly those in less powerful positions. McWilliams states that “the confluence of postcolonial and feminist interests has been identified as a particularly Canadian phenomenon and this is most vividly seen in Atwood’s own criticism and fiction” (50). This confluence can be examined from the cultural “renaissance” and growing nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s into the new millennium. As Atwood was such a central figure in Canadian literature during this period, and an outspoken voice on political issues, her under-examined short fiction provides a fresh perspective on how themes of feminism and Canadian settler colonialism can be combined, particularly in relation to representations of Othered characters as “outlawed figures” and exiles.

Howells states that “Atwood’s resistance to generalisations about ‘Woman’ is a crucial feature in her feminist understanding of the importance of history and culture in shaping women’s lives” and that Atwood “insists on specificity of context as a prerequisite for definitions of feminism” (*MA* 19). Similarly, McWilliams states that “Atwood’s brand of

feminism is self-interrogating as she is cautious of investing in any single feminist ideology”

(94). Howells contends that:

In Atwood’s fiction there are no essentialist definitions of “woman” or “feminism” or even “Canadian”, but instead representations of the endless complexity and quiriness of human behaviour which exceeds ideological labels and the explanatory power of theory. As a “feminist” and a “nationalist”, Atwood is a “political” writer in the widest sense, for she is interested in an analysis of the dialectics of power and in shifting structures of ideology. (*MA* 19)

The issue of power remains central, as does the hegemonic occlusion of where power lies. While her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, as mentioned in the Introduction, is a clear interrogation of the potential effects of extremism in relation to gender and power, her short stories also indicate how patriarchal power norms and structures facilitate and enforce the victimisation of women. Her female characters are depicted as allowing for, or consenting to, their own victimisation and the limitation of their behaviours and choices. However, these are learned behaviours which are an effect, rather than the cause, of the maintenance of patriarchal structures. Atwood’s female characters can also be used to question the notion of personal responsibility and agency, and the power of narratives and myths in the construction of gendered identity.

Howells, who focuses on Atwood’s novels, argues that they “have provided a chronicle and critique of the changing fashions within feminist politics over the past 30 years” (*MA* 14). In the preface to the Virago 1980 edition of *The Edible Woman*, originally published in 1965, Atwood states that “the goals of the feminist movement have not yet been achieved, and those who claim we’re living in a post-feminist era are either sadly mistaken or tired of thinking about the whole subject” (qtd in Staines, “From Wingham” 17). As argued in the Introduction, the development of political and cultural discourses about Canadian post-colonialism, post-nationalism, and post-feminism has detracted from ongoing power imbalances and the maintenance of inequalities.

Coppock, Hayden, and Richter point to a linguistic shift in the 1990s in which “comment in the media, in politics and in industry became scattered with references to the 1990s and an ‘enlightened’ and ‘post-feminist’ period” (3). This was a politically and institutionally-sanctioned argument that “all had been achieved, in fact over-achieved, to the point that many men were left confused, their identities shattered, and many women struggled with over-expectancy” (Coppock et al., 3). However, the reality is that “not only have women’s real advancements been limited, but also that there has been a backlash against feminism of international significance” (3). Post-feminism is part of this backlash, a method of patriarchal control that conceals the continuation of patriarchal power. According to Whelehan, “the ‘new’ feminism of the ‘90s”, in which she includes Naomi Wolf, “displays a tendency to blame women because the revolution promised by the second wave has not yet happened” (220). These issues are reflected in Atwood’s stories and can be linked with discussions of belonging and identity in Canada, from the period of the Second World War up to the early twenty-first century.

Wisker asserts that “in her role as postcolonial, post-feminist, eco, Gothic writer, Atwood critiques common-sense constructions of identity and power, explores how people seem to see their lives as scripted and constrained, and reveals the power structures which control language, sexuality, and identity” (9). This links with Gallant’s “locked situation” and the concept of “gender scripts”. It emphasises the clandestine hegemonic power structures which continue to regulate identity. Learned notions of success and failure are prevalent in these stories in relation to appropriate adherence to gender roles. While Canadian settler colonial power structures continue to generate feelings of failure in relation to belonging and a stable “core” self, failure is also produced under patriarchal “gender scripts” of femininity. Both systems maintain hegemonic power. Atwood’s female characters demonstrate how women can be doubly exiled through both national identity and gender restrictions.

Wisker also acknowledges that Atwood “decries the limitations” (190) the feminist label. Though her “formative years” coincided with the development of Second Wave Feminism, and “her fiction reflects the changing climate when Women’s Liberation was becoming a political issue” (Howells, *MA* 14), Atwood is reluctant to call her work “feminist”. This can be connected with radical contemporary arguments about what classified one as a feminist. For example, in “Spotty-Handedness” from *Curious Pursuits*, she disagrees with argument that literature should present women who “could do no wrong, but could only have wrong done to them” (179). Atwood is reacting to gynocentric feminist views on unified and unnuanced definitions of gender identity, for men and women, as well as the outright rejection of marriage and motherhood, as explored in relation to Munro. She argues that if a writer includes female characters who sought power, who were victimised, or who abided by femininity norms, that writer was “considered anti-feminist” and “aiding and abetting [...] the male power structure” (*CP* 180).

Atwood states that the women’s movement allowed space for authors to undertake an “examination of the way power works in gender relations” and she exposes “much of this as socially constructed” (*CP* 179). She “has a political and literary agenda, challenging conventional notions of romance and prescriptive roles for women as wives and mothers” (Wisker 37). Her work suggests that a rejection of men is not that answer, and that “a woman’s culture does not necessarily mean that the culture will be better than what went before – separatism of any kind is suspect, and feminism itself requires careful surveillance” (Macpherson 24). Her writing “eludes the simplicity of any single ‘feminist’ position” (Howells, *MA* 14). She seeks to complicate relationships between men and women, while exploring broad themes such as nationalism and environmental change.

Atwood writes in “Great Unexpectations” that in order to “fit” into expectations of appropriate behaviour for women writers in the 1960s, she would have to avoid marriage and having children. She states that feminists “were assuring me that I didn’t have to get

married and have children. But what I wanted was someone to tell me I could” (“Great Unexpectations” xvi). Her short fiction can be used to explore the point that “feminism cannot be reduced to parodic slogans like ‘the oppression of women by men’ or ‘women are always right’” (Howells, *MA* 17). Her stories emphasise that “feminism also means looking at the ways in which women use the powers traditionally granted to them and how they have attempted to enlarge the scope of their influence”, and “looking at the effects on women of not having legitimised power” (17). This ties in with Butler’s arguments about the necessity of “subversive” resistance, which is discussed further below.

According to Hengen, “the issue of power as a phenomenon defined by broader social structures runs throughout all of Atwood’s writing, particularly in those works published during and since the Canadian cultural awakening of the 1970s” (16). In “Notes on Power Politics”, from 1973, Atwood writes that power “is not real, not really there. People give it to each other” (qtd. in Hengen 11). While this is the case, the broader patriarchal power system facilitates the perpetuation of passivity for women and adherence to the stereotypical traits of being “nice”, “kind”, and “nurturing”. Dominant political, social, and cultural norms generate “a sense of powerlessness” for women, which can lead them to feel “that they have even fewer choices than they actually do have” (Dallos and Dallos 14). Atwood explores ideas of power for characters in positions of privilege, “ordinary Canadians”, middle-class women who do not have to deal with racism or class bias. Many factors contribute to freedom for women to challenge victimisation, including financial status, education, and ethnicity. These stories highlight the socialisation of boys and girls into their “appropriate” gender roles, with instances of “boying” evident as well as the “girling” apparent in stories by Munro and Gallant, although “girling” remains the focus for the purposes of this investigation of the regulation of femininity.

Like Gallant and Munro, Atwood is a feminist but one that believes in non-exclusivity. Her interest lies not in definitions of what it means to be feminist but on what it

means to have power: “Atwood sees sexual politics as only one of the areas in which power relations are the crucial issue” (*MA* 14). Her stories are “not only about relations between women and men, but about relations between women and women” (Howells, *MA* 17). These texts also demonstrate a deconstruction of gender roles such as the necessity for women to be “nice” and to “fit” with the “good” wife/mother role, the “angel in the house”. Atwood’s short fiction also highlights the regulative power of social judgements on female characters and by female characters. She underscores that policing and sanctioning of non-conformity is facilitated through an internalised male gaze in female characters. According to the rules of gynocentric feminism, feminist writers were expected to avoid talking about “women’s will to power, because weren’t women supposed by nature to be communal egalitarians?” (Atwood, *CP* 180). This can be connected with earlier discussions about female characters having a greater connection to the feminised Canadian wilderness, in contrast with the dominating approach of colonial masculinity. This suggestion of egalitarianism presents a challenge to patriarchal hierarchal power in relation to place. Atwood is critiquing it here, and her stories highlight the naivety of this perspective.

“Bad” women should be represented in literature, Atwood suggests. She writes that “we are expected – in defiance of real life – to somehow believe” that it is “*unfeminist*” to “depict a woman behaving badly” (*CP* 172, emphasis in original). This connects with Fiamgeno’s argument about Munro. Similarly, Rigney questions how, “given such negative portrayals of women, can we construct a feminist ethic for Atwood” (161), suggesting that these unifying approaches to feminism have persisted over time. Atwood’s writing “suggests that women’s very real political oppression should not limit fictional women’s behaviour boundaries” (MacPherson 21). Readers need “bad”, victimised, selfish, or uncaring female characters, to reflect the reality of the diversity of identity, and also to question accepted social and cultural norms about femininity. Atwood asserts that the women’s movement has meant that “the Cinderella happy ending – the Prince Charming one – has been called into

question” (*CP* 178). In her characteristically wry tone, she assures the reader that this does not mean individual women

cannot find happiness with a good man, a good woman, or a good pet canary; just as the creation of a bad female character doesn’t mean that women should lose the vote. If bad male characters meant that, for men, all men would be disenfranchised immediately. (*CP* 178)

She argues against the tendency by feminist writers to “polarize morality by gender”, to write female characters as good and male characters as bad, and to imply that “women who slept with men were sleeping with the enemy”, that “women who wore high heels and make-up were instantly suspect, those in overalls were acceptable”, and that “defects in women were ascribable to the patriarchal system and would cure themselves once that system was abolished” (*CP* 179). This radical feminist approach is depicted by Munro through Addie in *Lives*, set in the 1970s, and an early implication of it is demonstrated through Molly in Gallant’s “The Remission”, set in the 1950s. This points to the importance of short fiction by these authors in highlighting the development of feminism over the twentieth century.

Within her investigations of changing approaches to feminism, Atwood’s stories allow for a useful examination of the influence of the male gaze and male objectification of the female body. Both male and female characters in these stories display discomfort with the aging body, and the female body becomes a site for the projection of male anxiety about this. The stories indicate the impact of post-World War II anxiety about identity and place, in combination with other factors such as the “Live Fast, Die Young” culture from the United States, as typified by James Dean’s death in 1955.

Atwood also looks at socially-ingrained and perpetuated ideas of female beauty and how this links with food and eating. She explores the breakdown of monogamy, and the prevalence of infidelity in marriage during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as “good” and “bad” motherhood as connected with “good” and “bad” femininity. In Atwood’s writing, “the importance of good mothering, its requirement of responsibility and individual mothers’

failures through personal inadequacy, wickedness, or the impossible and contradictory demands of the role itself are equally evident” (*Food* 12). This idea of failure can be demonstrated through Atwood’s “victim positions” from *Survival*, which are applicable not just to Canadian identity but to gender identity and femininity also.

The victim mentality theory is constructed according to four “victim positions”, as prompted by what Atwood calls “a superabundance of victims in Canadian literature” (Gibson, *Eleven* 39). Literary characters can progress from one position to another. They initially deny their victimhood, then acknowledge it but blame it on someone or something else (such as fate). They subsequently acknowledge it and believe they can change it. The fourth position is the “creative non-victim” where, Atwood states, “the external and/or the internal causes of victimisation have been removed. (In an oppressed society, of course, you can’t become an ex-victim – insofar as you are connected with your society – until the entire society’s position has been changed.)” (*Survival* 38, parentheses in original). This caveat in parentheses is problematic considering the systemic regulation of identity, and political and cultural perpetuation of failures, and the representation of such failures as an individual problem. In Position Four, Atwood asserts, “Victor/Victim games are obsolete. You don’t even have to concentrate on rejecting the role of Victim, because the role is no longer a temptation for you” (*Survival* 39). This is an example of the naivety to which McWilliams refers, as this argument overlooks the systemic power structure. This is similar to Atwood’s claim that both Settler Canadians and women need to stop thinking of themselves as victims or it “will always be true”, and suggests that they take personal responsibility for their experiences, behaviours, and attitudes (Gibson, *Eleven* 22). As with issues of national identity, Atwood’s writing becomes more increasingly engaged with the influence of hegemonic power on the individual, presenting more nuanced critiques about the possibility of personal agency and autonomy for women within the patriarchal system. However, her propagation of these ideas in *Survival* contributes to the cultural reinforcement of the “failures” of

“ordinary Canadian” identity. Her writing regularly features a “Canadian woman going through an identity-crisis” (Couturier-Storey 36). In contrast to Gallant and Munro, “many critics have noted a strong didactic streak” in her work (Couturier-Storey 36). While her short fiction can be read as deconstructing accepted myths and narratives of femininity, she also tends to make broad didactic gestures which make her texts less effective than those of Gallant and Munro in this regard.

(i) *Dancing Girls* and Atwood’s Early Feminism

Dancing Girls was published in 1977, at the height of Second Wave feminism, and illustrates Atwood’s reactions to different feminist issues at the time. According to Wisker, the collection suggests that “traditional gender roles and behaviours” (57) are “artificial” (58) and looks at themes which Atwood continues to examine throughout her short story collections, including identity and victimisation (57). As mentioned in Chapter 5, this collection was influenced by Laing’s *The Divided Self*, in the sense of its focus on characters “portrayed in unfulfilling, dysfunctional, or disintegrating relationships”, often with a “poor self-image” which “results in dependence on rather than love for his or her partner” (Nischik, *Engendering* 9). Many of the stories suggest the entrenched power of romance narratives and fairy-tale myths, and question the necessity for women to reject romantic relationships and love in order to maintain or achieve power and personal freedom. Through these female characters, the stories explore ideas of what quantifies success and failure in relation to socially and institutionally-determined standards of femininity.

Atwood draws on old English romance narratives to critique the indoctrination of women according to patriarchal beauty standards. These narratives link the prospect of happiness and success for women with marriage, “if only they learn to market themselves properly” (Bromberg 13). This connects with the process of “girling”. Wisker argues that Atwood “explores the constricting myths with which women develop (or fail to develop)

their own sense of individualism” (54). However, success or failure of this “development” is based not just on individual agency or self-victimisation but also on the influence of overarching power structures. Rao states that women are “constantly bombarded with promises of ‘ideals’” and must “cope with the fact that those ideals do not actually exist” (“Margaret Atwood’s” 142). Striving for these non-existent ideals exerts control over women. The female characters in *Dancing Girls* demonstrate this in relation to (primarily urban) Canada in the 1960s and 1970s.

Davis writes that “Atwood’s female bodies become battlefields where anxieties relating to wider power structures are written onto female flesh” (58). Davies points to Atwood’s use of the Gothic in relation to the female body, stating:

It is written in terms of surveillance and hiddenness and it is connected with ideas of incarceration; it is linked with metaphors of disembodiment, a failure to be completely *there*, or with the occupation of liminal territories which mark uneasy gaps between ‘real’ and ‘other’. (58, emphasis in original)

Davies describes Atwood’s “narratives of female resistance”, showing characters who “evade the bodily containment of the subject and break free to articulate the experience of incarceration and surveillance in a culture where women are trained in both self-surveillance and in exercising the surveillant gaze over other women” (62).

From the beginning of the first story, “The Man from Mars”, the female body is the focus of the male gaze. As Christine walks through a park, a group of old men watch her, “drawn by the movement of her body” (*Dancing* 9). But Christine does not abide by social and cultural expectations of female physical beauty and femininity. Her association with the Vietnamese man who stalks her imbues her with a sense of status in the eyes of her peers at the university, and in her own perception on herself, as she is now considered to be “doing” her gender correctly through attracting the male gaze. The power dynamics in this story are complicated because of Christine’s status as a middle-class, “ordinary Canadian”, and the Vietnamese man’s status as Outsider, unnamed, silenced. However, patriarchal structures

imbue him with power, and Christine is a victim of his harassment. The story challenges what it means to be exiled, both in terms of place and gender norms, and relates this to the precarity of perceptions of dominance and power.

Christine has learned that success for a woman is connected with physical beauty and the attention or attraction of a man, which imbues her body with meaning and purpose. It can also be perceived as a critique of the “Angel/Whore” binary, the categorisation of women as sex object or non-sexual, nurturing mother: “To her male friends she was the one who could be relied on [...] In moments of stress they confided to her their problems with women. There was nothing devious about her and nothing interesting” (*Dancing* 23). Prior to attracting the Vietnamese man, Christine “fitted none of the categories they commonly used when talking about girls”, which all relate to constructing girls as sex objects, and she is given “a special position” as an “honorary person” (24). Atwood’s choice of language here emphasises the objectification of women, but also implies that Christine is a “person” and thus cannot be a woman or a sexual being. Through the gaze of the Vietnamese man, these other men begin to sexualise Christine and view her in terms of her body. However, she remains mysterious to them because she still does not align with their learned idea of feminine attractiveness. Like the female narrator in Munro’s “Boys and Girls”, Christine begins to internalise their sexualisation of her and their connection of her value with her body: “In the bathtub she no longer imagined she was a dolphin; instead she imagined she was an elusive water-nixie, or sometimes, in moments of audacity, Marilyn Monroe” (*Dancing* 24). She starts to view the stalking as her fault, not his, and relates it to her body:

It was she herself who was the tormentor, the persecutor. She was in some sense responsible; from the folds and crevices of the body she had treated for so long as a reliable machine was emanating, against her will, some potent invisible odour, like a dog’s in heat or a female moth’s, that made him unable to stop following her. (*Dancing* 25)

While the story suggests that Christine gained power through this – which ties in with post-feminist attitudes of using female sexuality in order to gain power over men – she is still

subject to sexist and misogynistic behaviour. She is depicted as comparing herself to an animal, and not only perceives herself as culpable for his sexual harassment, but also suggests that it is a biological and unconscious by-product of her body that is causing his behaviour. The story suggests her misguided view of herself as controlling his behaviour due to her class, race, and sense of entitlement and belonging in the urban setting of Toronto. This relates to patriarchal culture in a broader sense. Christine sees herself as the cause of the male character's harassment, highlighting her learned mentality to view herself as a victim and, paradoxically, as in control of his behaviour.

Atwood suggests that seeking power through the self-sexualisation of the female body is not progressive because it is still based within the limitations of patriarchal standards and norms for women. It maintains men as the focal point and subjugates women through necessitating a view of the female body through the male gaze. Christine's new-found sense of power is dependent on the men's interaction with each other and on their view of her as a kind of status symbol, a puzzle to be solved, which they can use to improve their own social standing. The resolution to the stalking is orchestrated by men – Christine's father and male police officers – with her body used as bait. However, now Christine's sense of embodied power links with her non-conformance to expectations of feminine beauty as, knowing that the police are waiting to arrest him, she approaches the Vietnamese man and feels her body is "back to its usual size; she felt herself a giantess, self-controlled, invulnerable" (*Dancing* 27). There is a sense here of her movement into Victim Position Three, in which she recognises she is a victim but sees a possible alternative or a way of rejecting the victimisation. However, once the man is deported, she starts to romanticise the experience: "Maybe she had been special after all, maybe he had dared everything for her" (*Dancing* 29). She can be read as a character in a "locked situation" due to the limiting effects of "gender scripts", as she continues to think about him obsessively, drawing on learned romance narratives to reshape what happened in memory. The story indicates a link between

her perceived lack of success as a woman later in life – in relation to a lack of love, marriage, and motherhood – with her declining physical appearance, and a failure to secure the “happy ending” of the romance narrative.

Like Gallant and Munro, Atwood explores ideas of success and romance narratives in the twentieth century before and during the rise of Second Wave Feminism. “Betty” highlights generational differences in attitudes towards gender equality, as the first-person narrator recalls her childhood summers at the beach on Saint Mary’s River just after World War II, and her family’s interactions with a young couple, Fred and Betty. Betty represents the effects of “the feminine mystique” and Atwood’s Victim Position One, unaware of her victimisation. Bouson’s comment on *The Edible Woman* also applies to Atwood’s short fiction, which “shows how female passivity and submersion in the traditional wife and mother roles can lead not to self-fulfilment but to an intensifying sense of self-diminishment” (17). Betty is ignored, despite her kindness and “angel in the house” domesticity. Fred compares Betty to Betty Grable; again, the female character is measured by the perceived sexual attractiveness of her body. This comparison is a way for Fred to assert power and dominance over Betty, “for Betty Grable was renowned for her legs, whereas our Betty had legs that started at her waist and continued downwards without a curve or a pause until they reached her feet” (*Dancing* 37). It is implied that, because of Betty’s lack of sexual attractiveness and her “niceness”, Fred had an affair with the young woman who runs the local shop. Betty is aligned with domesticity and the house, with the status of wife and matron and so is devoid of sexuality. She can be read as an exiled figure who fails to “fit” into appropriate femininity norms.

The narrator’s father describes Betty as having “no sex appeal” (*Dancing* 38) and, after Fred leaves her, he calls Betty “a fool” (45). This represents a propensity to discount the broader political structure when it comes to gender inequality and to present failures as individual problems. It also highlights processes of “girling” and the unachievable and

contradictory expectations of femininity. These expectations are reinforced by popular culture, as “The Man from Mars” referenced Marilyn Monroe and this story refers to Betty Grable. Betty, through her failure to adhere to these roles, despite her easily discounted “success” at the “angel in the house” role, is what the narrator fears she might become. The story highlights the “girling” of the narrator and her sister, particularly with regard to their relationship with their friend Nan and her interactions with the boys at the local shop. Nan has earned the boys’ “respect” (*Dancing* 42) by trading airplane cards, but her interaction with them rests on a performance of feminine sexuality which the narrator’s sister then seeks to learn, having already internalised the notion that it is necessary for women to be sexually attractive to men in order to avoid “failing” like Betty. As with Christine’s developing view of the body as sexualised under the male gaze, young female characters are represented as being socialised into Atwood’s Victim Position One, victims of limiting patriarchal standards of femininity without their knowledge.

When the story depicts Betty’s reappearance in the narrator’s life years later, she has attempted to conform to expectations of femininity and beauty, but has also attempted to claim some independence: she goes by Elizabeth now, a less infantilised name, and has a job as a secretary. The narrator is fighting against the processes of “girling” and is anxious about her own adherence to femininity norms, comparing herself to Betty just as the narrator does with Beryl in Munro’s “The Progress of Love”: “If all Betty’s accomplishments had not been enough for Fred, what hope was there for me? I did not have my sister’s natural flair, but I had thought there would be some tricks I could learn, dutifully, painstakingly” (*Dancing* 47). Suarez states that the narrator “feels that Betty’s marital failure, and subsequent death, is the doom of ‘nice’ girls like herself, as opposed to the ‘vivacious’ girls like her sister, whom Fred had clearly preferred” (232). This indicates the effect of the indoctrination of young women in the “girling” process to connect success with marriage and the requirement to “fit” with patriarchal expectations of femininity.

However, the narrator's attitude towards Betty changes repeatedly as she grows up and responds to these social processes, reflecting changing attitudes to gender equality over time. She comes to see Betty's new persona as "the mask of a stricken and martyred woman" (*Dancing* 47) and perceives Betty as a victim, especially in light of learning that Fred's brother murdered his wife after she had an affair. This highlights the development of gynocentric feminism. The narrator begins to perceive women as victims generally:

[Betty] was not just a wife who had been deserted. Even I could see that this was not a tragic position, it was a ridiculous and humiliating one. She was much more than that: she was a woman who had narrowly escaped death. (*Dancing* 47)

She believes this is how Betty sees herself, as a "pious", "smug", "nunlike [sic]" victim (*Dancing* 48). Johanna in Munro's "Hateship" is also perceived as nun-like, suggesting the "Angel/Whore" binary where women are perceived either as sexual objects or as desexualised. This highlights the narrator's internalisation of patriarchal standards and her lack of empathy for Betty, and her assumption of Betty's victimisation and lack of agency. The narrator's perspective can be connected with "Valkyrie feminism", as critiqued in Chapter 4, which is actually an internalisation of patriarchal limitations on women and the impossible expectation for them to consistently be strong and powerful. This links with the argument by Davies that in Atwood's writing, "repeated examples are offered of how women learn to see themselves and other women through men's eyes, thereby becoming accidental policemen of the very power structure that excludes them" (62). As she matures, the narrator sees Betty as someone she could become, and views Betty's death as "the punishment for being devoted and obliging" (*Dancing* 49). She recognises her own anger at the "unfairness of life" (50), by which she means the unfairness of patriarchal gender norms. However, Betty is punished for the "girling" that has been imposed on her, and her "failures" are not individual shortcomings but a sign of the regulation and restriction of women's behaviours and attitudes in order to maintain patriarchal dominance.

Fred becomes uninteresting to the narrator: “The Freds of this world make themselves explicit by what they do and choose. It is the Bettys who are mysterious” (*Dancing* 50). This suggests that Fred represents a man – specifically middle-class and white – who has the ability and power to control his own experiences. Betty symbolises women who are victims of the feminine mystique, the narrator suggests, and are “uncomprehending” (*Dancing* 50) of the idea of their subjugation. Betty’s mystery rests on the narrator’s implied belief in her own status as more “comprehending” than Betty, as having been more successful at not giving away power. Suarez argues that this story “offers one of Atwood’s most optimistic endings” suggesting the possibility for “change, for the construction of the self, or rebirth” (232), and that the narrator learns from Betty, “escaping her victim position” (232). However, patriarchal social and political norms act upon her regardless of her apparent “comprehension” of the victimisation and self-victimisation of “the Bettys”, a unification that fails to acknowledge individual differences and demands unity, which is a problematic facet of feminism at this time.

Atwood’s stories throughout *Dancing Girls* continue to depict female characters “making a present of power”, as Munro writes in “Dulse”. These stories question the extent to which it is, or can be, women’s personal responsibility to assert themselves as non-victims. In “Hair Jewellery”, Atwood interrogates romance narratives which are often detrimental to women’s sense of independent identity and freedom. Atwood draws on the Southern Ontario Gothic genre “to deal with issues of social constraints upon the development of women, and to replay, undercut, or expose the myths and romantic fictions which offer seductive narratives leading (in particular) to women’s disempowerment” (Wisker 36). The story connects love with confinement and questions the contemporary feminist notion of the necessity for women to reject love in order to achieve personal independence. As with “Dancing Girls”, discussed in Chapter 5, the Canadian Gothic is transferred to a U.S. context, specifically New England, as the story draws on Victorian Gothic narratives. The

narrator is living in Boston, lecturing at Harvard, and travels to Salem, seeking refuge from her problematic relationship, where she discovers an exhibition of Victorian hair jewellery, including brooches of woven hair, intended to be distributed to mourners at funerals as reminders of the person who died. She thinks that wearing such a brooch “would be like a dried hand. It would be like a noose” (*Dancing* 110). This suggests a connection between love and a sense of confinement for women, a sense of being trapped into a relationship.

The story indicates the persistence of institutionally-perpetuated sexism and the education of women to accept and internalise gender inequality. The narrator reports having observed “febrile young men” at Harvard:

who sprawl on carpets [...] each with some girl in tow who buys cigarettes and coffee for him and who receives [...] his condemnations of the world and his mockery of her in particular, of the way she dresses, [...] of what she reads, of how she thinks. (*Dancing* 105)

Like the narrator in “Betty”, this narrator sees herself as an outside observer, with greater “comprehension”, wondering why these women “put up with it”, whether it makes them feel “healthful and life-giving” – suggesting a gynocentric feminist perspective – or if the men “are their mirrors, reflecting [their] misery” (105). However, when her own relationship ends abruptly, she internalises the man’s perspective as an inner critic, a mirror that judges her actions and consistently finds her unsatisfactory.

This mirror includes not just her self-criticism, but the social judgements common to victim feminism at the time. These judgements actually perpetuate patriarchal perspectives in the proposing that women are constantly failing or making the wrong choices: “When I became engaged, [...] you let me know you had expected other things of me [...] My two children did not impress you, nor did the academic position which I subsequently achieved” (*Dancing* 116). This suggests the punishment of women and a questioning of whether it is possible for women to have a career, a family, and a sense of self-fulfilment. This internalised judgement links with a haunting sense of failure, which becomes personified and occupies

the cellar of her house: “There you were, in your accustomed place ... looking at me ... with reproach, as if I had let it happen, as if it was my fault” (*Dancing* 118). This links with the idea of the house becoming an “unhomely” space, a place not of safety but of threat. It indicates the confinement of female characters in the domestic space, and the control and restriction of their behaviours and ideas under (often internalised) patriarchal power.

This idea of the (self)punishment of women is also explored in “The Sin Eater”, in which the narrator’s therapist Joseph describes a Welsh myth about a woman who eats dying people’s sins, absorbing them:

The Sin Eater thus became absolutely bloated with other people’s sins. She’d accumulate such a heavy load of them that nobody would want to have anything to do with her [...] except of course when it was time to summon her to another meal. (*Dancing* 213)

It is Joseph’s interpretation that Sin Eaters were women, specifically old women: “Destitute old creatures who had no other way of keeping body and soul together [...] A sort of geriatric spiritual whoring” (*Dancing* 214). This unsettled the “Angel/Whore” binary as Atwood addresses changing attitudes to feminism. She posits Joseph himself as the Sin Eater for his primarily female clients, who are all unsatisfied with “gender scripts” of the feminine mystique, who are “clever” and seek reassurance that they were not “too smart for our own good and should all have frontal lobotomies” (216). The narrator cannot shake the romance narrative that a man will arrive to rescue her from the dissatisfactions of her life. The story presents the possibility that she could become a Sin Eater, a self-sacrificial, nurturer/carer figure putting the needs of men first and attempting to gain a sense of self and purpose through this “whoring”. This highlights the impossible and arbitrary “gender scripts” to which women are expected to adhere.

These scripts are also explored in the final story in *Dancing Girls*, “Giving Birth”. Here, Atwood’s exploration of women’s confinement and regulation is combined with her interest in how language functions to perpetuate dominant power structures. The narrator

describes the process of giving birth and links it to the selfless nurturer/carer role. As Davidson and Davidson argue, the story addresses “Atwood’s intense interest in the relationship between language and the body” (118). Rao asserts that the story explores “woman’s distrust of language as a male construct that cannot represent women’s experience” (Rao, *Strategies* 169). The narrator deconstructs language in relation to childbirth:

No one ever says *giving death* [...] And *delivering*, that act the doctor is generally believed to perform: who delivers what? [...] Is it the mother who is delivered, like a prisoner being released? [...] Was someone in bondage, is someone made free? (*Dancing* 225, emphasis in original)

The first-person narrator refers to her “entrapment” (226), which links both to the limitations of her domestic life and of language within patriarchal structures, suggesting the impossibility of women moving beyond the victim positions. According to McWilliams, Atwood is focussing here on the “idea of identity as fixed by, and in, language” (97). Rao states that female characters can be used to “appropriate language – despite its being monopolised by men – to express women’s experience”, the alternative being to “reject it as a male instrument that will merely re-inscribe woman’s marginality, failing to determine any specificity of woman’s experience” (*Strategies* 163). Although the term “woman’s experience” is broad, Rao’s argument is helpful in demonstrating how Atwood’s characters highlight both possibilities and oscillate between them. However, the rejection of language outright leaves female characters with the alternative of silence which, as discussed above, can be used as a “subversive” behaviour but does not allow for communication between men and women to progress issues of gender equality.

In “Giving Birth”, Atwood incorporates Southern Ontario Gothic tropes as, while on the way to the hospital, Jeanie is depicted as imagining a double, a mirror female character onto whom she projects her fears and worries. This ties in with the projections explored in the other stories, with contemporary psychoanalytic theory at the time, and with the “emergence of the unconscious” (Rao, *Strategies* 42). Like the female characters at the hospital

in Munro's "Mischief", analysed in Chapter 4, the female characters at Jeanie's pre-natal classes have idealised versions of childbirth and motherhood and reject any alternate versions which do not "fit". This indicates the policing of appropriate feminine behaviour, the enforcement of "gender scripts", and the punishment of non-conformity. Jeanie recalls the "exclusions" she has felt in the past from mothers, making her think that "there was something they knew that she didn't" (*Dancing* 235). She swears she will not perpetuate this judgement of other women, which points to the possibility of individual agency and "subversive" power within the dominant system.

She hears what she imagines is the mirror woman screaming, giving birth to a baby she does not want. This connects with the feminine mystique and the many women who were never given the option to choose whether they wanted to be mothers, as referenced in relation to Munro in Chapter 4. Jeanie did choose it, however, and after she has given birth is overcome with the idea that the entire earth is "so thin, so fragile", something that needs to be "protected, cared for, tended. The enormity of this task defeats her; she will never be up to it, and what will happen then?" (*Dancing* 240). The story suggests that the desire to "mother" is bound up with a sense of inevitable failure, which is a "gender script" Jeanie has learned. Davidson and Davidson posit that this is a "postpartum illusion", a "mad anxiety" that is "counterbalanced by the normalcy of her baby" (119). This contributes to the idea that this pressure to be an impossibly "good" mother figure is individual problem and failure, rather than an effect of the overarching patriarchal structure. This argument proposes that the problem is solvable by Jeanie accepting the "normal" role of motherhood, indicating the regulation of femininity through its representation as biological and "natural".

The story suggests that while women must have the *option* to become mothers, the patriarchal system as it stands does not allow for that without personal cost to her. Like a "sin eater", too much is expected of her, and accordingly a sense of shame and failure is imposed upon her. Having internalised this, she sets herself an impossible task. However, in

contrast to the judgement exemplified by the haunting male gaze in “Hair Jewellery”, Jeanie sees the mirror woman as a protector through the process of childbirth, symbolising support and the acceptance of difference among women. The story suggests a hope for a society in which women can choose marriage and motherhood while also being considered feminist and supportive of equality for women, indicating Atwood’s responsiveness in her short fiction to the political context of the time.

(ii) *Bluebeard’s Egg* and Feminist Change

Atwood continues this investigation in *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983), in which “Significant Moments in the Life of my Mother” also focuses on motherhood and ideas of freedom and confinement in the domestic space for female characters in mid- to late-twentieth century Canada. The story suggests the idea of silence as a “subversive” behaviour, and the power of language and narrative. It also examines expectations of the “angel in the house” and “failures” of femininity. Additionally, through another mother-daughter relationship, it investigates generational changes with regard to gender equality.

At the beginning of the story, women are initially linked with nurturing and with failure. Because the narrator’s mother could not look after a basket of baby chicks as a child, according to regulatory patriarchal myths she showed early signs of being incapable of the caretaking expected of a “good” mother. The daughter-narrator suggests that her mother is emotionally closed. However, the story suggests the power of narrative in relation to gender identity as the stories the mother tells “give her power that she would not otherwise obtain: the power to amuse, or inform or impart” (Macpherson 94). According to the narrator, “there are some stories which my mother does not tell when there are men present [...] She tells them to women only, usually in the kitchen, when they or we are helping with the dishes or shelling peas” (*Bluebeard’s* 21). This links with Gallant’s story “Questions and Answers”

and the kitchen as a female space in which to communicate by telling stories. There is a gender divide in the house based on these stories, which are:

not to be passed on to my father, because they would upset him. It is well known that women can deal with this sort of thing better than men. Men are not to be told anything they might find too painful, the secret depths of human nature, the sordid physicalities, might overwhelm or damage them. (*Bluebeard's* 21)

There is a suggestion that the narrator does not agree with this matrilineal attitude and the rejection of men. The story proposes that the mother's separatism as a sign of female power denies the reality of broader patriarchal structures, which empower men and subjugate women. For example, the narrator is amazed that her mother can believe that men "find life more difficult than women do [...] despite the female bodies, trapped, diseased, disappearing, or abandoned, that litter her stories" (*Bluebeard's* 22). As the narrator becomes an adult during the sexual revolution and the height of Second Wave Feminism, like Del and Addie in Munro's *Lives*, the differences between hers and her mother's experiences of being a woman become clear, as do their different priorities and values: "My mother vacuumed around my feet while I sat in chairs, studying" (29). Tapping into issues relating to the feminine mystique, the narrator recognises that her mother "might be afraid of me" because "there must have been something going on in me that was beyond her" (29). The narrator had become "a time-traveller come back from the future, bearing news of a great disaster" (29) for her mother, suggesting that a possible reason for some women's rejection of feminism is that it disturbs their "informal", local level of power. The infantilization of men still maintains women's role as the carer, but it seeks to remove power from men, inverting the notion of the man as head of the family. Macpherson calls this "a reversal of the usual divisions", where women are "considered strong, and men are believed to be weak and in need of protection" (94). There is a suggestion that this is a "subversive" behaviour within the patriarchal system.

Sceats states, in relation to what she calls “negative mothering”, that mothers “frequently come under attack for failure to nurture” (*Food* 18). Mother characters often “share a sense of embattlement” which relates to the fact that “motherhood is associated in western culture with social and political powerlessness – that is to say a lack of legitimate and recognised power” (Sceats, *Food* 19). In “Significant Moments”, the narrator states that it was “shocking and slightly offensive to me to learn that my mother might not have been totally contented fulfilling the role in which fate had cast her: that of being my mother” (*Bluebeard’s* 27). The mother is expected to exist only as a symbol of “home” and domesticity around which the nuclear family can function. For women, “the popular conflation of the product of the female reproductive system (pregnancy and childbirth) with the activities assigned to the home (domestic work and childcare) place the responsibility for ‘caring’ firmly in the hands of women” (Gregory 62). These gender roles explored in Atwood’s stories link with Butler’s theory on gender as performed through repeated behaviours. This is observable here in relation to family, which is “one of the major sites where gender gets done” (Morgan 30). The family “and roles assumed by its members are demonstrated and reinforced through day-to-day activities” (Gregory 61). However, while roles are in part “assumed” they are also often gender-specific and in line with learned hegemonic expectations. In this story, the women are expected to prepare food and serve the men. However, there are potential “subversive” behaviours within these ritual activities. The narrator relates how her father would arrive, “wondering when the tea will be ready, and the women close ranks, turning to him their deceptive blankly smiling faces” (*Bluebeard’s* 22). This is an inversion of the idea of the feminine mystique discussed in relation to Betty in *Dancing Girls*. This idea of “blank” women suggests that the “mystery” about Betty, to which the narrator refers, is a deception, a conscious decision to exclude men and to claim power through female-focussed story-telling. Rao asserts that in Atwood’s writing, “woman often

chooses deceit and artifice” (*Strategies* 132), suggesting the use of “silence” as a subversive tool, which complicates the notion of “comprehension” explored in “Betty”.

These ideas of language and silence as connected to power are also discussed in “Loulou; or The Domestic Life of the Language”. Loulou lives with a group of male poets, who use her as their “muse” but also mock her. The poets claim to have constructed Loulou’s identity through their poetry and, implicitly, through the male gaze. They are, collectively, symbolic of patriarchal power structures. Loulou is a female character who appears to make herself a victim by not taking personal responsibility for claiming her own power, by not actively attempting to understand how patriarchy functions, and by discounting the importance of language in the maintenance of political power structures. For example, she is scornful of “their pickiness about words [...] Who cares what a thing’s called?” (*Bluebeard’s* 63). Whereas the mother in “Significant Moments” gains power through story-telling and language, Loulou acts as a “muse” for the poets and is constructed as “someone onto whom to hang language” (*Bluebeard’s* 95). Rao argues that the story “dramatizes woman’s (self)exclusion from language, and the strategies of resistance and survival she adopts in a male dominated context, where the power of naming is in the hands of the male poets” (*Strategies* 167). Loulou’s “subversive” behaviours are explored throughout the story, including silence.

Rao, as mentioned in the previous section, argues that rejecting language as patriarchal reinforces women’s subordination. A lack of engagement with language by women means silence and the continuation of ingrained power norms, which Atwood highlights through Loulou: “Mostly Loulou doesn’t like talking in bed. But she’s not fond of talking at other times, either” (*Bluebeard’s* 66). Although there is an implication that Loulou gains power through her sexuality, the learned connection between the woman and the body is present, presented as contrasting with the man and the mind or intellect. However, the power dynamics here are complex. Loulou is not simply a victim of the poets’ dominance.

They are also depicted as “in thrall to her” (Macpherson 95), which links back to the “mystery” associated with Christine in “The Man from Mars”.

Loulou has taken on, and been assigned, the wife/mother, nurturer/carer role. She was married to two of the poets and lovers with three, though the narrative suggests it was Loulou’s choice to change partners and posits her agency: “In the past there have been periods of strain between them, especially during the times when Loulou has been switching over, but they’re all getting along well enough now” (*Bluebeard’s* 64). However, patriarchal structures persist through the gender scripts to which she is expected to adhere. Loulou is depicted as not understanding and being incapable of reflecting on why she allows the poets to treat her as they do. However, she has given thought to what *they* think of *her*.

She knows why they put up with her though, apart from the fact that she pays the mortgage: she’s solid, she’s predictable, she’s always there, she makes them feel safe. But lately she’s been wondering: who is there to make her feel safe? (*Bluebeard’s* 70)

There is an overlap between her sense of sexual power and autonomy, as connected with developing feminism, her ingrained desire to “mother” the poets, and her need to be the receiver of care as she has learned to be a victim. She goes to “seduce her accountant” (*Bluebeard’s* 71) due to a “wistful desire to be taken care of” (72). Atwood addresses changes in relation to feminism and monogamy at the time in Canada. Her characters are used to explore women’s capacity to perceive themselves as victims and as empowered almost simultaneously. Loulou highlights the ability of women to claim the male gaze, suggesting that women can also objectify men and feel a sense of power through sexual desire, as Loulou observes businessmen on the street: “The sight of them filled Loulou with unspecific lust, though she found them touching also. She was like a middle-aged banker surrounded by sixteen-year-old virgins” (73). The implication is that the “banker” is male and the “virgins” are female, and that this is an inversion of power expectations, exploring a post-feminist argument that women can use their bodies and their sexuality to gain power over men.

Atwood's female characters often use sex as an attempt to gain a sense of power or control in reaction to, or because, of the actions of male characters. Like Christine in "The Man from Mars", Loulou begins to "enjoy his version of her" as constructed through the male gaze of the accountant, and starts to believe in it: "She's beginning to find herself mysterious. It's partly for this reason she wants to sleep with the accountant; she thinks it will change her" (*Bluebeard's* 75). This is an exploration of the internalisation of romance narratives by women. However, afterwards she is overcome with doubts about her identity and sense of self:

[Loulou] doesn't feel more known, more understood. Instead she feels less understood. She feels nameless. It's as if all those words which the poets have attached to her over the years have come undone and floated off into the sky, like balloons. (*Bluebeard's* 79)

As argued by Rao in relation to *The Edible Woman*, Atwood "questions the atmosphere of permissiveness and supposed liberation of the sixties' sexual revolution", suggesting how "female liberation' is male-defined, existing for the benefit of men" and how "the relaxation of sexual codes does not bring about significant changes in power relations between the sexes" (*Strategies* 48). Without the image of herself projected onto her by these men, without the imposition of their language, she becomes nameless, identity-less, but is incapable of understanding why: "What, underneath it all, is Loulou really like? How can she tell? Maybe she is what the poets say she is, after all, maybe she has only their word, their words, for herself" (*Bluebeard's* 80). She hears the poets say that they believe they "invented" Loulou, and thinks to herself: "Nobody invented her ... They make things up about her, but that's a whole other story" (81). She does not recognise the power of narrative and patriarchal language. She knows she should take action to claim power for herself, but cannot. Sturgess claims that because the poets cannot classify Loulou, she is "not only enclosed in the poets' versions of ideal womanhood, but such versions mean she escapes definition altogether" (91). It becomes possible that "her very silencing is the point of departure for a challenging

of cliché categories” in the sense that “Loulou the woman refuses to embody completely the linguistic sign ‘Loulou’” (Sturgess 92). The story thus suggests that the problem with silence as a strategy of resistance is that the structure goes unchallenged and power is not gained by women. No communication takes place between male and female characters. However, as a narrative strategy it highlights Loulou as representing the possibility of resistance, and also suggests the necessity of having female characters who are not consistently “strong”.

The misogyny displayed by the poets is also explored from a male character’s perspective in “Uglypuss”. Joel, like David in Munro’s “Lichen” or Morrison in “Polarities”, is used to highlight how gender roles and expectations are also enacted on men, and how they contribute to the perpetuation of sexist attitudes and behaviours towards women. Joel is “not ashamed” that:

He prefers women who are soft-spoken and who don’t live all the time in their heads [...] What he needs is someone who won’t argue about whether he’s too macho, [...] the personal is political or the political is personal [...] Someone who won’t argue. (*Bluebeard’s* 96)

He blames his emotions on his relationship with his mother who, he suggests, failed at an acceptable level of nurturing/caring. The urban space of Toronto is central to issues of gender and power in this story, as is the domestic space and “home”. Joel – when remembering that Becka considered “home” not as a place but “a feeling” – recognises that “for him, when he was growing up, home was the absence of a thing that should have been there. Going home was going into nothingness. He’d rather be out” (*Bluebeard’s* 95). He claims that Becka’s desire for monogamy prompted him to want to “escape” (95).

This is reminiscent of Munro’s Jackson in “Train”, as Joel sees the relationship as confining and seeks freedom. Both see the home as relating to a failure of the “angel in the house”, both trace their problems back to this and are depicted as viewing their inability to care for others properly as a result or effect of not being properly cared for by their mothers. This connects with the idea that women are naturally caring but men are more prone to

being shaped into being uncaring, or that they must learn to care through their mothers. Paradoxically, however, during his one-night-stands he is looking for “someone to go home with, to her home, not his, in the hope that this unknown place, yet another unknown place, will finally contain something he wants to have” (95). After these encounters, he “feels he ought to tell them they shouldn’t behave like this. Not all men are good risks” (*Bluebeard’s* 100). Atwood further complicates the issue by having Joel demonstrate an awareness of feminism: “But any interference from him could be interpreted as patriarchal paternalism: he knows that from experience too. It’s their own lookout, anyway, why should he complain?” (100). This supports Atwood’s position that unified ideas about feminism are unhelpful as people are too complex. The character is used to suggest that while women have a right, and responsibility, to make their own choices, they remain constrained by the limitations of patriarchal social norms. Joel is an example of this social policing of “feminine” identity.

When the story switches to Becka’s perspective, she is depicted as thinking in terms of ingrained romance narratives and definitions of success as relating to the “marriage market”:

She’d had enough of solitude, enough freedom. A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle. Brave words, she’d said them once herself. That was before she figured out she wasn’t a fish. Today she thought she still loved him, and love conquers all, doesn’t it? Where there’s love there’s hope. Maybe they could get it back, together. Now, she doesn’t know. (*Bluebeard’s* 105)

This demonstrates the power of language and the way repeated and learned stories affect self-perception. She expresses her anger at Joel and tries to take control and power by dumping his cat in a bin. The cat stands as a symbol of her own lack of power, with its tendency to “fawn” over Joel, despite his mistreatment of it. She recognises it as a “parody of herself” (106). However, her resolution to the recognition that she lacks self-confidence is to seek a new romantic relationship, to “feel inhabited again” (107), which evokes ideas of the control of the female body, similar to Loulou wanting validation from the accountant,

and Christine from the Vietnamese man. This suggests self-victimisation, but the story also indicates that she has learned this through these romance narratives and clichéd sayings such as “love conquers all”.

“Hurricane Hazel”, in which the young female narrator does not allow herself to be dominated by her older boyfriend Buddy, demonstrates the value of questioning gender expectations and the possibility of “subversive” resistance to patriarchal norms. Macpherson refers to this as “a collapsing of fixed categories” (95), where Atwood challenges simple narratives and invites the reader to question what feminism means: “Buddy is not violent, or crazed or in any way abusive; he is a gentle boy who expects the world to fit into his simple version of it, a version with clear gender lines” (*Bluebeard's* 95). Atwood emphasises the socialisation of women through “gender scripts” and the implication that women must “fit” according to impossible expectations of femininity. Despite the narrator’s strong sense of self-worth and ability to challenge the acceptability of the domination of women by men, the relationship with Buddy ends only due to the influence of the weather, a particularly Settler Canadian theme, as argued in relation to Munro. This is “the first of many breakups the narrator associates, somewhat anomalously, with weather, as if responsibility for such hurts must lie outside her” (Macpherson 95). This suggests that the girl does not perceive herself as powerful enough to make decisions and indicates ongoing power inequalities in her relationships with men. The power of the “girling” process is indicated here, as she is both a victim and non-victim.

Atwood continues to explore issues of relationship inequality and power dynamics in the collection’s titular story, “Bluebeard’s Egg”. This story engages with the Bluebeard fairy-tale, in which a handsome, powerful, successful man has a succession of wives who vanish mysteriously. In the tale, his current wife discovers, in the locked room which she has been forbidden to enter, the dismembered bodies of his previous wives. Atwood engages in an exposition of “cultural myths which construct versions of gendered roles and lock women

into a subordinate role”, in which women “tend to be portrayed either as vulnerable victims” (Wisker 58). She reverses expected power dynamics, suggesting that Sally is more dominant in the marriage and that Ed is a “dumb blonde” (*Bluebeard's* 132). Drawing on classic fairy-tale myths, she imagines that Ed “manages to make it through the forest with all its witches and traps and pitfalls and end up with the princess, who is Sally, of course” (133).

It transpires that Ed is having an affair with Sally’s friend Marylynn, and potentially other women too. Like Helga in Gallant’s “An Alien Flower”, Sally is consistently insecure about her sense of self and the stability of her position as Ed’s wife in their financially comfortable middle-class lifestyle, which brings her “informal” power and a status around which she has built her identity. She “worries that she’s a nothing” (*Bluebeard's* 138), without her own identity that is separate from her precarious position as Ed’s wife, especially as she is not a mother and cannot do the “angel in the house” role. The image of power and dominance that she posited at the beginning of the story is gradually destabilised.

W.J. Keith suggests that Sally “is imagining it all” and “projecting the Bluebeard story” onto Ed “without being aware of it” (“Interpreting” 255). However, Atwood’s writing encourages ambiguity and nuance. Both diligent husband, and adulterous and potentially violent heart surgeon, “Ed is multiple” (Sturgess 92). Sally both constructs the narrative and is “the purveyor of received wisdom, lacking in self-awareness” (Sturgess 92), afraid of Ed and dependent on him for her self-identity. Rao’s idea of the trope of the “captive princess” is similar to Atwood’s “Rapunzel Syndrome”, in which the female character is “locked inside the dungeon of man’s psyche”, requiring “liberation” (*Strategies* 138). Sally can be compared with the mother character in “Significant Moments” in terms of creating a narrative, but her lack of power and symbolic captivity is depicted through her silence. When Ed “reprimand[s]” her, she is represented as thinking about how “dumb” Ed is, but is actually scared into silence: “*Oh, come on, Ed*, she could say. But she knows also, most of the time, when to keep her trap shut” (*Bluebeard's* 143, emphasis in original). Atwood draws on the

Southern Ontario Gothic tradition to emphasise the link between this silence and the house as a place of increasing threat.

At the beginning of the story, Sally observes Ed, describing his helplessness.

However, she begins to display a sense of fear at his presence:

She feels Ed approaching, coming through the passages of the house towards her, like a small wind or a ball of static electricity. The hair stands up on her arms. Sometimes he makes her so happy she thinks she's about to burst; other times she thinks she's about to burst anyway. (*Bluebeard's* 145)

Like Jackson in Munro's *Train* or Morrison in "Polarities", Sally displays "self-deception or symbolic blindness" (Wilson, "Blindness and survival" 177). Wilson argues that this state is a necessary beginning for the character to progress beyond the "objectifying Gaze" ("Blindness and survival" 178). However, Sally is not depicted as finding a resolution epiphany. At the night classes she is taking, in an attempt to be "more interesting to Ed" (*Bluebeard's* 141) – similar to the reading Helga does in "An Alien Flower" – the instructor tells her to explore her "inner world" (150). This is impossible for Sally because her self-perception is so bound up with Ed. Meindl states that in this collection overall, and in this story specifically, perspectives from female narrators are "potentially unreliable or censored" (220). Sally, like Loulou, is more concerned with "a man or group of men" than herself, "to the extent that the outward view of a male provided by the female point-of-view character constitutes her mind or inner world" (Meindl 220). She is depicted as imagining Ed's inner world rather than her own. Atwood is drawing on fairy-tale imagery as Sally sees Ed's inner world as a forest, with herself as a nameless angel: "At set intervals an angel appears, bringing him food. It's always meatloaf. That's fine with Ed, who hardly notices what he eats" (*Bluebeard's* 150). Drawing on the idea of the angel in the house, Sally feels that "the angel is getting tired of being an angel" (150). Her wings are "frayed and dingy grey around the edges, why is it looking so withered and frantic?" (151). These are the effects of the regulatory practices of appropriate "feminine" identity under patriarchal structures. Control is

maintained through narratives and myths about romance, and through the clandestine policing of women's thoughts and behaviours to the extent that inequalities are not challenged and "failures" seem like the individual woman's fault.

In the original French Bluebeard fairy-tale by Charles Perrault (1697), the woman in the Bluebeard's castle is rescued by her brothers ("The History of Blue Beard"). The retelling of this tale in Atwood's story draws on radical feminist perspectives of the 1970s. It is told by the instructor of Sally's night class in *Forms of Narrative Fiction*, whose name is Bertha, a possible reference to *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the implicit links between Bluebeard, Rochester, and Ed. In her version, the woman outsmarts Bluebeard, and he "no longer had any power over her, and had to do whatever she asked" (*Bluebeard's* 156). This suggests the removal of outright power from men so that women become dominant. However, this perpetuates detrimental Victim/Victor power and an "Us and Them" social division based on overly-simplistic gender binaries.

Sally is too afraid to confront Ed. The sense of confinement mounts as she views herself as similar to Bertha, "madwoman in the attic" (Gilbert and Gubar xix), who "roams the house" after Ed has gone to bed, feeling that her precarious situation "will go on and on forever; she has no control over it" (*Bluebeard's* 163). This suggests that she has learned to be a victim, and highlights the endurance of the patriarchal regulation of "feminine" identity on local levels, despite developments in feminism on a broader scale. The domestic space represents the clandestine exertion of patriarchal dominance while the woman's self-victimisation – as demonstrated through Keith's criticism – is perceived as the cause.

The covert continuation of male dominance is also explored in "Spring Song of the Frogs", in which Will, like David in Munro's "Lichen" or Joel in "Uglypuss", projects his own insecurities onto women. His observations about women are based on femininity norms, which he relates as though they are frivolous and not part of a systemic form of patriarchal regulation:

Women's lips are paler again. [...] All this past winter the lips were dark [...] so that the mouths looked like the mouths of old-fashioned dolls, sharply defined against the china white of the skin. Now the skins are creamier, except on the ones who have ignored whatever wordless decree has gone out and have begun to tan. (*Bluebeard's* 165)

This links with the dismemberment of female bodies by Bluebeard. There is no acknowledgment of hegemonic control over the female body. Will judges his date, Robyn, on her appearance. He notices that the top three buttons on her dress are undone and thinks that "by the way she's glanced down once or twice, she's wondering if she's gone too far" (165). This emphasises how a woman is socialised to link her identity with her sexualised body, the patriarchal policing of the female body through the male gaze, and the male privilege which saves Will from having to experience this himself. "Successful" adherence to femininity norms is impossible and failure is inevitable. Bromberg states that Atwood's writing "exposes one of many contradictions in the Western cultural construct of femininity", where women are "often criticised and punished for the sin of narcissism, for loving their own images and selves above all (especially masculine) others", while simultaneously "it is precisely women's images, that is, their beauty, that society most prizes and rewards in the marriage market" (12). The contradictory requirements are emphasised by Will's anger when Robyn refuses to have bread with their meal. Women's beauty "must be validated in the eyes of the masculine beholder" (Bromberg 12). It is "dangerous" for a woman to find herself beautiful "because she has appropriated the masculine scopic power of approval. She must then be corrected or punished" (Bromberg 12). This is exemplified in this story. Will perceives Robyn as narcissistic, believing that she will "glance at her own reflection in the glass, checking herself out as if she's a stranger she might consider picking up" (*Bluebeard's* 166). However, rather than a potentially subversive behaviour and an appropriation of male power, the story indicates this represents the internalisation of the critical male gaze in the female character.

Robyn becomes a conduit for Will's self-criticism. Atwood "presents woman forged by man in order to constitute a mirror for his self-construction" (Rao, *Strategies* 146). This self-criticism relates to food in this story. Atwood uses food to "problematise assumed gender roles of the late 1950s and 1960s in urban Canada" (Sceats, *Food* 95). When writing about *The Edible Woman*, McWilliams argues that food is "an all-important metaphor for the identity crisis of the main character" (77). This is relevant to Will in "Spring Song" and his sense of diminishing sense of power as he ages. This suggests the "ordinary Canadian" identity crisis is also perpetuated through "gender scripts". Atwood uses food and eating "in relation to the politics of oppression and individual freedom and responsibility" (Sceats, *Food* 4). The body is "subject to external and internalised constraints" (*Food* 62). The egotism of Will's anxiety is highlighted through his niece Cynthia, who is suffering from anorexia. She is used to emphasise the patriarchal policing of the female body and its detrimental effects, to which the male body is never subjected, as acknowledged by Rose in Munro's "Simon's Luck". Will does not recognise a connection between his niece's present condition and his attitude to the female body: "Cynthia is white on white. Her hair is nearly blonde [...] Her skin is so pale it looks powdered" (*Bluebeard's* 168). She reminds him of the Madonna in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting *The Annunciation* (1849), which depicts Mary as a young girl sexually threatened by the Angel Gabriel. Will imagines himself as Gabriel, threatening Cynthia "with fullness" (168). This may refer to rape and impregnation but also to the necessity for Cynthia to eat, suggesting his desire to impose control on the female body.

Will is represented as linking Cynthia's present state with appropriate femininity. He associates this with eating, and remembers a younger Cynthia "wolfing down the dinners Will would cook" (*Bluebeard's* 169): "There was nothing wrong with Cynthia then; she wore her hair loose, her skin was golden, and Will felt a disturbing sexual pull towards her which he certainly doesn't feel now" (169). Atwood suggests the problems with unquestioned male sexualisation of the female body, particularly a child. This can be read as an alternate view to

the interactions between Del and Chamberlain in Munro's *Lives*. The focus here, however, is on the "girling" process: "All of a sudden she didn't like getting grease on her hands, she began painting her nails. Will sees this now as the beginning of the end" (*Bluebeard's* 170). Will is "blind" to how femininity norms are learned and enforced in young girls, though he perpetuates them himself.

This control of female bodies can be linked with the broader structure of identity regulation and the political policing of culture. As suggested in Munro's "Lichen", if female bodies are seen as "undisciplined", and "have historically been more subject to control than their male counterparts, then fears of disorder may well be focused directly onto female bodies" (Sceats, *Food* 66). This control is linked in the story with the notion of silence as a form of women's resistance and/or subjugation. Will thinks that "women in general are becoming more silent: it goes with their new pale lips. They're turning back to secrecy, concealment. It's as if they're afraid of something, but Will can't imagine what" (*Bluebeard's* 176). This indicates women's non-communication with, and distrust of, men. It echoes ideas of gynocentric feminism. Atwood's stories can be read as responding to changing ideas of feminism at this time.

(iii) *Wilderness Tips, Moral Disorder, and Post-Feminism*

In these two texts, published in 1991 and 2006 respectively, Atwood highlights shifts in discourses of gender equality. The stories can be read as exploring the problematic assumption that the goals of feminism have been achieved, that gender equality now exists, and that women can achieve self-fulfilment as well as marital and familial "success". There is a more direct relationship between gender and place in these stories. Rural and urban locations are connected with constructions of femininity, freedom, and confinement. In "True Trash", from *Wilderness Tips*, Atwood uses a romance magazine to highlight how "girling" occurs according to the policing of women's bodies and the learned victim

mentality. The magazine draws on themes of the “fallen woman” and “repentance” (*Wilderness* 12). The language of the magazine mirrors the language Munro uses in “Hateship”, such as “*he was crushing me in his arms*” (*Wilderness* 14, emphasis in original). This language sexualises the female character’s victimisation. The girl is expected to “resist” (14) sex and, in failing to do so, she “falls” from “Angel” to “Whore”, which indicates her failure to “fit” with femininity expectations as the “Whore” cannot be successful on the marriage market.

Set at a camp like the one in “Death by Landscape”, this story questions the extent to which women can have agency over their victimisation in patriarchal culture. Joanne compares herself to another waitress, Ronette, who is in a sexual relationship with camp counsellor Darce. Joanne covets “the power to give herself up, without reservation and without commentary” (*Wilderness* 25), as she believes Ronette does. This suggests Joanne’s romanticisation of Ronette’s life based on the romance narratives she has read. Ronette is subject to social judgement and becomes “in trouble” (*Wilderness* 29). It is subsequently revealed that the father of her child is a younger camp attendee, Donny. Ronette’s reasons for having sex with Donny are obscured, though it is suggested that she does so to gain a sense of power after Darce’s sexism towards her. This presents another angle to the interaction between Del and Chamberlain in Munro’s *Lives*, where the genders are reversed. As discussed in relation to Loulou, for female characters in Atwood’s stories, using sex as a way of obtaining power is ineffective as the characters are still operating within the patriarchal system and hegemonic power still acts upon them.

This remains the case, despite the new power dynamic here, suggested by Donny’s youth and the fact that this is statutory rape. Ronette’s choices remain constrained. Her voice is still silenced within the narrative. Joanne, better educated and wealthier, speaks for Ronette, creating a narrative about Ronette in the future, imagining her as pregnant “bloated beyond recognition, as if she’s drowned – a sacrifice, captured by her body, offered up to it.

Truncated in some way, disgraced. Unfree. There is something nun-like about this condition. She is in awe” (*Wilderness* 29). This image of the drowning female character connects with Atwood’s “Death by Landscape” and the double, but also with Gallant’s exiled characters such as those in “Questions and Answers”. Ronette is silenced, sacrificed, exiled, like the mirror woman in “Giving Birth”.

Atwood is highlighting the contradictory rules imposed on women and the limitations of their choices. Ronette and Joanne are both free and unfree simultaneously. Ronette is sexually active but also nun-like, which links back to “Betty” in *Dancing Girls* and Johanna in Munro’s “Hateship”. Joanne perceives Ronette in this light now that she is pregnant, suggesting her internalisation of the binary between sexually available object, “whore”, and sexless mother “angel”. On the one hand, for Joanne, sex was “sex lurking dangerously” and “on the other hand there had been marriage, which meant wifely checked aprons, play-pens, a sugary safety” (*Wilderness* 37). By the 1980s, Joanne describes the effects of the sexual revolution, viewing Ronette as a “trailblazer”, believing that everyone is “following in her footsteps” (37). This highlights Joanne’s position of privilege as an educated and financially-stable woman living in the urban space of Toronto. The story suggests that despite Joanne’s idolising of Ronette, Joanne has benefitted more from attempting to be “successful” according to femininity norms. Joanne’s story suggests that Ronette had more power and choices than she actually did. As Joanne projects her post-feminist ideals onto Ronette, she represents the dangers of unifying “women” to achieve feminist goals.

Similar questions are posed through “Hairball”, where Kat is represented as unhappy due to her failure in achieving marriage and motherhood. Kat “learned to say that she didn’t want children anyway [...] Her life began to seem long. Her adrenalin was running out. Soon she would be thirty, and all she could see ahead was more of the same” (*Wilderness* 47). Throughout the story, Kat feels a sense of loss that is associated with the tumour she has

had removed, which she names “Hairball” and stores on her mantelpiece. Atwood draws on the Southern Ontario Gothic tradition and the grotesque, as Kat is depicted as feeling that “something’s been ripped out of her” (53) and that “part of the life she should have had is just a gap, it isn’t there, it’s nothing” (54). Her doctor denies that the tumour is a foetus and tells her it could be her “undeveloped twin” (54). It represents the loss of an alternate potential self for Kat, as the story draws on the trope of the double as an alternative viewpoint to “Giving Birth”. This is a mirror life that she could have had in which she was a wife and mother, and was less nomadic, with a stable “home”, making her a more “successful” woman.

By sending the tumour to her ex-lover Ger and his wife, she expresses her anger at unjust and unequal gender expectations. She subsequently feels a sense of freedom: “She feels light and peaceful and filled with charity, and temporarily without a name” (56). Wisker argues that this is an example of a female character used to challenge “popular cultural versions of women’s roles, using various Gothic, often grotesque, ironic and amusing scenarios” as a method of contesting “constraining narratives of life” (190). There is a suggestion that, like Louise in “Polarities”, she has become psychologically unstable. However, her unnamng is also a rejection of the necessity to conform to a “feminine” identity within patriarchal structures. It is a “subversive” behaviour of resistance. Nischik argues that this is a refusal “to participate in [her] subjugation and domination” (“MA’s Short Stories” 151). Suarez claims that in these stories, female characters start to “assume, however tentatively, control of speech” (243). However, like the victim positions, it is impossible to assume control of language because it still exists within the patriarchal structure. The possibility of transformation lies in the female characters’ perspective of themselves and their self-definition as non-victim in spite of the continuation of restrictive social and political systems.

“Hairball” also deals with marriage and infidelity in relation to the “Angel/Whore” binary. Kat is judgemental of Ger’s wife, Cheryl, calling her “a priss” (*Wilderness* 49). While Kat sees herself as sexually free and as having power over Ger, she imagines that Cheryl “probably put on rubber gloves to make love, and checked it off on a list afterwards. One more messy household chore” (49). The persistence of the social policing of women, by men and women, highlights a problem in the suggestion that gender equality exists. This is also evident in “Isis in Darkness”, where Richard places fellow poet Selena in opposition to his wife Mary-Jo. Mary-Jo is described as “nurse-like” (70), demonstrating the imposition of the nurturer/carer role on her. Comparatively, Richard sexualises Selena as the Egyptian goddess Isis, who resurrects Osiris from the Underworld. Richard maintains the binary between lover and wife:

He couldn’t imagine marriage with [Selena]. He could not place her within the tedious, comforting scenery of domesticity: a wife doing his laundry, a wife cooking his meals, a wife pouring his tea. All he wanted was a month, a week, a night even. (*Wilderness* 69)

Like other male characters in Atwood’s stories, he projects his own insecurities onto her and is jealous of her talent as a poet: “What he craved was not her body as such. He wanted to be transformed by her, into someone he was not” (70). Richard is depicted as weak, but existing patriarchal structures imbue him with power, and he decides to create an archive of Selena’s poetry after her death. Like Ronette in “True Trash”, Selena is silenced. However, in contrast to Joanne’s construction of Ronette’s, Richard’s masculinity indicates his imposition of the male gaze onto Selena’s legacy, highlighting male dominance in the creation of cultural narratives.

The persistence of patriarchal power structures despite feminist change is also explored in “Uncles”, set during and after World War II, where Susanna is an example of “girling”, having been socialised to seek male approval through her uncles after her father is killed in the war. This influences her later associations with men, particularly with her

journalist mentor Percy Marrow. Despite advances in gender equality, the story implies that the regulation of “feminine” identity continues. This is highlighted through Susanna’s desire for career success:

An opening came up for a column. It was in the women’s pages, but it was a column nevertheless. Anyway, there were some stirrings just then about women. It was an area that was heating up. ‘Women’ were no longer only recipes and clothes and advice about dry underarms. Women were beginning to make a fuss” (*Wilderness* 145).

The language here, particularly the idea of “making a fuss”, proposes unnecessarily emotional reactions without appropriate cause, alluding to the reaction that men and women who believed the feminist movement was unnecessary. After several years, when Susanna has progressed in her career, Percy suggests a journalistic piece to her acknowledging that, “now that the women’s movement has accomplished its goals, isn’t it time to talk about men, and the ways they’ve been hurt by it?” (*Wilderness* 150). Susanna refuses, highlighting ongoing inequalities. Percy, jealous of Susanna’s success, writes a “tell-all” piece accusing her of being too ambitious, of being “a small-town girl with a heart of nails” (154). This points to the problem with arguing for the existence of post-feminism, and the more clandestine ways in which gender inequality is maintained through the social norms that restrict women. Percy’s attack causes Susanna to question herself and her beliefs – “Maybe I’ve remembered my whole life wrong [...] Maybe I’ve been wrong about everything” (*Wilderness* 156) – suggesting the endurance of “gender scripts”, the internalised male gaze and self-criticism, as well as the learned victim mentality as a method of controlling women’s behaviour.

Further exploration of the changing attitudes to feminism occurs in “Weight”, where the narrator meets with a man to convince him to donate money to her charity. It was established to help victims of domestic violence, after her friend Molly was murdered by her husband. The backlash against feminism – both from men and women – is highlighted as the man is depicted as glad she is “not one of those earnest women, the kind who lecture and scold and open their own car doors” (*Wilderness* 180). The narrator also has specific

assumptions about what this “kind” of woman is: “It’s not my style. But he could have figured that out from my shoes: women like that do not wear shoes like this” (180). This suggests reactions against Second Wave Feminism, as discussed through Coppock in the Introduction. The narrator has become more cynical about feminism since Molly’s death. Before this, Molly and the narrator had plans to “change things. We were going to break the code, circumvent the old boys’ network, show that women could do it, whatever it might be” (182). She has become more cynical about this due to Molly’s murder, though she and Molly had opposing views on feminism and on men: “Molly didn’t hate men. With men, Molly was a toad-kisser. She thought any toad could be turned into a prince if he was only kissed enough, by her” (*Wilderness* 182). Molly represents the internalisation of the carer/nurturer role which can lead to the victimisation of women. However, the narrator also depicts the blaming of women, and anger at the failure of feminism, for the continuation of women’s victimisation, without recognition of the overarching power structure. The narrator encouraged Molly to stop pushing for feminist rights, as it was not achieving anything. She supposes that Molly married her husband because she was “a fixer. She thought she could fix things that were broken” (189). Nonetheless, the narrator argues against the label of “victim” for Molly: “She wasn’t helpless, she wasn’t hopeless. She was full of hope. It was hope that killed her” (192). This indicates that it is more pragmatic for women not to believe that gender equality can be achieved, suggesting that men cannot be trusted. This indicates the return to restrictive “gender scripts” within post-feminism. The story depicts the injustice of the patriarchal system, in which Molly was punished for her feminism as well as her conformance to the nurturer/carer role, and the real possibility of women becoming victims of violence by men, as noted in relation to Quindlen in Chapter 4. The story suggests that Molly’s belief in the fairy-tale myth contributed to her death. However, this is instituted through “girling”, a process that indicates the endurance of regulated gender inequality.

The narrator has rejected marriage to men, but is also resentful about this and is vindictive towards women who are married. She views wives collectively, like Red Queens, as the enemy of single women, as in “Isis in Darkness” and “Hairball”. The story highlights an “Us and Them” mentality, and the “Angel/Whore” binary, as the narrator observes “wives, packs of them, or pairs or teams, loping around in their tennis whites, over at the club. Smug, but jumpy” (*Wilderness* 184). Their jumpiness connects with the sense of precarity displayed, for example, by Sally in “Bluebeard’s Egg”. They are jumpy because “they know this is a polygamous country in all but name” (184). Like Mary-Jo’s reaction to Selena in “Isis in Darkness”, the narrator asserts that she makes the wives “nervous” (184). She argues that wives should be “grateful” to her, for taking the time to “smooth the egos of men like Charles, listen to their jokes, lie to them about their sexual prowess” (184). She suggests that she is using the men to achieve her own aims, in a “devious” manner (184). Like the mother in “Significant Moments”, she views men as almost like children, and sees having affairs with them as game that requires skill: “The tending of such men is a fading art [...] The wives are too busy for it, and the younger women don’t know how” (184). She is presented, unreliably, as having status and power because of this. This, like the “informal” power the wives hold, also exists within, and contributes to the maintenance of, patriarchal structures.

When she thinks about the secrets she could reveal about these men she feels “powerful” (*Wilderness* 185). But if she told these secrets, she “would lose power. Knowledge is power only as long as you keep your mouth shut” (185). This is a form of silencing and does not allow for progress away from being a victim of inequality or escaping from “regulatory practices” because her behaviour is bound by, and dependent on, the actions of men. As in “Significant Moments”, “Spring Song”, and “Isis in Darkness”, the female voice is silenced here, and the narrator feels she must conduct her attempts to maintain power covertly. There is no communication with men, and a presumption that they are innately different to women and that no partnership can be reached. However, she also wants to be

married, and regularly has nightmares because when in bed she is “afraid of the emptiness, which lies beside me like a corpse” (186). The story thus presents the ways in which adherence to gender scripts – including the idea of success as related to marriage – is learned and can persist alongside other feminist perspectives and beliefs.

In *Moral Disorder* (2009), Atwood continues to investigate changes in attitudes to feminism, particularly relating to motherhood and domesticity, and to place. In “The Art of Cooking and Serving”, another mother-daughter relationship is used to explore this generational shift. Whereas the mother character is “ambushed” into pregnancy, becoming a “bloated version” (*Moral* 16) of herself (linking with Ronette in “True Trash”), the daughter seeks freedom, a “secret life” (21). At school, through texts like “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning (1842), she learns of female characters who are “pushovers”, “too trusting”, and “too eager to please”, “hapless, annoying, dumb-bunny girls” (74). This indicates the institutional indoctrination of women to police each other, and to blame individual women for attempting to “fit” with expected norms. In “The Other Place”, when she is older, she highlights changes in gender norms in 1970s Canada, as “a wave had swept through, changing the landscape completely” (*Moral* 83). She states that “marriage was a joke, and those already married found their once-solid unions crumbling like defective stucco. You were supposed to hang loose, to collect experiences, to be a rolling stone” (82). This attitude is demonstrated through female characters by all three authors, from Sarah in Gallant’s “In the Tunnel” to Del in *Lives*. It is a perspective which characters in *Wilderness Tips* rebel against as it promised a freedom and equality which never materialised.

Conclusion

While taking a broad-strokes look at changing notions of feminism over the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, Atwood focuses on the issue of personal responsibility through her female characters. Her stories indicate that, while characters are

sometimes presented as undertaking “subversive” strategies within the dominant culture – such as silence, or the rejection of motherhood – patriarchal processes such as “girling” still work on them. They are depicted as having internalised the male gaze, and as engaging in self-criticism for what they perceive as their “failures” to “do” femininity correctly. While post-feminist arguments posit that gender equality now exists, and that women can now maintain a successful work-life and home-life, these stories propose that power inequalities remain, perhaps more clandestinely than before. They also suggest that women participate in the reinforcement of male dominance and female victimisation through blaming women for their “failures”, and exiling them on a local, community level. Despite political and cultural discussions of progress, the victim mentality is preserved for women through institutionally and socially-perpetuated narratives and myths which ensure the continued regulation of “feminine” identity. This works through oversimplified categorisations such as the “Angel/Whore” binary, and women as well as men in these stories are presented as policing and punishing these “gender scripts”.

Conclusion

In 2018, Margaret Atwood became the first woman and Canadian selected for the Adrienne Clarkson Prize for Global Citizenship. Clarkson was Governor General of Canada from 1999 to 2005, and the award is “given to a leader whose work has been dedicated to ‘belonging and inclusion’” (Sharp). This points to the ongoing broad-strokes marketing about Canada’s post-nationalism and progressiveness. It contradicts the fact that the stories by Atwood explored in this thesis have demonstrated more recent *critiques* of dominant Settler Canadian political and cultural discourse about belonging, and her suggestion that narratives and myths which exclude individuals and groups who do not “fit” have become ingrained in “ordinary Canadian” identity and continue to be perpetuated by the dominant elite. These ideas are also evident, though less overtly, in stories by Gallant and Munro. This lack of “fit” is concurrently explored in relation to gender identity, and all three authors demonstrate criticisms of heteropatriarchal norms. The continuation of the settler colonial mentality and patriarchal dominance are both linked using these texts with a fear of what is perceived as different, as threatening to the stability and security of coherent masculinity and femininity and the dominant “cultural core”. According to Jonathan Kertzer:

English-Canadian literary history has been distinguished by its modest but persistent nationalism, by its mistrust of foreign influences, and above all by its casual appeal to historical conditions (roughing it in the bush, the garrison) and cultural forces (colonialism, regionalism, puritanism) as guarantees of coherence and value. (3)

Despite political gestures towards global citizenship and multiculturalism, as discussed in the Introduction in relation to Justin Trudeau, elements of this nationalistic thinking have persisted since the 1960s and 1970s. The short fiction by three of Canada’s most well-known, most successful white, English-speaking Canadian women writers are applied here to suggest that the Settler Canadian victim mentality has developed into a sense of victimisation through multiculturalism. If “ordinary Canadian” identity is constructed in opposition to the “ethnic”

Other, the continuation of nationalist thinking can be seen as a reaction against Trudeau's celebrations of the absence of a "cultural core". However, the endurance of this nationalism is a form of covert political control, a construction of Canadian unity based on an identity perpetually in crisis.

While other critical analyses of Gallant, Munro, and Atwood – such as those by Hallvard Dahlie, Robert McGill, and Eleonora Rao – have focused on issues of place and gender in their work, this is the first project to combine a settler post-colonial perspective with a Canadian Gothic lens to enact an exploration of these themes from a transnational viewpoint. I focus specifically on the short story form and its suitability for an investigation of Canadian literature and culture in terms of its fragmentary and non-linear structure, which challenges ideas of unity and cohesion, and its traditional use in depicting exiled, alienated, or outlawed individuals and groups. In this project as a whole, I engage in an interdisciplinary exploration of this short fiction using literary analysis, and sociological and psychological views, which emphasise the pervasiveness and internalisation of unequal power structures in relation to both place and gender. Drawing on Second Wave feminist theory, as well as Foucauldian theory and the ideas of Judith Butler, has allowed for connections to be made between the selected stories and the three authors as their ideas have developed over the course of several decades. Investigations of these themes is effective on two levels. Firstly, I examine the three writers and their work using the short story form, how their writing stands individually and the connections that can be made between them. Secondly, I consider how the stories demonstrate broader social, cultural, and political concepts relating to gender and national identity. I consider how these two levels cohere, and demonstrate how Gallant, Munro, and Atwood have responded to changes in constructions of national identity and gender inequality since the 1960s.

The texts selected for this study also demonstrate how boundaries of the self are bound up with gender identity. The connection between femininity and victimisation is often

depicted in literary and socio-political discourse as individual choice. However, this project has emphasised how heteropatriarchal power structures naturalise limiting behaviours and attitudes to do with femininity and unified definitions of what it means to be a woman and what a woman's roles are. The "failure" of female characters to adhere to the contradictory expectations demanded of them is exposed in this thesis as a regulatory practice and a form of political and social policing. These female characters highlight the endurance of this control throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, despite the changes effected by feminist movements. Between Gallant's European stories, Munro's focus on rural South-western Ontario, Toronto, and Vancouver, and Atwood's inclusion of U.S. cities such as Boston, these authors demonstrate the trans-locational persistence of these issues.

These stories also reveal how "ordinary Canadian" identity has been learned within the family and through the internalisation of social and political rhetoric about the necessity for a "home" that is defined by a sense of coherence and safety. While urban spaces and the Canadian Gothic "dark city" has been a significant influence on this construction of "home", myths about the wilderness have become ingrained in Settler Canadian national identity definitions. These myths, including narratives of haunting and the repression of a disturbing past, continue to be used within dominant cultural and political systems to occlude "Other" communities and voices. There are connections between transnationality of anxieties about place and belonging, and Settler Canadian strategies to cope with the past and similar transatlantic post-war strategies, including selective forgetting and a focus on positivity in relation to perceptions of identity and belonging. The figure of the exile has been a major focus here, and the strength of "Us and Them" thinking, which can be connected both with national and gender identities. Characters in these stories represent the possibility of being exiled due to a lack of "fit" in terms of national identity categories and hierarchical categorisations of place, as well as gender classifications and failure to observe assigned roles. The double dislocation of women is represented through these female characters. They

experience a sense of uncertainty in relation to their part in the legacy of settler colonialism in Canada, which is examined particularly through father-daughter relationships. The potential for decolonising gestures is suggested through the young female characters who engage with the land, Indigenous Canadians, and the past, without the desire for appropriation or control, while not taking for granted that female characters have any kind of “natural” connection to the landscape that is bound up with an innate femininity.

The arguments presented here pose questions about the ongoing regulation of women’s lives. This idea of natural feminine roles, including the expectation for women to be “nice”, caring, and maternal, are “gender scripts” that continue to be imposed on women. The mid-twentieth-century notion that it was necessary to reject love, marriage, and motherhood to gain independence and freedom as a woman is challenged and deconstructed. Attitudes towards feminism and femininity have changed over time, including the development of “post-feminism” and the suggestion that gender equality has been achieved. Short fiction by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood continues to be relevant to contemporary readers because this continues to be an issue and heteropatriarchal structures endure in clandestine ways. The power imbalance between men and women remains, as demonstrated by the #metoo movement in 2017 and discussions about sexual assault and the silencing of women’s voices. This project challenges unified ideas of belonging and gender labels. Gallant and Munro’s work particularly emphasise the complexity of these ideas on a local and interpersonal level between their characters. Atwood’s stories tend to emphasise overarching political macro-narratives, but this is also important in connecting ideas about individual responsibility, choice, personal success, and freedom to the broad structures of hegemonic power and control which act on individuals and communities.

While these stories continue to be relevant and important for discussions of place, “home”, and gender identity in Canada and internationally, future research could involve conducting a comparative study between these texts by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood and

works written by writers who do not classify themselves as “ordinary Canadian”, such as Madeline Thien. Her short story collection *Simple Recipes* (2001) cites Munro on the cover calling Thien a “splendid writer”. It would be interesting to consider ideas about mutable homes and anxieties about belonging in Canada from different perspectives such as that of Thien who is Chinese-Canadian. Dionne Brand would also be useful in this enquiry, specifically her short story cycle *Love Enough* (2014). In addition, a comparison with how these themes are explored using other literary forms is worthy of investigation, particularly with regard to more contemporary female Canadian writers, for example Vivek Shraya’s poetry collection *Even this Page is White* (2016). Further connections could also be made between changing ideas of gender in stories by Gallant, Munro, and Atwood and contemporary views on gender and feminism, particularly in light of recent developments in relation to #metoo (and the use of Atwood’s fiction in these discussions). *Black Star* (2018), a novel by Maureen Medved, investigates sexual assault on a university campus. The inclusion of this text could make an important contribution to this discussion. It would be beneficial also to explore work by writers from the LGBT community, such as *Pool Hopping and Other Stories* (1998) by Anne Fleming. These issues and texts could be explored in relation to *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* (2018), a book of essays and poetry collected by three Canadian academics and writers, Hannah McGregor, Julie Rak and Erin Wunker. This book seeks to discuss contemporary Canadian society and literature, and the “vital conversations about systemic forms of exclusion, cultural appropriation, rape culture, ableism, colonialism” (Andrew). It considers the ways in which “Canadians like to tell a national story about being pleasant and tolerant much more than we like to implement the kinds of structural changes that would make this place liveable for everyone” (Andrew).

Narratives and myths are used to maintain state regulation of identity and culture in Canada and constructed as “natural” and “true”. These stories advocate for the power of narrative and language, and the necessity for women to continue to engage in spheres which

have been traditionally male-dominated, such as politics. This is the first project to combine the short fiction of Gallant, Munro, and Atwood to investigate the continuity of these regulatory practices of identity control over the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

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