THROWING VOICES:

DIALOGISM IN THE NOVELS OF THREE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN WOMEN WRITERS

BY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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University of Manitoba
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In memory of my father and superaddressee,
Kenneth Downey Stuart (1930-1995)

I miss your carnivalesque laughter

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Abstract	ii
	Abbreviations	iii
I.	Introduction	1
II.	Zones of Consciousness: Writers, Readers, and Performers	10
III.	Being-in-the-world: Communication and Understanding	20
IV.	Intertexts and Contexts: Society, History, and Culture	30
V.	Thresholds: The Three-Ring Circus of the Novel	48
VI.	Conclusion	62
	Bibliography	66

Abstract

It is my interest in the innovative, experimental, and challenging works of contemporary Canadian women novelists that leads me to choose three very recent and relatively unexplored texts as the subjects of my study of dialogism in Canadian fiction. Each work is the first novel of the writers in question and each demonstrates the local, yet communal, concerns with identity, marginalization, and post-colonial hybridization in Canada. The novels I investigate are Margaret Sweatman's *Fox*, Roberta Rees's *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, and Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms*. These texts confront important social, racial, and ideological issues with a contrasting and distinctive range of dialogic strategies, such as double-voicing, intertextuality, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque. My inquiry determines how Canada, with its multicultural diversity and heterogeneous political and social foundations, is productively realized as an ideally open-ended dialogistic space in these texts, as well as how these texts qualify as genuinely dialogic novels within a framework of the ideas of M. M. Bakhtin.

The organization of my essay takes shape through a transverse approach to the novels, rather than writing three separate essays, in order to involve the texts at various levels and present a composite examination of the dynamic socio-linguistic aspects of each. These novels amplify the social phenomenon of communication and understanding, the formation of attitudes and values, the inextricable ties between language and life by utilizing narrative strategies that re/produce the struggle and challenge of forming autonomous consciousnesses within collective communities. I specifically consider the way they confront, search, and play with historical and cultural contexts, and the spaces between fact and fiction, author and reader, boundaries and margins, past, present, and future. It is, I hope, an engaging dialogue wherein my voice situates itself in relation to the many voices of these works, in addition to the articulate and enlightening voices of literary critics, Bakhtin, and, of course, yourself.

Abbreviations

CM	*Chorus of Mushrooms*
F	*Fox*
BFM	*Beneath the Faceless Mountain*
DI	*The Dialogic Imagination*
RHW	*Rabelais and His World*
PDP	*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*
DN	"Discourse in the Novel"

"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all."

- *Through the Looking-Glass*

I. Introduction

One of the most impressive features of literature is its ability to contribute to our understanding of our place in the world. Inherent in humanity is a desire to "locate" ourselves in relation to an overwhelming plethora of sounds, thoughts, feelings, sights, and experiences. Language, as a mode of communication, allows us to achieve some measure of connectedness with this world and others in it. It is, by its very nature, the primary means of realizing our sense of self because, as Russian philosopher M. M. Bakhtin believed, it is only through our use of language, our dialogue with others, that we can orient ourselves towards a comprehension of our environment, our place in time and space (DN 345). Canadian writers have an especially challenging task in making use of language to tell, or retell, their version of existence in a country that has distinctively vibrant cultural and historical foundations, but at the same time has to struggle against the weight and pull of old colonial traditions and stronger political strategies. It is generally agreed that the Canadian literary tradition, young or unacknowledged as it may be, is one of defiance; a writing against authoritative powers that have in the past determined, and those which continue to influence, what composes this country's culture. Contemporary Canadian fiction demonstrates in bold and exciting ways the attempt to celebrate the plurality of our present culture and to engage with the past in order to make it more our own. Provocative, particular, and postmodern, Canadian writers are throwing out their voices and inciting a response. The result is the dynamic, polyphonic discourse between writers, readers, and characters that is re-shaping the narratives that tell our story.

According to the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin as developed in works such as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *Rabelais and His World*, and the essays collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*, the novel is the literary form that best exemplifies and best allows for this polyphonic discourse to exist. The writer performs an aesthetic act, one that endeavors to give meaning to anothers' life in art, and it is essential to keep in mind that this act is the

expression of a *relationship*. It does not simply result in the product of an isolated consciousness (Dentith 12). The writer of artistic prose structures his discourse toward the reader, anticipates an answer, speaks with the characters. Literary discourse is *dialogic*. It is realized on the boundary between its own context and the context of an "other" who brings to the story a different perspective (DN 284). This is what makes literature the complex, messy, open-ended thing that it is. As Bakhtin writes:

> For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. . . . Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life: all words and forms are populated by intentions. . . . The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. . . . And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation . . . Language . . . is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (DN 293-294).

It is the shades of this process in the novels of three contemporary Canadian women writers that this study explores; three writers who endeavor to find the words to express their sense of history, culture, and identity. Margaret Sweatman writes her own version of events that took place leading up to and during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 in *Fox*. Hiromi Goto sorts through the contemporary immigrant experience of Canada as a Japanese-Canadian writing in the redneck wilds of Alberta in *Chorus of Mushrooms*. Roberta Rees incorporates into *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* a multitude of voices from both the past and the present that echo through the marginal region of the Crowsnest Pass. First novels for all three writers, these works reflect the qualities of their authors as young women, poets, and Canadians, but above all, as humans in dialogue with the world around them.

The human element is what remained for Bakhtin throughout the years of his writing (often in isolation and exile) the most important feature of fiction; its groundedness in social and historical contexts, a certain place and time. Its organic and dynamic nature

stems from the inescapable fact that every writing, every reading, every utterance, occurs in new and unique circumstances, new contexts. "Discourse is a social phenomenon," states Bakhtin on the first page of his great study, "Discourse in the Novel." He goes on to write:

> The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices artistically organized. . . . The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. (DN 262-263)

This diversity is social *heteroglossia*, the powerful blend of contextual forces which produces the *dialogization* of a novel. Heteroglossia, an expression created by Bakhtin (or recreated as such by his translators), is defined as the "base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance."

> It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions - social, historical, meteorological, physiological - that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different that it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress. (*DI* 428)

There is a regenerative, fresh quality to this perspective. History can be rewritten, understood in a different light. There are no timeless official truths. Texts that exist can be endlessly reinterpreted in new and multiple ways. Contrary to the concepts of Formalism and New Criticism, meaning cannot be determined from form alone, language cannot be reduced to divided types and stylistic devices. Factors outside the text must be considered in order to fully understand all the possible meanings available in a literary work. The author remains a vital contributor speaking to the reader and is not dead, as would have the Structuralists. The reader is just as important as the author in creatively realizing the text. Bakhtin even seems to anticipate, having written this extensive essay in the mid-thirties, the *jouissance* of Deconstruction in the sixties. But where he goes

beyond Formalism and Structuralism, he stops short of the eternally deferred conception of meaning particular to Deconstruction. For Bakhtin, meaning is always located in social conditions. This notion stands against the unstoppable indeterminacy of deconstructionist ideas of textuality (Dentith 95). As favored as his theories are by Structuralists, particularly Julia Kristeva, and as Formalist as his intellectual background may be, Bakhtin and his ideas seem to incorporate elements of many schools of thought.

Bakhtin perceives meaning as occurring somewhere in the space between writer and reader, between reader and text, between past and present, present and future. The freedom of writing in novel form stems from the connection of language with social and historical processes. Meanings do not simply exist in texts themselves, but spring from the particular occasions when texts are written and read. There always exists a distance, a gap in time and space, between the author and character, reader and text, but this distance is the condition for meaningfulness. It is precisely the space wherein dialogue occurs (DN 280-282). In this imaginary logosphere, Bakhtin envisions a continual contest, a struggle, a collision of voices that produces difficulties and resistance, but also dynamic engagement; a place which Feminist theorists have exploited to make their own voices heard, a space which Canadian writers have used to confront the past and create the future. The postmodern novel is a form which draws attention to this struggle. As Linda Hutcheon observes in *The Canadian Postmodern*, "all our systems of understanding are deliberate and historically specific human constructs" (x):

> Postmodern literature situates itself squarely in the context of its own reading and writing as social and ideological actualities . . . the act of making fictions is an unavoidably ideological act, that is, a process of creating meaning within a social context. . . . Canadian fiction presents itself as investigating the relationship between . . . the discourses of art and the structures of social and cultural power. (Hutcheon 10)

Postmodern writing values difference and Canada seems the ideal place where such a literature can be realized. Difference is important in a multicultural country like Canada where, unlike that other immigrant nation where people's cultural identities melt into the

glob of stars, stripes, and pledges of allegiance, people remain part of a patchwork mosaic, unsure even of what the words to their national anthem are, much less which part might be sung in one of the two "official" languages. We have been in the midst of an identity crisis since before our borders were drawn. An unceasing source of angst and self-reflection, this crisis does seem to disclose Canada as an unmistakably postmodern country. As Canadians struggle to come to terms with their colonial past, Canadian writers, including the three considered in this paper, engage with that past and its texts and challenge fixed notions of genre, unity, finality, authority, received wisdom and order. Hutcheon's notion of an "historiographic metafiction" echoes Bakhtin's conception of a dialogic novel. They are both intensely self-reflexive, grounded in historical, social, and political realities and metafictional in their attention to the processes of reading, writing, and interpreting fact, as well as fiction (Hutcheon 13). To these texts, readers bring their own sensibilities, memories, and experiences; factors anticipated by the authors, factors which help us to create meanings from words.

Writing, and the subsequent reading of that writing, creates a meeting of minds. Every utterance is intended for someone, oriented towards a listener who will generate some understanding of what has been said. The anticipated response, which shapes the very nature of an utterance, is what makes dialogue an interactive, social act. Once again seeming to anticipate literary theory by decades, this time in the arena of Reader-response, Bakhtin writes, "Responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an *active* understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse" (DN 280) :

> To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. (DN 282)

The writer speaks to the consciousness of another, whether real or imagined, present or absent. Even when we mill about the house talking to ourselves, thinking to ourselves, it is to some *other* that we direct our thoughts. After all, to whom was Bakhtin speaking as he wrote all his works that were published years after they were written? Every utterance, for Bakhtin, is directed to someone. Exiled for his personal views, Bakhtin was able through his writing to continue his existence, to develop his sense of self in relation to the others to whom he wrote, despite his immersion in a Soviet society. Defying this repressive society, he remained devoted to his belief in the importance that communication has in relation to being, and the importance of being responsible for one's own perceptions. Unlike the *jouissance* of Deconstruction, Bakhtin is not about coming, but becoming (Dentith 98). There is pleasure to be found in multiple interpretations, but these interpretations are located in the consciousnesses of people and they contribute towards their sense of self in the world. Bakhtin expresses in his writing a great respect for the otherness of people. It is only in others that we can see ourselves. For example, only others can know my whole story, things that I cannot ever know, such as my own birth or death, my own origin or closure (*PDP* 291). The other provides the outsidedness, the external position I need to assume in order to understand fully, to perceive wholly, to communicate, to be. "I" is an empty referent in the system of language that means nothing, but when filled by a particular person in the event of an utterance, in a specific social and historical context, a self is forged, and done so from the outside. Like the Fates in Greek mythology who shared one eye/I, we each, in order to have our own vision, must use the means by which others see (Holquist 28). In order to see ourselves, we must appropriate, and resist, the vision of others. This is exactly what we do when we speak, when we read, when we write. We author our selves.

Appropriation is an act at which Canadian novelists, as the descendants of colonial peoples, or in reaction to having once been colonized, have become quite good.

Consciously or unconsciously, voices and texts from the past are included in the stories they produce. Historical texts figure to some extent in all three of the novels examined here. In *Fox*, newspaper excerpts, telegrams, letters, journal entries, lyrics and poems, real or imagined, set the stage of the Winnipeg General Strike. The narrator in *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* "enjoys the vicarious pleasure of holding in [her] hands a volume that once belonged to another reader, conjured up like a ghost through the whisper of a few scribbled words on the margin" (Manguel 266). *Chorus of Mushrooms* includes as part of its text revised folk tales, postcards, and newspaper articles. In their acknowledgements, all three authors make reference and give credit to "sources . . . too numerous to mention," "Texts that influenced the writing of this novel," talks, stories, and books that contributed to the production of the texts. As Bakhtin points out, the novel, with its inherent stylistic uniqueness, is able to accommodate all of these forms (*PDP* 108).

The presence of other texts, whether echoed or inserted, intended or not, demonstrates the doubled-voiced nature of all discourse as interpreted by Bakhtin. *Intertextuality*, to use the term coined by Julia Kristeva, reveals the interconnectedness of all dialogue: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 66). This appropriation is often ironic or parodic. It is always, to some extent, transgressive; a form of plagiarism. The insertion or use of other texts also challenges the classical notions of authorship, form, chronology, and more conservative literary conventions. The dialogic novel is "a kind of epistemological outlaw, a Robin Hood of texts," write Clark and Holquist of Bakhtin's views (Clark 276). On the outside looking in, marginal, transgressing borders, the contemporary dialogic novel creates an imaginative space that affords voices that are otherwise not heard a chance to speak. The result is an orchestration which serves to deride authoritarianism and celebrate multiplicity.

One of the most important elements of the novel that Bakhtin explores in his works, along with polyphony, heteroglossia, double-voiced discourse, and intertextuality, is its *carnivalization*. As depicted in his thesis, *Rabelais and His World*, written in 1940, defended in 1947, but not available in English until 1968, carnivalization incorporates all of the mischief, freedom, joy, and regenerative energy of folk culture. Carnival was the ancient festival of transgression, a turning of the world on its head, when the higher ranks of society submitted to the laughter and mockery of the lower classes. Released from the oppression of societal norms, people celebrated the opportunity to be other than what they usually were: rich, poor, powerful, impotent, young, old, male, female. Sensuous, playful, irreverent, and grotesque, the nature of carnival was artistic and ambiguous. It created a double world that existed on "the borderline between art and life;" a theatrical realization of life itself (*RHW* 7).

As the actual celebration of the festival died out in later ages, it is Bakhtin's contention that the tradition was maintained, albeit in a less obvious way, in literature (34). The three contemporary narratives to be explored in this thesis illustrate, to varying degrees, the carnival spirit of the dialogic novel. The creative disorder of carnival is reflected in their disruptive form and the multiple stories within, which serve to make strange the reading experience and make new the form and substance of Canadian fiction. The irony, paradox, and ambiguity of carnival contributed to a process of renewal of meanings, the entrance into an other world of altered perceptions. So too the carnivalization of the novel in which the writer plays with language and the reader transforms language into meaning. And as critic Pauline Butling notes of carnivalization in Canadian literature:

> it has been a particularly important process for women writers in their struggle to disrupt not only their own resistances, and the weight of tradition, which every writer must confront, but also to disrupt the gender-based hierarchies, attitudes and expectations that limit their responses, and inhibit their creative impulse. (Butling 192)

Certainly, like feminist literature, the carnivalesque novel is accused of never really escaping the very systems it seeks to overturn. The inevitable fact remains that one can only operate within those systems, even if marginally. Once the party ends, and it always does, order is re-established and life goes on. But what Bakhtin emphasizes, and what makes his ideas so positive and stimulating, is that because of carnival, because of the carnivalesque novel, life is never the same. Change is the essential result of transgression. "A transgression in Bakhtin's system of analysis would be neither destructive nor a replacing law to itself, but completive. Its transgressiveness would create a new, and richer, situation. One might say that carnival must always enhance the context in which it occurs" (Wilson 86). You come full circle, you return to life as it is, yet you find yourself somewhere different, and for every person, the journey is not the same. Canada is a carnival world, an immigrant Tower of Babel, a place that is always itself and yet becoming something else (Kroetsch 102). In its literature we witness a drama of rebellion located in language, a social and political process that transgresses laws of literary convention, monologic official discourse, and boundaries of existence. And like its festive originator, the carnivalesque novel is a pageant "without a division into performers and spectators . . . everyone is an active participant. . . its participants *live* in it" (*PDP* 122). Such is its reading experience.

II. Zones of Consciousness: Writers, Readers, and Performers

In the truly dialogic novel, the chief characteristic is a "*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices*" (*PDP* 6). Bakhtin makes this statement in relation to the works of his favorite author, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and the majority of his essays relate either to Dostoevsky or Rabelais, but in the spirit of dialogism, Bakhtin's ideas can be appropriated and put to use in the contexts of the three contemporary polyphonic novels considered here. In Bakhtin's view, in order to allow this plurality of voices to sound, authors should not dominate the discourse of their novels with their own consciousnesses, but rather they should attempt to create characters as "*free* people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him . . . "

> A character's word [does not] serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice . . . It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, *alongside* the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (6-7)

In other words, characters are autonomous subjects in a novel, not only objects of representation. What makes this possible is to be found in the nature of language itself, in its heteroglossia. Language is stratified internally into the diversity of social speech types present at any given moment in its historical existence. This diversity of levels "permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships" (DN 263). There are single languages amid other social languages within a single national language, and beyond that, different national languages within the same culture, and amongst other cultures. Bakhtin imagines centripetal forces acting within this system of languages to repress differences and simplify discourse. Centrifugal forces act in opposition to allow voices to engage in multiple dialogues. The author of a polyphonic novel is a centrifugal force, permitting a variety of value judgements, belief systems, and points of view to show through the many languages of characters that speak other than the author.

In Hiromi Goto's novel, *Chorus of Mushrooms*, we have a multi-leveled narrative that centres on the story of Murasaki, also known as Muriel, but interspersed with her tale is the voice of her Obachan, or grandmother, Naoe, also known as Purple. Above, or outside these voices is Murasaki assuming yet another identity, that of controlling narrator recounting the tales to her lover, who, from his position as "you," doubles as the reader in his experience of the story. The title itself suggests the text's polyphonic nature. Murasaki's part as storyteller is set off from the rest of the text in italics where a reflexive criticism of the novel's own form is internalized. When questioned about her story's authenticity by her lover, never named and thus implicating the reader, Murasaki admits to making up the truth as she goes along (12). Truth with a small *t*; unofficial, flexible, open to interpretation. Goto purposefully confuses reality and fiction in her depiction of a main character that mirrors her own immigrant self. In the publication notes, we are told that "This is a book of fiction and all characters are fictional," yet in the acknowledgements, Goto hints that the story of Naoe relates to her own grandmother, and that the novel "should (almost) always be considered a work of fiction." It is clear, however, that Murasaki has her own voice alongside that of Goto's, and Goto weaves a complex narrative web that allows the voice of Naoe to accompany Murasaki's.

In *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, Roberta Rees conducts a novel resonant with voices, a complex orchestration of past and present. Like Goto, Rees also works to implicate the reader, or *listener* as this position is termed in the thought of Bakhtin, by having the narrator address her/him as "you" as she guides us on a tour of the region and tells the stories of the characters. Listening in this sense, like reading, is not passive, but active. We find the narrative voice speaking directly to the reader, which is somewhat reminiscent of Timothy Findley's technique in *The Wars* where the reader is "put quite unceremoniously into the position of co-narrator-researcher of the very fiction he is reading . . . [T]o write the story within the story provides [the author] with [a] distancing

device that, ironically, far from distancing the reader, allows if anything a closer and more dispassionate reassessment of the ambiguities of history under the guise of fiction" (Seddon 217). As in Goto's novel, the narrator disrupts the text. Her instructive voice is set off from the rest of the story in bold print, and in italics is depicted the mysterious green handwriting that appears in the margins of the text that guides her journey. Through the narrator, Rees controls our senses. On the first page alone, we are invited to taste, feel, touch, trace, and look. But most importantly we are asked in this novel to *listen*. To hear the voices of the past and present that speak in the novel and echo in the mind of the narrator, voices of people as well as of place, the Crowsnest Pass, beneath Turtle Mountain: coalminers, immigrants, natives, children, barmaids, and housewives; trees, wind, water, and earth. Rather than facing the narrator as a separate entity, as does the lover in Goto's novel, here readers share the perspective of the narrator's momentary experience of searching for the remnants of former residents of the area. "You" has the immediacy of "I" in this case, personalizing the story. Identities harmonize. The complete narrative of this novel is woven from five different plot-lines which slip in and out of focus as the narrator finds and loses her voice. It is a dream-like experience doubled by the reader as the narrator surfaces from and sinks into the stories. As polyphonic as this novel is, the ghost of the green ink writes, "*There are always voices missing. There should always be more voices. And more questions*" (81).

Fox is a novel which offers a different expression of polyphony. Margaret Sweatman, like the subject of the title, is ingenious, more crafty, in her presentation of multiple voices. The main characters are upper-class citizens of Winnipeg in 1918-1919, a city about to enter the throes of a massive general strike. In a parodic twist of Bakhtin's polyphony, however, it is not the main characters, representatives of the official high society, that get a chance to speak in the novel. In fact, they engage in very little dialogue. Sweatman chooses instead to maintain authorial control over them in the role of

omniscient narrator. For once, their monologue does not rule, but rather her ironic view of them does. It is the voices of the lower classes that are allowed to speak directly in this novel, though only briefly, furtively, as if afraid they will be overheard. What Sweatman does most, however, is to insert alongside the narrative various intertexts that show, rather than tell, the prevailing conservative ideology of the time; newspaper headlines, letters, notices interspersed with fragments of the narrative which come under their own sardonic headlines or three simple flowers that belie the violence of the strike's suppression. As such, the narrative is much more disjointed than those of the other two novels, drawing more attention to its own artifice. Heteroglossia is presented as a collage rather than as a web of voices. Here, voices clash. They are thrown side by side with little hybridization, demonstrating the dangers of speaking past someone instead of to them. The ruling class of the time was not interested in dialogue. Nonetheless, Sweatman skillfully presents a variety of social values, views, and beliefs which allows the novel to speak for itself. The reader is left to decipher their meaning. As in Rees's novel, we have external historical texts to which we can refer. In them, we probably will not find the voices revealed in this novel, but we may find the photographs described; photos we cannot see, but which engender in us the nostalgia for a past we can only know through its texts (Hutcheon 22).

Thus the position of the author in relation to the characters and readers of a polyphonic novel is an interesting one as conceived by Bakhtin and demonstrated by these three authors. By allowing their characters to express themselves through their own points of view, the authors artistically recreate the polyphonic nature of life. The authors try to be as objective as possible; like a judge hearing all testimonies, but one which passes no verdict, has no finalizing word. They want their characters to appear as people interpreting and evaluating their own selves and their surrounding reality. Autonomous characters are *conscious* of themselves and "[s]elf-consciousness, as the artistic dominant in the construction of the hero's image, breaks down monologic unity" (*PDP* 51). As

such, an author's ultimate design is not even to create an image or a type, but rather to represent the character's discourse about herself and her world. After all, we do not see the character, we hear her, and what we hear is not so much a character, as a personality; someone unfinalizable, distinct, unique. An author cannot completely explain her characters, for to do so would be to render them as something dead, as empty referents filled by the author's voice. As Bakhtin states:

> a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. *In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.* (*PDP* 58)

Therefore, the author speaks not about her characters, but with them, and attempts to develop varied possible meanings available from multiple points of view. She is both spectator and performer, and invites the reader along for the ride.

An intriguing twist results from the author's dual position, however. By refraining from defining her characters, the author, through this act of generosity on her part, is protected from ever having to define herself. As creator and participant, the author operates on two levels and is able to say "I am me" in someone else's language, while at the same time saying to herself, "I am other" (DN 315):

> Thus a prose writer can distance himself from the language of his own work, while at the same time distancing himself, in varying degrees, from the different layers and aspects of the work. He can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions. The author does not speak in a given language . . . but he speaks, as it were, *through* language, a language . . . that he merely ventriloquates. (DN 299)

As a puppeteer, the author maintains control, but brings to life believable, independent personalities expressing their own belief systems, their own consciousnesses, that interact and struggle with one another. In this position, the author is no god, however. As she relates to her characters dialogically, her word on them is not absolute. She is responsible for her treatment of them, and always writes in a historically and socially specific time.

What is created is a double-voiced discourse which erases the boundaries between authorial speech and the speech of others. In this discourse, the author conveys a feeling for her characters' participation in historical becoming and in social struggle (DN 331). The ideological becoming of the characters reflects the author's, and inevitably the reader's, process of selectively assimilating the words of others.

Bakhtin perceives the development of a person's consciousness as occurring when she begins to interpret and resist the different discourses that surround her (DN 342). *Authoritative* discourse, that is the official voices of religion, teachers, parents, the media, and politics, attempts to persuade us to follow its example, to believe in its dominion. There evolves in an individual, however, an *internally persuasive* discourse that is not privileged or authoritative, but is made up of assimilated and appropriated discourses reinterpreted in new contexts along with one's own discourse. This internal discourse is the development of one's own opinion, if you like, in contrast with the official discourses which seek to control that opinion. Herein is reflected the struggle of these three authors to represent that struggle in their characters. And as the receiver of the text of the author, herein lies the interpretive struggle of the reader. These authors want to share their internally persuasive discourse and write against finalizing authoritative discourses of history and conservative society. Their intentions are filtered through what Bakhtin terms *character zones*, places in the discourse of novels where new voices can be heard (DN 316). In turn, we as readers take these freely given texts and place them within our own individual zones of consciousness wherefrom we interpret the story and expand our understanding of life experience:

> We have not learned from it all it might tell us; we can take it into new contexts, attach it to new material, put it in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it, new insights into its meaning, and even wrest from it new words of its own (since another's discourse, if productive, gives birth to a new word from us in response). (DN 346-347)

Reading produces new readings and writings in response. "What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system" (DN 365). In hearing all these voices, it is important to understand where they are coming from and what they are trying to say, as well as the positions from which they are written and understood.

Authors, then, are somehow both outside and inside their texts and transform into socialized split personalities because they both experience and write about experience. In *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, Rees's voice becomes a convergence of fragmented personalities. The most compelling, yet least developed, is the one found in the margins of the history recorded in the guiding text of the novel, the *History of the Crowsnest Pass*. Scribbled across paragraphs and photographs, disrupting that text, is the green handwriting of a stranger; a stranger from the past writing to the reader about that past, asking questions and imagining its reality. A voice that asks "who are we?" and urges the narrator/reader to "Question, question, remember to question what you read or hear or write or say or think or do" (21), putting us in a position of uncertainty about the text we hold in our hands. As the narrator passes a restless night journeying to the sites of the stories in the Crowsnest Pass, the history text begins to disintegrate and is eventually lost. The narrator blends into her own imaginings. More important than this official historical account is the author/narrator's revisioning of it which brings dead subjects to life.

In *Fox*, Sweatman's hidden writer surfaces at the end of the novel to provide a commentary on a "list of illustrations" that are missing from the text; six photographs, imagined or real, that perhaps generated the writing of the story as did the photographs in the *History of the Crowsnest Pass* (Are they perhaps Eleanor's? [105], MacDougal's? [47]) (199). Unlike Rees's narrator, however, this writer views her words as failures, unable to "invent" the images in the photos, though Bakhtin would argue that the writer's

duty is not to invent, but to reveal, to assist voices from the past to speak for themselves (*PDP* 65). But the narrator's defeated feelings about a past that can only be so altered and a present that is not so different are palpable as she asks "How far have we come?" She acknowledges the artifice of her writing, "These are theatrics," yet she wants to put herself in her subjects place; to feel compassion, empathy, to enter their world. "The necessity of writing is the necessity of asking you to move from the chair where you sit with your hands folded," she says to the image in the photo, to the reader. Her desire is to replace a vanished image with the immediacy of the present. To move you, to shift perspective, to ask for your co-operation. The third photograph is appropriated by the writer. She takes the photo and transforms it onto the screen of her computer, into her story, adding to it as she sees fit colors and words that please her. But in Photograph # 4, she realizes that there is no room for her. She cannot share with the past the same time and space (Holquist 26). She can only create the "appearance of truth or reality" from the traces available to her. Identities are not visible. She can only admire from afar; admire the efforts of "the few, against the many." But what is that distance? After all, history is taking place as we speak. We live in it. It is on the front page of today's newspaper. The past is layered in the present: a "Pentimento." In the dual sense of this word, the writer seems to ask for forgiveness, unable as she is to change what happened during the 1919 General Strike, but she does succeed at artistically adding to the texture of a story, remembering people, giving them a moment of our time.

Goto blurs the distinction between her role as performer and as spectator by dividing her experience of story-telling not only amongst various voices, but amongst various national languages as well. The story is written in English, but Japanese appears throughout the text without translation. Murasaki tells the story of her and her grandmother's past to her lover, who is Japanese. They appear to speak in English, their discourse is written as such, yet it must be in Japanese that they converse for she asks her

lover to "bear with her language," that he might not get everything she says because her Japanese is not as good as her English (1). She begins each phase of the story with an incantation to ancient times: "*Mukashi, mukashi, omukashi* . . ." as if to cast a spell, then speak in tongues. As the story progresses, the identities of characters and the languages they speak begin to transpose. Like the narrator in *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, Murasaki eventually participates directly in her own story. Her present blends with her past. It is finally revealed that Murasaki has been understanding her lover in English, yet they have only ever spoken to one another in Japanese. The same experience is repeated in her grandmother's experience with her lover. English melts into Japanese, letters transform into Japanese characters. The alienation of the reader is complete (unless they read Japanese), yet the narrator shares some of this confusion. "When does one thing end and another begin? Can you separate the two?" asks Murasaki. Goto explores the indefinite lines between languages, between cultures, between generations, between old and new. What is given is continually turned into something original.

Bakhtin emphasizes, along with these authors, that life is an event in progress, as is writing or reading, to which we add our signature. Although the authors are a vital force, the story does not belong exclusively to them. All three writers are in control of their texts, but demonstrate that they cannot control, nor are they certain of, their meanings. They create independent characters, yet convey a sense of shared experience in the characters' uncertainty of life, which is reflected in their uncertainty in being able to represent reality, and further causes uncertainty in the reader's perceptions of the text. The authors are with us, like Hamlet between the player king and Claudius, as we are both performers and spectators. The encounter is interactive, yet disturbing. Crossing the conventional boundaries of authorial autonomy, these authors open up dialogue among themselves, their characters, and the readers. When allowed this interpretive space in a dialogic novel, the reader also becomes a split personality. I experience the world of the

character, yet view it from my unique perspective. I am simultaneously myself and other. I fill the absent referents with my imagination, yet I think the thoughts of someone else. Consciousness "forms the point at which the author and reader converge. . . It follows that the work itself must be thought of as a consciousness, because only in this way is there an adequate basis for the author-reader relationship" (Iser 292-293). This relationship lays the foundation for understanding, a foundation made up of "contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements" (DN 281). Literature is unintelligible without an understanding of individual voices, both of the authors and the characters (Morson 35). In understanding from the perspectives of others we learn to be aware of the wisdom we already possess.

III. Being-in-the-world : Communication and Understanding

In Bakhtin's view, in a polyphonic novel, "each opinion really does become a living thing and is inseparable from an embodied voice. If incorporated into an abstract, systemically monological context, it ceases to be what it is" (*PDP* 17). This does not mean that ideas cannot be removed from their contexts, but they will have specific meaning if kept in contact with specific persons (DN 401). This is why when anyone quips a pithy quote, the first thing we ask is "Who said that?" What is of greater importance, however, is the idea expressed by that voice. A character is "a person of the idea," and the idea is a major force in novelistic discourse (32). And it is also important to bear in mind that ideology, for Bakhtin, is not a politically oriented system, but rather a way of visualizing and evaluating the world. In this sense, all speakers are ideologues, their own visionaries, and reveal their ideology in their discourse (DN 333). Thus novels portray the interaction of consciousnesses in the sphere of ideas:

> . . . consciousness never gravitates toward itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is on the contrary open to inspiration from outside itself - but it is not in any case concentrated simply on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person. (*PDP* 32)

In *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, Roberta Rees creates the ambivalent character of Henry, a young girl with a boy's name, who remains a peripheral figure in the novel, but whose dilemma is central to the novel's exploration of identity and consciousness. She is continually glancing sideways at her father and the world around her while reflecting on her place in relation to them. With her mother about to have another baby, this time perhaps a "real" boy, Henry finds herself in a tenuous position as she goes fishing with her father, perhaps for the last time as his son. As they walk along the river, her father helps her discover how water is both inside and outside the earth, both hidden and visible, but

present in both places. In the water, there is both the underwater world and the world which is above it, yet reflected in it. Like water, she realizes, she will have to carve her own way. Her world takes on new dimensions. In a bizarre form of self-baptism, Henry decides that to "get her hook", the river must have her in it. She plunges into the Napi/Old Man River and nearly drowns. Rescued by her father, she finds that he loves her regardless of what she is, but more importantly, she understands from her experience under water "how things come apart and how they come together" (19). She is herself a convergence of world views. She is Tomorrow Woman to her Native mother, and Henry to her British father. She is inside and outside them, inside and outside the river, inside and outside her self. Located in the gap between the Goat and Turtle Mountains, the river is a trickster (Napi) that shows her new things (54). She finds herself in everything and everything in herself: " '. . . and the land has a lake in it with fish in it and those fish have my mother in them who has another inside her . . . River, lake, fish, father, mother, me . . .' Henry turns the words around and around" (53-54). Their interconnections are infinite. She goes on in the novel to struggle with her internal discourse and the alien discourses which surround and attempt to define her, the ones "always taking it upon themselves to decide once and for all what someone else is" (52). She resists them by being a woman, yet living her life as a man. She finds a new way to mean alongside the consciousnesses of others.

Murasaki and her grandmother, Naoe, face much the same challenge of defining one's self in relation to one's view of the world in *Chorus of Mushrooms*. Naoe is an eighty-five year old woman who sits in the hall of her home in Nanton, Alberta and natters away in Japanese to the relentless, dusty wind. Little does anyone suspect that she can speak English, but her family has abandoned its native tongue, so she speaks against this loss with her own language. Her daughter Keiko, Murasaki's mother, in the wish to assimilate quickly into Western society and avoid the fear of difference, has forsaken her

Japanese heritage and speaks only English, cooks only Western food, and refuses to understand her mother. Naoe declares:

> I mutter and mutter and no one to listen. I speak my words in Japanese and my daughter will not hear them. The words that come from our ears, our mouths, they collide in the space between us. (4)
>
> My words are only noises in this place I call a home. (11)
>
> I could speak the other to her, but my lips refuse and my tongue swells in revolt. I want so much for someone to hear yet it must be in my words. (15)

Murasaki becomes that someone. She cannot understand, but she listens, and soon translates her grandmother with her own voice. They are like an old couple: "One can begin forming the words, the other listening, and if the one who speaks should tire, the other is there to finish. They tell each other legends, myths. They re-create together" (20). Naoe fills the hollow left by Keiko's lack of language. Murasaki is starving for a story. Her grandmother teaches her "how words take form and live and breathe among us. Language is a living beast" (99). Murasaki needs to find her "home inside herself," her "home words" (48). Her becoming is characterized by the sharp gap between her mother's and her grandmother's discourse: "My Mom didn't tell tales at all. And the only make-believe she knew was thinking that she was as white as her neighbour. I wanted to hear bedtime stories, hear lies and truth dissembled" as somewhere to begin (29). Naoe's discourse is internally persuasive for her and opens up entirely different possibilities of understanding. As Bakhtin states:

> Such discourse is of decisive significance in the evolution of an individual consciousness: consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it . . . Internally persuasive discourse . . . is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "one's own word". . . it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses . . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. (DN 345-346)

Life, becoming, existence must be shaped not only in values, but in story. Stories are the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations (Holquist 37). Murasaki

and Naoe agree to share their words between them, to speak for one another until Murasaki can speak for herself and against the narrow, often racist, discourses that surround her (*CM* 127).

Creation of meaning requires a meeting or collision of one discourse with another. Naoe and Keiko do not converse, therefore they fail to understand one another and this failure is passed on to Murasaki. Naoe and Keiko share the tender and intimate ritual of cleaning one another's ears, yet significantly, they cannot hear one another. Bakhtin writes:

> The consciousness of other people cannot be perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or as things - one can only *relate to them dialogically*. To think about them means to *talk with them; otherwise they immediately turn to us their objectivized side*: they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished, objectivized images. (*PDP* 68)

To be objectivized, to be ignored, to engender no response is, in Bakhtin's view, the equivalent to being in hell (Morson 136). Murasaki and Naoe save one another. While she remains at home, Naoe voices "her very existence" by never ceasing to believe that Murasaki hears her (*CM* 92). When she disappears, Naoe becomes for Murasaki a kind of *superaddressee*, a third person who is an absent but ideal listener (Morson 135). Naoe is no longer present to Murasaki in an immediately available time and space, but is present as a consciousness who understands; she hears her when no one else does. Left alone with her alienating mother and her silent father, Murasaki begins a drama in her head which unfolds as a direct discourse with her Obachan. In some form, Naoe as superaddressee is always with Murasaki:

> (Murasaki: Obachan?
> Naoe: *Hai*?
> Murasaki : I don't think I'm ready.
> Naoe: Oh. When will you be ready, child?
> Murasaki: Soon. Very soon. But promise you'll be with me when I start. It's very frightening and what if I get stuck or something?
> Naoe: Trust me. I'll be there. And if you falter, I will fill in the words for you until you are ready again.
> Murasaki: Can we do that?
> Naoe: Murasaki-chan, we can do almost anything.) (173-174)

In the dialogic novel, this is true.

In Margaret Sweatman's *Fox*, the ideological formations of two very different women are juxtaposed to reveal the extent to which authoritative discourse can influence the development of self-consciousness, and one's ability to participate in and discriminate between various discourses. In *Fox*, ideology in its traditionally political sense plays a larger role than in the other two novels in that the characters find themselves in the midst of a tumultuous time of social crisis. It is 1919, the War to End All Wars is over, a new decade is about to start, stock markets are crashing, empires are crumbling, stability as the upper classes have known it is threatened. Change is in the air of Winnipeg as the formerly docile lower immigrant classes rise up to demand more. An internationally significant General Strike is about to paralyze Winnipeg. This volatile atmosphere is filtered through the perspectives of wealthy cousins Mary and Eleanor. Mary is about to marry well-to-do Drinkwater. Her future is sewn up. She basks in the glow of never having to worry about anything. Eleanor, on the other hand, does not rest easy in her skin, but questions who she is and who she can be as strike supporter MacDougal opens her eyes to the possibility of life beyond the pale and the responsibilities that come with that awareness.

Eleanor is a woman who "has long since outgrown herself" (1). She is trying to leave herself behind (154) and all the things that "once gave Eleanor a *name*, the secure feet-on-the-ground knowledge of herself as *Eleanor*, daughter of, sister of, niece of, cousin of, member of" are changing in her view, leaving her as "owner of nothing, not really, it all belongs to Father" (68). Others have always defined her. Now, she feels the ground slipping out from under her feet. There is something going on out there and she wants to know what it is all about. Political rhetoric pours forth from the *Tribune*, residue from the War. Loaded terms like "Bolsheviki," "Socialists," and "The Enemy Aliens" are carelessly appropriated by "bullish young men" to name their hockey teams, whilst people

are being jailed or deported as such (5). MacDougal, with his quiet strength and illicit socialist views becomes the man to educate Eleanor. MacDougal exposes Eleanor to the counter-rhetoric of his own circle and to the violence that occurs between these political parties. The only parties she has previously been witness to are the toboggan parties catered to by her father's "Men." In fact, she realizes that men dominate her world. She has been used to "The Generals" speaking on her behalf (10). In this growing confusion, she comes to feel, like Henry, that she is drowning:

> How can they breathe under these words? (13)
>
> She can't hear well. . . . Words wash over Eleanor, she tries to net them and they fin through her fingers. . . . Here and there, phrases stipple the surface, submerge, disappear. (57)
>
> . . . her own voice is getting long, the words are slow to start and then flip like fish out of a net, splattering and stuttering, oh god. (69)
>
> *And beneath us, nothing. We are floating on the surface. . . . We are fictions. Time, dust, haphazard increments, on our faces, in our empty arms. Our empty hands caress each other, ruffle the surface of the sea.* (56)

Eleanor is struggling against the images that surround her, her image in the eyes of others. She is striving to liberate herself from the influence of the conflicting discourses she hears from friends, family, MacDougal, his comrades, the rhetoric she reads in the paper. "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous," writes Bakhtin. "One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse" (DN 348). Eleanor's "private monologue" surfaces in the form of a diary, speaking in "paragraphs, long and short ones, alternating eddies of the fictions she's rewriting" (126), yet it is not so much a monlogue as her own voice in dialogue with others. The people around her are indeed "fictions", *fictile*, fashioned images, but she come to understand that "accepted falsehoods" can be challenged and revised. By moving

outside, literally and figuratively, the "protective" cover of her social circle, Eleanor unfolds in the new space of her self:

> She has recently discovered (and maybe this discovery has given her freedom) that she can indeed listen in a fragmentary way, skipping like a thin stone in and out of these conversations, alternating her listening with a conversation she has begun with herself. In this way, Eleanor has discovered, she can listen and place the fragments that she takes from the men according to her own translation. And another thing: it doesn't matter anymore that her patterns of translation differ from MacDougal's or her father's. The men speak their public language and it is a marvel, their absolute sentences, and Eleanor, living under and between, always outside, has a place she can furnish according to her own design. She has decided this is good. (120)

Eleanor does not renounce who she is. She remains the rich girl financed by her father and continues to be quite ignorant. We perceive little of her that is not filtered through the sardonic eyes of the narrator. She does, however, demonstrate the dynamism of working out the gaps and fragments of one's self.

The character who represents the absence of this dynamism is Mary. She never steps outside herself to develop any sense of definition; she is herself strange. Mary is sealed-off and self-sufficient. She does not want to have any relationship with the world. She recognizes no other cultures or languages. Whereas Eleanor faces up to the fact that she cannot exist as Eleanor, daughter of, etcetera, Mary hides behind the alibi of her father's name, and will soon be content to hide behind Drinkwater's. She is an example of what Bakhtin would call a *pretender*, "someone who tries to live in no particular place at all . . . obligating no one and obliged to nothing" (Bakhtin qtd. in Morson 180-181). Mary's behavior, with her decided lack of compassion for the poor, the strikers, the lower classes, and her bizarre habit of breaking into her neighbours homes when they are away, would suggest that she is just such a person. She moves lanquidly from place to place in the novel: Eleanor's, her family lakeside cottage, her newlywed home. She has no concept of who she is in place or time. "Those who live as pretenders frequently do so by living, in effect, as if they were characters in a novel . . . so as to make a work of art of oneself" (Morson 181). Thus Mary perceives herself, but not in quite the same way as Eleanor, as

a fiction. Hers is a face made up of tropes: Nearly Rose, Linen and Cream, Royal Blue (*F* 26). Mary identifies with the image others have of her and does not understand the falsity of this view. She finds security in her distance from the world around her and does not want to be responsible to anything, reluctant even to humor her dying mother:

> Mary waits. She will promise, ardently, to do anything her mother asks, and it will take the entire day to convince herself that whatever her mother has requested is impossible, really, and would serve no purpose after all, there's no point is there, what are servants for? (17)

What she must do is receive the Reverend Bateman, who proceeds to impart to her all the sordid news of "the aliens" and how they were "smashed right proper" by the "Soldiers" for spreading Socialist views. He notes she is not "perturbed" by this, but considers her a "woman of understanding" (19). Ironically, she is no such thing. Mary cannot communicate. When she speaks to someone, she addresses someone else (2). There is no sideways glance, only peripheral vision. She is a fox in a rabbit fur coat; disguised and predatory. She bites the heads off flowers, the tip off Walter's ear. She likes best her father's soldier figurine of a man mangled beneath a horse. She is a Trotter; family of butchers, eaters of pig's feet (right after Trotskyism in the dictionary).

After her mother dies, Mary develops at the very least an internal voice, but it is only "a contradiction, a joke," a "sort of echo" (61). She comes to the conclusion that thinking is not so bad after all, for one who has not done much of it. Nothing can touch her and it is futile to think too much. Best to remain in the dark. The one day Mary does venture beyond her safe haven of *laissez-faire*, she gets way too much exposure; to foreigners, bad food, garbage, and those people who are always having children they cannot afford. She goes to the home of her family servant, Mrs. Sokolov, as a gesture of self-serving peace. She meets instead her daughter whose name she cannot remember, and because she cannot conceive of addressing this person by anything other than her first name, Lydia remains without an identity in Mary's eyes. "What language do they speak?" Mary wonders, and in the classic act of an ignoramus faced with someone who does not

speak English, she "speaks loudly, in consideration of their foreign tongue" (135). When she is unceremoniously led out of the house, Mary sees that the only thing left to do is return to her opulence and pamper herself back into form. Mary does not understand and never will. She does not care to bridge any gaps.

Allyn is a character in Rees's *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* who ends up slipping literally and figuratively between such gaps on a bridge. Another girl with a boy's name, Allyn looks for some relationship to connect her to the world, but cannot do it with language. Everyone she loves has disappeared out of her life; her father and brother to war, her sisters and other brother to far away cities. Only their voices remain. If she speaks she fears she will disappear. Her mother is a stranger who is unable to communicate with her and, with language, she lies. Allyn will not talk and appears not to listen. The person who finally reaches out to her is a literal stranger, a foreigner, Stan Yurek, a man Allyn's mom falsely tries to pass off a just a boarder. Allyn and Stan relate to one another in a special way. No master of English himself, Stan finds his voice in music. Allyn finds hers in drawing. They are scholars of their own arts. Allyn's finest sense is her sight. She sees what others cannot. She draws through time; past, present, and future, though she never draws herself for "How do you draw your own voice?" (149). The only person to whom she does voice herself is Henry Reed, whom she recognizes immediately as being female. For this gentle woman who introduces her to the marvel of horses, she introduces herself, speaks herself into existence: "My name is Allyn Davis" (117). When in an explosive accident she loses her ability to see other than in black and white, Stan reassures her by telling her that things have only reversed themselves: "You paint music, I play colour" (187). Allyn's confusion about her world only increases, however, and it is reflected in her drawings. When her brother and father return from the war, she does not know them. She struggles to determine what she does and does not know. In her twisted logic, she thinks that things literally function as give

and take. When her sense of colour is restored, she believes it was only possible because a baby died. After her father returns, Allyn thinks she must now sacrifice something of herself (not unlike the man on the crucifix her brother gives her when he leaves again) in order to keep her newly-adopted father, Stan. She burns all of her drawings, drawings she had finally begun to keep and sign as an artist, and sets off an explosion at the tipple, hoping to "fragment color" (200). Instead, she unites them as her last word is "White" (202). Escaping onto the bridge, she falls through time and surrenders herself to darkness.

These few characters from the three novels demonstrate how people come into being only once they begin to define themselves against the defining discourses of others. Each must develop her own ideology, her own way of seeing the world based on her place in it and its relation to others. Even their own definitions are never finite, however. As Bakhtin terms it, each character retains a *loophole* of consciousness and word: "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words" (*PDP* 233). They remain elusive and ambiguous even to themselves, countering their own self-definitions. Allyn's last word is "white," a colour that is not a colour. She cries out against the silence that has defined her, then disappears. Henry's final word is defied by her whole body. She laid herself out naked to die and, discovered by others, gets the last laugh by revealing her sexuality in the end. Her acquaintances refuse to believe it, but cannot ignore it. Eleanor "sees in the mirror that she is her own double agent" (*F* 185). Murasaki ends her story with a journey beginning. None of these characters are simple, finalizable. There is a surplus of meaning to them even after the stories end, a continuing of the creative process that takes place outside the experience of the text. In a sense, to understand someone best is to not understand them (Emerson 24). Nor can we understand things "on their own terms." Other texts, contexts, discourses, values, and views are always needed in order to fully appreciate the multiplicity of singularity.

IV. Intertexts and Contexts: Society, History, and Culture

By including in their novels multiple voices and modes of discourse, Goto, Sweatman, and Rees make full use of the innovative, experimental styles available to them in dialogic, postmodern fiction, and challenge definitions of the novel form. Their artistic play with languages evinces the diversity of cultural and social beliefs that exist at any given time in history which are demonstrated in the multiple discourses of people (DN 357). In these novels, contrasting points of view are most vividly depicted in the many intertexts that are woven into the narratives. Newspaper articles, script-writing, letters, poems and other extraliterary forms interrupt the plot-lines. Historical texts are appropriated and placed in new contexts. The notion of intertextuality is attractive; it enriches both the form of the text and the possibilities of interpretations. The idea that "every book has been engendered by long successions of other books whose covers [we] may never see and whose authors [we] may never know but which echo in the one [we] now hold in [our] hand" serves to increase the dimensions of reading and writing (Manguel 266). Intertextuality is a term that merits some clarification, however, as it has different meanings in different contexts (how appropriate). The concept never figured in the work of Bakhtin, but in its original sense as conceived by Julia Kristeva and its widening use in literary criticism, it does serve to enlighten some of the notions connected to dialogism. Kristeva's vision of how texts interact is somewhat abstract, concerned more with impersonal systems of signs newly articulated in texts (Kristeva 15) at a more psychoanalytic level involving the symptoms of subjects, not "personalities" (Dentith 96). Bakhtin has a much more particular interest in the interrelations of social and historical dialogues, thus intertextuality, when associated with his thinking, has generally come to signify their insertion in the form of various genres within the genre of the novel (*PDP* 108). They may be literary, semi-literary, oral, or extra-artistic in form, and often directly

refer to texts that already exist, but when located in these narratives, such inserted dialogues are re-accentuated and interpreted in a new light. One might also consider another term, alongside Bakhtin's "inserted genres" and Kristeva's "intertextuality", which is Sherrill Grace's notion of "embedded texts," which is interesting for its implication of the archeological aspects of reading and writing the contemporary novel (Grace 121; Godard 25; Kroetsch in Neuman 8). Intertext helps tie content to form,

> . . . content that may be dispersed, traceable to different points of origin; the final meaning of this content will be neither the original source nor any one of the possible meanings taken on in the text, but will be, rather, a continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all the possible connotative meanings. . . . The essential point is . . . the fact that we can add other connotations that perhaps even [the authors] didn't recognize. (Kristeva in Guberman 191)

What remains important in any consideration of intertextuality in the novel is how it shows the plurality of participation in the working-out of the fragmentary nature of the self, society, and the art of fiction, as well as the immeasurable possibilities of ways to mean.

Hiromi Goto inserts in her text a variety of intertexts and references to other sources which serves to cleverly juxtapose the differences between Eastern and Western philosophies, as well as highlight the many ways these intertexts can be taken to mean in different contexts. Pokes at master narratives of Western society, such as those of Shakespeare (69,175) and the Bible, shake up the assumptions often associated with them or situate their "truths" in new relations. Her characters are self-conscious participants in a story, and as such, they have fun with words usually found in the classics of the English literary canon. "We stayed in bed for a fortnight," writes Murasaki of her fairy-tale time with her lover, "I've no idea how many days that is, but that's how long we stayed. We ordered pizza and Chinese food and threw a rope out the bedroom window so we wouldn't have to get out of bed" (57). "Turn back, woman, turn back. There are no pillars of salt in my culture," asserts Naoe as she heads out on her quest and thinks to return for a look at the mushroom farm her family has been working at all these years,

"This *furoshiki* is going to get heavy. It's heavy enough already, no telling how heavy it'll be when I've walked a league or two, however far that may be" (82). Words like "league" and "fortnight" are antiquated, typical of nineteenth century novels, but re-accentuated coming from their mouths in a twentieth century novel. They are familiar, but have no specific meaning for Naoe or Murasaki, emphasizing the indefiniteness of any word. "Whatever that means" is a phrase Murasaki often uses in her questioning discourse (89,189).

One purpose these references to other texts serves is to point out the contrasts between belief systems which are so generalized in society. Oriental society appears to be much less monologic than Occidental society, more open in its tradition of multiple deities and reflexive thought. Murasaki celebrates her difference: "I thought that Jesus must be pretty blind if he thought everybody was the same. Because they weren't. They weren't at all." She comments on her Sunday School upbringing (59):

> There were words in excessiveness when we sat in church. All those "Thous" and "Thees" and "manifestation," now there's a doozie for you! I even knew when I was little that their words were falsely weighted. That god was not a bellower, but light as motes of dust. That there wasn't a definite god but god-spirits living in everything I saw around me . . . The gods would never linger in pews stinking with selfish guilt. With all those wads of gum. . . .
>
> At least Mom never joined that spectacle [of public confession[. I can thank the gods, not Greek, for that. (101-102)

Naoe teaches Murasaki that authoritative discourse and the weight of Western philosophy can be countered:

> Listen, Murasaki, listen. Do you wonder why the wind howls like a stricken woman? Do you wonder why the rain sometimes tastes like blood. *Che!* The Greeks. Forget the Greeks! And don't quote Bible verses to me, child. There were stories long before Eve tasted fruit fit for women. (18)

Japanese mythology carries its own validity. When, in a fairy tale that Naoe recounts to Murasaki about how the world (Japan) was formed by two child-gods, one of the gods says at one point "'Let there be light!'", he is severely reprimanded by his sister. He makes a disgraceful, shabby light that does not work in this context. Izanagi is the younger, less

wise of the two, but he asks good questions: "'How can you make a new home?'", echoing the immigrants of this country, its writers, like Robert Kroetsch (Kroetsch 5). "'We are gods,'" Izanami responds. "'We can create.'" "'What are the rules?'" asks Izanagi. "'There are no rules,'" replies Izanami, "and saying it aloud made it so" (30). When he protests to his sister "in his normal voice" after having appropriated God's with a chorus of angels in the background, no doubt, Izanami states, "'I said there were no **rules**, but there is such a thing as good taste and understated beauty'" (31). Such is often the apparent difference between Western and Eastern philosophies. But Goto also recognizes that there are limitations to any mode of thought. Naoe complains of "that silly Chinese philosopher," Chuang Tzu, and his narrow Taoist dichotomies, referring to his famous butterfly/philosopher dream: "What nonsense. This need to differentiate. Why, he was both, of course" (44). Yet it must be remembered that, while yin and yang appear to be opposites, they are really to be perceived in a state of constant diffusion. Naoe's perspective and Tzu's dream serve to remind us that all values and concepts are relative to the mind that entertains them, a thought with which Bakhtin would agree (DN 295). What "we call something governs the scope and breadth of what it'll be," notes another of Naoe's fairy-tale figures (68). You can either be abandoned (forsaken) or abandoned (free). It is all a matter of perspective.

Naoe understands how stories keep changing, how "it is the nature of matter to change" (73). The uncertain nature of meaning is also linked to language signs. At one point in the novel, when Naoe is remembering her desperate escape from China during World War II, her memories become so vivid, she is transported back to that place in time. Her English text turns into Japanese, then into Japanese characters. The text suddenly becomes silent. The reader is left in the gap between sign and sound. We cannot even hear the Japanese as it sounds in readable romanized characters. And how "can anyone be sure if what they hear is what is said?" asks Naoe (199-120), revealing the gap between

sound and meaning. "Yes, limits to sounds and utterances, always something misconstrued," notes Murasaki (170). "Better than being utterless," she decides (98). It is the risk taken whenever we engage in dialogue. The difficulties can be physical as well, as happens to the poor little boy who sees a skunk as a cat, "Ba dum Bum" (103). This story as reported in the newspaper is the stuff of urban myth (the dog/rat brought back from Mexico). Wildlife identification courses would not help. Things look different when viewed from different places. Goto's inclusion of handwritten text in the novel further demonstrates this point, transgressing as it does the typeset tradition of the novel. We get a view of Murasaki's grocery list of Japanese foods which will finally connect her to her cultural heritage (136), as opposed to the incorrectly translated foods of Safeway produce signs (90). And Keiko receives a Calgary Stampede postcard from Naoe on her travels; physical evidence, along with the MasterCard receipts, that she is not dead but alive and well in 1994, and aware somehow of what they are all up to (192). Textual boundaries, like meanings, are arbitrary.

As a member of a "visible minority" (a term as insulting as any racial slur), Murasaki is painfully aware that she is defined by the colour of her skin. She is continually considered Chinese, confused by the monologic views that refuse to see or hear her for who she is. Even people of her own cultural background use the derogatory terms applied to them, thereby perpetuating and complicating the problem: "You know, he said, you're pretty cute for a Nip. He said. Most Nips are pretty damn ugly. All that inbreeding. . . . And I felt really funny inside, him saying Nip and everything. Because he was one too" (53). Murasaki unwittingly accepts the term to describe herself, complicity in a crime, but she learns it is only true if you believe it. "It's not about being bitter. You just notice. People talk race this ethnic that. It's easy to be theoretical if the words are coming from a face that has little or no pigmentation" (89-90). Murasaki is something of a "displaced amphibian" (106), caught between cultures, fighting the persuasive, insidious discourse of

narrow-minded views (211). She speaks out against the voices that relegate her to the edge of society as an alien other, subject to suspicion and mistrust (189). Goto underlines the irony of this situation in a country where faces with little or no pigmentation are fast becoming the minority; an important statement in face of the increasing intertextuality of the world.

The experience of prejudice and displacement is not always based on skin colour, however. In *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, Rees explores the immigrant heritage of Canada as found in the miners and their families of the Crowsnest Pass between the war years of 1914 to 1940. Immigrants from around the world come to Canada in droves to escape the devastation left in China, Poland, Russia, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere. Or they are from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, countries with a long history of oppression under the English. Expatriates and refugees, they seek asylum in a land so huge, they hope to get lost in it; to forge a new identity, despite their obvious cultural markers. Canada at that time is itself a colony, however, and the long arm of British law finds its way to the Crowsnest Pass, tying people to a past they would rather forget. What the British do not control, the Americans own, like Hillcrest Mines where the men work; "tipple, spur line, houses, all the shops except the union store. Your opinions, too, Evan Thomas, so keep them to yourself," warns Thomas's friend Grant McRae in 1914. The management keeps control by exploiting language difficulties: "'They laid off a bunch last year . . Hired on a bunch who don't have enough English to say, 'I need more money,'" he tells him (31). Authoritative discourse prevails. Twenty-six years later, Stan Yurek is in the same position, forced to account for his complex heterogeneity. As "aliens," immigrants faced the continual threat of deportation if they did not conform to British Commonwealth standards. Stan receives such a threat from the Canadian War Office and must travel to Calgary to answer charges. He does not appear to fit into the parameters outlined for him by the narrow views of English-Canadians. He speaks Polish, yet has an

Austrian visa. He also speaks German. According to their logic, he is reduced to an equation. Austrian + German = Nazi spy, yet he is the one being spied upon: "'Our sources tell us'. . ."

> "We have cause to believe you are an enemy alien, Mr. Yurek."
> A laugh foams in Stan's throat. German, Polish, British, Russian, Canadian, Czech. He cannot find the language of answers. . . .
> "Mr. Whatever-your-name-is, if this is a question of language, I also speak Russian, Czech, Latin, Canadian English, British English, and I read music."
> "Mr. Yurek, this is not simply a question of language but a question of security and truth." (134)

Whose "truth", whose "security"? Canada was in a perpetual state of paranoia during World War II, with some reason, but all too often, as has come to light in recent years, particularly in books, plays, documentaries, and other art forms, that paranoia was unjustified. There was little understanding, and even less knowledge about where most immigrants came from. Obviously, Stan's interrogator does not know his European history or understand Poland's violated cultural heritage. He allows Stan to continue his employment in the Hillcrest Mines, however. Cleared in an official letter, Stan will continue to be considered a "Displaced Person" (yet another derogatory political term), as long as he "remains underground" (137). Who will receive this letter is unknown. It does not address Stan, it speaks past him. Stan, like a package, has been safely labelled and relegated to the Canadian Underground. He can spy on the coal. Out of sight, out of mind, there on the margins of society, displaced. Spared deportation, he can only laugh, releasing the tension between monologic and dialogic discourse.

Like Stan, Allyn's father, Rhys, is not able to express what his experience of World War II means. He has no voice alongside the authoritative discourses which have already interpreted events, recorded their versions in print. He is an anonymous mime in the "Theatre of War" (143-144). He fights in Italy and feels confused about who the "enemy" is. He has known Italians as his immigrant neighbours, friends with whom he shares wine. Now he battles the Italians of Ortona. How are they different? (151). When he returns

home, he takes out from the town library a history book about the part of the war in which he fought. In a doubling of the narrator's reading of the *History of the Crowsnest Pass*, Rhys fingers the writing on the page, looks at pictures of sites he has visited, an unfathomable distance between him and the text, reality and history:

> "Red." "Mediterranean." He touches the words, looks over both shoulders, whispers them out loud. Smooth white paper, his voice dry.
> He riffles back to front. "Skirmish." "Assault." "Operations."
> Words. Black and white. Official.
> Rhys Davis closes his eyes. The pain from his leg swells.
> "Formation." "Campaign." "Theatre."
> "Infant
> 　　　try."
> He squeezes his eyes shut.
> Behind the official black and white.
> Behind enemy lines. (159)

Rhys faces the brute materiality of written authoritative discourse; it is finite, calcified. That history text is a relic, a thing. It "is not surrounded by an agitated and cacophonous dialogic life, and the context around it dies, words dry up" (DN 344). Those words mean nothing to him, distanced as they are from the actuality of war, containing no emotion or individuality. His personal experience exists for him, however, speaks against these empty referents, remains with him in the throbbing of his leg. Positioning "dead quotations" such as these in the narrative gives them a new context, however. Their vacuousness is revealed and they have a different power. The indifference of such discourse is impressive, shocking, ironic. In the midst of the chaos, grief, terror, and death of the Hillcrest mining disaster of 1914, a telegram arrives from the "His Majesty King George V" (236). He read about it in the paper (probably over tea and scones), unsure even of the facts. His expressions of sympathy are inane, so devoid of sincerity are they. We are moved to agree with the Ukrainian miner, Petrovik, who curses the monarchy as he works: "Piss on the king . . . Shit on English King George" (42). These are daring words at a time in history when British royalty was held in high regard by most English-Canadians. To be fair, George may have had more pressing concerns nearer to home (like

the early stages of World War I), but his telegram nevertheless seems futile in its formality. He knows nothing of the miners' reality.

Rees weaves another formal text into the narrative of her novel, the Word of God, the Bible, but this time fills phrases and verses with rich, new meanings using them as a dialogizing background rather than dead quotations. The beauty of the words of this oldest book come alive in the mouth of Evan Thomas, a character who comes to Canada from Wales, land of poets and singers. Serious and lyrical, he is uneasy with the feelings he has for his best friend's wife. Religious discourse speaks both with and against him, of passion and chastity. Susan and Evan attend church together and her husband's name echoes in the sermon of the minister: "Grant, Grant, grant, grant . . . " (33). But his yearning for her is beyond law and reason. Susan is attracted to his dual nature: "'Your voice slides between a man's and a woman's, Evan Thomas'" (29). She feels that a "wife and mother can't afford to get lost in another man's voice . . . but I look at Evan Thomas's lips and my breasts ache. . . . It's not just his lips, everybody has lips, it's the words and the voice that come out of those lips, and not knowing where the words come from'" (206-207). Evan quotes holy scriptures to voice his illicit love and Susan is seduced, unaware of their original context. He seems to cast a spell over her. Grant is his opposite. Big, blustery, and grounded, he is solid as a rock. He is no-nonsense, denying his own ability to dream. He does not want to reflect too much on himself: "'Some men talk about mazes and labyrinths. Trouble is, a man can get lost in his own voice . . . Thomas, a man must know the difference between past, present and future. A man can get lost in his own head if he's not careful'" (208-209). Thomas, on the other hand, transcends time, appreciates his voice. He feels within himself the traces of his Welsh ancestors, Llywelyn Olaf and Owain Glyndwr. He is their reincarnation and feels a connection to the earth he mines, knows his history to be part of himself. Quoting Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Evan also incorporates Solomon and sings his Song against Susan's body:

> *Look not upon me for I am black, because the earth hath looked upon me.* (226)

Changing the story, he is black from mining the coals of his grave, though, not from the burning of the sun (Song Sol. 1:6, 8:6). With mythic power, he invades Grant's dreamless consciousness and tells him of his impending death. He transcends death as well as time, however, as he continues to see and hear after the mine explosion that kills him. The words of Jesus resound between his words to the yet living (Luke 24:39):

> *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bone.* (232)

His voice is no more than a draught in the ears of his companions, however. As they try to escape and gather the dead, he drifts and hovers, no longer heard. Roles are reversed and his friends become doubting Thomases that cannot see him (John 20:24-31). Like Allyn, he feels responsible: "God, you can't do this to them, I am the one who sinned" (235). His consciousness falls apart, scatters, like his body: "Evan Thomas knows then that they will. Never. Find. His body. Sings" (236). The disjointed syntax reflects the fragments that remain, fragments that shift into the mind of Susan:

> *His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*
> *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love.*
> (238; Song Sol. 8:3,4)

Separated from the words of the Bible by time and social space, Susan and Evan nevertheless speak its words and recontextualize their situation. Various phrases are repeated throughout the novel, each time taking on deeper accents as their relationship develops. Their discourse becomes a hybrid, grafted to the biblical verses, yet growing into something new and unique. Their discourse, and that of the Bible, makes evident the organic energy and openendedness of language.

As Bakhtin writes in "Discourse in the Novel," our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words. When those words are represented in the novel, they are subjects of passionate communication, but also objects of interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, and further development (DN 337). Margaret Sweatman

makes great use of such discourse to guide the sensibilities of the reader on the wildly varied course of events in *Fox*. The narrative is so full of different intertexts that we hardly know what to expect next, whose voice we will hear. As a Winnipeger, I find this novel has a surplus of meaning because the setting is the city in which I live. I walk on historical ground. Names of politicians and strike leaders are familiar. Some of these characters really existed. Schools are now named after them. The Walker Theatre where the "Unlawful Assemblies" took place is now a popular music venue. My own knowledge of names and places becomes another intertext, adds to the dimensions of the novel. I, myself, could find an historical account of the strike, and like the narrator of *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*, go about Winnipeg tracing the paths of the characters, listening for their voices. Sweatman has already heard some of them, however, and in her novel she completely ruptures the boundaries between story and history, creatively positioning authoritative and personal discourses in new contexts which allows for multiple realities to come alive in a rewriting of already written texts.

The continual struggle between opposing forces of language as envisioned by Bakhtin is realized in *Fox*, where the conflicts between classes are largely based on language, and thus cultural, social and historical, differences. Rhetoric, in authoritative and personal form, is everywhere in this novel. As Murasaki points out "Hysteria or history can become one and the same" (*CM* 36). The various headlines that disrupt the text denote this feeling. From the safe position of hindsight, they appear ridiculous:

GYPSY WEDDING
ALMOST HALTED
BY RED SCARF
Policeman Believes Carmine
Headgear is Anarchist Symbol
Winnipeg Tribune (21)

CITY FACING REVOLUTION!
Citizens Committee Demands
Immediate Arrest of Strike Leaders!
Deport as Many as Possible! (102)

I maintain that this so-called Labour Church is merely a camouflage for the preaching of sedition, for fanning the flames of unrest, intended to make you forget all you ever were taught at your mother's knee, to remove the word duty from the dictionary and substitute pleasure for vice. The whole vile doctrine preaches duty to class, self before country.

Winnipeg Tribune (34)

WHO WILL GET THESE JOBS?
ALIEN ENEMIES OR
WAR VETERANS?
The Strike Committee's Answer:
Starve the Babies
So Aliens Can Get Their Jobs

Winnipeg Tribune (126)

The War is not over, but has been transported home to Winnipeg. Veterans are still in service as soldiers. Unlike Rhys Davis, they are not confused: "Fritzies are all the same to us!" (19). Any foreigner is an alien enemy, any German a Hun, any eastern European a Bolshevik. People are categorized according to ethnicity, and as MacDougal wryly observes, anyone with a zed in their name does not get bail once arrested (192). The conservatives want duty to *their* class. No thought is given to the possibility that these "aliens" may have babies of their own to feed. The Socialists are not made to look or sound any better, however. They speak in theatres and temples. There is something artificial about their theatrics. They appear as vaudeville actors, comically trying to connect with what we now know to have been a lost cause (7-8). Their rhetoric looks just as ridiculous through the eyes of one anonymous character, a prostitute, who is asked to give her opinion by an unknown interviewer:

> It ain't no new church, not to me it ain't. Most ways, it's worse, like they tossed some more coal on the old fire, it burns hotter, but me it still leaves cold. Like they'd tie me up and toast me for kindling, their righteous old fire.
>
> But the funny thing about this, me and Aileen are sitting proper and the minister or whatchacallim kind of saying the world's gonna go up in smoke and some kind of new one come and I wanna laugh cause every word he's saying I could whisper to some john in bed and it'd finish the job quick as a dime. (66)

Now there is a different context for political rhetoric.

Perspectives are never more than momentary as views constantly shift between characters. One voice that does recur, however, is that of the Canon's Diary. Who this

man is exactly is not clearly explained, but he, like Eleanor's father, has some connection to the Labour movement, as well as conservative factions. We watch, as over the months leading up to the strike, he becomes more and more caught up in the energy of the conflict. He embodies the strange mix of politics and religion that colours rhetoric. Having lost his wife and experienced the horrors of war, his hopes for regeneration are pinned on the reformation that will result from the Strike. He was known for reciting the heavy, pompous poetry of Dead White Males in the trenches just as the enemy attacked. Now his style alters, his syntax loosens; the Canon is changing. His authority is converted. He is mad, however, as Walter's perspective of him shows us: "he fills the vast spaces rented by the Establishment, growing strange and wild things behind the sanctum" (194). When a young boy with whom the Canon has come to identify his expectations is shot down during the Strike's suppression, he can only retreat into "the ruined gardens" of his mind (198). He predicted Stevie's fall by likening him to a sparrow (148). His phrase echoes Eleanor's remembrance of her brother:

> There is always too much to say to one another and it is always important. Analogy is a virtue; the smallest nuance is tremendous as any public event, as sparrows do fall. (30)

The image recalls a passage of the Bible, from Luke 12: 2-7. In it, Jesus warns against hypocrisy, declaring that all secrets will be known, that even the deaths of sparrows signify. Eleanor learns that her brother was killed by his own artillery. Stevie is killed by the R.N.W.M.P.. As marginal as they seem, their deaths express the staggering loss that results from meaningless violence, from forces that injure when they should protect. Through subtle attention to detail and the intricate weaving of texts and experiences, Sweatman invests these characters with all the tragedy of that period in history, and reveals the poor integrity of those who sanctioned such oppressive measures.

By placing the discourses of all kinds of people side by side in the narrative, Sweatman closes the gap between classes that in 1919 were clearly demarcated, yet, at the

same time, manages to show the lack of understanding amongst people that apparently speak the same national language at the very least. But there are deeper differences. Sir Rodney shows Drinkwater a piece of limestone, "fossils melded into one solid mass," which is what Rodney wants of the lower classes (75). He asks Drinkwater what the rock tells him, but Drinkwater hears nothing. He does, however, see diversity, not fusion, and finds it "rough," irregular," "disturbing". "It's damn ugly," as are foreigners, immigrants, the people causing all the trouble. Examining his specimen under a magnifying glass, Rodney sees in it "the infinite particularities of individual lives" but believes they would otherwise be lost to dust if not fused as a whole. He prefers the general to the particular, at least where commoners are concerned. He would rather the masses remain ignorant to their situation. Classes are "fragments of the community organized wholly for their own benefit" (77). These people, in his view, do not realize what is good for them. Rodney's "limestone parable" demonstrates the insidiously self-righteous views of the ruling order. In Sweatman's novel, fragments are not fused, they stand one against another; they diffuse.

One of the best examples of this intertextual technique is in the experience of the chapter called "What Dixon Said" (30). It begins with a phrase of political rhetoric, then switches to describe Eleanor and her friend, Grace, paying homage to her dead brother, Tony. There is a dreamy, timeless quality to the prose. Sentences run on and repeat: "the two women sitting at the low table by the window to watch the wind the wind to watch the wind." In the comfort of their own context, they enjoy imports from far away lands. We envision something of Tony's room in the reproduction in the text of the "framed homiletic verse embroidered on linen" (31). Its text is divided, however, and the narrative becomes increasingly disrupted. Eleanor's intimate memory of Tony is broken by more rhetoric. It is offset by italics, but then Eleanor's discourse becomes italicized and hearsay replaces the normal type: "Robinson talks . . . And Dixon says . . . And Ivens says . . . But the police know . . . ":

> And Lloyd George said and Robert Burns said and Oscar Wilde said and Mr. Shakespeare said and Abraham Lincoln said and Mr. Dooley said. Don't ask fr rights. Take them. (33)

Eleanor's discourse is drowned out by a medley of voices. It seems that in the "hurly-burly of people in a crowd, everything . . . fuses into one big 'people say,'" but this chapter is actually an intricate verbal performance which provides an interpretive frame for re-conceptualizing the discourse of numerous people (DN 338-339). It ends with a quote from the conservative side, which, incidentally, always remains anonymous, identified only by initials (like W.A.M., B.I.F, and B.M.W.) and professions (doctor, dentist, lawyer). The text is rough, irregular, and disturbing, but far from ugly.

Despite the fact that the lower classes are considered "a dangerous crowd of illiterate foreigners" (33), the "Government is putting men is jail for circulating literature" (7). "Absolute power requires that all reading be official reading" (Manguel 283). MacDougal, as the owner of a bookstore, is the target of Dominion censors. It is ironic because, although he sells Marx and Adler, writes for the Labour News, and wants to complete a "great prophetic history of social reform," his commitment is superficial. He begins to read books, but cannot finish them. They are only dusty relics that clutter up his home and store. His is a collector of fragments, obsessively washing his hands of any trace, possessed of a "relentless and unseemly passion for contradiction" (22). In a brilliantly written passage, MacDougal nonetheless defends his position against an abhorrent Government agent; a fat, little man with a thin mouth and a mean face whose life story MacDougal susses out in a matter of minutes. "Sedition," the censor declares of MacDougal's Social Reform section:

> MacDougal gets this bad-dream feeling, enjoys the cold-gin sense of alarm, and he watches Bill Benstock rolled in his chair like a hungry armadillo sticking a long tongue out to lick ink from the page. (23)

(This is a great scene. Humphrey Bogart is MacDougal and Sidney Greenstreet is the censor, right?) MacDougal tries to downplay the power of discourse, reducing them to

mere words on a page, though he knows himself to be more than that. He is a creation of doubled-voiced discourse:

> *Returned to himself*, feels his lungs fill, such a beautiful balance, to *have two of so many things*, and his voice is his full deep radiovoice, and he says, beautifully, *as if he'd written it*, he says, "This isn't any continental socialism, you fat idiot. It may not have occurred to you, these are the politics of the opposition party in the British House of Commons." (24, emphases mine)

The Government intends to focus post-war malaise away from itself, however, and "the foreign element will do nicely," Benstock says.

> The people are damned cattle and you know it. We intend to drive them, herd them as we wish. Come off it MacDougal, you're no different from me. You've an interest yourself, in moving stock. (24)

Benstock's insinuation is hateful. So much for democracy. But the fact remains that the printed word holds more power than fiery rhetoric, for reading is a personal exchange that takes place in individual consciousnesses as opposed to the experience of receiving discourse as one of a mass. Despite the gaps between "kinds" of left-wing politics, between place and language, the ideas that permeated this literature were meaningful in the contexts of prairie Canada. They could be translated, cross borders, rest in libraries for all posterity. The Government had reason to fear, though its measures were severe. It is interesting to see how Sweatman achieves such a "beautiful balance" in presenting what are really two monologic systems, authoritative totalitarianism and utopian socialism, along with individual discourses that distinguish people as anything but cattle.

All three novels resound with heteroglossia and multi-languagedness, whether in the speech of diverse characters or the intertexts of other discourses, which undermines the authority of any single point of view that seeks to avoid the contradictoriness and conflict of dialogue. These novels, like their characters with one another, insist on confrontation. As Bakhtin observes:

> The novel demands a broadening and deepening of the language horizon, a sharpening in our perception of socio-linguistic differentiations.

> The novel is the expression of a Galilean perception of language, one that denies the absolutism of a single and unitary language . . . that has been made conscious of the vast plenitude of national and, more to the point, social languages - all of which are equally capable of being "languages of truth." (DN 366-367)

In attempting to understand these languages, writers and readers are translators. "Each language embodies its own specific worldview, its own system of values. Every speaking subject, in short, speaks somewhat of a foreign language to everyone else" (Emerson 24). The charm of translation and intertextuality is that they always create a new text and renew its mystery. A parallel universe comes about in another space and time "in which the text reveals other, extraordinary possible meanings" (Manguel 276). In fact, the process of translation never ends for there can be no final word or definition:

> There takes place within the novel an ideological translation of another's language, and an overcoming of its otherness - an otherness that is only contingent, external, illusory. (DN 365)
>
> Translating and assimilating alien material is completed here not in the individual consciousness of the creators of novels: this process, lengthy and multi-staged, is accomplished in the literary-language consciousness of the epoch. Individual consciousness neither begins it nor ends it, but is a part of its progress. (DN 378 *n*)

Thus Murasaki asks, "Where does one thing end and another begin?" (*CM* 213). She comes to understand herself as a translation of her grandmother, something Naoe already knows and explains to her lover:

> "So, who is Murasaki and who is Purple?"
> "The words are different, but in translation, they come together."
> "So you're a translation of Murasaki and Murasaki is a translation of you?" . . .
> "That's one reading of it." . . .
> "Is there more than one?" . . .
> "Always." (174)

Thus Eleanor develops her own patterns of translation (*F* 120). Thus Henry discovers herself to be a translation of her parents, and Stan and Allyn translate language into art and music. Everything is always in production; texts, people, life:

> Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. (DN 291)

In reading these novels, we place ourselves at "the intersection of this plurality of texts on their very different levels" (Kristeva in Guberman 190), and witness the pageant of humanity in all its colour, contiguity, and diversity.

V. Thresholds: The Three-Ring Circus of the Novel

One of the richest concepts developed by Bakhtin in his understanding of the novel genre is the idea of *carnivalization*. It envisions the traces of a festival tradition in the ambivalence, transgression and renewal that characterize polyphonic writing. What this writing expresses is a carnivalized sense of the world. Bakhtin believes:

> Carnival was, as it were, *reincarnated in literature*, and precisely into one specific and vigorous line of its development. Carnival forms, transposed into the language of literature, became a *powerful means* for comprehending life in art, they became a special language whose words and forms possess an extraordinary capacity for *symbolic* generalization, that is, for *generalization in depth*. Many essential sides of life, or more precisely its *layers* (and often the most profound), can be located, comprehended, and expressed only with the help of this language. (*PDP* 157)

Carnivalized writing is a form of creative disorder. Its purpose is to offer a world of altered perceptions, to show how reality can be other than what it is normally understood to be. As such, it demonstrates close ties to magic realism. Both forms of writing incorporate a connection to fantasy, history, sensuality, alterity, and marginality. What is captured in this writing is the spirit of folk culture; its joy, its beauty, its vulgarity, its materiality, its sense of communalism, its existence on the border between freedom and oppression that results in a double aspect of the world. Life is a more fragile balance than we realize on a daily basis. Carnivalization is about showing life on the edge. Its energy stems from the fact that death is part of life, laughter is part of tragedy, the grotesque is part of the exquisite:

> the upper pole of a two-in-one image is reflected in the lower, after the manner of the figure on playing cards. It could be expressed this way: opposites come together, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another.
>
> Everything in [this] world lives on the very border of its opposite. (*PDP* 176)

The human condition in all its intensity is artistically rendered in carnivalized writing. Bakhtin's most extensive work on carnivalization is found in *Rabelais and His World*,

where Bakhtin treats the image of the grotesque. In art, the grotesque is the representation of a threshold state (a grotto, or cave, being a hidden space between the upper and lower world); an image that is distorted and double, comic and repulsive, monstrous and human, incongruous. For Bakhtin, the grotesque is closely associated with the materiality of the body, the human body in action and celebration: eating, drinking, laughing, talking, shitting, pissing, fucking, birthing, and dying; all the universal functions of life that are usually omitted from polite forms of literature. They are given in carnivalized literature as an indivisible whole. "And this whole is gay and gracious" (*RHW* 19). The three novels considered here share these complex elements, each in its own way interpreting and renewing the genre.

Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* has an abundance of these images of bodily life. Most of the story is told between lovers in bed, or in the kitchen while they prepare food; regenerative, theatrical places of ingestion and growth, expression and release, dreams and erotic seduction. Food is a way for Naoe and Murasaki to overcome the boundaries of language. Foreign treasures emerge from mystery packages sent by unknown relatives: soya crackers, sea squid, pickled plums and *sake*! (16). Murasaki captures the sensory richness and tactility of food's taste, touch, smell, feel, and sound. When she has her first menstrual period, her transition from girl to woman is celebrated by her Obachan with *Sekihan*, a red bean dish (181-182). Through food, she also discovers how "words and meaning twist beyond the dimensions of logic" (91). As when she ate too many beets and it turned her shit red, Murasaki eats too many "Jap oranges" and they turn her skin yellow. Her mother's reaction is hysterical. She tries to scrub the colour away, stereotypically associated as it is with Orientals. Her mother suffers a few breakdowns in the course of the story. After Naoe leaves, slipping out one night never to be seen again, Keiko takes to her bed and the only way Murasaki can reach her mother is through the medium of food; Japanese food. Not the mashed potatoes, Burns weiners, and special occasion burnt hams

Murasaki was forced to grow up with, but the exotic, flavourful, tasty foods of her place of origin.

Murasaki takes a list received somehow from her grandmother and goes to an Oriental food store in Calgary. Finally she can get over her aphasia and put word and object together (136). She can eat the words and retain them forever. She finds out her own last name, Tonkatsu, means "deep-fried pork cutlet." She makes them for a late-night dinner and in the twilight hours eats her name with her parents:

> There were no hugs or kisses or mea culpas. There wasn't a sudden wellspring of words, as if everything we never said burst forth and we forgave each other for all our shortcomings. We sat and ate. No one saying a word, just the smack of lips and tongues. . . .
>
> But it was a chrysalis time for Mom or me. Maybe for both of us, I don't know. Every day, we ate supper around midnight, food I had made from the Japanese cookbook and we used Dad's twig *ohashi*. Mom's words slowly coming back, or maybe me beginning to hear them. . . . I still stayed at home, to run the house and take the business calls. But mostly to hear the rich sound of my Mom's laughter. (153)

Food is a way to realize yourself, for "Eating's a part of being after all" (138). People look for "a filling story. Something that would leave a rich flavour on their tongue, on their lips. Lick, then suck their fingertips. Let me feed you":

> There are people who say that eating is only a superficial means of understanding a different culture. That eating at exotic restaurants and oohing and aahing over the food is not even worth the bill paid. You haven't learned anything at all. I say that's a lie. What can be more basic than food itself? Food to begin to grow. Without it, you'd starve to death, even academics. But don't stop there, my friend, don't stop there, because food is the point of departure. A place where growth begins. You eat, you drink and you laugh out loud. You wipe the sweat off your forehead and take a sip of water. You tell a story, maybe two, with words of pain and desire. Your companion listens and listens, then offers a different telling. The waiter comes back with the main course and stays to tell his version. Your companion offers three more stories and the people seated at the next table lean over to listen. You push all the tables together and the room resounds with voices. You get dizzy and the ceiling tips, the chair melts beneath your body. You lie back on the ground and the world tilts, the words heaving in the air above you. You are drunk and it is oh so pleasurable. (201)

Goto captures in her novel Bakhtin's banquet image of carnival and the body:

> The distinctive character of this body is its open unfinished nature, its interaction with the world. These traits are most fully and concretely revealed in the act of eating; the body transgresses here its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense. The encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing mouth, is one of the most ancient, and most important objects of human thought and imagery. Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself. Man's awakening consciousness could not but concentrate on the moment, could not help borrowing from it a number of substantial images determining its interrelation with the world. Man's encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage. (*RHW* 281)

Eating in this novel, and the discourse that accompanies it, represents the very essence of life.

Food and its consumption have very different connotations in Rees's *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*. During World War II, food was rationed. Certain items, like flour and sugar, took on the status of rare treasures. Troops had even less to eat: canned rations or bully beef. Families would send care packages, or soldiers would receive chocolate or cigarettes. In a completely demented gesture, Allyn's mother, Bran, sends Rhys two eggs. Of course, by the time he gets them, they are stinking rotten. "*They were fresh,*" she writes (165). One is to go to Owen, his son, if he sees him. Rhys actually eats the yolk:

> Until he has to swallow, he rolls it around his tongue, unable to breathe.
> Allyn, Bran, Gwen, Meinir.
> Daughter. Son. Wife. Husband. Father. Mother.
> He wraps the other egg in tissue, slides it into his pack. Owen. If he sees him, if he recognizes him, Rhys Davis will give him the egg, will say "Your mother sent this." (165-166)

This act is a way for Rhys to make contact with his wife across the distance, a way of tasting something of her. Stan Yurek repeats this act when he grabs out of the sink a rotten egg that Gwen throws away. Though he spend the day vomiting, Stan eats the egg (128). Throwing it away would be a sacrilege after what he has lived through in Poland. His children starving, he and his wife gave up eating. They ran out of food and ate grass and boiled wallpaper. "If I die first," his wife tells him, "feed me to the children" (113).

Stan tried to play them food on his saxophone, but his wife and two daughters die. Eating the egg is a way for him to fill the gaps and make sure nothing is lost again. "No one should stop eating, ever" (137). As Sweatman point out in *Fox*, "Sometimes Food Isn't a Metaphor" (168). During the suspended time of the strike, women go about with their children's wagons, carting home as many vegetables as they can, filling tubs, sinks, and bins, which seems crazy and fun, but people were going hungry without work (92-93). These people struggle in their social world, a world in which starvation and sacrifice accompanies abundance and plenitude.

Rees takes advantage of the opportunities available to her as a writer of carnivalized fiction, however. Food is also cause for celebration in her novel. The mystery writer of green ink asks, "What about another way to write about the tragic?" and Rees writes the most carnivalesque chapter of the book (55). In this chapter, fire is a source of tragedy, but what occurs with the little Toleco girls is anything but. As a fire sweeps across the town of Bellevue, on Tuesday, August 28, 1917, sausage, pepperoni, salami, mortadella, chorizo melt in the Italian Pool Room, invading the nostrils of Vera and Elsa. They cross the threshold of the pool room, go where no female has gone before. In a festive and fearless act, they hoard the food and run around in the chaos of the town, decorating people with blessings and balms (79-80):

> "Who said fishes and loaves?"
> "Why not sausages and cheese?" (62)

Indeed, why not? As homes and businesses are destroyed, Vera and Elsa are like Santa Claus, or Jesus, providing for the needy with all the joy and abandonment of carnival, with all the delicious foods of their culture smelling of pepper, anise, and garlic. Yum!

As a site of convergence and dissolution, the body also encompasses birth and death. As Bakhtin writes:

> One of the fundamental tendancies of the grotesque image of the body is to show two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born. This is the pregnant and begetting body, . . . From one body a new body always emerges in some form or other.
>
> The unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born) is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements. It is an incarnation of this world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom . . . (*RHW* 26-27)

When she is under the water of the river, Henry envisions just such an image of her mother. Along the shore she sees a bear with her mother's face:

> Between her front legs, her swollen breasts swing. Through shimmering water, Henry watches them splash white drops on the water above, but she cannot reach them. She opens her mouth like a fish. Her mother the bear lopes past the willow bush, brushes leaves silver-green with her humped shoulder.
>
> Beside the willow, her mother rises upright, lifts her great head high into the air, swings her head from side to side. Between her hind legs, a dark slit opens wide. Rips her belly up to her throat. Her skin flaps back in the breeze. Underneath, jeans, a checked shirt. Her eyes change shape, colour. (18)

Henry sees her mother giving birth to her future self. Her father has quite a different vision of her mother in a dream. In it, he sees two Coyote Women, one a reflection of the other in the river she walks beside. They rub their faces and one turns white. Slowly burning in the sun, she turns into a cooked fish. The other is trampled by the drumming hooves of horses running across her swollen belly (102). Samuel is haunted by his wife's borderline situation. She is forced to be Mrs. Reed, Samuel's squaw, as well as Coyote Woman. She has had to leave her people behind. He has shot bears, fed coyotes the carcass, and eaten the fish. He does so with respect, however, in order to feed himself and survive. He admires them for their grace, cunning, and courage (49). She is all of these creatures.

In Goto's novel, there is another image of the cosmic body in the story of the *yamanba*, or mountain woman, and in the transformation of Naoe as she leaves her home.

One reflects the other, for Naoe somehow changes from an old withered obachan to a giant young woman. She goes into the dense and humid air of the mushroom house. In the heat and moisture, she removes all her clothing and stands, looking "like an aged shrimp in silent contemplation" (84). But slowly, like the moths she would keep in her pockets and the silkworms in their cocoons that she nursed as a child, she grows and metamorphoses as the mushroom moisture fills her hollow body:

> The wet tinkling into her brittleness. Blood stirring, restless. Like silk threads, they wound through her. Old chicken arms grew longer, filling with supple strength, her buttocks curving, swelling, with flesh and longing. She could hear her body filling, the rippling murmur of muscles and bones, squeak of hair growing long and smooth, long enough to sweep the soft skin of her back. Her yellow parchment skin growing taut, glowing coolly like newborn silkworms. She ran her palms from her collarbones over her breasts belly hips thighs. Laughed aloud in wonder. Stood tall and straight and stretched on her toes, flung her hands skyward. (84-85)

Naoe then lays down and soaks into her body the peat water, floats toward, fulfills and falls into her flesh: "SLAM of breath knocked from lungs, beyond the painful register of human sound, the unheard chorus of mushrooms" (86). She comes down to the humming earth and is regenerated through direct contact with the orgasmic and organic power of the earth and of the body. In a tale given as a gift in return, Naoe tells her new companion, a Japanesespeakingcowboymusicscholar trucker, the story of the mountain woman. In a story inversion, it is she who regenerates the earth; an earth too sick, polluted and "beaten to weep" (116). Nothing but maggots remain. The mountain woman convinces the maggots to allow her to "speak her words aloud and shape the earth again." She lays down on the ground, opens her mouth and swallows the millions of maggots. She gets up, pregnant with the weight, and squirts the maggots out from her nipples. They grow into shades of people, her children. She sucks up the polluted water with her giant lips, then straddles the riverbed and lets loose:

> Jaaaaaaa. Jaaaaaaaaaaaaa. The water rushed from her body, Jaaaaaaaaa in a steady stream between her muscular thighs. But the water was no longer sickly, it was crystal clear. The water flowed, sweet and pure between her legs. (118)

The water renews the plants and flowers, and mushrooms grow everywhere. Life is given in refigured forms of procreation. There is no semen or blood, but rather milk and piss. According to Bakhtin, urine is "gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter . . . a link between body and sea" (*RHW* 335). The body and the world become "more intimate, more easily grasped, for this is the matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself" (ibid). Naoe/Mountain Woman encompasses the grotesque image of the body, for as Bakhtin declares:

> The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensible trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (*RHW* 24)

Her character becomes completely ambivalent. She is both old and young, dead and alive, real and unreal. She is imagined in a new dimension. She embodies earth and sea by taking from and giving to their fluidity. She becomes a "gay carnival monster" (*RHW* 335).

The fragility of the human body is exposed in *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* as the miners, who live on the threshold of death every day, know they could be blown apart at any minute. They work in a border space between heaven and hell, a nether world of silence. Evan is haunted by a feeling of dislocation; he never feels quite whole, but is only the sum of his parts. In the depths and dark of the mines, they cannot make out their bodies. Each day, before entering and upon exiting, they take an inventory to make sure they are still all there:

> You look down at the puzzle of your own body fitting itself together.
>
> My hands, feet, legs, head, lost in the dark. Dissolving in sunlight. My hands cold, gripping the rough wooden bench, growing away from me. My head expanding - so much light, so much space. Ache of thin skin stretched tight, tighter. Pounding in my temples. Wrench of bone at the base of my neck. Head lifting from my body. Running my icy fingers through my hair, digging them into my scalp, holding. Holding on. (24)

Susan's love discreetly knits Grant and Evan together. Grant marvels with wonder and respect at the presence of his hands, appreciates their form around a glass of beer (28). They live "Dizzy beneath a faceless mountain . . . Turtle Mountain . . . its face gouged and strewn," aware that their own faces, their own identities, men of all nationalities, could be gouged and strewn if a mine blows. Their death would echo that of Christ in the New Testament:

> *And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves.* (39, Matthew 27:51)

The pieces of their bodies are reverently collected like the relics of saints after the explosion which kills Evan Thomas. The solemnity of the occasion turns to travesty when their limbs pulled from the depths of the mine suffer the indignity of being spewn across the road when the coffin-bearing horses bolt on the way to the burial field. It is his love for Susan which holds Evan together; she finally holds him as they consummate their love in a cleft of rock on the night of an early summer celebration. As he watches the rocks cleave around him in the mine just as the gas ignites, he recalls their passion, his body burning with "no sound part" (231). Sex and death are synchronous. Like Allyn's, Evan's flesh flies into darkness (232). He is swallowed up by the cavernous mouth of the earth, strains toward the singing. However, his final appearance is ambivalent. His existence is split and a space opens between death for Evan and his death in the eyes of the McRaes. He is killed, yet does not realize his own death. Evan's personality does not die. Death is for him a departure. He departs, "having spoken his word, but the word itself remains in open-ended dialogue" (*PDP* 300). Crossing the threshold of life and death, he moves to a new dimension of freedom and release.

Carnivalesque freedom is always dual in nature, incomplete. As Bakhtin writes, "To live means to participate in dialogue . . . In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and

deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse" (*PDP* 293). The spirit of carnival offers the self a chance to become other, however. A gap exists between who I am and who I can be. It is this gap which Naoe fully exploits as she goes on in her story to enjoy repeat appearances at the Calgary Stampede as The Purple Mask, bullrider extraordinaire. She enters the rodeo grounds "starkers" as the day she was born (215). Unrecognized, invisible, she re-creates her identity, covers her eyes like "that other masked wonder, who rode that Hi Ho Silver horse, I can't remember his name" (216). The mask is one of the most complex and important elements of carnival, altering and hiding as it does the most revealing part of the body - the face:

> The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image . . . It reveals the essence of the grotesque. (*RHW* 39-40)

Naoe is a lone ranger, perceived as male, like Henry, but transgressing female roles, and giving bullriding a whole new meaning (217). As Tom Robbins writes in his novel *Jitterbug Perfume*, the mask expresses the true beauty of the Carnival:

> A mask has but one expression, frozen and eternal, yet it is always and ever the *essential* expression, and to hide one's telltale flesh behind the external skeleton of the mask is to display the universal identity of the inner being in place of the outer identity that is transitory and corrupt. The freedom of the masked is not the vulgar political freedom of the successful revolutionary, but the magical freedom of the Divine, beyond politics and beyond success. A mask, any mask, whether horned like a beast or feathered like an angel, is the face of immortality. Meet me in Cognito, baby. In Cognito, we'll have nothing to hide. (*JP* 309)

Baring her flesh and her soul, Naoe is a legend in her own time; immortal and familiar all at once. Changing face, she rides with and away from her carnivalesque double, escapes the restrictions of time, gender, and reality and adopts as her own the cultural iconography of the cowboy drifter. The rodeo is hers - its smells, its food, its eventfulness, its violence. She becomes one with the bull, a "Minoan gymnast" (*CM* 218). Her world meets the

West: its mythology, its folk culture, its competitiveness. Between cultures, she finds a momentary balance, a "smooth clear space" where she can simply be.

Otherness is a concept that feminist writers have often focussed upon as a condition from which to create a new space of dialogue in the face of patriarchal traditions and masculine language. It is reinterpreted as a position of strength and courage, a distinct and magical way of being in the world. Carnivalesque writing offers a chance to craft an alternate position from which to view society, history, and sexuality. The writer-in-green-ink of *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* asks, "Is this the only ending for a woman?", and Rees responds by exercising her option, as she does throughout the novel, to tell a different story, to draw a new conclusion (99). The only contemporary chapter in the novel, "Delores Divine" is about a stereotyped woman; a dumpy, overworked mother of three, wife of a box boy, and wisecracking bar wench. Donna Wisachuk is the epitome of undesirability, but remains the queen of the evenings amongst the all-male clientele of the Michel Hotel beer parlour. She and the other bar-slingers are confronted, however, with the impending arrival of a stripper, image supreme of the stereotypical working class man's fantasies, coming "all the way from Vancouver" (87). Donna has never been anywhere except Kimberly the night of her high school grad and conception of her first child. Twice a day, she crosses the border between British Columbia and Alberta to work at the bar by the mine. For her, Delores Divine is exotica personified. She has it all: travel, money, the desire of men and the envy of women like herself, who is stuck in a dump by the tracks, in a dead-end life. Her girlfriends are no better off, abandoned or abused. Donna speaks constantly against the boring silence of her life. She talks to the imaginary Divine, taunts her about her seemingly perfect occupation; she can show, but does not have to "give and give and give" as women usually do (70). It seems a pathetic option, but being a stripper would give Donna an opportunity to be someone else, something more than what she is in Coleman.

Her conversation quickly switches from Divine to God, however, when her truck fishtails off the night highway in a rainstorm and sinks into the Crowsnest Lake. Like so many of the characters of these novels, Donna enters a nether world of water and is transformed, baptised, made to see from a new perspective. She is now the lady of the lake, confronted with the face of a small ghost-child, her "live audience" who witnesses her death dance, then draws her out of her enclosure and releases her to the sky (98). The ghost is the child Allyn, whom we meet with her crayons in the next chapters, transcending time and space with her vision and art (120). Donna strips (to Ian Tyson's *Four Strong Winds* no less), incorporating the image of Delores, in all her pain and sorrow and grotesque sexuality, and celebrates what she believes are her last moments by removing the trappings of her body. Rescued from a death by drowning, she slips out of the truck like a baby being born:

> Her hair slides out first. Her face. Looks up and up through water. Clouds. Mountains.
>
> Her neck. Shoulders. Skin naked, slippery. Ribs. Hips. Thighs. Knees. Toes. (100)

Rees counters the possible "failure of our culture" to see women as other than wives, servers, givers, and mothers by imagining that Donna can escape her fate and emerge from the lake, irrevocably changed, allowing her to "make her own choices, have a life after" (99). She responds to the question the character Henry asks of herself, of history, "What if. . . what if a girl changed the words?" (204). "You know you can change the story," invites Murasaki at the end of *Chorus of Mushrooms* (220). The worlds that these writers create, and their characters enter, reflect otherness with an intensity and intimacy that denotes dialogic writing. The three authors examined here give value to the lives of women, as well as men, who find themselves between the lines of official discourse. In other worlds, their characters find mirrors of themselves.

The carnivalesque time of the Winnipeg Strike in *Fox* offers the HelloGirls and wives of the strikers the opportunity to be other than what they normally are, to act and

speak out against oppression, and Sweatman documents these events with cold precision. The HelloGirls are saying Goodbye (86). In sympathy with the men, they strike against their lousy pay and long hours. Sweatman has her narrator try to figure it out:

> Put it down to the brutality of war, but something's made the HelloGirls say no. Maybe the scarcity of men makes them act more masculine. Maybe Womanhood gets stale, left too long. But it just doesn't seem fair, a woman paying her own way. Someone ought to take care of her. (86)

These women would not need anyone if they were paid a decent wage. But at this time, in their place of employment, they have a power, and they use it, walking out and jamming the whole telephone system of the city. In lieu of voice, their actions speak as loudly and are just as confrontational when it comes to expressing their thoughts on the matter of better working conditions. In the chapter entitled "The Right To Remain Silent," Sweatman reminds us of this fact as she relates the story of how a frustrated group of women storm some delivery trucks flouting the efforts of the strikers. They are "together because of their differences . . . And they've got the mad anger, they do. That's not just the property of the men" (141-142). Sweatman recognizes the importance of respecting each woman's struggle, not just lumping them together as an indeterminate mass. Their protest is no triumph, however. It is the only way they can fight the powers that hold them down. They are a shocking and unexpected force that cannot be touched because of their gender, one of the factors that represses them in the first place. Their silence becomes a language of transgression as they subvert the conservative cultural expectations of what women are capable of doing. "*But we really gave it to those bastards. Yes, we did*," says the voice that opens the scene (141). The interests of feminism and dialogism converge in the carnivalesque desire to thwart authority and generate change.

The marginal region of Rees's novel provides Allyn with a site for a silent expression of her perspective of her carnivalesque world. One of the most interesting scenes in *Beneath the Faceless Mountain* shows how Allyn, with only a few pill bottles full of paint, manages to cover entirely the magically real walls of ice and snow that bury her town that

winter (185). Like a cleansing wash, her painting reveals what is known to be underneath. She reconstructs all the buildings and people of her community, paints the past and the future, reaches in to touch her own creations. Her painting reflects the style of Marc Chagall (with whom Bakhtin was acquainted, Clark 48), displaying flying animals and wild colours. A further extension of the Song of Solomon appears in Allyn's depictions of her mother (179,186), which are very similar to the woman of Chagall's painting *Cantique des Cantiques*, as well as *Le Cirque*. The painting is her gift of color, her restoration of the demarcations of her place in the world. Yet Allyn in her art messes with the linearity of time, much like the authors of these novels. She sees the intrinsic connectedness of time and space, beyond their abstract nature. Chronology is not a given, nothing should be seen as formulaic. Casually sketching the stories of all the characters of the novel, she acts as a medium through which these people of various periods are linked, yet she shapes her own location. Like Murasaki and Naoe, Allyn and the other characters' stories "entwine and loop around and this will never change" (*CM* 113). Her art, like the carnival, may not last, but its spirit operates outside of any parameter. Allyn's creations are captured in words that will constantly renew her drawings each time they are read.

Dialogism perceives language as a living thing, dynamic in its upheaval and colorful in its influences, yet it is checked by rules of grammar and usage designed to conserve its power for those of education and rank. In *Fox*, Sweatman parodies this struggle in two mocking, carnivalesque statements written with the mask of official discourse, entitled "Millennium" (149) and "Do people still speak like that?" (180). The first demonstrates how the formality of language serves only to make it dull and meaningless. The speaker rants like a minister or biblical prophet. It seems "they" would embrace the social diversity of heteroglossia, but elevate it to such a pompous degree that it is rendered as some kind of cultural construct. No language is supreme or exalted, and an encyclopedic love of otherness sounds rather categorical. They still possess the Adamic urge to name

everything. It is dialogic language that would celebrate "lengthy sentences of doubtful grammaticality" for grammaticality is not so much a concern for many levels of speech. But many people do still "speak like that," using language in units of complexity which observe the *un*natural restraint "preserved for our use by our forefathers, ( ), whose love for the English language (lang. of the isle etc.) prevents the descent and fracture of idiom" (180). This language was the exclusive right of conservative British males. The ellipsis ( ) denotes the "logic of paradox" (149), the paradox being that for all its 'superiority,' their language has no substance. The dialogic novel fractures this systematization of speech and opens the arena of language to whoever would dare to enter. As Patricia Yaeger writes, "Both feminist praxis and dialogic thinking emphasize the political struggles of our texts and our lives, insisting that there should be no reign of normative speech without revolt, protest, challenge, invective - in short, without trouble" (245). The novels of Sweatman, Rees, and Goto provide fine examples of how Canadian women writers are doing just that.

VI. Conclusion

The situatedness of the utterance in specific social and historical contexts relates well to the human desire to situate ourselves in relation to the complex and ever changing world around us. This desire finds powerful expression in the works of the three writers explored here. Situatedness cannot be understood without an active engagement with others in dialogue, whether by apppropriating their words and voice, or in seeking to understand the voices of others. It is because of this interconnectedness, this intertextuality, that we are able to perceive, and to enjoy the freedom of that perspective. By stepping into the place of someone else, losing ourselves for a moment, we are paradoxically better able to understand ourselves in relation to that other. This is the experience of the writer and reader of dialogic fiction. The novel, with its rich tradition of artistic variety, is a mirror of that engagement, as well as the plurality of the individual.

It is interesting to note that the novel, which so intrigued Bakhtin, is a genre which has historically been defined as "feminine" (Watt 43). The importance of the growth of consciousness in the dialogic novel is, in part, the result of the fact that readers whose identities are denied have no other place to find their stories except in the historical or autobiographical literature they themselves produce, which is what women writers have been trying to do for centuries, what Canadian writers have had to do for themselves. It is what Murasaki, the forerunner of the Murasaki of Goto's novel, did in the eleventh century (*CM* 165). Available to Murasaki only in translation and long after it was written (much as Bakhtin is to us), Lady Shikibu's masterpiece, *The Tale of Genji*, nonetheless offers her an important model of courageous achievement in the face of restrictive conditions. As the supposed creator of the novel and anti-hero, she also offers Murasaki a proud cultural foundation upon which to build a positive image of herself as a Japanese woman. The reference to such a work has the added importance of showing how novelistic discourse is able in an intensely personal way to reflect and give value to the otherness of the lives of

those that find themselves between the lines of official discourse, which allows people to find voices similar to their own and confirms their own experience of life (Manguel 235-235).

Having lived through revolution, wars, purges, Stalinism, and exile, Bakhtin understood something about marginality and displacement. Within the context of his life, it is easy to see why context has such an important place in the writings of Bakhtin, yet it is ironic that his own works were open to interpretation and meaning only decades after they were written and, no doubt, outside their original contexts (Dentith 3). There is also no doubt, however, that this would not surprise Bakhtin, as he was, himself, so unfinal in his thinking. "There is no text without context," affirms one of the epigraphs to *Beneath the Faceless Mountain*. Indeed, how we see depends entirely on where we see from, our position *vis-à-vis* what we are looking at. Factors of race, class, and gender create positions of difference and resistance in relation to one another, as these novels demonstrate. "*Who* speaks and under what condition he speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning," writes Bakhtin (DN 401). In speaking, we seek to describe our contexts in language, but it is in language that belongs to no one and everyone, a balance of use that Bakhtin captures in his concept of heteroglossia; a balance not of equality, but like that of a tight-rope walker, with one part supporting and providing stability for the moment, while the rest of the body wavers in chaotic tension, yet somehow moving ever forward. Balance is what Bakhtin sought in his exploration of the general and the unique, the objective and the subjective, in his idealism and scepticism.

These three novels reflect this uncertain and ever changing balance in the uncertainty of their narrators and characters. Everything is "strange" or "funny." Their ambivalence, disruptiveness, and inventiveness operate against systematization and continually subvert ideas of status and power. They work to enrich the novel genre while chronicling the multiplicity of Canadian culture. As the epigraph to Goto's novel states, "The legend is

believed, it is remarkable, and also it is local." Holding coal to rock, these three writers begin, to draw, to create their own local mythology from the voices of those not normally heard (*BFM* 239). And the balance always shifts: "History. Herstory. My story. Your story. Their story. Who's telling? Who's listening?" (*BFM* 8). Naoe understands that there is a partnership in the telling and listening, that "if the positions ever become static, there can never be stories. Stories grow out of stories grow out of stories. Listening becomes telling, telling listening." (*CM* 172). And it is hard work. The conversation never ends, fraught as it is with openendedness, "an inability to say anything once and for all or to think anything through to its end" (DN 365). But the need to voice one's existence is vital, despite risks of misunderstanding. Bakhtin is sure of his place, however, as he writes "My word remains in the continuing dialogue, where it will be heard, answered and reinterpreted" (*PDP* 300). It has indeed, and Canadian writers are responding.

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