

**METAPHORIC LANDSCAPE IN THE NOVELS OF
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND MARGARET ATWOOD**

Margaret Dabney Ledyard

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews**



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the following study is to demonstrate the ways in which Virginia Woolf and Margaret Atwood use metaphoric landscape as a tool to delineate boundaries in their novels. The thesis will explore the progression of this technique from Woolf to Atwood to discover whether these two novels can be read in similar ways, "suggesting" as Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik remark, "a continuing tradition of alternative quest and vision in women's writing."

The first part of the thesis introduces metaphoric landscape and illustrates the various ways that Woolf and Atwood use the technique. Part II offers a brief biographical sketch of Woolf, and it closely examines five of the author's novels as well as one of her essays. Part III introduces Atwood to the study with a brief historical background and a comparison with Woolf; it also explores the technique as it appears in seven of Atwood's novels. The dissertation concludes with observations that connect Parts II and III, showing the way that Woolf and Atwood delineate existing boundaries and forge new frontiers through their use of metaphoric landscape.

I, Margaret Dabney Ledyard, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 40,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

18-7-94

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolutions and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M Phil in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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I was admitted as a candidate for the degree of M Phil in June 1992; the study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between October 1992 and November 1993.

1.8-2-94

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations refer to the sources cited throughout this study. (Publication details in the Select Biography):

- (AROO) - Virginia Woolf. *A Room of One's Own*.
(Atwood from Ingersoll) - Margaret Atwood from interviews compiled by Earl G. Ingersoll. *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*.
(AWD) - Virginia Woolf. *A Writer's Diary*.
(Berger) - John Berger. *Ways of Seeing*.
(BH) - Margaret Atwood. *Bodily Harm*.
(Chernin) - Kim Chernin. *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*.
(CE I-IV) - Virginia Woolf. *Collected Essays*, 4 vols.
(CE) - Margaret Atwood. *Cat's Eye*.
(Dowling) - David Dowling. *Mrs. Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness*.
(Fullbrook) - Kate Fullbrook. *Free Women: Ethics and Aesthetics in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction*.
(Gilbert and Gubar) - Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol 1: "The War of the Words".
(Horner and Zlosnik) - Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik. *Landscapes of Desire: Metaphors in Modern Women's Fiction*.
(Jehlen) - Myra Jehlen. "Feminist Criticism in the wilderness".
(JR) - Virginia Woolf. *Jacob's Room*.
(Lecker) - Robert Lecker. "Janus Through the Looking Glass: Atwood's First Three novels."
(LBM) - Margaret Atwood. *Life Before Man*.
(LO) - Margaret Atwood. *Lady Oracle*.
(Lee) - Hermione Lee. *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*.
(McNichol) - Stella McNichol. *Collected Novels of Virginia Woolf*.
(MD) - Virginia Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*.
(Nicholson) - Nigel Nicholson. *Portrait of a Marriage*.
(Orl.) - Virginia Woolf. *Orlando*.
(Pratt) - Annis Pratt. *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*.
(Rigney) - Barbara Hill Rigney. *Margaret Atwood*.
(Rosenberg) - Jerome Rosenberg. *Margaret Atwood*.
(Squier) - Susan Squire. "Tradition and Revision in Woolf's Orlando: Defoe and "The Jessamy Brides".
(Surf.) - Margaret Atwood. *Surfacing*.

- (TEW) - Margaret Atwood. *The Edible Woman*.
(THT) - Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*.
(TTL) - Virginia Woolf. *To the Lighthouse*.
(TW) - Virginia Woolf. *The Waves*.
(Warner) - Eric Warner. *The Waves*.
(Zimmerman) - Bonnie Zimmerman. "Exiting from Patriarchy:
The Lesbian Novel of Development".

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Part I: An Introduction

"Indeed, the female territory might well be envisioned as one long border, and independence for women, not as a separate country, but as open access to the sea."
Myra Jehlen

This thesis will explore the importance of landscape in twentieth-century women's fiction by examining chosen novels of Virginia Woolf (1882 - 1941) and Margaret Atwood (1939 -). The term *landscape* has several meanings; this thesis will explore its use in modern language as a word suggesting physical, psychological and societal territory. This particular use of the term landscape is discussed in several recently published texts, such as *Landscapes of Desire* (1990) by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik and *Free Women* (1990) by Kate Fullbrook; these critical works concentrate on the position of women within the physical, psychological and societal territories of the twentieth-century. To understand the subtle suggestions of the term landscape, one must first explore the traditional meanings of the word.

In the Second Edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume VIII, five definitions of the term as a noun are listed, as well as two verbal definitions. The historical development of the word indicates that early writers, such as Milton, initially used the term, which often appeared as *landskippe* or *lantscap*, yet over the years, the term became popular with artists. Initially referred to "a piece of inland scenery", the word has slowly evolved into a more sophisticated, modern definition that suggests physical and non-physical territory in

twentieth-century literature (*OED*, p. 629). The fourth definition of the noun landscape has eight submeanings, three of which are as follows: "a view, prospect of something"; "The object of one's gaze"; and "The depiction or description of something in words" (*OED*, p. 630). Examples cited in the *OED* of this particular use of landscape are as follows: G. Sarton's article in *Hist. Sci. I.* x 256 (1952) - "Let us return again to Athens and try to consider the intellectual landscape from the point of view of a well - educated man"; The 1963 March edition of the *Listener* 7, 405/1 - "The landscape of international politics is now very different from what it was only two to three years ago" (*OED*, p. 630). From these definitions and examples, one can begin to see the more modern use of the term. By the twentieth-century, writers are using the term to explain areas in politics and within the mind. Landscape no longer suggests merely physical, visible areas; it has evolved into its modern metaphoric use.

Next, *The Oxford English Dictionary* explores the verbal meanings of the word. The text states that landscape can mean "To represent as a landscape; to picture, depict". One example cited is taken from Browning's *Ring & Book I. 1352* (1868): "Putting solely that On panel somewhere in the House of Fame, Landscaping what I saved, not what I saw" (*OED*, p. 630). This excerpt illustrates the way that landscape can be internalized. It shows the psychological aspect of the term, far different to its the physical sense. The *OED* verbal definition of landscape, meaning "to picture, depict" or as *The Collins English Dictionary* states, to "create, arrange", is less a definition than already a

metaphorical use of the term, suggesting the author's control in the "mapping out" or "landscaping" of the frame of a novel (TCED, p.274). These definitions show that though the modern evolution of the term, landscape, is based upon its early meanings, it has progressed from a word that describes physical setting into one that suggests inner territory, the power to describe in non-physical terms, and the ability to shape a text in a new style.

As each novel is explored, it will become evident that Woolf and Atwood both use landscape in their novels to delineate existing boundaries for women and to restructure new areas and territories. By comparing Woolf, a pioneer in modern women's writing, with Atwood, who is presently clearing new paths for women, it will become clear that the use of landscape as metaphor in literature is a powerful tool that has changed and continues to change the ways in which society views women and also the ways in which women view society. By contrasting the ways in which Woolf and Atwood present landscape, this study will chart the progression of this method over the last eighty years and demonstrate the differing approaches used by the two authors in response to their respective societies. It will show that although Woolf and Atwood present differing images of metaphorical landscape, it is a common denominator bonding these two writers together.

Woolf uses images drawn from landscape (including room, house and sea) to explore the inner lives of her characters, often female; through these images, she can portray aspects of women's natures which could not otherwise be as fully described. Oftentimes, Woolf uses this technique to illustrate her male characters as well,

as in *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *The Waves* (1931). By using anthropomorphism and leitmotif, Woolf is able to ascribe external characteristics to each individual character, whilst exploring their internal state of mind. Atwood, however, uses landscape, both literal landscapes and metaphors drawn from landscape, to expose the social and political pressures to which women are subject. In her early novels, such as *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972) and *Lady Oracle* (1976), she shows an interest in the inner psychological state of her characters, much like Woolf; her middle novels, such as *Bodily Harm* (1981) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), focus more on the ways in which her female characters confront the political aspects of society. What for Woolf were inner, psychological experiences, primarily, are in Atwood to be seen as the reflex or consequence of women's confrontations with their society. By the time she had published *Cat's Eye* in 1988, she had returned to a study of the inner state of her characters.

Although the information and opinions from a number of critical texts will offer support to this thesis, only two of the studies focus solely on landscape. As a result, these two texts contribute more to the overall theme of this study and will require a more thorough examination. *Landscapes of Desire* by Avril Horner (1947 -) and Sue Zlosnik (1949 -) and *Free Women* by Kate Fullbrook, both published in 1990, offer the most recent and detailed interpretations of the use of landscape. The authors of these two texts agree on the importance of landscape in twentieth-century women's fiction, yet they approach the subject from different perspectives. Both studies include

close examinations of the novels of Woolf and Atwood; however, they focus on separate aspects of metaphoric landscape. Horner and Zlosnik concentrate on the psychological aspect, which relates more to Woolf's novels. Fullbrook studies the ethical aspect of metaphoric landscape, which appears more in Atwood's novels. The authors agree that Woolf and Atwood use metaphoric landscape to challenge the barriers that the modern woman faces, yet the texts offer different observations of the ways in which Woolf and Atwood use this technique.

Landscapes of Desire begins with the statement that it will be "a book about reading women's writing" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 1). Horner and Zlosnik aim to show one way of interpreting modern women's fiction. They claim that their study will explore boundaries that "are both actual and psychological...those effected by society...and those less obvious...which lie within the female psyche as a result of her socialization" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 11). They acknowledge that their ideas build on other critical works by Ellen Moers¹, Elaine Showalter², Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar³, who all discuss landscape in their studies. They also admit that metaphoric landscape is not "exclusively a female way of writing", but rather develops from "a state of alienation that can be felt by both sexes" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 6). Finally, they present the "common configurations of metaphor...room, house, land and sea", which appear in the novels they review.

Horner and Zlosnik concentrate on six female authors of nineteenth and twentieth-century women's fiction. By examining this range of women writers, they hope to see "whether similar metaphorical writing in later twentieth-

century novels may be read in the same way - suggesting, perhaps, a continuing tradition of alternative quest and vision in women's writing" (Horner and Zlosnik, p.6). This statement is vitally important in this study of Woolf and Atwood. After discussing a period they entitle "Awakenings", which includes studies of Edith Wharton⁴ (1862 - 1937), Charlotte Perkins Gilman⁵ (1860 - 1935) and Kate Chopin⁶ (1850 - 1904), they progress to three novels of Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Horner and Zlosnik pinpoint Woolf as a turning point in women's fiction. They attribute her significance to the onset of modernism, the movement that "involved a rejection of traditional forms in all the arts" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 9). They see the onset of modernism as a time when boundaries and barriers are dissolving, and the public is being forced to reexamine their old ideas. Virginia Woolf begins writing at this time, and modernism becomes an opportunity for her to introduce new forms of the novel. It is the subtle "unseen boundary" and the surreal "mystic boundaries" that shape her novels (Horner and Zlosnik, p 13). Her main concern is to "explore the hidden boundaries which constrain women within the construct 'woman'" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 65).

In the chapter entitled, "Virginia Woolf's 'mystic boundaries'", Horner and Zlosnik explore Woolf's ability to describe the hidden, unseen boundaries and areas. They note the images of sea that appear literally in *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and metaphorically in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). As they explain, metaphoric landscape includes any physical area that is used to describe setting, scene or

atmosphere. Although the setting in these novels incorporates seascapes rather than literal landscapes, the metaphorical value of the area described is just as important to an understanding of territory, boundary and transitional character. Landscape as metaphor is not always seen in its literal meaning, "a piece of inland scenery"; rather, it appears in many forms such as, seascapes, rooms and houses. The use of sea imagery in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* gives both novels a certain fluidity that suggests the rhythmic, changing nature of the sea. Horner and Zlosnik focus on Woolf's use of landscape to shape her characters, Rachel Vinrace, Clarissa Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay. They agree that Woolf bonds the external landscape to her main characters to explain their psychological natures, their inner landscapes.

As well as the novels, Horner and Zlosnik briefly discuss Woolf's two polemical works, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). Although these two texts have little to do with the psychological aspect of metaphoric landscape, they do illustrate the way in which Woolf uses landscape to create new territories. For example, referring back to the "configurations of metaphor" that appear in these texts, one can see the symbolic "room" in *A Room of One's Own* that signifies an intellectual and financial freedom for women. Woolf uses the room configuration again in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*. Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay are both associated with room and house. Mrs. Dalloway's attic room is a retreat that allows her the freedom to read, to dream and to enjoy her solitude. In this room, "Clarissa takes

herself outside the constraints of gender" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 99). She can read Marbot's journals of the Russian campaign and feel as if she is a part of that history. Mrs. Ramsay embodies several configurations of metaphor. She associates herself with the sea, the lighthouse and the house. And later after Mrs. Ramsay's death, Lily Briscoe tries to capture her spirit in her painting of the landscape.

The novels of Virginia Woolf support Horner and Zlosnik's claim that by the author's use of landscape, literally and metaphorically, in literature, the reader can gain a deeper insight into that inner landscape in which women often function. Their study of the psychological aspect of metaphorical landscape includes a close examination of one of Margaret Atwood's novels, *Surfacing*, that centers on the psychological journey of its nameless narrator. In the section, "Beyond boundaries and back again: Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*", Horner and Zlosnik explore the ways in which Atwood uses metaphoric landscape to create a different type of novel from that of Woolf. The narrator of *Surfacing* has created her own fictitious version of her past. When she begins her journey to the Canadian island where she lived as a child, she is forced to face the truth. The narrator is closely associated with the surrounding landscape. As Horner and Zlosnik point out, the lake symbolizes both death and rebirth for the main character. The title of the novel refers to this process of drowning and surfacing back to the top, and the narrator's purpose is to find her father who, she secretly hopes, will resurface from the landscape into which he seems to have "simply disappeared" (*Surf.*, p. 24). The

novel presents the same configurations of metaphor that Horner and Zlosnik have defined in their study, the room/house (the cabin), the isolation of land (the island) and images of water (the lake). They view *Surfacing* "as part of the continuing quest by women writers for an alternative vision of society through which the fixity of the dominant discourse is questioned" (Horner and Zlosnik, p.198).

The second critical text, *Free Women*, by Kate Fullbrook, relates more to Atwood and less to Woolf than *Landscapes of Desire*. Fullbrook explores the ethical implications of metaphoric landscape as a changing force in society. She links several of Atwood's novels that focus on colonisation, national independence, women's rights and the nature of the victim to her theme. Fullbrook explains her purpose in the introduction:

What I wish to explore in this book, by considering the work of some of the most skilful writers of the past hundred years, are the ways in which women novelists have been engaged in restructuring the ethical landscape by devising new patterns for assessing moral success or failure. It is my major contention that they have thus helped to change the topography of ethics by shifting the terms in which the good for women is defined (Fullbrook, p.1).

Her purpose relates back to the earlier statement that Woolf and Atwood are both seeking to delineate existing boundaries for women and restructure new areas and territories. It is necessary to establish Fullbrook's purpose and to understand the way in which it differs from the goals of Horner and Zlosnik. Although she also hopes to shed new light upon the ways in which people read women's fiction, she does not focus on the psychological

aspect of metaphoric landscape. Rather, Fullbrook offers an alternative interpretation that concentrates on the literal freedom for women. As in *Landscapes of Desire*, Fullbrook begins her study with a look at the novels of Edith Wharton; she examines eleven authors in total, including chapters on Woolf and Atwood.

Fullbrook's study of Woolf's novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915), *To The Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941), and of her polemical work, *Three Guineas* (1938), offers a comprehensive look at the way in which Woolf uses metaphoric landscape to create an ethical scheme and free women from the social constructs in which they are imprisoned. In this study, "Virginia Woolf: Beyond Duty", Fullbrook analyses the way in which Woolf pushes "through the frontiers of modernism" to shape new characters (Fullbrook, p. 110). The strongest part of this chapter focuses on *To The Lighthouse*. Fullbrook closely examines the character of Lily Briscoe in relation to Mrs. Ramsay. She studies the final chapter of the novel, "The Lighthouse", pointing out the symbolic sea images and Lily's interpretation of them. She sees Lily as "a woman who is trying to reach beyond the personal, domestic and contingent dimension of life which is ordained as the exclusive legitimate territory for women by the code of her time and her class" (Fullbrook, p.97). Fullbrook refers to the images of room as well, and the way in which these images reflect the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay depends upon his wife to fill his house with life. As the house provides shelter and comfort for its occupants, so Mrs. Ramsay provides care and protection for her husband, who sees himself as a suffering and

persecuted intellectual. Although Mr. Ramsay appreciates the nurturing aspect of his wife, he sees her mind as intellectually vacant. He establishes himself as the intellectual of the family, passing on this title to his son Andrew. Mrs. Ramsay allows herself to be characterized in this way by her husband. She associates herself with the landscape around her. The lighthouse and Mrs. Ramsay are both guiding forces in the novel. Mr. Ramsay, Cam, James and Lily are all angry when Mrs. Ramsay dies because she cannot be there to guide them and to give life to the house. When she is able to capture Mrs. Ramsay's spirit in her painting of the landscape, Lily realizes that her own identity as a woman is far different from that of Mrs. Ramsay.

Fullbrook also examines the metaphoric landscapes that shape *The Waves*. She explains that the "description of the sea, the sun and the seasons" that introduce each section of the novel "relates to the position of the characters in the long day of their life" (Fullbrook, p.104). She compares the position of the female characters with that of the male and notes the relationship between the waves and each character's own strengths and weaknesses. This discussion is the second strongest part of Fullbrook's study of Woolf's use of ethical landscape. However, Fullbrook admits that her theme does not function as well in Woolf's novels as it does in other sections of the study. She admits that Woolf's "refusal to commit to any definition of women" makes a study of her novels in relation to Fullbrook's purpose difficult (Fullbrook, p.85). Although she has difficulty in linking Woolf's novels to her theme, she is able to examine these novels in

a different light than is seen in *Landscapes of Desire*. She focuses more on the way in which metaphoric landscape defines the external atmosphere in which women function. Her study relates more to the verbal definition of landscape as a means to create or arrange details into a territory.

Atwood's novels support Fullbrook's claim that modern women writers are freeing women from social constructs. In her chapter, "Margaret Atwood: Colonisation and Responsibility", Fullbrook reviews seven of Atwood's novels. Focusing on the nature of the victim and the desire for freedom, she is able to discuss in detail the ethical aspect of metaphoric landscape. She explains the purpose of Atwood's novels and the use of metaphoric landscape in them. Atwood focuses on Canadian nationalism, women's rights and victimization in her novels. Fullbrook explains the picture that her novels present:

That picture might best be described as the interior landscape of oppression, the effects of colonisation on those who have been colonised, the ways in which that landscape might be altered and just what that process might involve (Fullbrook, p. 174)

Fullbrook establishes Atwood's political concerns, but she also recognizes Atwood's ability to present her concerns for the oppressed in everyday situations. Atwood uses images of women's bodies to signify personal territory, and she details the ways in which that territory can be claimed by outsiders and reclaimed by the individual. Underlying each of Atwood's stories is the nature of victimization. This theme influences all of her work, and she often uses metaphoric landscape to represent the nature of victimization. She understands that there are two sides to

this dilemma and that both parties create this situation. Fullbrook explains that Atwood sees the way in which some victims become attracted to these situations. It gives them "moral righteousness" and allows them to avoid responsibility for their situation. These victims often shape themselves as "innocent" and "powerless", and until they can refuse to be the victim they will not define themselves (Fullbrook, p. 175).

In characters such as Marian McAlpin, the nameless narrator of *Surfacing*, Joan Foster, Rennie Wilford and Elaine Risley, Atwood illustrates this journey from victim to self-controller. Each character is faced with the dilemma of finding the way back to her true self. Fullbrook is able to detail Atwood's novels showing their importance as stories based upon ethical landscape. As in Woolf, there are recurring scenic details that mark Atwood's novels. The recurring images of the wilderness, suggesting the nature of the hunt, as well as the image of the ravine, a place of sexual threat and the unknown, reappear in Atwood's novels. Atwood also uses the body and its relationship to food to describe a personal territory. She employs "these fictional locations" to create a "terrain" for "her central character's evolution" (Fullbrook, p. 190).

Fullbrook details the way in which Atwood creates this ethical terrain in the following novels: *The Edible Woman* (1969); *Surfacing* (1972); *Lady Oracle* (1976); *Life Before Man* (1979); *Bodily Harm* (1981); *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985); and *Cat's Eye* (1988). She concentrates on five of the seven novels giving only minimal insight into *Lady Oracle* and *Life Before Man*. Fullbrook concludes that

these two novels deal with other areas, "women's attitudes to food, art, work, children, fertility", that do not concern her purpose - to explore the ethical landscape in literature. However, this thesis will closely examine *Lady Oracle* because it is an important text revealing Atwood's use of metaphoric landscape. Fullbrook focuses on the different ways that Atwood presents ethical landscape in these novels. She examines Marian McAlpin's struggle to reclaim her personal territory with the symbol of the edible woman cake. Fullbrook also looks at the other female characters of *The Edible Woman*, Ainsley and the office virgins, and explores the ways in which they represent the hunter. Atwood's first stab at using metaphoric landscape as a tool in the novel produces the story of a woman who must face the social constraints for women of the Sixties' society.

Fullbrook, like Horner and Zlosnik, recognizes *Surfacing* as Atwood's most skilful use of metaphoric landscape. To shed her role as the victim, the narrator must remove herself from the human race, likening herself to an animal. As Fullbrook explains, it is this process that leads her to the truth. "Her rejection of ethical responsibility is finally so strong that it leads her to a madness in which she removes herself from the human altogether, working her way back through the layers of being until she imagines herself as 'the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place'" (Fullbrook, p. 183). The narrator is able to bond with her surroundings which enables her to recognize her true identity. Atwood chooses to define her character not with a name or a physical description, but rather with the

surroundings she encounters on her journey. Skipping over the next two novels, *Lady Oracle* and *Life Before Man*, Fullbrook next discusses the importance of *Bodily Harm*, a story in which the main character, Rennie Wilford, faces actual physical threat from her environment. Fullbrook examines the relationship between Rennie and the many men in her life, but she focuses on Rennie's feelings towards her prison cellmate, Lora. Faced with the extreme violence of revolution on the island, Rennie must find her true, concrete identity and learn to overcome her desire to distance herself from others. Atwood offers more physical landscape in this novel and the following one, *The Handmaid's Tale*. In both stories, the main characters face the oppression that society has placed on them. Their fight is directed at an actual governing body, though the layers underneath their physical structures involve an inner, psychological change. Rennie and Offred long to be free women.

Fullbrook concludes her study of Atwood with a look at *Cat's Eye*, a novel that contains many of Atwood's "classic" images, the wilderness, the ravine, etc (Fullbrook, p.190). As in *Lady Oracle*, Elaine Risley is an artist who is forced to face her childhood. Elaine's education in the woods as a traveller and her confrontation with the worst of bullies, Cordelia, shape her as a character of transition. She is constantly in a state of change, travelling from bullied victim to torturer, from oppressed housewife to successful artist. Atwood's use of metaphoric landscape mirrors Elaine's changes. When she is alone with her family in the wilderness, she is complete

and happy. The move to the urban world symbolizes Elaine's confrontation with the constraints of society. Learning to operate in this world as a child and in the world of her fellow artists at university as a young adult gives Elaine a firm identity. Her experience in the ravine and the symbolic saving images of the Cat's Eye and the Virgin Mary, signify Elaine's refusal to be a victim. Unlike Atwood's other characters, Elaine has found her identity before the story really begins; her trip back to her childhood territory reinforces her identity, and allows her to remember her development. Her experience guides her art, and she remains attached to her childhood acquaintances, Cordelia, Grace, Mrs. Smeath and the Virgin Mary. Fullbrook uses Atwood's novels to reinforce her principle that modern women writers have "helped to change the topography of ethics by shifting the terms in which the good for women is defined" (Fullbrook, p.1).

This thesis will give attention to the ways in which Woolf and Atwood use metaphoric landscape in their novels. It will consider the approaches of Horner and Zlosnik as well as Fullbrook, sometimes agreeing with their opinions and sometimes disagreeing. At times it will be necessary to use other critical sources to shed light on the subject. For instance, Barbara Hill Rigney's study, *Margaret Atwood*, has been a valuable source of information especially with regard to the different types of characters in Atwood's novels. Hermione Lee's study, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* has shed light on several of Woolf's novels. Annis Pratt's text, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, offers observations of the novels of Woolf and Atwood and defines the "Green-World Guide" as a

force that leads the main character to self-realization through a landscape of experience (Pratt, p.139). Other texts have also contributed to the study of these novels. This thesis will examine five of Woolf's novels, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, as well as one of her polemical works, *A Room of One's Own*.

It will detail Woolf's use of metaphoric landscape in the texts, the psychological aspects as well as the ethical aspects. The same attention will be given to seven of Atwood's novels, the same as those reviewed in *Free Women*, although the novels will be grouped together in subject matter rather than chronological order. For instance, the theme of the "escape artist" defined in Rigney's text links *Surfacing*, *Cat's Eye* and *Lady Oracle*. Confrontation with the system links *The Handmaid's Tale* to *Bodily Harm*; at times, it will be necessary to bring previously discussed novels into these sections as they relate to the subject. Therefore, it may be necessary to compare and contrast the use of metaphoric landscape in a novel by Woolf to that of Atwood. The main aim of the thesis will be to show metaphoric landscape as a common denominator between Woolf and Atwood and to illustrate the different ways in which they use this method.

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Part II: Virginia Woolf

"Perhaps no twentieth-century literary woman better exemplifies this shift from the nineteenth-century fictional tradition than Virginia Woolf, in part because no twentieth-century woman was more conscious of her aesthetic foremothers" (Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar).

Virginia Woolf merely claimed to follow the path that had already been forged by her precursors, writers such as the Brontes and Jane Austen; but one can see a clear divide between the writing style of nineteenth-century authors and that of the twentieth-century. Woolf took inspiration from her literary foremothers, but she pioneered her way to new, undiscovered frontiers. When examining women writers in the twentieth-century, one must recognize the immediate move towards Modernism, the movement of the 1920s that "involved a rejection of traditional forms in all the arts" (Horner and Zlosnik, p.8). Woolf offered a new perspective to women's literature through her innovative use of landscape. Unlike nineteenth-century writers, who wrote of the woman confined to the "room" desperately wanting to escape, Woolf presented an alternative formula. For Woolf, the "room" became an ideal location that allowed women to have their own space. The sea and land become areas of ambiguity and danger, symbolizing the unknown and the uncontrollable.

Hermione Lee explains the way that Woolf used metaphoric landscape to relate life to art:

Objects, colours and physical sensations express the life of the mind...But the translation of mental states into physical images is not reductive. The process is the natural expression of her concept of

existence, not a superficial, decorative technique. Virginia Woolf not only felt that the expression of life of the mind through physical images was the most accurate equivalent that art can make for reality; she also believed in the relationship between people and non-human objects as being life-enhancing. (Lee, p. 29)

This passage shows the connection between life and nature. It relates to the idea that art imitates life and that life imitates art. The two are bound together in this relationship.

Virginia Woolf is an excellent starting point for the examination of modern women writers who cross boundaries through literature. The journey from *The Voyage Out* (1915) to *Between the Acts* (1941) shows her literary achievements over a twenty-six year period. As a female novelist of the early twentieth-century, Woolf's involvement with the Bloomsbury Group⁷ (1905 -) allowed her to explore and experiment with many different ideas, and if it were not for the stimulation, encouragement and freedom that the group supplied, she may never have produced the groundbreaking novels that she did. Her father, Leslie Stephen⁸ (1832 - 1904), was the author of several texts, including *History of English Thought in the 18th Century* (1976) and *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1904). His numerous literary and intellectual contacts meant that Virginia was exposed to many different areas of study.

Growing up in the Stephen household, Woolf formed relationships with writers, such as Lytton Strachey⁹ (1880 - 1932), Roger Fry¹⁰ (1866 - 1934) and J.M. Keynes¹¹ (1883 - 1946). As a woman of privilege, she was exposed to many

areas of study from the Classics to Freud¹² (1856 - 1939). Her bouts with mental illness responded to therapy that involved writing; thus her husband set up the Hogarth Press in 1917 to accommodate her need to write and publish. She had the intellectual background and the financial means that allowed her to experiment with new approaches to writing. Timing was also a crucial factor in shaping Woolf as a pioneer for women's writing; the combination of Modernism with the end of the war signalled a period that was desperate for change.

Woolf was greatly interested in developing and redefining the novel. This dream resulted from her dislike of the confining quality of Victorian and Edwardian literature. She took pleasure in pointing out what she believed to be the faults of nineteenth-century literature in many of her novels, such as *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *Orlando* (1928); she longed to produce novels that would challenge former writing styles and offer her readers something new and different. It was Woolf's rebellion against the accepted norms of nineteenth and twentieth-century literature that established her as a writer of importance.

In redefining the modern novel, Woolf had to consider what she wanted to change. She wanted to reshape the way in which the novel was defined, change the narrative style, and give prose the sort of intellectual weight that poetry possessed. She was opposed to literature that possessed a structured, didactic quality, and she was concerned with the status and position of the modern woman. She wanted women to have a place of value in her stories, for then they might gain a

place of value in society. As she explains in her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), it is unacceptable that one should assume that a book is "insignificant...because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room" rather than "war", "football and sport" (AROO, p. 74). By her third novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922), Woolf began to develop a "new form of novel", but it was not until *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), that she "discovered...her voice" (McNichol, p. 7). As David Dowling explains in his study, *Mrs. Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, the novels that followed *Mrs. Dalloway*, such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928), revolved around similar subjects: "war, peace, London, England, young men dying, the passing of time, the fragile web of friends and society, the place of women, and the shaping power of vision" (Dowling, p. 14).

Although Woolf's middle novels focused on similar aspects, they both served another purpose. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* were both bridges connecting Woolf's earlier novels, such as *Jacob's Room*, to her later novels, *Orlando* and *The Waves*. By studying this progression, one can see the development of the "new form of novel" that Woolf aspired to create. In these two middle novels Woolf began to play with landscape and narrative, and this experimentation led to the innovative structure of *The Waves*. Woolf regarded *Orlando* as a vacation from her writing, and although she exhibited the traditional third person narrative and simple descriptive passages in the novel, it crossed the boundaries of other contemporary literature in its use of fantasy and landscape. It was, as Susan Squier argues,

Woolf's "literary emancipation ... she confronted the influence of both literal and literary fathers to reshape the novel, and so create a place for herself in the English novelist tradition which was their legacy to her" (Squier, p. 167).

Metaphoric landscape in Woolf's novels often appears in the room, house, land, sea configuration that Horner and Zlosnik discuss. In many of her novels these images overlap, yet in three of the novels, those in *Collected Novels of Virginia Woolf* (*Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*), the main recurring image is, as the editor, Stella McNichol, observes, the sea:

I have concentrated my discussion on the sea imagery because it seems to hold the key to the reality that Virginia Woolf is trying to express in all three novels. Always when she is expressing emotional, psychological or metaphysical meaning, or those areas of experience that cannot be pinned down by language, she turns to metaphor to convey or suggest the ideas she is exploring and the predominant metaphor is that of, or connected with, the sea. (McNichol, p.4)

Although the room is an important image in *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, McNichol believes that the sea is Woolf's strongest and most used image because, after spending many summer holidays by the shore in St. Ives, it is the one with which she is most familiar.

In this study of Woolf's novels, one can see the common themes that Dowling discusses in development. The reason that these novels deal with war, death, and the changing position of women is because they reflect the popular issues of Woolf's society; yet there is a common

thread that stems from these issues binding her novels together. This thread, according to Horner and Zlosnik, is "a preoccupation with boundary" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 65). Boundaries, borders, and new frontiers are influential in shaping Woolf's novels. Her ambition to create new forms of novels and to emancipate women from the confinements of nineteenth-century mentality gives her novels the qualities of openness and freedom. From the earlier novels, like *Jacob's Room* to the later, like *Orlando* and *The Waves*, Woolf toys with the ideas of journey, progress, and a passage to freedom. She wanted to present a modern day Ulysses, but in a style far different from the one that James Joyce¹³ (1882 - 1941) presented.

Section ii: *Jacob's Room*

Jacob's Room, published in 1922, is an experiment with narrative; Woolf wanted to present a new type of novel that followed the development of her main character, Jacob Flanders, by telling his story from the distant third-person narrative in an attempt to create a feeling of memory, rather than action. Woolf drops her first narrative clue by telling the entire story in the past. The reader expects to arrive at the present by the end of the novel, and one senses that Jacob will not be a part of that present. Woolf models Jacob after the ancient Greek traveller, Ulysses, to signify that the reader's foremost concern will be Jacob's journey.

Although the reader grows curious about Jacob's destiny, Woolf presents such an overwhelming cast of characters that at times Jacob becomes lost in the story.

From the first chapter of the novel, Woolf sets the tone for loss. Betty Flanders claims to hear "the voice of the dead", namely her husband, Seabrook Flanders, whenever the church bells ring (JR, p.11). Woolf wants to create a recollection and to show the way in which people cling to their memories of the past. This preoccupation with the loss of a loved one is familiar territory for Woolf. There is a relationship between Jacob Flanders and Thoby Stephens, Woolf's brother who died in 1906, for Jacob leaves for Cambridge on the very day that Thoby died. Woolf's preoccupation with death stems from the many losses she experienced in her life: the deaths of her mother, her sister, her brother and her father contribute to this aspect of her novels. She explains that this novel will allow her "to say something in my own voice"... "of the relationship between memory and desire"... "of the dark places of psychology" (Woolf from AWD, p. 47; Bowlby from introduction to *Jacob's Room*, p. xi; Woolf from CE, II, p. 108). Woolf paints a landscape of open fields, rising waves, and rocky beaches that gives the story a rather solitary, isolated quality. Before Woolf reveals any description of character, she prepares the scene with the lonely images in Jacob's seaside home in Cornwall.

Woolf shares her own experience of memory. She maps a territory that begins on the beaches of Cornwall, moves to the academic world of Cambridge, to Jacob's travels to Greece, Italy and Turkey and back with him to England.

In the novel, Woolf uses metaphoric landscape for her purpose; to know Jacob, the reader must follow his footsteps. The reader must depend on descriptions of Jacob's relationship to his surroundings to gain access to his thoughts. As Sue Roe states in her introduction to the novel, "one scene, one incident, one glimpse should lead to another" (JR, xxiii). The story ends in Jacob's room, the room of a dead man, and Woolf explains that the question of Jacob's ultimate demise keeps her audience "turning the pages" (JR, p. 84). Woolf realizes, in the novel, that it is a natural human characteristic to search for some universal truth in the actions of other people.

In the first two chapters of the novel, Woolf describes Jacob's childhood surroundings, his relationship to his mother and two brothers and his nature as Betty Flanders's most difficult and obstinate son. Using images of the sea, which recur throughout the novel, Woolf establishes Jacob as a transitional character. When he discovers an "old sheep's head" on the beach, his mother says,

'Throw it away'...but Jacob squirmed away from her...The wind was rising. The waves showed that uneasiness, like something alive, restive, expecting the whip, of waves before a storm. (JR, p. 6)

The reader senses that, like the waves, Jacob also possesses an "uneasiness" (JR, p. 6). He is searching for place, purpose and meaning; his selection of the works of Byron, the tragic, Romantic poet who died in the Greek battle for independence, as his gift from Mr. Floyd suggests his desire to mould himself into the classic

Byronic figure.

The following chapters describe Jacob's time at Cambridge, his introduction to Timmy Durrant and Richard Bonamy and his string of affairs with several women. The sail from Falmouth to the Durrants's home in Cornwall foretells Jacob's obsession with travel. Woolf's use of metaphoric landscape in this section describes the way in which Jacob romanticizes about distant lands. Although told in the third person, this section reveals Jacob's observations of the passing landscape:

No doubt if this were Italy, Greece, or even the shores of Spain, sadness would be routed by strangeness and excitement and the nudge of a classical education. But the Cornish hills have stark chimneys standing on them; and, somehow or other, loveliness is infernally sad. Yes, the chimneys and the coast-guard stations and the little bays with the waves breaking unseen by any one make one remember the overpowering sorrow. And what can this sorrow be? (JR, p.40)

Woolf uses metaphoric landscape to illustrate the inner thoughts of Jacob's mind that she could not describe in any other manner. Later in the novel, Jacob travels to these lands only to learn that they do not give him the purpose for which he is searching.

The reader never becomes too close to Jacob, for though he is the main character of the novel, the reader senses that he is not quite real, but rather a representation of something else. The reader develops a deeper concern for those closest to Jacob, such as his mother, Richard Bonamy, Florinda, and Clara Durrant, rather than to Jacob himself. These four characters, each with their own personal opinions of Jacob, give the

reader insight into Jacob's thoughts, for like the landscape, they are part of his surroundings also. Mrs. Flanders, Bonamy and Clara remain the three characters that follow Jacob throughout the novel. They are closely linked to to Jacob through his letters, and they each show a deep concern for Jacob. Florinda, however, is vitally important to an understanding of Jacob for another reason. When she goes off with another man, Jacob is left devastated, and he begins to change, to harden even more:

Then he saw her turning up Greek Street upon another man's arm.

The light from the arc lamp drenched him from head to toe. He stood for a minute motionless beneath it. Shadows chequered the street. Other figures, single and together, poured out, wavered across, and obliterated Florinda and the man.

The light drenched Jacob from head to toe. You could see the pattern on his trousers; the old thorns on his stick; his shoe laces; bare hands; and face.

It was as if a stone were ground to dust...
Whether we know what was in his mind is another question. (JR, p. 81)

The significance of this passage in relation to metaphoric landscape is threefold. First, the allusion to "Greek Street", one of Woolf's many allusions to ancient Greece in the novel, suggests that now that Jacob has lost Florinda, a woman whom he claimed to have loved only for her looks and her willingness to have sex with him, his fate will be similar to that of ancient Greece, that is to decline rapidly and diminish. Woolf also compares him to "a stone...ground to dust", surely another allusion to the crumbling statues and landmarks

in Greece. Secondly, Woolf uses this technique to establish Jacob as a character alone and isolated. Surrounded by other people in the street, he is illumined and set off by the light making him seem totally separate and individual. Thirdly, the ending phrase that Woolf writes suggests that she is fully aware of her ability to use landscape to describe Jacob's emotions, and she toys with the idea that her character has a mind of his own, perhaps separate from her own observations.

As well as Florinda, Woolf develops several other interesting female characters in an attempt to introduce new types of women to her readers. The reader witnesses a wide range of women from the educated women in university to the women with whom Jacob sleeps. By showing their interaction with Jacob, Woolf can again illustrate his ability to distance himself from others. He dissects each of their personalities, trying to find their flaws. As suggested earlier, Woolf realizes that some people often look for themselves in others. The reader knows that Jacob is searching for himself, and thus he embarks on the search for the perfect woman. Jacob's dilemma is to separate a woman's mind from her body; he believes that the mind and the body are so separate, in fact, that a woman could not possess both a superior mind and a pleasing body. He believes that "Beauty goes hand in hand with stupidity" (JR, p. 68). Therefore, he sleeps with beautiful women like Florinda, who he claims is "horribly brainless" (she merely lacks education), and he glorifies women like Clara Durrant, who he feels is suitable wife material. He shares an intellectual bond with Sandra Wentworth Williams, yet he

knows he can never have her as a wife. Woolf disapproves of this sort of classification of women, and as an established intellectual herself, she wishes to show that women can possess qualities of intellect, grace, and beauty.

In relation to this concern for women, Woolf expresses her views on the status of women in the academic arena by using metaphoric landscape. This theme is something that she develops further in the essay, *A Room of One's Own*, yet it rears its head in *Jacob's Room* some seven years earlier. As in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf follows the academic path of one female character whom she uses as a representation of women in the academic world. The academic society that Jacob encounters at Cambridge is based on a patriarchal principle that preserves the male canon. Woolf uses Julia Hedge's description of the interior of the British Museum to explain this theme in the following excerpt:

Not so very long ago the workmen had gilt the final 'y' in Lord Macaulay's name, and the names stretched in unbroken file round the dome of the British Museum. At a considerable depth beneath, many hundreds of the living sat at the spokes of a cart-wheel copying from printed books into manuscript books; now and then rising to consult the catalogue; regaining their places stealthily, while from time to time a silent man replenished their compartments.

Miss Julia Hedge, the feminist, waited for her books. They did not come. She wetted her pen. She looked about her. Her eye was caught by the final letters in Lord Macaulay's name. And she read them all round the dome - the names of great men which remind us - 'Oh damn,' said Julia Hedge, 'why didn't they leave room for Eliot or Bronte?' (JR, pp. 90-91)

The introduction of Julia Hedge and of her opinion of academic society seems to be a warning signal from Woolf of the possible progress coming. Woolf expands this theme in *A Room of One's Own* with the fictitious character, Mary Carmichael, and she instructs Mary to continue moving forward and to disregard the attitudes of her fellow male students. The much smaller scene with Julia Hedge seems to have little connection with Jacob's journey, but it relates to the ideas of personal identity and the characterization of women. This scene is a small example of the subtle way that Woolf uses landscape and scenery metaphorically. The Museum houses the greatest literary texts in the world, and it is decorated in a manner that suggests that the access to this knowledge is solely for males. By mapping out this scene, Woolf is able to express her concern that this accepted male canon is restraining women's progress.

In this same scene, Julia thinks that Jacob is distracted by the presence of women in the Museum. When he receives a note from a fellow male student, Julia Hedge notices his laughter, and she concludes that he regards the idea of women studying alongside men absurd and ridiculous. Later, when Jacob is in Greece reading and writing at the Acropolis, he remarks upon the distraction of the surrounding women:

'Damn these women - damn these women!' he thought. And he went to fetch his book which he had left lying on the ground in the Parthenon. 'How they spoil things,' he murmured, leaning against one of the pillars, pressing his book tight between his arm and his side. (As for the weather, no doubt the storm would break soon; Athens was

under cloud.)

'It is those damned women,' said Jacob, without any trace of bitterness, but rather with sadness and disappointment that what might have been should never be. (JR, p. 132)

Woolf comments on his attitude towards women, and in her following remark, she realizes that these young men, men like Jacob, will rise to positions of power (politicians, bankers, doctors, lawyers). Woolf writes:

(This violent disillusionment is generally to be expected in young men in the prime of life, sound of mind and limb, who will soon become fathers of families and directors of banks.) (JR, p. 132-133)

Her readers following this line of thought can progress to the next level. That is, if men like Jacob are going to rule society, then where will this leave women? How are women to move forward and be treated as equals, if men like Jacob, men who undervalue, mistreat and insult women, are in power. Perhaps this is merely the view of a late twentieth-century reader; yet, Jacob's actions towards women seem as though they would be offensive to many women of the twentieth-century.

Julia Hedge's impression of Jacob and the impression that she believes he has of her illustrate the struggle between the sexes and the way in which it reflects how people, in general, often misread one another. Julia is defensive about her status, and Jacob refuses to see women in other other categories than the ones he creates. He allows women like Sandra Wentworth Williams, who he regards as older and wiser, to have intellectual status as long as it does not threaten his own. When women like Sandra and Florinda betray him, Jacob takes his anger out

on the entire female population in much the same way as Orlando will when Sasha betrays him. The insecurity of Jacob and Julia influences their beliefs regarding the opposite sex. By using stream of consciousness, Woolf not only creates a memory (Jacob), but she displays the way in which people often judge each other without really knowing the other person's inner thoughts.

Though Julia Hedge never appears in the text again, her scene is important because it relates to another aspect of the novel that focuses on the past. As suggested earlier, Woolf often mentions ancient Greece in the novel (Florinda on "Greek Street", Clara's dog "Troy", "the brothers Zeno", etc.), not only because Jacob is linked to Ulysses and has an interest in the Classics, but also because Woolf is interested in the long pattern of male-dominated society. Julia's encounter with this attitude at the British Museum reflects the struggle that women face in a male-dominated society.

Jacob and Timmy Durrant feel as if they know all there is to know about life, "as though they had read every book in the world; known every sin, passion, and joy" (JR, p. 64). Perhaps it is just as well that young Jacob dies, for he foolishly believes that he has inherited all the experience and knowledge of his past brothers. He, as a Cambridge-educated man, would know all the secrets of the universe and would die defending them. He refuses to accept that a university education cannot prepare him for all of life's experiences. Jacob often speaks of his admiration for war heroes like the Duke of Wellington, Lords Nelson and Byron. Obsessed by this hero-worship, Jacob shapes himself in the image of

his heroes. His death in Flanders is caused from his desire to be a hero. Heroism is the only means for Jacob to find purpose in life.

The final chapter of the novel, in which Bonamy browses through Jacob's room, the room of a dead man, represents the whole purpose of the novel. Jacob, like his room, is just a memory, something to miss when it is gone and to grow sentimental about. Everything is left in the room as though Jacob were still there, and his mother's main concern is what to do with her dead son's shoes. In this moving scene, Woolf demonstrates the way in which people preserve memory. Betty Flanders speaks of the "far away...dull sound, as if nocturnal women were beating great carpets" (JR, p.154). It is this sound from the "distance...the sea" that awakens her at night because it sounds like "The guns" (JR, p.154). She thinks of her "sons fighting for their country" and of her dead husband, even as she occupies her mind with mundane worries about her garden, the chickens, and "a pair of Jacob's old shoes" (JR, pp. 154-155).

Distance, mental and physical, is at the heart of *Jacob's Room*, for once Jacob leaves his seaside home for Cambridge, he never really returns. He learns to distance himself from the women in his life in his ridiculous quest to establish himself as a hero, in the shape of Lord Byron and the Duke of Wellington. Woolf's descriptions of landscape in the novel mirror Jacob's isolation. The descriptions of rocky beaches and the open sea serve as metaphors that relate to Jacob's own journey to solitude.

The novel works with the notions of the past, distance, and memory. Woolf uses words throughout the novel like effigy, elegy, and eulogy that reinforce her interest in memory. For example, after Clara and Jacob meet, Woolf writes, "and Clara said farewell to Jacob Flanders, and tasted the sweetness of death in effigy" (JR, p.57). The novel traces the history of Jacob Flanders, Woolf's modern-day Ulysses. Her ability to map his journey, whilst painting vivid images of the landscapes he travels through, allows her to demonstrate her skill to use landscape as metaphor. In this novel, Woolf is beginning to find a voice to speak about change in regard to the past. She illustrates the temptation to cling to the past and to memory. Yet she ends the novel with these two sharp scenes ("the guns" that Betty Flanders hears and the packing of Jacob's room), which suggests that Woolf is concerned with the process of moving on after loss. Perhaps the blare of the guns that Betty Flanders hears is Woolf's signal to move forward.

Section ii: Mrs. Dalloway

In her next novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925, Woolf again describes the life of one main character, Clarissa Dalloway, and the way in which she interacts with her surroundings. Woolf presents a whole cast of characters that work in conjunction with each other and with Clarissa in, as E.W.Hawkins states, "'a woven fabric of life, gay and tragic and dipped in mystery'" (Dowling, p. 17). On the first layer, *Mrs. Dalloway* appears to be a detailed account of a day in

the life of Clarissa Dalloway. This day, 13 June 1923, is very important, for Clarissa must prepare for her party and face her past, in the forms of Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. Clarissa Dalloway is an unusual female character, for though she is past middle-age and married, she is still interesting and full of life. The reader is allowed a closer relationship with Clarissa than with Jacob Flanders. Woolf allows the reader access to Clarissa's thoughts, though she continues to use metaphoric landscape, in places, to illustrate emotions that she could not explain otherwise. Like Jacob, Clarissa resembles Ulysses, for she is embarking on a journey of self-awareness. She, too, is searching for place, purpose and meaning.

Although the sea does not appear literally in this novel, Woolf uses sea imagery to create a wave-like flow in the novel. This use of metaphoric landscape in language first appears in *Mrs. Dalloway*, yet "the poetic resonances of her references to the sea become structurally important in...*To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*" (McNichol, p. 1). In the interior monologue that appears in the first few pages of the novel, Woolf shows the way in which Clarissa is affected by her surroundings:

(June had drawn out every leaf on the trees...Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved...) (MD, p. 7)

Clarissa compares the urban atmosphere of London to the rural calmness of Bourton:

How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course,
the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a
wave; the kiss of a wave; (MD, p. 3)

This sea imagery appears throughout the novel, and it serves as a reminder that, "The ever-changing ebb and flow of existence, like the movement of the waves, is the real concern of all her novels" (McNichol, p. 7).

The reader experiences Clarissa's past and her present, and it all remains very alive and active, though the passing of time plays a background part. The action on the day of the party makes up one part of the narrative, and flashbacks to Clarissa's past at Bourton constitute another. Woolf presents another Ulysses-like character, shell-shocked war victim Septimus Warren Smith, whose story parallels Clarissa's journey. The reader follows these two separate characters as they each embark on a journey. Clarissa's desire to find her identity contributes one half of this journey, and Septimus Smith's struggle to overcome the effects of the war makes up the other part. Woolf weaves all these bits of story together, and she succeeds in maintaining a fluidity throughout the novel. To undertake this task, she focuses on the thread that ties all the events and characters together, which is the way in which Septimus and Clarissa relate to their surroundings.

Septimus is trapped inside the battle that continues in his mind. Dr. Bradshaw, the link between Clarissa and Septimus, advises him, "think as little about yourself as possible" (MD, p. 108). Earlier in the novel, Dr. Holmes tells him to "take an interest in things outside himself" (MD, p. 23). One common image that ties Clarissa to

Septimus is their observations of "the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead" (MD, p. 4). The same aeroplane that pleases Clarissa has quite a different effect on Septimus. When he sees the plane overhead, he is convinced that it is "signalling" to him and instructing the trees to beckon to him (MD, p.23):

...Rezia put her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weighted down, transfixed, or the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave...so proudly they rose and fell, so superbly, would have sent him mad. But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more.

But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body...when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. (MD, p.24)

Again, Woolf uses wave-like imagery to capture the mindset of Septimus. Septimus believes that he is a part of the trees and that their movement dictates him. In some ways, Septimus is like the waves and the trees, rising and falling, on his journey towards death. He cannot separate himself from the surrounding landscape, yet he seems unaware of the people surrounding him. Septimus loses a part of himself in the war, but rather than trying to find this lost part, he wants to lose the rest of himself. He has reached the point of no return, that is the point when it is easier to continue the journey to the end rather than to turn around and make one's way back to the beginning. His wife, Lucrezia, tries to help him back to reality, but she realizes that she must let him reach the end of his journey, which is

death; there is nothing she can do to ease his pain.

The connection between Septimus's doctors, Holmes and Bradshaw, and Clarissa ties the novel together. The reader witnesses Clarissa's reaction to the news of Septimus's death at her party:

Lady Bradshaw...murmured how, 'just as we were starting, my husband was called on the telephone, a very sad case. A young man...had killed himself. He had been in the army.' Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought. (MD, p. 201)

After hearing this news, Clarissa suddenly is overcome with guilt; she feels that this man's death is "her disaster - her disgrace" because "She had schemed...She had wanted success, - Lady Bexborough and the rest of it...once she had walked on the terrace at Bourton" (MD, p. 203). From this passage, the reader knows that Clarissa has recognized what she used to be and what she has become. Once she confronts her identity, she is overcome with happiness. Septimus's death is the catalyst for Clarissa's rebirth. She takes a sort of odd pleasure in her transformation from the young woman, Clarissa Parry at Bourton, into Clarissa Dalloway, society hostess and wife of an MP, because she can cling to this identity; it gives her purpose.

Hermione Lee observes that the structure of the novel "does not lie in the sequence of events; they are its bare bones"; she argues that the "descriptive passages, leitmotifs and internal thought processes create the 'substance' of the book" (Lee, p. 98). The reader understands that the main focus of the novel is

not the awaiting party, nor the downfall of Septimus Smith, but, rather, the story of a man and a woman, Septimus and Clarissa, who are on a quest to find meaning in their lives. They seek purpose in the enclosure to which society allocates them. Septimus's tragic end seems to trivialize the dilemma that Clarissa faces in organizing and carrying off her party. Yet, Woolf does not mock Clarissa, nor does she undervalue her struggle. Clarissa and Septimus are from very different backgrounds and have different burdens to carry, but each has a valid problem in coming to terms with their past and defining their present. "Woolf was shocked by the way the war did not seem to change people", and she expected people to "have the imaginative capacity to conceive of a life separate from their own" (Dowling, pp. 7-8). The war changes Septimus by taking away his awareness of other people. He internalizes his struggle to such a point that he lapses into extreme solitude, and this solitude eventually brings about his death.

In the novel, Clarissa's attention is focused on her personal relationships with those around her: her husband, Richard, whom she loves and respects, but who rarely spends any time at home; her former lover, Peter, who has returned from the East; her daughter, Elizabeth, who is under the control of her tutor Miss Kilman; and her long lost friend, Sally Seton, who seems to have drastically changed from a free spirit into a domestic nightmare. Clarissa confesses at the beginning of the novel that she feels "invisible; unseen; unknown" because she sees no purpose to her life (MD, p. 11). There are no more children to raise, no jobs to complete. Clarissa

seeks purpose, and the events leading up to the party shape her journey to discover this purpose. Some critics, like Dowling, argue that Clarissa never resolves her dilemma. However, the fact that she is on the path to discovery is the focus of the novel; whether she discovers her purpose on 13 June or on 22 August is irrelevant.

Clarissa's ability to imagine other people's lives makes her an especially sensitive character, and it reinforces her social qualities. She thrives on the lives of other people, and she feels threatened by anyone who tries to take those people away from her. Characters such as Lady Bruton and Miss Kilman make Clarissa extremely uncomfortable. These two women contribute to the "debate over the relative happiness of the married woman and the single one...These women study each other's state of mind, envy each other's position, and live contrasting life-styles" (Pratt, p. 121). Lady Bruton is "more interested in politics than people", and her ability to discuss political topics with Richard Dalloway makes Clarissa uneasy (MD, p. 116). With the one simple description of Lady Bruton's alcove in her drawing room, Woolf establishes her as an intellectual and as an opposite to Clarissa:

Certainly there was an alcove in her drawing-room, and a table in that alcove, and a photograph upon that table of General Sir Talbot Moore, now deceased, who had written there (one evening in the eighties) in Lady Bruton's presence, with her cognisance, perhaps advice, a telegram ordering the British troops to advance upon an historical occasion. (MD, p. 116)

This use of landscape as metaphor allows Woolf to describe characters without stating a concrete definition, giving her characters a greater depth to their personalities.

Richard Dalloway is constantly going from one meeting to another and is rarely in the house. Woolf never allows the reader to see Richard at work in Parliament, though he is mentioned as being there several times in the novel. She associates Richard with this building to show the separation between himself and Clarissa. He is a loving husband, but Clarissa accepts the fact that she cannot participate in this part of Richard's life. There is "a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect" (MD, p. 131). Clarissa recognizes the boundaries in her marriage; she does not expect to join Richard in his discussions with Lady Bruton any more than he would expect to be included in the planning of the party. She is aware that she is living in a different territory from that of Lady Bruton. Clarissa enjoys the same intellectual freedom that Lady Bruton has in her alcove, yet Clarissa must do this hidden away in the attic.

Miss Kilman, Elizabeth Dalloway's tutor, also exists in territory far different from that of Clarissa Dalloway. Life in her bedsit is not as comfortable as Clarissa's life of luxury. Miss Kilman is both envious of and repulsed by Clarissa's lifestyle:

...she did not envy women like Clarissa Dalloway; she pitied them. She pitied and despised them from the bottom of her heart, as she stood on the soft carpet...With all

this luxury going on, what hope was there for a better state of things...Instead of lying on a sofa...she should have been in a factory; behind a counter; Mrs. Dalloway and all the other fine ladies!

Miss Kilman...had always earned her living...She did out of her meagre income set aside so much for causes she believed in; whereas this woman did nothing, believed nothing; (MD, pp. 135-7)

These two women seem to be at war over Elizabeth because they both desperately want to control her. For Doris Kilman, Elizabeth represents the "hope...for a better state of things", and she wants her influence and knowledge to shape this "hope" (MD, p 136). Woolf introduces Lady Bruton and Doris Kilman into the novel because they force Clarissa to define her boundaries. She becomes aware of and protective towards her territory.

Clarissa remembers the love she had for Peter Walsh and for Sally Seton, and she identifies both characters with "the fresh, calm, stiller" environment of Bourton (MD, p. 3). Woolf hints at a lesbian relationship, though very brief and innocent, between Sally and Clarissa:

She and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it- (MD, p.38)

Placed in the natural setting of Bourton, this scene takes on a natural quality as well. As Clarissa

remembers the scene, she realizes that this feeling for Sally was "not like one's feelings for a man...it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up....It was protective on her side; sprang from a sense of being in league together" (MD, p. 37). Metaphoric landscape allows Woolf to challenge society's views towards love between women.

When examining the underlying meanings in this passage, the reader gains insight into the way in which Woolf achieves this purpose. The "most exquisite moment" in Clarissa's life appears in this scene. The "stone urn with flowers in it", suggesting a link between the defunct society of ancient Greece with the productive, living nature of flowers, represents society's view that homosexual love is non-procreative and therefore unnatural. Before Sally kisses Clarissa, she "picked a flower" - an obvious reference to the term to deflower, which signifies the taking of a woman's virginity. Yet because there is no penetration nor any actual taking of Clarissa's virginity, this action seems irrelevant. However, Woolf suggests that Sally's kiss is as important to Clarissa's development as heterosexual intercourse. Woolf shows society the powerful emotional bond that lesbian love can have; it is no lesser a bond than heterosexual love. Clarissa feels that with this kiss she has "been given a present, and told just to keep it, not to look at it". The phrase, "not to look at it", represents the way that society refuses to acknowledge the possibilities of lesbian love. Society could not imagine such a relationship could exist between women, and thus lesbianism appeared to be mystical and

unnatural. With this scene, Woolf attempts to change these views.

Clarissa is disappointed when she sees Sally Seton, now Lady Rosseter, at the party. She describes the girl whom she had once loved as "less lovely" as though "The lustre had left her" (MD, p. 188). Sally, now Lady Rosseter, is identified with the mining community of Manchester. Woolf uses this descriptive landscape to establish Sally's transformation; before she had been associated with the woods and nature. Sally, who was always described as a free-spirit, is now married with five children. Clarissa associates her with the factories of northern England. Sally symbolizes the dingy, dirty qualities of industrialization, as though the coal mines have somehow taken away her "lustre". Sally has conformed to society's image of women as productive machines. Now in a heterosexual relationship with a wealthy businessman and also as the mother of five sons, Sally seems to have transformed herself into society's role of the perfect woman.

Sally is not the only love that Clarissa remembers at Bourton. Clarissa is awaiting the return of Peter Walsh, and the reader learns of their love mainly from his memories rather than from Clarissa. In fact, Peter is mentioned "172 times" in the novel, a close second to Clarissa, who is mentioned "293 times" (Dowling, p. 129). The reader depends on his perspective to gain insight into Clarissa's journey:

'Lord, Lord!' he said to himself out loud, stretching and opening his eyes. 'The death of the soul.' The words attach themselves to some scene, to

some room, to some past he had been dreaming of...It was at Bourton that summer, early in the 'nineties, when he was so passionately in love with Clarissa. (MD, p. 64)

Peter associates the phrase, "The death of the soul" with Bourton because it is here that Peter realizes that Clarissa can be "timid; hard; arrogant; prudish" (MD, p. 65).

Throughout the novel, characters often associate feelings and people with landscape. Peter has returned from India, a place that Clarissa associates with enchantment and adventure. The reader senses that Peter has distanced himself from Clarissa so he can forget her. Clarissa connects the gaiety and excitement of India with Peter, and she even imagines, "If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day" (MD, p. 51). By the end of her party, Clarissa realizes that excitement and adventure will not fulfill her. She achieves pleasure from the people surrounding her, embracing the life that each one possesses. Even Peter, who has the last word in the novel, recognizes the effect that this party has on Clarissa:

What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?
It is Clarissa, he said.
For there she was. (MD, p. 213)

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf begins to perfect her use of metaphoric landscape. Although she rarely presents a Ulysses - like central character in her following novels, she continues to use metaphoric landscape to explain the psychological aspects of her characters.

Section iii: To the Lighthouse

Regarded by many critics as "the most appealing of all her novels", *To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927, tells the story of the Ramsay family over a ten year period (McNichol, p. 22). Separated into three sections, the novel revolves around two days in the lives of the Ramsays and the other guests of the beach house. The middle section, "Time Passes", is a distant account of the ten years that pass between these two days. In this section, Woolf's central character, Mrs. Ramsay, her daughter, Prue and her son, Andrew, all die. Mrs. Ramsay remains "the central cohesive force" of the novel, and Woolf presents her surroundings, including the other characters, "to make everything contribute to the revealing of her character" (McNichol, p. 25).

It is clear from her diary that Woolf shaped Mr. and Mrs Ramsay on memories of her parents. Woolf's mother, Julia Stephen, was the inspiration for Mrs. Ramsay. Woolf's obsession with her mother, who died when Woolf was thirteen, is represented in the character Lily Briscoe. Like Woolf, Lily wants to capture the essence of what was Mrs. Ramsay. At the end of the novel, when Lily finishes her painting of Mrs. Ramsay amidst the landscape, it is symbolic of Woolf's own relief when she finishes the novel, which had become a tribute to her mother. Capturing the essence of her mother in the character of Mrs. Ramsay allowed Woolf to come to terms with her loss; the novel was a sort of self-therapy for Woolf. As McNichol states, Mrs. Ramsay remains the "central cohesive force" in the novel, but as she did in

Jacob's Room and *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf offers a range of characters to show "how one consciousness impinges on another" (McNichol, p. 22).

By showing the way that Mrs. Ramsay interacts with the other characters, her eight children, her husband, Mr. Tansley, Mr. Bankes, Lily Briscoe, Paul Rayley, Minta Doyle, and Augustus Carmichael, Woolf is able to present a clearer picture of Mrs. Ramsay. Although no one else really likes Mr. Tansley, Mrs. Ramsay shows him compassion because he is so fond of her husband. Mr. Ramsay shapes himself as the suffering artist, making scenes and throwing tantrums. He resents his wife, though he knows she is his guiding force, because he believes that if he were not married, he would "have written better books" (TTL, p. 95). Mrs. Ramsay shares a bond with Mr. Bankes; they are able to talk and share their interests. She also feels connected to Lily Briscoe, and thus she tries to match these two characters, though in the end she is unsuccessful. She cannot understand why Lily or Mr. Bankes would want to remain individual.

To the Lighthouse is, as Leonard Woolf¹⁴ stated, "a psychological poem" that depends on landscape to illustrate the psychological aspects of its characters (McNichol, p. 26). From *Mrs. Dalloway* to *The Waves*, Woolf is trying to give prose a poem-like quality. By the time she wrote *The Waves*, she had perfected this technique so fully that the format of the novel was something never seen before. In the first section of *To the Lighthouse*, "The Window", Mrs. Ramsay expresses her connection with the elements surrounding her. She explains that the sound of the waves resembled "some old

cradle song, [which] murmured by nature, 'I am guarding you - I am your support', but at other times...like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think..." (TTL, pp. 23-24). Another example of Mrs. Ramsay's connection with the landscape occurs later in the first section:

It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to things, inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself. (TTL, p. 87)

From the passage, the reader knows that an awareness of the way in which landscape relates to character is vital in understanding the novel.

Woolf wanted her readers to hear "the sea...all through it" (McNichol, p. 23) She uses sea imagery in *To the Lighthouse* as she did in *Mrs. Dalloway*, yet in *To the Lighthouse* the sea imagery stems from the natural setting rather than appearing solely in Woolf's language. As well as the sea, Woolf uses the house to symbolize aspects of Mrs. Ramsay, as she explains in the second section of the novel, "Time Passes". After Mrs. Ramsay dies, "The house was left...deserted...like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grains now that life had left it" (TTL, p. 186). These images, house and sea, as well as the lighthouse enable Woolf to capture the inner substance of Mrs. Ramsay.

The image of the lighthouse and the symbolic sail to it reflect aspects of Mrs. Ramsay, such as stability and immortality, that Woolf could not describe by any other

means. Mrs. Ramsay identifies with the lighthouse and thinks that she, like it, is a guiding force for her family and friends:

...and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke...which was her stroke, for...one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw...Often she found herself sitting and looking...that light for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase...like..."Children don't forget, children don't forget"...It will end...It will come...We are in the hands of the Lord. (TTL, p. 86)

The phrase, "Children don't forget", is vitally important in this passage, for it foreshadows Mrs. Ramsay's death and connects her to the immortal landmark, the lighthouse. From the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay's son, James, wants to sail to the lighthouse, but it becomes increasingly more important to him after his mother dies. Seen from the house, the lighthouse serves as a stable, guiding force to all those around it, much like Mrs. Ramsay. It has great importance for the Ramsays and their guests, and, in ways, it serves as a reminder of Mrs. Ramsay in the final section of the novel, "The Lighthouse".

Yet just after she thinks these thoughts, she realises that she is not "in the hands of the Lord":

What brought her to say that: 'We are in the hands of the Lord?' she wondered. The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her....How could any Lord have made this world? she asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact

that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that. (TTL, p. 87).

Here Mrs. Ramsay expresses her true feelings about fate. She connects herself to her surroundings rather than finding comfort in the Lord. Later in this passage, she remarks that, "one helped oneself out of solitude by laying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some sight", not from placing one's fate "in the hands of the Lord" (TTL, p.87).

Unlike Jacob Flanders and Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay has place, purpose and meaning. She is not searching for herself, rather, the other characters are searching for the contentment that she has. After realising that she does not need the security of religious faith, she explains that her surroundings, the beach house, and her family and friends are "enough" for her to be content:

She saw the light again...which had her at its beck and call...watching it with fascination, hypnotised...and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly...and the blue went out to the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon...and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (TTL, pp. 88-89)

She realizes that no matter what her fate is, "This would remain" (TTL, p. 142).

Before the passing of the ten years or the symbolic sail to the lighthouse, Woolf writes of the dinner party, "which she later thought to be the best thing she ever

wrote" (McNichol, p. 25). Mrs. Ramsay shows an immense pleasure in the interaction with her guests at the party. She enjoys being the stable, guiding force that joins these people together; she displays a sincere concern for each of her guests, reflecting Woolf's earlier notion that an awareness of other people is an admirable quality. Hermione Lee remarks that "Mrs. Ramsay is herself a creator" (Lee, p. 130). Mrs. Ramsay is able to join the other characters together in the dinner party scene. Endlessly trying to match Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe, Mrs. Ramsay exhibits her desire for these two solitary characters to find the contentment that she has, yet she also grows weary of her role as creator and matchmaker. In this scene, Mrs. Ramsay recognizes the nature of this event; it is, as Woolf explains, a "moment of being", and Mrs. Ramsay understands its fleeting nature:

It could not last she knew, but at the moment her eyes were so clear that they seemed to go round the table unveiling each of these people, and their thoughts and feelings, without effort like a light stealing under the water so that it ripples and the reeds in it and the minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are all lit up hanging, trembling. (TTL, p.144)

At the party, Mrs. Ramsay realizes that it has a special fleeting quality about it, and she remarks, "inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished waterily" (TTL, p. 132). For Mrs. Ramsay, this party is the source of her happiness. At such an event, she can enjoy those around her and shine like the lighthouse, providing light

for those around it.

After the near-perfect first section, Woolf presents the short, distant, impersonal middle section, "Time Passes". The observation made by Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast, the caretakers of the house during these years, that the house looks "deserted...like a shell" is one example of metaphoric landscape in this short section (TTL, p.187). The reader is aware of the connection between the house and Mrs. Ramsay; she had provided the light and life that made the house seem alive. Another example of metaphoric landscape, in this section, is Mrs. McNab's sighting of the "ship and the stain" in the distance, which she believes are portents of something to come:

There was the silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship...a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea...This intrusion into a scene calculated to stir the most sublime reflections and lead to the most comfortable conclusions stayed their pacing. It was difficult blandly to overlook them to abolish their significance in the landscape; to continue, as one walked by the sea, to marvel how beauty outside mirrored beauty within. (TTL, p.182)

From this passage, the reader assumes that life will be returning to the house soon, that something is coming. In the next section the sea no longer has this "stain on it", as Lily Briscoe observes, but, rather, it has an overwhelming feeling of "Distance" (TTL, p. 253). "Time Passes" is similar to the ten interludes that will appear in *The Waves*; the impersonal descriptions of the landscape serve as a link between the more active parts of the novels.

In the third section of the novel, "The Lighthouse",

life again enters the house as the Ramsays and their guests, Lily Briscoe, Augustus Carmichael, and others return. However, there is the dilemma of the missing guiding force, Mrs. Ramsay, who has died in the previous section. Lily vows to find Mrs. Ramsay, or the essence that was her, using as her medium a painting of Mrs. Ramsay amidst a scenic landscape. This scene is so vitally important to the theme of this thesis because it clearly shows Woolf's awareness of the power that metaphoric landscape has in her novels. As Lily explains the nature of such a task, the reader senses that Woolf is also defending her own reasons for using metaphoric landscape to describe her characters:

And this, Lily thought, taking the green paint on her brush, this making up scenes about them, is what we call "knowing" people, "thinking" of them, "being fond" of them...She went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past. (TTL, pp.233-234)

Lily is very similar to Woolf; she uses landscape to describe the nature of Mrs. Ramsay. There are other similarities to suggest a connection between Woolf and Lily; they are both childless artists who are committed to perfecting their crafts, and they both use landscape to do this.

Underlying this theme of landscape capturing the essence of a person, is again the image of the lighthouse. It is to this image that Lily looks, searching for Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James as they sail to it. Woolf uses this image to connect Lily to Mr. Ramsay. As Lily seeks to find Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James sail to the lighthouse in hopes of discovering some

truth, to find the contentment they had when Mrs. Ramsay was alive. For James, this desire is fulfilled when his father finally gives him the praise and reassurance that he has craved for so long:

"Well done!" James had steered them like a born sailor. There! Cam thought, addressing herself silently to James. You've got it at last. For she knew that this was what James had been wanting, and she knew that now he had got it he was so pleased that he would not look at her or at his father or at any one...His father had praised him...you've got it now, Cam thought. (TTL, p.278)

For Cam, the sail gives distance; "things simplify themselves" (TTL, p.275). Reaching the lighthouse gives her a new perspective. Here, she can have her own "vision" of a "hanging garden...a valley, full of birds, and flowers" (TTL, p. 275). On the sail, Cam finds such peace within herself that she is no longer "Cam the Wicked" (TTL, p. 32). Lily Briscoe realizes, as she paints her scenic picture, that "Distance had an extraordinary power" (TTL, p. 253). She continues this observation in the following passage:

So much depends then, thought Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it...so much depends...upon distance: whether people are near or far from us; for her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay. (TTL, p. 258)

This theme of distance, which has appeared in *Jacob's Room* as well, is central to the novel. It enables Lily to capture the true essence of Mrs. Ramsay. In the final scene when Lily finishes her painting, she is able to lay

to rest her obsession with Mrs. Ramsay:

There it was - her picture. Yes with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something...Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (TTL, p. 281)

This passage is such a powerful ending to the novel because the reader knows that just as Lily has had her "vision", so, too, has Woolf.

Section iv: *Orlando*

In *Orlando*, Woolf presents "'the longest and most charming love-letter in literature'" in honour of Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's friend and lover (Nicholson, p. 201). She creates a bizarre tale of a four hundred year old hero/heroine, who changes sex midway through the novel. In the introduction to the novel, Rachel Bowlby remarks that as in *Jacob's Room*, Woolf is "concerned with exploring the relations between biography and narrative", and as *Orlando* is subtitled *a biography*, the reader knows that the details of the protagonist's quest will be presented in a historical manner (Orl., p. xxii). Woolf writes this "historical extravaganza" for several reasons:

to...push through the frontiers of modernism as precursors to the even more pyrotechnic, if fragmentary techniques of postmodernism ...treat historical speculation in radical new ways ... identify sexual transgression and fluidity as norms ... claim the fantastic as prime territory for modern fiction ... and ... [present] portraits of enormously empowered women (Fullbrook, p. 110)

Woolf shapes *Orlando* as a genuine historical account, carrying the reader to far away places and to past times. Her ability to change the scenery throughout the novel allows her to challenge the boundaries of the modern novel. Metaphoric landscape plays a key role in this process. Orlando's mobility is shaped by the changing landscape. In the novel's introduction, Bowlby explains the way in which metaphoric landscape functions in the novel:

The usual priorities have been reversed, so that now clock and climate, at once the most man-made and the most natural of phenomena, seem to conspire in an odd partnership to determine every other kind of change. This then draws attention to the way in which historical narratives do often covertly rely on quite arbitrary temporal and atmospheric markers, with the weather transmuted to a general metaphor. (Orl., p. xxx)

Woolf experiments with identities in the novel, and though Orlando changes from a man to a woman, via some strange, mystical Turkish ceremony, not many characters in the novel find her transformation odd. Woolf is in control of the narrative and of the landscape, and while the novel remains true to certain historical facts (it is, after all, a biography) Woolf allows room for the inexplicable. For example the account of the Great Frost of 1608 is based upon historical fact. Woolf uses this enchanting description of the Frost to signify Orlando's mystical relationship with the Russian princess, Sasha, based on Vita's lover, Violet Trefusis. This Frost freezes time, in a sense, and as it traps the porpoises and fish in its hard shell, it also forces Sasha to

remain in England until it melts. Orlando is glad of this because he knows that he could not follow her to Russia:

He wanted another landscape, and another tongue. English was too frank, too candid, too honeyed a speech for Sasha. For in all she said, however open she seemed and voluptuous, there was something hidden; in all she did, however daring, there was something concealed (Orl., p. 45)

Like Sasha, the Frost is concealing and enchanting; its "frozen waters" remind Orlando of "death" (Orl., p. 44). The melting of the Frost brings about a sort of death for Orlando, for he is abandoned by Sasha. As "the river had gained its freedom in the night", so Sasha also escapes to the sea (Orl., p. 59). Upon seeing Sasha's ship in the distance, Orlando realizes that he has been betrayed by his love. He shouts, "Faithless, mutable, fickle...devil, adulteress, deceiver", "the insults that have ever been the lot of her sex" (Orl., p. 62). This scene relates back to Jacob's reaction towards women after Florinda and Sandra betray him. It also relates to the image of the men who are "locked in" and feel threatened by women in *A Room of One's Own*. Orlando has already proven that he himself is "fickle", deceitful, and adulterous, by suddenly breaking off his engagement to Euphrosyne when Sasha arrives. As a result of this action, he is exiled from court to live a life of solitude on his estate, where he develops a love of writing.

At this point in the novel, Orlando strikes up a relationship with Nick Greene, "a very famous writer at

that time", who gains Orlando's trust and then betrays him. Writing becomes Orlando's greatest love, and like Woolf, it serves as a sort of therapy. Greene entertains him with his stories of Shakespeare, Donne, Marlowe, and Jonson. Orlando agrees to fund Green's work, a mistake which he later regrets. Greene ridicules Orlando's writing efforts, and this forces him to burn all of his work except for his poem, "The Oak Tree", which becomes a symbol of his "boyish dream" (Orl., p. 93). After this experience, Orlando declares that he has "done with men...Love and ambition, women and poets were all equally vain...Literature was a farce...Two things alone remained to him in which he put any trust: dogs and nature" (Orl., p. 92). Once again, he separates himself from the rest of the world into the solitary existence of life on the estate. Woolf describes the weeks, months and years that he spends thinking of his life in terms of passing scenery, the "deserts of vast eternity...the tapestry from Queen Elizabeth...Elizabethan sailing ships" (Orl., pp.96-97). After a century of thought about Greene's betrayal, "Orlando swore one of the most remarkable oaths of his time, for it bound him to a servitude than which none was stricter...to write, from this day forward, to please himself" rather than "to please Nick Greene or the Muse" (Orl., p. 99). This oath frees him from his solitude and allows him to venture to Turkey as a representative of King Charles.

After recognizing his overwhelming lust for the Archduchess Harriet Griselda, Orlando finds that his home has become "uninhabitable":

Vainly, it seemed, he had furnished his house with silver and hung the walls with arras, when at any moment a dungbedraggled fowl could settle upon his writing table. There she was, flopping about among the chairs; he saw her waddling ungracefully across the galleries. Now, she perched, top heavy upon a fire screen. When he chased her out, back she came and pecked at the glass until she broke it. (Orl., p. 113)

Orlando refurbishes his house throughout the novel, and this signifies his desire to change. The metaphorical landscape in this passage symbolizes the nature of lust. The description of "Lust the vulture" right before this passage personifies his feelings for the Archduchess, and the bird, that enters Orlando's house, symbolizes this "vulture". His sexual feelings towards this woman, who later turns out to be a man in disguise, interfere with his vow to remain solitary. As a result, Orlando asks the King to send him to Turkey; this is his escape. It is during his residence in Turkey, another mystical landscape, that Orlando changes into a woman. He becomes "mutable, fickle", the insults that he hurls at Sasha (Orl., p.62).

At the end of the great fast of Ramadan, Orlando attends a party at the embassy to celebrate his Dukedom. Woolf paints a "brilliantly illuminated" scene, allowing the naval officer, John Fenner Brigge, to offer his account of the event from his seat perched in a Judas tree (Orl., p. 122). Brigge's description gives the party a historical quality, making the events of the native uprising and Orlando's subsequent transformation into a woman all the more real. The day after the first uprising, Orlando is found in a deep sleep; the only clue

in his room is a marriage certificate between himself and a gipsy woman, Rosina Pepita, who signifies Vita's own notorious ancestry. Orlando sleeps through the second uprising when most of the English are killed, and is visited by three sisters: Our Lady of Purity; Our Lady of Chastity; and Our Lady of Modesty. These spirits serve as guides, leading Orlando through the transformation to womanhood and forcing him to awaken to "THE TRUTH" (p. 132). Orlando has reached a crucial point in his quest, a discovery that he could only have made in a mystical setting of spirits and gipsies. Orlando joins the gipsies and learns of their unusual relationship with nature; yet she suffers alienation, and flees to England as a reborn woman.

Orlando returns to England on a ship called the *Enamoured Lady*, which symbolizes her new found gender. The "awning spread for her on deck" of the ship signals to Orlando the "penalties and privileges of her position" (Orl., p. 147). She becomes aware of the designated areas that society allocates for women. Upon her return to England, she is accepted as a four hundred year old man turned to woman; though she once was a man, she has no lack of suitors, but she becomes aware of the restrictions placed on her as a woman in a patriarchal society. She is forced to fight the courts for her right to the family estate, a reflection of Vita's own battle with the courts. After the legal proceedings have ended, Orlando is proclaimed to be the rightful heir to the estate; the court's decision to allow a woman to control the estate is unheard of at this time. Woolf attempts to cross the boundaries of a society that existed years

before the time in which she is writing. Orlando's return to England and her struggle with the legal system allow Woolf to address the restrictions that society placed upon women. Metaphoric landscape enables Woolf to trace the changing views that society has had and continued to have towards women; she is able to show the way in which men and women react to these attitudes by using the two identities in Orlando.

Woolf experiments with ideas of sex and gender, as well as with the passing of time and memory. Though Orlando becomes a woman and is attracted to men, she never forgets her love for Sasha. Woolf also shows the change in position that Orlando experiences when he becomes a woman. As a powerful Ambassador, Lord, and Duke, Orlando becomes accustomed to being treated as a superior and powerful individual. When he becomes a woman, she realizes the repercussions of her new found sex. The Gipsies had treated her with distrust after some time, not because she was a woman, but because she was English and a lover of Nature. When Orlando boards the *Enamoured Lady* to return to England, she realizes that her feminine beauty is treated as a dangerous temptation that must be hidden to protect her virtue and the men around her, for "a woman's beauty has to be kept covered lest a sailor may fall from a mast head"; these are "the sacred responsibilities of womanhood" (Orl., p. 151). Woolf enjoys pushing the boundaries of gender by showing a character who travels from manhood to womanhood with considerable ease.

As in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf addresses the nature of homosexual love. As a man, Orlando is attracted to the

Archduchess, and when Orlando transforms into a woman, she still has these sexual feelings for another woman. Yet the Archduchess is actually a man, confusing matters even more, for now Orlando must come to terms with the fact that she was attracted to another man when she was a man. Woolf plays with the various combinations of heterosexual and homosexual love to show her society the possibilities of different types of relationships. One link that binds the male characterization to the female one is Orlando's ambition to be a successful writer. As a man, he is addicted to reading and writing until Nick Greene damages his ego by declaring his writing rubbish. He vows to give up his ambition to achieve immortality through the written word, and he realizes that there are other ways to leave his mark:

Why, then, had he wished to raise himself above them? For it seemed vain and arrogant in the extreme to try to better that anonymous work of creation; the labours of those vanished hands. Better was it to go unknown and leave behind you an arch, a potting shed, a wall where peaches ripen, than to burn like a meteor and leave no dust.
(Orl., p. 102)

Orlando turns his energies to refurbishing the family house, all 365 rooms of it. Yet he always keeps his poem, "The Oak Tree", close by, and in the end, it is this poem that brings Orlando literary praise from Nick Greene. As a woman living in the gipsy community, Orlando yearns "for pen and ink" (Orl., p. 140). The desire to write never leaves Orlando despite her newly found gender.

Woolf enjoys exposing Orlando to a cast of famous

writers, but when the female Orlando socializes with Pope and Dryden, she becomes more of a maid than a colleague, always pouring tea for them. Her new status as a woman is difficult to adjust to, and Orlando dresses as a man at night to roam the streets and escape the confinements of being a woman. Yet it is not until the nineteenth-century that Orlando senses that she has little self-worth unless she marries. The novel allows Woolf to pursue a "'what if' ...fantasy which imagines what femininity...might be in quite different conditions" (Orl., p. xlvi). She is able to present the good and bad aspects of manhood and womanhood through her use of landscape as metaphor. Orlando experiences love in both areas of gender. The novel allows Woolf to experiment with narrative and biography; she has the power to exert control in the novel and reshape history on her own terms, crossing boundaries and forging new frontiers.

Section v: *A Room of One's Own*

Between the publication of *Orlando* in 1928 and *The Waves* in 1931, Woolf expanded a lecture she had given at Girton College, Cambridge in 1928 into an essay, *A Room of One's Own*, which was published in 1929. Asked by the women of Girton College to discuss the topic "women and fiction", Woolf researched the relationship between women and writing, offering her own observations on the subject. She recognized the link between the lifestyles of the women of the past and the absence of women writers before the nineteenth century. Woolf clearly states the necessity for women to have a room of their own and money

of their own in order to write. The image of the room, which Horner and Zlosnik define as one part of the "configurations of metaphor" found in twentieth century women's fiction, takes on new meaning in Woolf's essay (Horner and Zlosnik, p.6). It is no longer "a metaphor for the physical and psychological constriction of women", but, rather, "its value changes and it becomes associated with autonomy, choice and freedom" (Horner and Zlosnik, pp. 6-7).

In the essay, Woolf describes the forbidden territories from which women are excluded in the academic world. Unlike the psychological territories that she maps out in her other novels, Woolf uses metaphoric landscape to illustrate concrete, external boundaries. In the beginning of the essay, she explains two such exclusive areas in the academic world, the turf and the library:

It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me...he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. (AROO, p. 7-8)

After considering this problem for some time, Woolf decides that she has as much right to be on the turf as anyone else. In her opinion, all people consist of male and female qualities, and a separation of the sexes categorizes people, confining them within the boundaries of their sex. The "great mind is androgynous...when this fusion takes place...the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties...[it] is resonant and porous...transmits emotion without impediment...is

naturally creative...and undivided" (AROO, p. 97):

Literature is open to everybody. I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass. Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that can set you upon the freedom of my mind. (AROO, p. 76)

Woolf's next encounter with the exclusive attitudes of this patriarchal society occurs in the university library:

...here I was actually at the door which leads into the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction. (AROO, p. 9)

Rather than focus on the nature of those who are "locked out", Woolf examines the fears of those who are "locked in". She writes that perhaps these men who are locked in the library are insecure about their status in much the same way as the rich fear the poor. She proposes that these professors and patriarchs oppress women in the same way that dictators and tyrants oppress the masses, "for if they [women] were not inferior, they [men] would cease to enlarge" (AROO, p. 37). Yet, Woolf notes that to become embittered about this problem will not bring about change:

...and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity

of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of a writer, I thought at last that it was time to roll up the crumpled skin of the day, with its arguments and its impressions and its anger and its laughter, and cast it into the hedge. (AROO, pp. 25-26)

Amidst these concrete images of the academic world, Woolf creates scenes from her knowledge of the past. Her research of women leads her to the "bookshelves" where she discovers "that nothing is written about women before the eighteenth century" (AROO, p. 47). She recognizes the dichotomy of the situation; little is recorded about "the most discussed animal in the universe" (AROO, p.28). Woolf continues her argument:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (AROO, p. 45)

Having little information on women of the past and questioning their relationship to fiction, Woolf opts to create her own hypothetical version of the past. As in *Orlando*, she pursues a "what if" scenario. She imagines what it would be like for the "wonderfully gifted sister" of William Shakespeare, coping with life on her own in London. Judith would not have all the advantages that William had, and she would have to disobey her father in order to go to the city. There her aspirations to become

a playwright would be met with laughter and disbelief. Unable to fare for herself ("Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight?"), she would be forced to accept the advances of a man (AROO, p. 49). Unlike her famous brother, Judith's path would end in suicide. Examining this woman and other women of the past in relationship with the women of the future, represented by the student, Mary Carmichael, enables Woolf to draw conclusions from history and advise her audience on their future as women.

In advising these women, Woolf again uses metaphoric landscape, not in a concrete manner as with the library nor in an historical way as in the story of Judith Shakespeare, but, rather, as an architect, planning the "structure" of women's fiction. She explains the "pagoda shaped...domed like..structure" of literature, and the way in which it was used to serve men's purposes; but, because the novel was a young form of writing, it was still pliable enough for the women of the nineteenth century to reshape (AROO, p. 71). Woolf proposes that as woman gains the "free use of her limbs", she can offer "some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her" (AROO, p. 78). She counsels her audience to connect with their male and female qualities. Rather than venting all their anger at those who are "locked in" or at those who shaped the past, Woolf encourages the women of the future to "explore...illumine your own soul with its profundities and its shallows...and say what your beauty means to you or your plainness" (AROO, p. 89).

Woolf advises Mary Carmichael, whose story, *Life's*

Adventure, she claims to have read, to learn about herself and her sex because they are both more interesting to Woolf than the "fiftieth life of Napoleon or the seventieth study of Keats" (AROO, p.89). Then, Mary can "go behind the other sex and tell us what she found there" (AROO, p. 90). Woolf sees Mary as a race horse in front of many fences in her future. She advises her not to "curse" at those who stand in her way because it is a waste of energy and time:

Think only of the jump, I implored her, as if I had put the whole of my money on her back; and she went over it like a bird. But there was fence beyond that and a fence beyond that. (AROO, p. 93)

Woolf's ability to use metaphoric landscape in the essay allows her to present a clear picture of the situation and status of the modern woman. Images such as the turf, the library, the room, the domed like structure and the race course allow Woolf to paint a concise picture of the obstacles that women face. Without metaphoric landscape, Woolf would be unable to illustrate these obstacles in an interesting and complete manner.

Section vi: *The Waves*

Whilst writing *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf realised that she was beginning to reshape the modern novel into something that was, "Away from facts; free; yet concentrated; prose yet poetry; a novel and a play" (AWD, p. 104). She did not attempt to produce a novel that incorporated all these characteristics fully until she wrote *The Waves*, published in 1931. Although she wrote

two other novels, one essay, and one biography after 1931, this study of metaphoric landscape in Woolf's novels ends with *The Waves*. For, as Eric Warner remarks, "*The Waves* occupies a particularly interesting junction in Virginia Woolf's career, a work written at the height of her powers before a decline, and the climax of her 'modernist' phase" (Warner, p. 16). This is not to say that Woolf's following novels are not worthy of study. Rather, *The Waves* marks the height of her search for a new style of writing, and it illustrates Woolf's use of metaphoric landscape better than any of her other novels.

The novel, which is divided into nine sections, follows the lives and inner thoughts, revealed in soliloquies, of six characters who are childhood friends. Each section begins with an interlude, a description of the landscape as it changes from dawn to day to night and again to dawn. Woolf writes that these "interludes are very difficult, yet essential; so as to bridge and also to give a background" (AWD, p. 153). From the first interlude at dawn, the reader senses that the nature of the seaside landscape reflects the nature of the relationship between the characters. The relationship between the waves and the characters is similar to the way Woolf uses metaphoric landscape in her earlier novels, such as *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Stella McNichol observes that the "'playpoem'" quality of the novel is "reinforced by the shaping symbolism of the waves and also by the rhythmic movement of the narrative whereby the 'waves' that begin in the interludes infiltrate the consciousness of the

characters" (McNichol, p. 30). As the waves, the "thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually", so, too, the characters merge and divide, "following each other...perpetually" (TW, p. 3).

As in *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* has a "central cohesive force", Bernard, whose summary ends the novel (McNichol, p. 25). In several instances in the novel, Bernard acknowledges himself as the central character, connected to and embodying aspects of the other five characters. Early in the novel, Bernard remarks, "I do not believe in separation. We are not single" (TW, p. 53). And again later, Bernard says,

I have been traversing the sunless territory of non-identity. A strange land...I think of people to whom I could say things: Louis, Neville, Susan, Jinny, and Rhoda. With them I am many-sided. They retrieve me from darkness...I need not be alone.
(TW, p. 95)

The other characters establish Bernard as a "many-sided" figure much like the "seven-sided flower" that he mentions (TW, p. 104). Even Louis notes that Bernard "half knows everybody" (TW, p. 99). And in the summary, Bernard concludes,

For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny, or Rhoda - so strange is the contact of one with another...
Am I all of them? (TW, p.234, 240)

Bernard is the central character, yet he does not have the same status that Mrs. Ramsay had in *To the*

Lighthouse. Percival, the silent, worshipped, seventh member of the group, fills this role, for after his death, he serves as a guiding force, like the landmark, the lighthouse. His death upsets the structure of the "seven-sided flower", and it affects each character's psychological state. The theme of death and memory are as important in *The Waves* as they were in *Jacob's Room*. Bernard realises, in the final scene, that "Death is the enemy...advancing against us" (TW, p. 247). As in *Jacob's Room*, Woolf presents one character, Percival, to illustrate the way in which the other characters relate to death and memory. In his summary, Bernard remarks,

...we compared Percival to a lily - Percival whom I wanted to lose his hair, to shock the authorities, to grow old with me, he was already covered with lilies. (TW, p. 221)

At the farewell dinner, Jinny also realises the importance that Percival presents to the group.

'Let us hold it for one moment,' said Jinny; 'love, hatred, by whatever name we call it, this globe whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall never make this moment out of one man again.' (TW, p. 119).

Woolf links each of these characters to a symbol that, in some way, identifies them. As earlier noted, Percival is associated with the lily, a fading flower. Susan is represented in the "field" (TW, p. 78). Louis is the "stalk" and the "roots" (TW, p. 7, p. 14). Jinny is connected to the "body" and to outward, external, opulent surroundings, such as the "gilt chairs in the

empty...room" (TW, p. 49, p. 82). Rhoda is represented in the wild "tiger" and with the rocking "brown basin" (TW, p. 85, p. 12). Neville is "scissor-cutting, exact"; he is associated with the Classics and with "order" (TW, p. 96, p. 56, p. 202). Bernard is connected to "the canopy of the currant leaves...the underworld" (TW, p. 16).

By using these identifying symbols and the revealing soliloquies, Woolf is able to establish the psychological nature of each character. The reader knows that Susan will always be fruitful and productive, like the field, bearing many children. Unlike the rural setting in which Susan functions, Jinny moves through urban territory. Everything she is connected to relates to the external, outward qualities of the body, her "companion" (TW, p. 146). The most interesting, isolated and inward female character is Rhoda. Like Lily Briscoe, Rhoda possesses vision; she is able to see the "landscape" beyond the boundaries of the group (TW, p. 113). Not fitting into an accepted female role, Rhoda is like the wild "tiger", ready to leap into unknown territory. Yet, she is unable to find her niche, and she admits to following Susan and Jinny, at times, unsure of her own purpose (TW, p. 170).

The male characters complement the female ones. Like Susan, Bernard settles into family life and security. Louis shares a bond with both Jinny and Rhoda. He is "disgusted by the nature of human flesh", yet he is sexually adventurous with many women, including Jinny (TW, p. 202). As "the best scholar in the school", yet the only member not to go the college, Louis shares the same dissatisfaction that Rhoda experiences (TW, p. 74).

These two characters shared a "silence when the others spoke"; they are failed artists, intellectually and emotionally bound (TW, p. 168). Neville, who is homosexual and in love with Percival, shares Rhoda's cynicism towards the others. Like Susan and Bernard, he is searching for monogamous love. Neville is the most deeply affected by Percival's death. He builds his life around the memory of his hero, and he occupies his time with the study of the Classics, an area of history that embodies this hero-worship.

As earlier stated, the novel is divided into "nine episodes...(childhood, school, college, the farewell dinner, death, life, middle-age, the reunion dinner, and Bernard's summing-up) and ten interludes beginning with dawn and ending with another dawn thus locating the six characters...within a process of continual renewal" (McNichol, p. 28). And though the interludes and the soliloquies share equal importance in shaping the structure of the novel and revealing the characters, the descriptive interludes give the novel its haunting quality. Like the scene descriptions in a play, these interludes establish atmosphere and setting. However, the seaside imagery in these ten sections is not literally the territory in which these characters function. These short descriptive introductions create the tone for each episode. Lee recognises the impact of these interludes on the development of each character and the way that the interludes overlap with the characters:

At such moments *the world becomes their world*, particularly at the end, when Bernard turns the scene of the interludes into his vision of truth, and confirms our suspicion that the house of the

interludes is the house where the children's lives began.

The overlap is made more plausible by the sustained anthropomorphism of the interludes... Obviously a consistent analogy is being made between non-human growth and decay and the human lifespan. But the effect of the anthropomorphism is peculiar; the inhuman scenes seem, because of it, to be bursting with active life, and to provide (like the activity of nature in the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*) a threat to the individual human consciousness. (Lee, p. 167)

This observation that the house in the interludes is the house where the children's lives began reinforces Lee's statement that the interludes do more than reflect the nature of the six characters; they intertwine and overlap the soliloquy sections of the novel.

For example, the death episode in section five is introduced by the "heat" of "midday" (TW, p. 122). In this interlude, Woolf establishes the reality that has been forced upon the other characters by Percival's death. The "sun" at "its full height" can no longer be "half seen... guessed at"; it is "uncompromising, undeniable" (TW, p. 121). Woolf also uses the easily identified symbols that represent each character in this interlude:

...At midday, the heat of the sun made the hills grey... while, further north, in the cloudier and rainier country hills [Susan] smoothed into slabs... Through atoms of grey-blue air the sun struck at the English fields [Susan]... The currants [Bernard] hung against the wall in ripples and cascades of polished red... The trees' shadow was sunk to a dark pool at the root [Louis]. The birds sang passionate songs [Louis and Rhoda]... Gilt and purpled [Jinny] they perched in the garden... and even the tunnels [Bernard] under the plants were green and purple... barred by some

thickly furred green stalk [Louis].
...Sharp-edged wedges of light lay upon the window
sill and showed inside the room...the bulge of a
great bowl [Rhoda]...the formidable corners and
lines of cabinets and bookcases [Neville] (TW, pp.
122-123).

In this passage, Woolf uses symbolism and metaphoric landscape to show the way in which Percival's death, represented by the midday sun, affects each character. She also uses metaphoric landscape in the language of this passage, playing with the words, "currants ... ripples ... cascades", to suggest the relationship to the currents of the waves. As in *Jacob's Room*, the reader senses that Woolf is familiar with this feeling of loss, perhaps because Thoby's death upset the structure of the Bloomsbury Group. In this same way, Percival's death forces the others to restructure their "seven-sided flower" (TW, p. 104). By using metaphoric landscape, Woolf is able to reveal the psychological state of each character. These interludes introduce the soliloquies that reinforce the reader's interpretation of each character.

In *The Waves*, metaphoric landscape takes shape in the language, in terms such as rocking, flowing, rising, and falling, suggesting not only the changing nature of the waves but also the continual changing nature of each individual character and of the group as a whole. Woolf intended the novel to possess a rhythmic flow, as she writes in her diary:

The Waves is I think resolving itself...into a series of dramatic soliloquies. The thing is to keep them running homogeneously in and out, in the rhythm of the waves. (AWD, 159).

Eric Warner suggests that this rhythm may make it difficult for the reader find "bearings within its too-fluent texture" (Warner, p. 106). Yet, Warner understands Woolf's purpose in using this rhythmic tactic:

To read the book then is to experience a constant rise and fall, to be immersed in the sense of conflicting currents and endlessly appearing and disappearing patterns, all of which serve to obscure a sense of the whole. (Warner, p. 107).

Stylistically, Woolf aimed to produce a novel that possessed a "playpoem" quality; yet, she also wanted to explore the way in which the individual can function in a group as an entity. Metaphoric landscape allowed her to achieve both these goals, producing a new form of novel, which was deemed a "'masterpiece'" (McNichol, p. 31).

* * *

Part III: Margaret Atwood

"Literature is not only a mirror...it is also a map, a geography of the mind" (Margaret Atwood)

"Back in the days when you were supposed to pay attention to the diapers and the washing of dishes, I was a threat to other women's positions. Now I get made into a kind of hero, which is just as unreal." (Margaret Atwood)

"Far from thinking of writers as totally isolated individuals, I see them as inescapably connected with their society. The nature of the connection will vary - the writer may unconsciously reflect the society, he may consciously examine it and project ways of changing it; and the connection between the writer and society will increase in intensity as the society ... becomes the 'subject' of the writer." (Margaret Atwood)

Margaret Atwood, like Woolf, creates her own formula when using landscape. As a female poet and novelist beginning her career in the changing atmosphere of the 1960s, Atwood was able to see the opportunities to create new perspectives in her writing. Atwood was born in 1939 in the Canadian city of Ottawa, Ontario. In 1946, when her father, an entomologist, accepted a job at the University of Toronto, Atwood became a part of this academic, urban society. Her experiences in Northern Ontario and the Quebec bush country influence the settings for many of her novels. Woolf and Atwood both write at a time when their audience is ready for change; their writing is affected by their own reactions to society. Atwood focuses on the wilderness of Canada in much of her writing, and parallels her concern with the

victimization of her homeland to that of women. Unlike Woolf, Atwood sees the wilderness and the sea as areas of freedom. Whereas Woolf describes the sea as rhythmic and changing, connecting it with danger of the unknown, Atwood describes water as a baptismal, rejuvenating force. Whereas Woolf favours the use of room, land, and sea configurations of metaphor, Atwood paints landscapes of the wilderness.

Woolf often writes of insanity in her novels, such as in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but in her description of this inner landscape, she seems to identify insanity as an outside force that is caused by circumstances rather than by the person themself. Atwood approaches the area of inner landscape in a different manner. Atwood's characters often attempt to escape from physical boundaries only to discover that they must first confront the mental and emotional boundaries that they have created within themselves. Her characters are forced to take responsibility for their destiny; their confrontation with their inner surfaces is far more important than their contact with the external landscape.

Atwood does not put as much direct personal experience into her novels as Woolf does. Although she often sets her novels in the wilderness of Canada and in Toronto (two areas with which she is familiar), there are not the same personal recollections that appear in Woolf's novels. In fact, Atwood vehemently denies a close association between her personal life and her novels. Many of her readers assume that she used to be fat because she often writes about obesity and an obsession

with food, such as in *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*, yet this is not the case. Rather than writing about personal experience, Atwood creates experience. She has a keen awareness of other people, a quality that Woolf deems admirable in characters, such as Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa Dalloway, and she uses this awareness to illustrate the oppression that women face in contemporary society. Atwood often writes of memory and of the failed artist as does Woolf. Yet, her main concern is with freedom.

Atwood explores physical, political, marital, and territorial boundaries in her novels. Rather than being trapped in a room or in a social structure, Atwood's characters are often trapped in undesirable relationships or in the confines of their own body:

The body as a concept has always been a concern of mine....I think that people very much experience themselves through their bodies and through concepts of the body which get applied to their bodies.... I'm interested in where you feel your body can go without being conspicuous or being put into danger. How you see the adornment of your body, which every culture does, to some extent, in different ways. Whether you see that as something forced upon you or as something you do of your own free choice. Whether you see beauty as a tool, which ... women ... are taught to do. (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 187-188)

This image of the body appears in several novels, such as *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle*, *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The cyclical structure of the way that society views women's bodies and the way that women react to these attitudes shapes these novels. The metaphorical terrain of the ravine as seen in *Lady*

Oracle and *Cat's Eye* often symbolizes a character's transitional move from young girl to woman. This theme will be developed in the study of these two novels.

The Edible Woman, *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle*, *Bodily Harm*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Cat's Eye* present characters who challenge the "prescribed female roles" of society. (Zimmerman, p. 246). These characters travel through a process of growth and self-awareness. In Fullbrook's opinion, Atwood forms these transitional characters: "Through her intense interest in the psychological undercurrents in her character's lives, [she] traces the genesis of change" (Fullbrook, p.176). Woolf and Atwood both allow the reader direct access into the minds of their characters, which lets their audience experience the sense of being trapped by boundaries.

Another image that appears in Atwood's novels, such as *Lady Oracle* and *Bodily Harm*, is the mirror. Reflection is seen as one part of the transition to completing the person. Sometimes this reflection is represented in other female characters; they often support the main character and allow her to see inside herself:

Women friends, being subject to the faults of the rest of humanity, may turn out to be as treacherous as men, as is the case with Ainsley in *The Edible Woman* and with Anna in *Surfacing*, but they may also serve as unconditional supporters and faithful allies in a way that men never do. Moira in *The Handmaid's Tale* and Lora in *Bodily Harm*, for example, are more heroic figures than the heroines themselves. (Rigney, pp. 10-11)

Reflection as seen in the supporting female characters

and in the image of the mirror is an important part of Atwood's use of metaphoric landscape, and this theme will be explored in these novels.

The characters in Atwood's novels often do not appear conventionally heroic; it is their courage to free themselves from their limitations that makes them heroic. Rather than remaining in an unfulfilling situation, Atwood's characters attempt escape; she usually ends her novels with this attempt, allowing her readers to draw their own conclusions. It is not necessarily important that her characters have achieved absolute happiness by the end of the novel, but that they have taken control of their own lives. In Fullbrook's words,

"The kinds of responsibility that Atwood's heroines assume as they metamorphose from states of acquiescence, confusion and powerlessness into other, imperfect, but less helpless states, are extremely varied, but all involve degrees of refusal of the position of victim as sole definition of the self...Atwood's heroines (and, at times, the men who accompany them) are creatures of transition" (Fullbrook, p. 175).

As in Woolf's novels, Atwood shapes Ulysses-like characters who are embarking on a journey of self-awareness. Atwood's narrative, usually in the first person, allows her central characters to have more voice. Their interaction with the complementary characters is important, as it is in Woolf, but their eventual outcome seems to depend less on this interaction. Atwood gives her novels a sort of poem-like quality much like Woolf's stories; yet, Atwood does not use the same type of rhythmic language that Woolf uses, perhaps because the rocking and flowing images of the sea are not present.

Atwood's novels can be separated into three types. In *The Edible Woman* and *Life Before Man*, she concentrates on the boundaries of love and marriage. *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle*, and *Cat's Eye* work with the idea of the "escape artist", an idea developed by Barbara Hill Rigney in her study of Atwood; the "escape artist" is "evading reality and commitment" by creating her own world through her art, but she also runs away from her responsibility as an artist (Rigney, 62). The heroines of *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale* face confrontation with "the system", and these two novels focus on the boundaries of political societies. Thus, the discussion of Atwood's novels will focus on these three types of novels, rather than presenting them in chronological order.

As Hermione Lee's study shaped Part II of this thesis, Part III builds on themes suggested in Barbara Hill Rigney's text, *Margaret Atwood. Margaret Atwood: Conversations*, edited by Earl G. Ingersoll acts as a guide to Atwood's purpose much like Woolf's diary and critical essays did for Part II. And, of course, as stated in the introduction, Fullbrook's study, *Free Women*, sheds light on the ethical aspects of Atwood's work. The final text that guides the reader through this part of the thesis is Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*. In this study, Pratt discusses the concept of "The Green-World Guide or Token", a supporting character, place or object that aids in the transformation of the main character. This theme will be developed in *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle* and *Cat's Eye*.

Section i: "Love and Marriage"

a) *The Edible Woman* 1969

In her first novel, *The Edible Woman*, Atwood uses metaphor to represent the helplessness and isolation of her main character, Marian McAlpin. Marian faces several dilemmas in the novel. She hates her job; she loses her ability to eat, and though she is surrounded by many other characters, she feels isolated and alone. As Rigney suggests, Atwood links Marian to the Alice-in-Wonderland image of a young girl who loses herself and must find her way back to her beginning. Atwood separates the book into two parts: the first part of the novel is before Marian's engagement, and the second is during and after Marian's engagement. In the first part of the novel, Atwood allows Marian to tell the story in the first person; yet once Marian becomes engaged to Peter, she seems to lose her voice, and Atwood tells the story from the third person narrative. It is such a sharp distinction that one immediately knows that Atwood is now excluding Marian by setting up a boundary that she cannot cross. Marian is no longer able to tell the story because she has lost a part of her self by becoming engaged to Peter.

In this novel, Atwood's first attempt at fiction, she is beginning to experiment with metaphoric landscape. The reader is aware of Marian's home-life with Ainsley. They live "on the top floor of a large house" that was probably "the servants' quarters" at one time (TEW, p. 12). This image and the references to the house as a prison with the landlady as the warden illustrate the oppression that Marian faces as a single woman living in

the city. In this time, there are few places for a single woman to live other than boarding-house rooms and top floors. Atwood uses the landscape to mirror Marian's transformation. The seasonal images of Toronto reflect Marian's own transition. She moves from the snowy surroundings to the humid atmosphere whilst changing internally.

In Fullbrook's opinion, *The Edible Woman* "operates on two interacting layers. The first layer concerns the dilemmas of Marian McAlpin...who is trying to puzzle together an adult life through marriage, and does not realise how revolted she is by the process" (Fullbrook, pp. 176-7). Marian neither loves nor hates Peter, but she simply wants some order in her life. She feels marriage will give her meaning. Fullbrook continues, "The second layer, presented through metaphors, has to do with the violence of eating, with cannibalism, and with the meaning of the hunt" (Fullbrook, p. 177). Indeed, Marian is disgusted by Peter's tales of hunting with his friend Trigger. The description of this hunting trip is what initially puts her off food. She begins to see all food as living organisms, and she fears that she is disappearing, being eaten alive.

As Rigney suggests, the novel shares many similarities with the story of *Alice in Wonderland*. Duncan, the mysterious, reappearing character, is similar to the Rabbit in *Alice*; he surfaces at various times, providing disorder and non-sense in Marian's all too real life. Marian, much like Alice, appears to be running away from a threatening situation. Her fear of physically disappearing is not unlike Alice's own fear

that the Queen will chop off her head. In one particular scene, Marian seems similar to Alice. In the company of the hunters, Len, Peter and Ainsley, Marian longs for escape. She decides that she will hide under the bed, separating herself from them and creating her own burrow:

I began to find something very attractive about the dark cool space between the bed and the wall. It would be quiet down there, I thought; and less humid.

A minute later I was wedged sideways between the bed and the wall, out of sight but not at all comfortable. This will never do, I thought; I'll have to go right underneath. It will be like a tent.

I was quite cramped....Though I was only two or three feet lower than the rest of them, I was thinking of the room as "up there". I myself was underground, I had dug myself a private burrow. I felt smug. (TEW, pp. 75-76)

Unlike Jacob Flanders and Mrs. Dalloway, who are both searching for place, Marian wants a hideaway. After this "embarrassing display", she realizes that she does not need to hide in uncomfortable, cramped spaces. Her action has already created the rift between herself and Peter that she wants.

Although Atwood focuses on Marian's attitudes towards marriage, which she observes is an area of boundaries and restrictions, the reader learns more from Marian's relationships to the other characters in the novel than from her relationship with her intended husband, Peter. Like Woolf, Atwood presents Marian in contrast to several female characters. Marian's flatmate, Ainsley, is the self-absorbed huntress, who is searching for the perfect male specimen to impregnate

her. Despite her attempts to appear caring and compassionate, she is really a shallow woman, who bases her existence on what she reads in magazines.

Marian's landlady, "the lady down below", watches Marian and Ainsley with a judgmental eye (TEW, p. 56). She is solely concerned with maintaining respectable appearances. The women at Seymour Surveys seem to be complacent with their boundaries on the second floor below the men. The "office virgins" are delighted, yet jealous of Marian's engagement to Peter, for they themselves wish they could have *caught* such a splendid man. She soon tires of "this thick sargasso-sea of femininity" that surrounds the women in her office (TEW, p. 167). Clara, Marian's college friend, is so busy with her children and her husband that Marian views her as some sort of baby factory. She reacts to Clara's change in much the same way that Clarissa did when she sees her old friend, Sally Seton, again. Marian has no one to talk to about her anxieties because she cannot identify with anyone.

She finally comes to depend on Duncan as a friend, lover, and means of escape. He is a childlike graduate student, who has distanced himself from reality. He avoids confrontation from the real world by hiding out in laundramats, movie theatres, and his apartment. Ironing out creases becomes an obsessive habit that occupies his time. There are several interpretations of this character. Rigney argues that Duncan is "Marian's anorexic and hungry self" and that he acts "as a link between Marian's fantasy world and her real one" (Rigney, p.30). Fullbrook suggests that he is Atwood's "first

attempt at drawing a man, who as much as her women, refuses the normative and gendered categories open to him" (Fullbrook, p. 178). Certainly, there is a connection between Duncan and Marian; they have several chance encounters in which they share common fears of the real world. They speak at each other, fulfilling the other one's needs to be heard. The problem is that neither one of them really listens to the other. They just pass the time together. However, Duncan gives Marian an outlet to direct her concerns about marriage. In the end, he shows his acceptance of Marian, by eating her "delicious" cake, the symbol that she has broken free from her dilemma (TEW, p. 270).

As there are many interpretations of Duncan's role in Marian's transformation, so, too, are there of the symbolic woman cake. Robert Lecker, writer of "Janus through the Looking Glass", believes that the cake allows Marian to break free from her role as a "packaged product of a male-dominated society". When Marian stops eating, she is rejecting "a culture which tends to exploit women and treat them as edible objects". Marian creates the cake to symbolizes her stand against these attitudes. The cake shows her awareness that she has been both "consumer and consumed" (Lecker, p. 179-180). Kim Chernin author of *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* sees the cake as "a re-enactment of the ritual feast" that "signifies the coming together of the human and the divine, individual and collective...a woman with her own body and feelings" (Chernin, p.71). These interpretations reflect Pratt's concept of "The Green World Guide or Token"; the cake is a symbolic token that

aids in Marian's transformation (Pratt, p.139).

The "meaning of the hunt", as Fullbrook explains, is an important aspect of the novel. Atwood uses this imagery to paint a landscape of the territory that Marian roams in her quest to find herself (Fullbrook, p. 177). She runs through the streets like a hunted animal three times in the novel. In the first instance, she runs away from Peter after she watches him consume a steak. In the second instance that has already been explored, she feels an uncontrollable urge to hide under the bed to separate herself from Peter, Leonard and Ainsley. Before the escape, Peter tells of his hunting trip in which he kills a rabbit, and then proudly takes pictures of it. As Fullbrook theorizes, Marian subconsciously feels "the living equivalent of the rabbit" (Fullbrook, p. 178). For this reason she separates herself from the other three characters. Even Ainsley, who shows up at the dinner as the picture of femininity in an attempt to catch Len as her specimen, is a huntress; Marian fears for her life among these hunters. Atwood uses this imagery of hunting and escape to describe her inner struggle.

In the third escape scene, Marian leaves Peter's party to find Duncan. She runs through the streets searching for some escape from the claustrophobia of Peter's apartment. She feels that Peter wants her as a showpiece rather than a partner; Duncan does not make such demands of her. When she finds Duncan and they finally sleep together, Marian realizes that this does not fulfill her either. Duncan takes her to his favourite escape, the edge of a cliff above the ravines,

but she does not feel comfortable in Duncan's territory; it is "closed, deserted" full of "empty space" (TEW, p.262). Atwood presents a character who is constantly out of bounds; she is roaming from scene to scene in hope of finding her own territory. Marian is not associated with any one metaphoric configuration, such as house, room, land or sea. Unlike Woolf, Atwood allows her main character to remain unattached to any one landscape. She never finds a favourite escape, like Duncan, for her the problem is not a territorial one but rather an internal one. Duncan tells Marian that she has created her own prison: "you invented it, you'll have to think your own way out" (TEW, p. 264). The journey to Duncan's ravine transforms Marian; it is a "Green- World Guide" that forces her to take responsibility for the role of the victim that she has created (Pratt, p. 139). As Rigney states,

"With this exhortation to responsibility, Marian leaves the ravine, the pit, the burrow, the underground, and moves back to the street alone, towards reality and, perhaps out of her Alice existence" (Rigney, 32).

When Marian identifies her problem as an internal one, she decides the woman cake will free her from her struggle. This cake, which she creates as a representation of what she has become, gives the novel its title and becomes the metaphoric focus of the book. She offers the woman cake to Peter to show him that she refuses to be treated as an object for his consumption.

You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you, ...You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you've wanted all along, isn't it? (TEW, p. 271).

Of course, Peter thinks she is insane and does not understand the cake's symbolic status. Marian herself realizes the whole exercise is irrational, but making the cake is the final rite of passage for her. As stated earlier, this cake becomes Marian's guiding "token", leading her through her journey (Pratt, p. 139). Ainsley states upon seeing the cake, "Marian!...You're rejecting your femininity!" (TEW, p. 272). This statement relates back to Peter's exact words when he chides her for her first escape; he wants her to be like Ainsley, who assumes a sort of stereotypical idea of femininity to bate Len. Marian realizes that Ainsley does not understand the cake any more than Peter does because they are both superficial, unaware of others. The creation of this "edible woman" gives Marian back her appetite and her voice; through this metaphor, she is freed from the prison that she has created.

b) *Life Before Man* 1979

The second novel in this grouping that focuses on love and marriage, *Life Before Man*, is a work that explores three intertwined relationships. Atwood separates the novel into chapters that correspond to each character's thoughts, though she tells the story in the third person. By changing the narrative and giving each character equal opportunity to express themselves, Atwood allows the reader to view these characters as three very

separate individuals. Their soliloquies appear at first glance to be like those in *The Waves*. However, Atwood is more concerned with showing the nature of the individual than the essence of the group as a whole. As in her other novels, Atwood uses landscape to describe the territory in which her three characters function.

As Rigney suggests, the "depressing lives" of the three characters is "reflected by a surreal cityscape characterised by intense heat and the smog of pollution...by leaden skies and 'fish-grey' snow" (Rigney, p. 83). She also points to the Royal Ontario Museum as a "Dominating" force, a "grey monument to an irretrievable past", that connects the three characters (Rigney, p. 83). From the first section, the reader knows that the Museum is a surreal place of escape for Lesje:

Lesje is wandering in prehistory. Under a sun more orange than her own has ever been, in the middle of a swampy plain lush with thick-stalked plants and oversized ferns, a group of bony-plated stegosaurus is grazing.

Lesje knows, when she thinks about it, that this is probably not everyone's idea of a restful fantasy. Nevertheless it's hers; (LBM, p. 18)

The Museum reminds Elizabeth of her dead lover, Chris, who also worked there. When Elizabeth invites her co-worker to dinner, she creates the connection between Nate and Lesje. The Museum is the image that brings these characters together.

Atwood includes subtle descriptions of the way in which these characters move through the urban setting. As stated, Lesje is always associated with the Museum;

Nate is more mobile, caught between two territories. Elizabeth is always connected to the home and especially to her bedroom, where she hides herself away from the world. She shapes herself as the isolated victim. She does not love Nate, but she relies on his support. Elizabeth locks herself in her house, surrounded by antiques that echo her obsession with the past, because she is unable to face the real world. She has to come to terms with her past as a mistreated child and with her lover's suicide.

Atwood opens Elizabeth's chapters by placing her in various rooms of her house. She is "lying on her back" in the bedroom (p. 11); "she sits on the grey sofa" (p. 23); she "sits in the kitchen" (p. 36); she "stands in the hall" (p. 203). It is odd that she is associated with the home as she is the only character who was literally homeless for a time in her childhood. Atwood develops this idea and explains Elizabeth's connection to the house in the following passage:

She thinks with anticipation of her house, her quiet living room with its empty bowls, pure grace, her kitchen table. Her house is not perfect; parts of it are in fact crumbling, most noticeably the front porch. But it's a wonder that she has a house at all, that she's managed to accomplish a house. Despite the wreckage. She's built a dwelling over the abyss, but where else was there to build it? So far, it stands. (LBM, p. p. 302).

Atwood uses metaphoric landscape here to compare the building of Elizabeth's house to her progress in the novel. She cannot sink deeper into the abyss after Nate leaves her to be with Lesje, and so she begins to restructure her life on the edge of this cliff.

Atwood presents detailed accounts of the home-lives of each character in the novel, and these descriptions allow the reader to understand the inner thoughts of Nate, Elizabeth, and Lesje. Yet, Atwood admits that her novel is often misunderstood because "it's a novel novel...It stays very firmly within the boundaries of realism" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p.178). As a result, one might believe that there is little room for the use of landscape as metaphor, but Atwood's ability to structure the narrative in a triangular pattern allows her to plot her own map. In this way, Atwood embodies the verbal definition of landscape, to create or arrange. She uses the interchanging narrative to achieve this metaphoric pattern as she explains:

My most domestic novel is *Life Before Man*. In it, there's an equilateral triangle. There are two women and one man, and viewed from any point in the triangle, the other two are not behaving properly. But you can go around the triangle and look at it from all sides. (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 246).

Atwood's ability to shape the novel in this pattern allows the reader to focus on three different perspectives. The novel is like *The Waves* in that it has a defined pattern; yet because the three interchanging sections of *Life Before Man* are not structured on soliloquy, Atwood depends on descriptions of the characters' past and the metaphoric configurations of the city, the house and the Museum to give her readers insight into her characters' psychological states.

One theme that surfaces in the novel is the nature of the scientist and of the historian. The ability to

categorize people and collect data becomes a focus of the novel. Lesje admits to categorizing people, and she notices that Elizabeth is "adept at cataloguing the reactions of others" (LBM, p. 21). In one scene Lesje demonstrates the way that she classifies Elizabeth as a shark, a venomous toad, or a huge squid; Elizabeth is "the Spider Woman who invites the innocent flies into her parlour, takes them to lunch, snickers as they spill their coffee and expose their weaknesses" (Rigney, p 91). She is cruel to Nate's lovers and pretends to befriend them before she moves in for the kill. Nate is a creator more than a cataloguer; his toys reflect his desire to control, to shape. Rigney suggests that the third- person narrative shaping the novel gives it an impersonal, scientific tone that "makes no evaluative comments", but rather simply reports the different episodes in each character's life (Rigney, p. 84). Nate, Elizabeth, and Lesje struggle to remain in the boundaries that they have set up, but the characters never seem to know exactly who is making the rules.

Nate and his wife, Elizabeth, have drawn marital boundaries that allow them to pursue other sexual relationships while still remaining married. They agree to abide to this set of rules for the sake of the children. Nate nurtures both Lesje and Elizabeth; he does all the domestic duties out of a sense of guilt. This guilt stems from his past and his inability to shape himself in the heroic mould of his father. He also feels guilty because he cannot comfort his wife, nor can he satisfy Lesje's needs by leaving his wife. He is the only male in "what for him is a female world", and he

shapes himself as the caretaker of this world (Rigney, p. 86).

Atwood explains the title of the novel in relation to its characters:

...it was originally called *Notes on the Mesozoic*. Mesozoic means "middle life." The novel is the middle of the lives of several people. And they're middle class. And it's mid-history. But the title was changed because everybody said, "Notes on the What?"

For Lesje, [*Life Before Man*]...refers to the pre-historic era. For Elizabeth, it means that her own life is given priority over any relationship with a man. For Nate, it's connected with his political idealism. (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 123)

Lesje is unclear as to where she fits into this carefully planned relationship. At first, Nate believes that Lesje will accept him as he is, an immature, uncommitted, incomplete person. Yet Lesje is just like Elizabeth and Nate's previous lover, Martha; she wants Nate to accept his responsibilities, grow up, leave his toy-making to return to the law practice. Nate shapes himself as the victim in the novel. He envisions himself as the oppressed man under the control of domineering women. He and Elizabeth create their arrangement because neither of them can face true intimacy. Nate is not quite sure where he should be; he is torn between two houses. He loves his children and wants to be with them, but he knows that living with Elizabeth is like living a lie. He relates himself to the toys that he creates; he is "patchwork, a tinman, his heart stuffed with sawdust" (LBM, p. 246).

Throughout the action, Atwood gives equal detail to each character's past and present. The reader knows of

Lesje's feuding family, of Elizabeth's suffering as a child, and of Nate's dominant mother. Atwood also describes each character's present state. Lesje is in a destructive relationship with an uncaring man. She makes sense of life by categorizing things, and this is the reason for her love of paleontology. Perhaps the title comes from Lesje's love of dinosaurs, of a time when things seemed less complicated, before man. Nate gives up his law profession to make toys. He loves creating and animating these lifeless objects. In one sense, he wants to reanimate his own life. He often associates himself with his toys. The lifeless objects to which he gives action resemble Nate's own life; his ability to create the appearance of life in his toys persuades him that he can do the same to his life. Elizabeth no longer has a love of anything. The reader knows that she used to love collecting antiques, but she has lost the ability to care about anything since her lover killed himself. She cannot even associate herself with the role of a mother.

It is obvious that each character is trapped in a state of immobility. Nate and Elizabeth's arrangement does not work for their lovers, for their children, nor for themselves. There is a mutual respect for one another, but little else exists between them. By Part Five of the novel, the characters have begun the process of change. Lesje is demanding more from Nate. She has learned to value herself throughout the novel. She is no longer the hybrid that her family had convinced her she was. She realizes that her former lover, William, means

nothing to her now, and that her relationship with Nate has given her self-worth. Nate has changed throughout the novel also. He realizes that he must work at the law office to pay for his responsibilities. Nate begins to break his connection with Elizabeth, and he realizes that her problems do not always need to be his concern. He can still be a father without living within Elizabeth's boundaries.

Elizabeth realizes that she can live on her own. Her sharp words to Auntie Muriel and Muriel's eventual death free her from her past. She is aware of her limitations and of her newly found sense of freedom. She does not need to identify herself as Nate's wife, as Chris's lover, or as Nancy and Janet's mother. Now she can be just Elizabeth. She still longs to be somewhere else, but rather than feeling "lonely", she feels "single, alone" (LBM, p. 316). Atwood's use of words is always clever, but in this instance the distinction between the two words, "lonely" and "alone" is crucial. She ends the novel with this distinction to show an optimistic view of individuality, a vital aspect of the novel. Each character triumphs by becoming powerful individuals.

Section ii: "The Escape Artist"

a) *Surfacing* 1972

In the second grouping of novels, Atwood deals with the "escape artist". In the first novel that presents this characterization, *Surfacing*, the nameless heroine of the novel embarks on a journey to the small island in

Canada where she was raised. Accompanied by a married couple, David and Anna, and her own partner, Joe, the heroine travels from her life in the city to the backwoods of Canada in search of her missing father. She states, "we're on my home ground, foreign territory", and the reader wants to learn why her homeland has become "foreign" to her (Surf., p.5).

Atwood uses metaphoric landscape more in this novel than in any other. She describes the isolated island with its mystical woods and enclosing cabin, that has become "greyer" through the years. The fence outside the cabin represents "reproach", and the narrator believes that it "points to [her] failure" (Surf., p.28). The surrounding lake, full of danger, hope and the unknown is her passage to the island, yet it represents death and rebirth as well (Surf., p. 28). She tells of the day when her brother almost drowned by the dock and how the lake has been "fished out" by Americans. Later in the novel, she imagines her "lost child...rising from the lake where it has been prisoned for so long" (Surf., p. 155). She even imagines the snow that appears in the winter, "melting and freezing again into different shapes" (Surf., p. 85). Atwood's ability to use landscape metaphorically signals to the reader the malleable quality of the novel; she warns the reader that shapes may change in the novel, and that landscape can represent many concepts.

Atwood presents several mysteries in the novel, which she describes as a "ghost story" (Atwood from *Ingersoll*, p.43). The first mystery is the disappearance of the father; the protagonist questions whether he is

alive or dead, or if he has gone insane. The second mystery involves the identity of the protagonist, who Rigney warns is an unreliable narrator:

the protagonist has spent most of her life in metaphorical 'border country', maintaining a precarious balance between truth and lies, between reality and fantasy, between sanity and derangement. (Rigney, p. 38)

The novel focuses on surfaces; nothing is what it appears to be. Anna and David seem to have the ideal marriage, but the narrator discovers that they are living a lie. They betray one another and try to hurt each other. Anna appears to have a flawless face, but she covers her face in make-up to hide the ugly surface beneath. The other boat of fishermen, whom the narrator identifies as Americans, turns out to be a party of Canadians. The story of the narrator's marriage and child is her own self-created fantasy. Her job as an illustrator enforces her ability to create fairy tales. The man whom she claims is her husband is actually her disinterested art teacher; he robs her of her dignity by giving her artwork "Cs", and tells her that there is no room for women in the art world. His cruel action, forcing her to terminate her pregnancy, becomes a central conflict in the novel.

To solve the first mystery, that of the missing father, the narrator looks for clues in the cabin to point her in the direction of her father; he is eventually found in the water, drowned by the weight of his own camera. Atwood paints a rich landscape for the narrator to roam through, and the protagonist describes

the clues that she finds in the cabin as "a treasure map" (Surf., p. 98). She finds scribbled drawings by her father that convince her he has gone mad. However, she discovers that her father has developed a scientific interest in these Indian drawings that prompts him to investigate. The Indian paintings at White Birch Lake are "signs that mark the sacred places...where you could learn the truth" (Surf., p. 139). She travels to White Birch Lake to discover this truth, and there she encounters the dead heron, which she associates with a Christ-like figure, a sacrifice:

Whether it died willingly, consented, whether Christ died willingly, anything that suffers and dies instead of us is Christ; if they didn't kill birds and fish they would have killed us. The animals die that we may live, they are substitute people...that is Christ also. (Surf., p. 134)

This image of the heron relates back to "the meaning of the hunt" (Fullbrook, p. 177). The protagonist realizes that exploitation always carries with it casualties. She relates to the heron because she has shaped herself as a victim.

She eventually discovers her father's dead body, and this encounter forces her to confront the abortion. She links the two corpses together, focusing on the ability of weight to trap these bodies under the surface and their subsequent rise out of the murky water. This confrontation reintroduces the protagonist to her "other half", not the one she has been carrying around that is "detached, terminal" (Surf., p. 102). The corpses of her father and of the heron are "Green-World tokens" that encourage the protagonist to continue her quest to the

end (Pratt, p. 139). She must admit the truths of her life and "refuse to be a victim" (Surf., p. 185). Just as these bodies help the protagonist in her transformation, so, too, does her "Green-World lover", Joe (Pratt, p.140).

She associates him with a furry beast. The protagonist reveals that "his beard is dark brown...His back is hairier than most men's, a warm texture...like a teddy bear" (Surf., p. 35). He comforts her, but she is not sure that what she feels for him is love:

I'm trying to decide whether or not I love him I sum him up, dividing him into categories: he's good in bed, better than the one before; he's moody but he's not much bother, we split the rent and he doesn't talk much, that's an advantage The fact is that he doesn't make me sad; (Surf., p. 36)

Joe does not threaten the protagonist; he allows her to find her own way to the truth. He, too, is a failed artist, but she finds "purity" in his "failure" (Surf., p. 51). Like the main character, he is quiet, unconnected; he "spends most of his time" "in the place inside himself" (Surf., p. 38). Although he joins David in the making of the video journal, *Random Samples*, a collection of all that is degrading, exploitative and offensive, and he sleeps with Anna, Joe is actually very concerned for the protagonist. Her inability to offer him her true self drives him away, but he returns to take her away from the island and to father her child.

Atwood uses visual landscape as metaphor throughout the novel to explain the narrator's journey towards the truth. Another layer of this metaphor involves the "body

as a concept". Atwood explains that she is "interested in where you feel your body can go without being conspicuous or being put into danger" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 187). This concept is central to the development of the novel. The protagonist offers her opinion of the relationship between the mind and body in the following passage:

The trouble is all in the knob at the top of our bodies. I'm not against the body or the head either: only the neck, which gives the illusion that the two are separate. (Surf., p. 70)

The protagonist feels that she has lost contact with her body because she was forced to have an abortion; because she loses control of this territory, she detaches herself from this other half.

When she accepts the abortion and takes control of her other half, she allows herself to be impregnated by Joe. She is so in touch with her body that she can sense "her lost child surfacing" the moment she conceives (Surf., p. 155).

He trembles and then I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been prisoned for so long, its eyes and teeth phosphorescent; the two halves clasp, interlocking like fingers, it buds, it sends out fronds...In the morning I will be able to see it: it will be covered with shining fur, a god, I will never teach it any words. (Surf., p. 156).

The concept of the body also arises in the final scenes of the novel when the protagonist changes from human to animal and back again. She must rely on her body to withstand the dangerous environment of the wilderness.

She forbids herself human food, clothes and shelter in an attempt to focus only on the body. This is her final step towards a reconciliation with her body, which she has ignored for so long:

In the middle of the night silence wakes me, the rain has stopped. Blank dark, I can see nothing. I try to move my hands but I can't. The fear arrives like waves, like footfalls, it has no center; it encloses me like armour, it's my skin that is afraid, rigid. They want to get in, they want me to open the windows, the door, they can't do it by themselves...logic is a wall, I built it, on the other side of terror. (Surf., p. 168)

Once she is able to fuse her two halves back together, she allows her human self to emerge...to surface. However, once she learns to live outside this wall of terror, she must also face her role as the victim. Her refusal to be a victim signifies her transformation.

This above all, to refuse to be a victim. Unless I can do that I can do nothing. I have to recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt anyone. (Surf., 185)

The subject of victimization arises again in *Cat's Eye*, *Lady Oracle*, *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Whereas death and loss become the focus of Woolf's novels, victimization, colonization, and freedom become recurring topics in the novels of Atwood.

b) *Lady Oracle* 1976

In the second novel in the "escape artist" grouping, *Lady Oracle*, Atwood explores the physical and emotional barriers that her main character, Joan Foster, faces. Her journey takes her to several different countries, yet she learns that her problem has been an internal one all along. In the novel, Atwood also examines the female-female and female-male relationships that shape Joan's journey. The most striking relationship is between Joan and her mother. This relationship dictates her life physically and emotionally. In many ways she gains strength from this conflict. She briefly escapes her mother's house by working outside the home because her mother "found the jobs [she] took degrading to her personally, which was a bonus." (LO, p. 96). Yet, the most evident conflict between these two is the issue of Joan's weight. She recalls countless arguments regarding this subject and explains that the "war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body." (LO, p. 69). Atwood focuses on this concept of body in the novel, and she charts Joan's relationship to her other half.

Joan's mother, Frances, is an unhappy woman, trapped in an undesirable relationship. For five years, she raises her child by herself because her husband is fighting in the War. When he returns, Joan learns that her father is a kind man, but he is passive and indifferent towards his wife and daughter. Atwood places Frances and her husband in the confining boundaries of marriage in the 1950s. Her parents seem to have reached a stalemate; neither one will leave the relationship because they are concerned with the appearance of such a

move. The sole bond between Joan and her father is their shared dislike of Frances, leaving her isolated from her husband and daughter. She resorts to controlling Joan's life because she feels so helpless in her own. Joan is her only window out, her only reflection in society, her only means to show personal success.

Frances tries desperately to slim her daughter into her own desired shape, yet Joan rebels. She reveals that, "It was only in relation to my mother that I derived a morose pleasure from my weight." (LO, p. 74). Frances enrolls her daughter in a dance class in hopes that this exercise will help her lose weight and make her more graceful. She loves dancing school because it allows her to assume alternative personalities. The recital includes three pieces: "Tulip Time", a dance that requires "a long full skirt with a black bodice and white sleeves"; "Anchors Away", a tap dance with costumes in a naval theme; and Joan's favourite dance, "the Butterfly Frolic", in which she will wear "a gauzy skirt...a tight bodice with shoulder straps, and a headpiece...and wings" (LO, p. 45).

Joan is so excited to become a butterfly, but Frances convinces the dance teacher, Miss Flegg, to change her part:

"Joan, dear...how would you like to be something special?"...

"What am I going to be?"...

"A mothball, dear," she answered serenely, as if this were the most natural thing in the world... I was wounded, desolated in fact, when it turned out that Miss Flegg wanted me to remove my cloudy skirt and spangles and put on one of the white teddy-bear costumes the Tensies were using for their

number...She also wanted me to hang around my neck a large sign that said MOTHBALL, (LO, p. 49).

Neither Miss Flegg nor Joan's mother wants to be publicly humiliated by Joan's size. Joan is aware of the boundaries that her weight causes; she cannot be a butterfly like the other girls, and she loses her wings. The reappearing floating lady reflects Joan's desire to fly; this image symbolizes freedom. Miss Flegg's refusal to allow Joan to be a butterfly shapes her entire outlook on herself and her body. Three years later at the age of ten, Joan realises the repercussions of being regarded as fat in her society. She says, "If Desdemona was fat who would care whether or not Othello strangled her?" (LO, p. 52). She feels that she will have no value in society until she loses the weight.

Frances also enrolls Joan in the Brownies, but she forces her to join a troop that is miles from her home because it is in a wealthier area. Joan is forced to walk to these meetings with three fellow Brownies (Elizabeth, Lynne and Marlene), who torture her and make her even more self-conscious of herself. She loses all her self-esteem and begins to fabricate stories of her life because she wants to gain acceptance and approval. The three girls tie Joan to a post in the dangerous ravine where perverts and vagrants roam; she has to rely on a stranger, possibly a pervert, to free her:

Now I knew where I was; they had tied me with Elizabeth's skipping rope to the post at the end of the bridge, right where we had seen the man the week before. I started to whimper I heard footsteps coming towards me ... maybe it was one of the bad kind The man was neither old nor young He

smiled at me ... Was the man who untied me a rescuer or a villain? (LO, pp. 62-64)

The ravine is symbolic in the novel; trapped in this terrain that is notorious for sex offences, Joan is forced to confront her own sexuality. This experience severs her relationship with Marlene, Lynne and Elizabeth. She grows "tired of them"; she refuses to be their victim any longer (LO, p. 62). After her traumatic experience with these girls, Joan becomes "wary of any group composed entirely of women, especially women in uniforms." (LO, p. 87). She has to confront Marlene later in life, though the latter has no memory of torturing Joan.

In Joan's other female relationships, she has either amazing success or absolute failure. She experiences success among her peers in highschool. She befriends many girls in the popular crowd because she fulfills the unthreatening roles of "kindly aunt and wisewoman". (LO, p. 93). Joan admits that being overweight insulates her and allows her to become trusted among her friends. She sees the weight as a cocoon, a reference to the mothball episode, and she dreams of the day that she will emerge from her cocoon to be a butterfly. She becomes a good listener, and she attributes her success as a Costume Gothic writer to this ability in the following passage:

About the only advantage to this life of strain was that I gained a thorough knowledge of my future audience: those who got married too young, who had babies too early, who wanted princes and castles and ended up with cramped apartments and grudging husbands. (LO, p. 95).

Like Clarissa Dalloway, Joan is able to imagine other people's lives; it is her only means of escape, a concept she is familiar with because she "was brought up on it" (LO, p. 34). In many ways, Joan is writing for her mother, from whom she inherited this addiction for escape.

The most positive female relationship in *Lady Oracle* is between Joan and her Aunt Lou. In fact, Joan bases one of her many "selves" on her. Aunt Lou, Louisa K. Delacourt, is the embodiment of what Joan hopes to become: an independent, confident, free-spirited woman. Lou serves as a comforter and adviser for many teenage girls because she is an agony aunt for a feminine hygiene company. However, she guides Joan in quite a different way. She opens the world to her by taking her to the Jordan Chapel for spiritual development, introducing her to her lover, and taking her to the movies. By leaving Joan two thousand dollars, she gives her the freedom to leave her parents' home.

Aunt Lou and Frances are polar opposites, yet they each have an equal effect on Joan's destiny. Frances desperately wants her to conform to her own ideal, yet Aunt Lou allows her to follow her own path of growth. Joan's mother forces her take laxatives and diet pills. In her will, Aunt Lou leaves her two thousand dollars on the condition that she loses one hundred pounds. Lou is not disgusted with Joan's shape, but she knows that this extra weight will always be an impediment for her; it serves as a layer of insulation that prohibits her from experiencing life and furthering her personal growth. The two thousand dollars guarantees her escape from the

confinements of her mother's house. She is determined to break free from her mother's rule, even if she must employ drastic measures to lose the weight.

Her weight loss is significant to her personal growth. This insulation of fat is the first boundary that she must cross. In order to lose the weight, Joan declares war on her body by starving herself and using stimulants and laxatives. She describes this process as emerging from a cocoon, an obvious reference to her early childhood days in Miss Flegg's dance class. She becomes anorexic and bulimic in an attempt to shrink her body to the socially accepted size. As her body was a territory of dispute between Joan and her mother, it becomes a battleground in her war for freedom. She believes that by escaping her physical body, she will somehow be transformed into the confident woman she so wants to be. This bout of anorexia and bulimia allows Joan to control her body, and it gives her the power she so desperately wants. It frees her from her mother's control, but Joan must confront her inner self and the lies that she has created before she can begin her transformation.

Once Joan loses the weight, she begins her new life. Suddenly she can cross the boundaries that she was unable to cross as an overweight teenage girl. She leaves Canada to go to England. Although the weight loss gives Joan physical freedom, she is still trapped in emotional turmoil. She constantly lies about herself to numerous people. With each lie, she creates another layer of the cocoon that she wants to shed. It becomes more and more difficult to establish reality, and as she develops a special talent for creating alternate personalities, she

realizes her potential as a writer. If she can give fantasy to herself, certainly she can give it to the others like her in society who want to escape. She enters relationship with an older man and fellow liar, Paul, who claims to be an exiled Polish Count. It is with Paul that Joan begins to develop a talent for writing Costume Gothics.

He is an important character in Joan's sexual development. After she sleeps with him for the first time, he realizes that she was a virgin. When he asks her why she did not tell him, she admits to herself the reason for her actions:

"anything I could have said would have been implausible. This was the reason I fabricated my life, time after time: the truth was not convincing. (LO, p.150)

Paul, alias Mavis Quilp, makes his living from writing nurse novels, and he describes the freedom of being his other self as an enormous release of stress and a means of escape. She has already assumed parts of Louisa K. Delacourt's life, and so she uses this name to write her stories. Paul convinces her that it is acceptable to assume other selves.

Later in the novel, while Joan is in Italy reflecting on her life, she realizes that all the men in her life "had two selves":

Every man I'd ever been involved with, I realized, had had two selves: my father, healer and killer; the man in the tweed coat, rescuer and possibly also a pervert; the Royal Porcupine and his double, Chuck Brewer; even Paul, who I'd always believed had a sinister other life I couldn't penetrate. Why should Arthur be any exception? (LO, p. 292).

She becomes an expert at creating new identities; she becomes the quintessential "escape artist", dodging her responsibilities to herself and to her art. Once she fails in one life, she leaves that self to create a new one. The other characters also assume separate identities. Like Joan, they are forced to confront their former selves along the way. These chance encounters with people from her past force her to tell more tales to cover up her past. She eventually marries Arthur in a ceremony at Leda Sprott's, alias Eunice P. Revele, the former leader of the Jordan Chapel. She is desperate to keep her former life a secret from Arthur.

Wherever Joan goes, she has the unfortunate luck of running into people from her former days. Characters such as, Marlene Pugh, the political activist, former Brownie and tormenter of Joan, force her to confront her past. When she finds success with the publication of *Lady Oracle*, her first non-Gothic work, she suddenly becomes famous. Yet, she always remains connected to the floating "Fat Lady", and she often longs to be insulated in her former fat body. Success and fame threaten her fantasy world because they make her identity as Joan Foster all the more real.

She becomes involved with The Royal Porcupine, another example of a "Green-World Lover" who encourages the main character's transformation. Like Joan, he has a passion for alternative identities; he even hopes to change his name "legally" to the Royal Porcupine (LO, p. 240). He is very similar to Duncan in *The Edible Woman*, for he also provides fantasy and non-sense in Joan's

life. He is an eccentric artist, who uses as his medium "Con-create poetry", dead animals that symbolize the casualties of exploitation and victimization (LO, p. 241). Joan's affair with this man adds excitement to her life, initially, but it becomes a burden to her later.

The catalyst that forces Joan over the edge is Fraser Buchanan, professional blackmailer. He threatens to expose Joan's past and her affair with the Royal Porcupine. It is only when Joan becomes so entangled in her own lies that she stages her death. She flees to Italy to begin yet another new life and escape the wrath of her blackmailer, but she becomes so paranoid about her escape that she is convinced that she might be better off dead. Her struggle with the past and her confrontation with the present enable her to see the errors of her ways. When she faces the reporter who has been following her in Italy, she realizes that it is best to admit all the truths of her life. She can lie no longer about who she is and who she has been. This realization signifies freedom for Joan, and as she faces the truth, she overcomes the barriers that have prevented her true self from emerging.

To establish Joan as an "escape artist", Atwood relies on metaphoric landscape throughout the novel. She focuses on boundaries and escape, taking the reader from Canada to England and back again. Joan's escape to Italy, a place she has been with Arthur, symbolizes the "Other Side", that is the afterlife, for she migrates to this far away country after her staged death. She realizes that this magnificent escape is not the ideal end she had imagined. In fact, no escape could live up

to Joan's expectations, as she states:

The Other Side was no paradise, it was only a limbo: the Other Side was boring. There was no one to talk to and nothing to do. (LO, p. 309)

When Joan finally meets someone to talk to, the very man she dodges in Italy, she tells the truth for the first time. This confrontation with reality frees Joan from the cocoon of lies that she has created.

c) *Cat's Eye* 1988

In the final novel in this grouping, *Cat's Eye*, Atwood presents another "escape artist", who is running from memories of a childhood bully. She focuses on the nature of victimization and of escape from this state of turmoil, and the central metaphor of the book is the Cat's Eye, a souvenir from childhood. For as Atwood explains, this novel "is partly about being haunted" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p.237). Fullbrook explains that the "novel is set in classic Atwood terrain", and the reader can expect a connection between the landscape and the theme (Fullbrook, p. 190). As in *Lady Oracle*, Atwood uses the images of the Canadian wilderness and the newly-created suburbs, as well as the dangerous ravine, a symbol of "the wilderness cutting through the city and the site of sexual violation" (Fullbrook, p. 190).

Elaine Risley is the "escape artist" who must confront her past when she returns to Toronto for her art exhibition. The narrative follows her from her early days as a transient, living in the woods and in motels with her family, to the present; she is an established

artist, the survivor of a broken marriage, though now remarried, and the mother of two daughters. In between, the reader learns of Elaine's relationship with Cordelia, a character who shapes her life and inspires her art. The conflict and torture that she first experiences as a victim of Cordelia, Carol, and Grace teach Elaine about power and territory. She remembers the very day that the tables were turned and she became their victim. Trapped in the hole that the girls force her to enter, she identifies it as "the point at which I lost power" (CE, p. 107):

Cordelia and Grace and Carol take me to the deep hole in Cordelia's backyard Inside the hole it's dim and cold and damp and smells of toad's burrows
Nothing happens. When I was put into the hole I knew it was a game; now I know it is not one. I feel sadness, a sense of betrayal. Then I feel the darkness pressing down on me; then terror. (CE, p. 107)

Atwood uses metaphoric landscape in this scene to illustrate the nature of the victim. Later in the text, when these same girls leave Elaine in the ravine, she regains her dignity. Eventually, Elaine becomes the victimizer, a role which plagues her with guilt throughout the novel; the reader follows her in this transformation, learning about the nature of victimization as she moves through the territory.

The connection between Cordelia, the leader of this group, and Elaine remains a bond throughout their lives. Elaine eventually "changed places" with Cordelia by refusing to be the victim anymore. From the beginning of the novel, the reader senses that Elaine feels deeply

guilty about taking over this position of power because she knows how it feels to be the victim, but she must protect herself. This connection to Cordelia never leaves Elaine; she explains, "We are like the twins in old fables, each of whom has been given half a key" (CE, p. 411). From time to time, Elaine makes contact with Cordelia, but when Cordelia is placed in a "rest home" after a suicide attempt, Elaine loses touch with her (CE, p. 357). She also remains connected to Carol and Grace, though they leave during school. She imagines that Cordelia, Grace, and Carol are like the three witches in *Macbeth*, plotting her death. Elaine remembers their families, the Campbells and the Smeaths. Grace's mother, Mrs. Smeath, appears in Elaine's artwork, a representation of a "transplant...a displaced person" (CE, p. 405). She also remembers Grace's father, and the way he "lives a secret life of trains and escapes in his head" (CE, p. 164). He longs for excitement and identity in the female world where he lives.

Elaine begins her story with her memories of life on the open road with her mother and father and her brother, Stephen. She shares a special closeness with Stephen until gender boundaries dictate their separation. Living this transient life protects Elaine from these boundaries and concepts of life in the city. When her father accepts a job at the university, Elaine cannot wait to settle into their new house. Although she later regrets this, the stability of a home is very important to her as a child. She quickly receives an education in the accepted norms of society, though she never understands certain aspects, such as the BOYS door in her classroom.

She wonders: "How is going through a door different if you're a boy" (CE, p. 46). Grace and Carol teach her the domestic side of things, exposing her to Eaton Catalogues and proper clothes. Mrs. Smeath assumes the role of religious teacher, trying to save Elaine's damaged soul, but Elaine learns that Mrs. Smeath disapproves of Elaine's family and thinks that the abuse that the girls inflict on her is "God's punishment" (CE, p. 180).

One of the more cruel abuses and a turning point in the novel is the scene in the ravine. Cordelia throws Elaine's hat to the bottom of the ravine, daring Elaine to confront the danger and cold in the pit of the ravine. Stranded and unconscious at its base, Elaine imagines the Virgin Mary, a "Green-World Guide", saving her from this situation, giving her the strength to pull herself out. As in *Lady Oracle*, the ravine symbolizes sexuality, and it signifies Elaine's transformation to womanhood. At this point, Elaine learns to respect herself and to refuse to be the victim:

I am still a coward, still fearful; none of that has changed. But I turn and walk away from her. It's like stepping off a cliff, believing the air will hold you up. And it does. I see that I don't have to do what she says, and, worse, and better, I've never had to do what she says. I can do what I like. (CE, p. 193)

Elaine makes other friends, though "Grace and Cordelia and Carol hang around the edges of [her] life"; she refuses to hear them, to listen, and this robs them of their power. She has the Virgin Mary and her Cat's Eye to protect her from further abuse, but her realization of

her own power protects her the most.

Cordelia loses power and Grace and Carol leave the scene; Elaine enjoys her freedom. She hears from her mother that Cordelia will be attending her school, and she needs Elaine to walk her to school. This begins a second phase in their relationship. Cordelia is helpless; she depends on Elaine for companionship. Elaine takes advantage of Cordelia's vulnerability. Although she remembers that agony of being the victim, she can hardly resist enforcing her power over Cordelia. Her lack of confidence is an invitation to bullying that Elaine finds hard to resist. They have both been the victim, and this connection dictates their relationship. Elaine admits that she is "afraid of being Cordelia" (CE, p. 227). She remembers the horror of being victimized, being out of control. Elaine imagines an encounter between Cordelia and herself at the art exhibit. She begins to associate Cordelia with the lady that rescued her from the ravine, the Virgin Mary because both appear to her throughout the novel. The ghost of Cordelia that haunts Elaine reminds her of her nature as a victimizer; the vision of the Virgin Mary reminds her that she is protected and will never again be a victim.

The last actual encounter between Elaine and Cordelia happens at "The Dorothy Lyndwick Rest Home" (CE, p. 355). Cordelia has been reduced to this existence because she has tried to kill herself. She gets in touch with Elaine and begs her to come see her at the home. Then she pleads with her to help her escape. Elaine hesitates, and Cordelia replies, "So you won't...I guess you've always hated me...I'll get out anyway" (CE, p.

359). This is the last time that Elaine sees Cordelia, though she often dreams of her "falling, from a cliff or bridge" (CE, p. 360). Going home to Toronto and facing her memories of Cordelia help Elaine confront her past as victim and victimizer. Her present life with Ben is safe and fulfilling, but it lacks reality. Atwood uses landscape as metaphor to describe Elaine's present state in the western part of Canada:

I closed my eyes, and thought about the mountains on the coast. That's home, I told myself. That's where you really live. Among all that stagey scenery, too beautiful, like a cardboard movie backdrop. It's not real, it's not drab, not flat, not grubby enough. (CE, p. 41)

Elaine also explains the development of her art and her relationships with men. Enrolling in a class called Life Drawing, Elaine begins to learn about different perspectives. Just as the Cat's Eye enables her to "see the way it sees", so the class, and her teacher Josef Hrbik, give her new insight (CE, p. 141). It is here that Elaine begins "letting herself go" (CE, p. 277). She dresses in black, has an affair with Josef, meets Jon, her first husband, and begins to separate herself from her home. The affair with her art teacher, Josef, begins this series of events. Susie, Josef's other lover and Elaine's former classmate, becomes pregnant and she tries to abort the baby herself. Elaine has to rescue Susie from near death, and after this event, Susie disappears from Josef's life. Elaine abruptly ends her affair with Josef because once she changes roles from the other woman to the only woman, she finds she cannot handle the responsibility. Susie had been a crucial part

of the equation, and without her presence, Elaine loses interest in the relationship:

Without Susie, whatever has been keeping us in equilibrium is gone. The full weight of Josef rests on me, and he is too heavy for me. (CE, p. 322)

Elaine marries Jon, a failed artist of sorts, who eventually becomes a special effects man in the movies, a commercial artist. Elaine describes their broken relationship as "like a traffic accident"; they are "survivors of each other" and share a common bond through this survival (CE, p. 17). They share two daughters and are both remarried. Elaine stays in Jon's apartment in Toronto during her visit for the art show, and she must confront her past with him as well as her past with Cordelia. She and Jon cannot function together because neither one wants to take responsibility, "to be in charge" (CE, p. 341). They trap each other, and each one plans their escape from the other one. Atwood focuses on the boundary lines in marriage. Elaine and Jon both contribute to the destruction of the marriage because they cannot agree to remain in the confinement of the boundary lines.

Atwood presents the reader with a new version of the "escape artist" in *Cat's Eye*. Elaine is a successful artist; she has not compromised her artistic integrity, though she is forced to work in the commercial art industry for some time during her marriage to Jon. She has a happy relationship with Ben in an ideal setting. She escapes victimization at an early age. She seems to

have everything in life, happiness, success, love, children. Unlike the narrator of *Surfacing* and Joan Foster in *Lady Oracle*, Elaine appears adjusted from the beginning of the novel. She seems very happy with her life; yet, she has to confront the obstacles that she has left behind in her past to realize her present. She must walk through her old territory and chart her progress to the present. She has to confront the death of her parents and her brother, as well as her connection with Cordelia and Jon. She leaves Toronto after the art show, and on the plane she realizes what she misses:

In the two seats beside me are two old ladies ... laughing like cars ... amazingly carefree ... rambunctious ... innocent ... like children This is what I miss, Cordelia: not something that's gone, but something that will never happen. Two old women giggling over their tea. (CE, pp.420-421)

Elaine confronts the "old light" in her life, and she misses this "light" (CE, p.421). She longs for her other half, Cordelia.

Atwood's use of metaphoric landscape in the novel allows the reader to embark on the journey with Elaine. The territories are clearly defined. The wilderness is safe. Life on the road is exciting. When her family moves to their house in the suburbs, she remarks: "I want to be back in the motel, back on the road, in my old rootless life of impermanence and safety" (CE, p. 33). As stated, the ravine signifies danger; the city is fickle, never loyal or dependable. Elaine must come to terms with her past in these territories. She evolves as she moves from place to place.

Section iii: "The System"

a) *Bodily Harm* 1981

The final grouping of novels relate to characters who are forced to confront the system that victimizes them. Rennie Wilford, the despondent journalist, in Margaret Atwood's novel, *Bodily Harm* (1981), hopes to escape life's "massive involvement", but a malignant tumour in her left breast, followed by a mastectomy, and the break up of her relationship with her dominant lover, Jake, force her to confront the underlying problems in her life. Rennie shapes herself as the powerless victim; she believes that the worst in life has happened to her, and she is content to pass through each day dodging confrontation at all costs. She, alone, is responsible for the choices that she has made in her life: leaving Griswold for the city; accepting trivial magazine pieces; becoming involved in a destructive relationship.

From dissatisfaction with her career to her inability to find a suitable and loving partner, Rennie seems to be avoiding any real commitment to life. Like Joan Foster, Rennie is an "escape artist", intent on the evasion of the uncompromising realities that make up her life" (Rigney, p. 104). She has chosen the direction of her life, but she convinces herself that she is one of life's victims and has no control of her destiny. Like Atwood's previous novels, *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle*, and *Life Before Man*, *Bodily Harm* is a story about a woman who "must move from innocence to confrontation"; this is a novel of self-awareness and of self-creation (Rigney, p. 3).

Atwood plays with tense and narration so that the

reader pieces together Rennie's life in much the same way as she does from her prison cell in St. Antoine. As Rennie redefines the shape of her life, Atwood also explores new territory in her writing. She presents a "malleable" landscape that mirrors Rennie's own ability to change. The text has a filmlike quality with its flashback scenes and changing perspectives. The key to the novel is placing all the events into some order. To examine the book from the definitive first line to the ambiguous ending is to join Rennie in her journey. When questioned about the "deliberately unclear" ending to the novel, Atwood replied that it allows "the reader to participate in writing the book" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 227). There are several interpretations of the novel's ending. Some readers and critics, such as Jerome Rosenberg, believe that Rennie "sits in her dark prison cell, rotting away to the bitter end", and though this seems a rather pessimistic view, the evidence fully supports it (Rosenberg, p. 92). Other critics argue that Rennie returns to Toronto to record her experience.

Atwood begins the novel "This is how I got here, Rennie says"; a curious lack of quotation marks matched with the conflicting narration indicates that the reader must be aware of who is telling the story and what their purpose is in telling it. The reader immediately wants to know just where "here" is; it certainly is not her apartment in Toronto, which is the description that follows after this first line through to the next few pages. Though the description is given in the first person, Rennie tells the reader about the break-in at her apartment in the past tense. This first scene is

Atwood's warning that her readers must "pay attention" throughout the novel to moving tenses, changing narration, and chronologically misplaced events. The dialogue from Rennie's life in Canada is clearly from her memory, as it is not punctuated with quotation marks and is told from the past; yet Atwood chooses to tell this part of the story in the third person. The only first person dialogues concerning Rennie's past are the mysterious conversations between Rennie and Lora.

After Rennie's first person account of the break-in at her apartment, the text moves to the third person where it remains until the first account of Rennie's life in Griswold at the beginning of Part II. The reader questions the peculiar manner in which she is telling her story; it seems as though she is telling someone who is sitting right next to her. The next such account happens in the beginning of Part III on page 109 with an exchange of stories between Rennie and Lora. Though Lora is initially introduced in the text on page 86, the reader does not learn of her past until she tells her story in her own voice on pages 110-115. This dialogue warns the reader that surfaces cannot be trusted. To solve the puzzle, the reader must look beneath these surfaces.

Underlying the theme of character in relation to body is the subject of colonization. As a journalist sent to report on the tourist aspects of the two islands, Rennie becomes involved in a greater story, that of the political state of the islands. Before the journey, Rennie regards the islands as a paradise, cultivated only for the pleasure of tourists. During her vacation, she realizes that the true nature of the islands could not be

further from the truth. Used by tourists for pleasure and more importantly by powerful governments as a barrier between themselves and Cuba, the islanders feel isolated and alone. Several parties promise to take the islanders' concerns on board as part of their political plan; yet none of them can be trusted because they are all power-hungry. Colonization and the hope for freedom are at the heart of this novel. By contrasting the pictures in the travel brochures with the actual reality as seen in the rapidly disappearing beauty of the landscape, Atwood is able to show what lies in the inner surfaces:

The beach isn't one of the seven jewel-like beaches with clean sparkling iridescent sand advertised in the brochure. It's narrow and gravelly and dotted with lumps of coagulated oil, soft as chewing gum and tar-coloured. (BH, p. 79)

That Rennie takes the flight, arrives safely in Toronto, and records her nightmarish experience would be the more optimistic conclusion, but the evidence for the other outcome, that is Rennie's demise, is far too convincing. When asked about the novel's ending, Atwood explained that "whether she gets out or not, she still has undergone an experience that has changed her way of seeing" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 228). And perhaps Rennie's fate is irrelevant, but to decide this one must look at the function of her character in the text. In Earl G. Ingersoll's collection, *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*, Atwood comments on the character of Rennie. She claims that Rennie is an "everyperson", the sort of person who "can afford to worry about...personal

health ... fitness ...personal romances" (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 148). Atwood argues that in many countries where poverty and revolution are common, people don't have time to focus on the future; they live from day to day, never expecting too much. Rennie believes because she has lost in life she is exempt from future tragedy; she has paid her dues. She has unreal expectations of life and of what she rightly deserves. Atwood's carefully manouevred text allows the reader to join Rennie on her journey and to discover the same truths.

In her response to the question of Rennie's fate, Atwood makes reference to Rennie's "way of seeing" which relates back to the novel's epigraph, a quotation from John Berger's (1926 -) *Ways of Seeing*:

A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. By contrast, a woman's presence...defines what can be done to her.

This epigraph introduces the focal point of the novel, the nature of the victim and the process of escaping victimization. As Rigney explains, several of Atwood's novels, from *Surfacing* (1972) onwards, project heroines who refuse to be victims. Rennie has been the ultimate victim throughout the novel, and as she sits in her cell licking Lora's wounds she realizes that she is no longer the victim waiting for a saviour. "She will never be rescued. She has already been rescued. She is not exempt. Instead she is lucky, suddenly, finally, she's overflowing with luck, it's this luck holding her up" (BH, p. 301).

This symbolic gesture, Rennie's licking of Lora's

wounds is significant in the development of the novel. In an interview with Bonnie Lyons, Atwood acknowledges the power of touching in this scene:

Lyons: Certain images seem to me to play off each other, from one novel to the next. Besides the food images, there are the hands.

Atwood: Hands are quite important to me. The hand to me is an extension of the brain I don't think of the brain as something that is just in your head. The brain is also in your body And the brain is certainly in the hands.

Lyons: It seems to me that certain symbolic hand gestures are central in several of the novels...the breakthrough gesture is when she [Rennie] touches Lora. (Atwood from Ingersoll, p. 229)

This scene, when Rennie touches Lora, is vitally important in her journey. She no longer feels uncomfortable with the inner surfaces. Rennie has to depend on Lora for "reflection" because there is no mirror in the cell. This image of a mirror is Atwood's "instrument for establishing identity, for seeing the truth about one's self (Rigney, p. 117). When Rennie learns to rely on Lora, she develops into a character that can touch, can face the reality within herself. This theme relates back to Woolf's belief that an awareness of other people helps one to gain insight into one's inner self.

Before her imprisonment, Rennie fears the bits of life that live beneath the surfaces. "From the surface you can feel nothing," Rennie says of her mastectomy scar, "but she no longer trusts surfaces" (BH, p. 48). This "mastectomy is symbolic of a psychological separation from the self both as woman and as artist, a

division between the actual self and the self one attempts to create, a condition which is potentially as deadly as the cancer" (Rigney, p. 104). When Rennie develops breast cancer, she believes the worst that life can throw her way has come and gone. Her subsequent imprisonment opens her eyes to a new "way of seeing". Certainly, she does not deserve breast cancer, but nor does it exempt her from future troubles. She sees the cancer as a possible death sentence, but the dangers she faces in St. Antoine and Ste. Agathe force her to face the reality of being imprisoned in a foreign country. On this journey, she learns about restriction, confinement, isolation, alienation, boundaries and death. It is this self-awareness that saves Rennie, though she may never leave the cell; this realization and confrontation with the truth that hides beneath the surfaces becomes the "luck holding her up". She must rely on her memory; Atwood aptly names the boat from Ste. Agathe to St. Antoine the *Memory* in an attempt to show that Rennie's memories are a form of transportation guiding her through her journey.

To look at other interpretations of the ending, such as the belief "that Rennie returns to Toronto to write *Bodily Harm*", is rather pointless because the outcome for Rennie is not that different. Atwood uses characters in other novels, such as Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, as examples of the benefit of writing and recording experiences; yet whether Rennie actually returns to Toronto to put pen to paper or mentally records it in her prison cell is irrelevant for her own benefit. To share the truth about the revolution with the rest of the world

would allow Rennie to fulfill her responsibility to Dr. Minnow and to Lora, who are both desperate to have their stories told, but Atwood rarely ties up all the loose ends in her novels. Rennie transforms into a character who can touch without looking; she is no longer afraid of the truth that hides under surfaces.

b) *The Handmaid's Tale* 1985

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood presents a woman who also faces political boundaries; Offred's struggle begins as an external one, rather than an internal one. She knows her true self, but is forced by a political regime to become another person. In the Republic of Gilead, women are separated into groups depending on their ability to conceive and their loyalty to the government. The fictitious battle zone allows Atwood to illustrate one possible future for women. By using metaphoric landscape, Atwood can create this *what if* scenario. These groups of women are as follows: Wives, who have the most power because of their husbands; Aunts, who oversee the Handmaids; Econowives, wives of lesser government officials; Marthas, who cook, clean, and run the domestic affairs of the household; Handmaids, who bear children for the Wives; and Unwomen, who are forced to clean up toxic waste in the Colonies. Offred is fertile, and she has married a previously married man, thus making her marriage illegal in the eyes of Gilead. Therefore, the government officials assign her to the role of Handmaid. She loses her husband and her daughter, as well as her name, her job, and her money.

Offred quickly learns the balance of power in

Gilead, and she knows that as a woman, whether she were a Wife or an Unwoman, she would never have the power that the men have. She realizes that the men of Gilead have cleverly divided women into groups to disempower them. The officials of Gilead have sold the idea to women that they are all working together when in reality they are battling against each other for power. Offred does not know who she can trust, and because her future hangs in the balance, she cannot afford to make mistakes. The one person she knows she can trust is her old friend, Moira, who is also a Handmaid. Atwood presents a touching relationship between Moira and Offred, and though Offred comes to trust several other characters, both male and female, in the novel, Moira remains her most trusted and loved friend.

Moira's function in the novel is extremely important because she represents a strong feminist, lesbian woman, who has been subjected to the imprisonment of Gilead. Atwood includes Moira in the novel to show that even the strongest woman, who is aware of the dangers of an all male oligarchy, can be disempowered by this nightmarish society. Also important is the social view of lesbians, especially in Gilead. Moira's sexual preference is non-procreative, and it is therefore wrong in the eyes of Gilead. Even Offred confesses to an initial feeling of homophobia when she first discovers Moira is a lesbian. Offred reveals that for some time they no longer hugged until Moira told Offred that she was not attracted to her. Offred learns that the society of Gilead is ruled by fear, and she must be discreet in forming alliances.

In order to be discreet, Offred must appear to

integrate into the prescribed society set by Gilead. She knows that there are Eyes everywhere seeking out traitors. Offred does not want to change Gileadean society; she wants to escape it. She wants to find her husband and her daughter, and she knows she must reach the borders of Canada to be free. She longs to resume something resembling her former life. Offred's internal struggle grows from her deceit. She must be deceitful and act the part of the loyal Handmaid to escape this prison. Yet, she has difficulty acting the part without becoming it. Rigney explains Offred's process of change as she attempts to become the part of the Handmaid:

Offred makes some furtive attempts at communication with other Handmaids, but fear of betrayal prevents any meaningful exchange. As is the case with all of Atwood's previous heroines, Offred values her own physical survival above sisterhood, and in doing so sacrifices her own integrity, that which is, for Atwood, more crucial even than life. (Rigney, p.116)

The longer she remains a Handmaid, the less she remembers of her former life. Her long talks with the Commander about the former society make her realize that the way things used to be was not so ideal either. However, Offred can no longer live with the Gileadean society dictating her every move.

Unlike Atwood's other characters, Offred has only limited means of mental escape. She is not allowed to read or write, and she must rely on the pictures in her head to transcend her circumstances. Forbidden to roam freely as she wants, Offred becomes connected to the internal symbol, the house; it is here that she is

imprisoned:

I know why there is no glass, in front of the water-colour picture of blue irises, and why the window only opens partly and why the glass in it is shatterproof. It isn't running away they're afraid of. We couldn't get far. It's the other escapes, the ones you can open yourself, given a cutting edge. (THT, p. 17-18)

From this passage, the reader knows that Offred has considered suicide, but she is ultimately a survivor so this is not an option for her. The Handmaids are also forced to wear a headdress that prevents them from seeing the surrounding landscape; they can only look forward. Gilead has taken away all that is external, and so Offred must connect with the internal. She lies on her bed thinking of her mother, her daughter, her husband, and Moira. These characters allow her to escape mentally, but she knows she must rely on someone to help her physically escape. Atwood presents boundaries within boundaries in this novel: the boundary of Gilead; the boundary of the center; the boundary of the Commander's house; and the boundary of Offred's own womb. The Commander can pass through any boundary he desires, whereas Offred cannot. When he allows Offred access to his study, it appears that she has gained some freedom to move about freely; however, she must function in this territory under the Commanders' terms. She has no choice.

The two characters whom Offred comes to trust are Ofglen, another Handmaid, and Nick, a Guardian. She has lost a part of herself in these troubled times, and the descriptions of her relationships with Nick and Ofglen

illustrate this change. Offred remembers the way in which she unconditionally loved her husband, her child, and even Moira. Now that she is alone and constantly in danger, she forms relationships that will benefit her. Offred is solely concerned with herself and her escape because the society of Gilead has reduced her to this state.

Ofglen and Offred finally develop an alliance after some time. Each is afraid to trust the other, for each knows that the other could turn them in for plotting against Gilead. A betrayal against a fellow Handmaid would mean extra points for oneself and perhaps a slight promotion in a society that pits women against one another. Offred is delighted to find an alliance in Ofglen, but they have different goals. Offred merely wants to escape; whereas, Ofglen wants to bring down the establishment. Ofglen is already a part of some underground group fighting against Gilead. Offred becomes tired of listening to Ofglen's information and her plots. Offred admits that she no longer cares about Ofglen's information and her plans. She states that the things that Ofglen "whispers seem...unreal. What use are they...now...so lazy I have become" (THT, pp. 282-3). Offred's strength is weakening day by day, and she is losing her desire to escape. Gilead begins to convince her that she is lucky to be a Handmaid.

Offred's other alliance, Nick, develops from an initial physical attraction. Serena Joy, the Commander's Wife and Offred's employer, is desperate to have a child, and she organizes a meeting between Offred and Nick to

ensure a pregnancy. Offred has no success with the sterile Commander, and she is on her last assignment before reevaluation. She is happy to comply because it has been so long since she has had any physical pleasure. Gileadean society considers Offred an object, a territory or zone that may not be crossed by unauthorized people. After many visits with Nick, Offred begins to trust him. She also begins to become attached to him, and sees little reason to leave Gilead. Offred becomes comfortable in her boundaries:

The fact is that I no longer want to leave, escape, cross the border to freedom. I want to be here, with Nick, where I can get at him.

Telling this, I'm ashamed of myself...Even now, I can recognize this admission as a kind of boasting...it demonstrates how extreme and therefore justified it was, for me...like stories of illness and near-death, from which you have recovered; like stories of war. (THT, p.283)

Nick appears to be loyal to his Commander and to Gilead; Offred knows that he may be acting the part as she is. Though Nick helps Offred to escape, the reader never learns whether Nick is true to her cause. As her diary is discovered in Maine near the borders and appears in the Historical Notes, the reader can only assume that Offred finds freedom. In this novel, Atwood relies on metaphor to show her readers the extreme boundaries that could possibly surround women. She also tells her story realistically. For Offred to sustain her desire to fight the system throughout the novel would be less believable. Offred is, like most of Atwood's characters, a transitional character.

As Fullbrook establishes, Atwood "traces [her

characters'] genesis of change", and this makes her characters believable, workable and mobile. They work within their assigned areas, showing all their options, before crossing the boundaries (Fullbrook, p. 176). Like Rennie, Offred's escape does not define her as a heroine. Offred's actual freedom is as unsure as Rennie's in *Bodily Harm*. It all comes down to the interpretation of the reader. Offred has been able to leave a record of her experiences, and this gives her a sort of immortality that negates the importance of her final outcome. "The very act of writing, of recording, is for Atwood as well as for her heroines, the final and irrevocable commitment to one's society and to one's own humanity" (Rigney, p. 121). She may find her way to the freedom of Europe, or she may be captured and hung. Like Rennie, the important message is that she has confronted her fears and fought the system. She has crossed the boundaries that restricted her transformation.

* * *

Part IV: Conclusion

"Similar metaphorical writing in later twentieth-century novels may be read in the same way [as in earlier twentieth-century novels] - suggesting, perhaps, a continuing tradition of alternative quest and vision in women's writing." (Horner and Zlosnik)

"From classical times, writing about metaphor has been dominated by the notion of 'place' - 'of territory already staked out, of the tropological as well as the topological'. Metaphor itself is seen as the crossing of boundaries, as a transgressive act." (Horner and Zlosnik)

After examining the various texts of Woolf and Atwood, this thesis has shown the progression from the early twentieth-century style of Woolf to the present style as seen in Atwood. Both authors reflect aspects of their society. In the 1920s and '30s when Woolf was writing, society was more concerned with loss, a reaction to the deaths from the war. At the forefront of Modernism, Woolf was able to pursue her quest for a new type of novel that concentrated on the inner aspects of character; it set the tone for Woolf's novels. The changing atmosphere of the 1960s, including the Feminist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, allowed Atwood to present her new form of novel that dealt with freedom and victimization. Both authors address the status of women in their society, and metaphoric landscape allows them to illustrate the territories in which women are forced to move. Crossing boundaries by using this technique enables Woolf and Atwood to present new patterns for

women in which they can shape themselves.

This thesis has shown a comparison between Woolf and Atwood. Both authors use metaphoric landscape to reflect their characters' inner thoughts. As seen in Part II, Woolf uses this technique to explain her characters' reaction to their society. They each are forced to come to terms with loss, memory and death. In characters, such as Jacob Flanders, Mrs. Dalloway and Orlando, Woolf presents a Ulysses-like figure, who is searching for truth, meaning and purpose. Atwood also presents transitional characters, such as Marian McAlpin, the nameless narrator in *Surfacing*, Joan Foster, Rennie Wilford, Elaine Risley and Offred, who are searching for the truth that is within each one.

Woolf and Atwood use different images, symbols and metaphoric configurations to shape their stories. For Woolf, the sea is the most prevalent image; it represents "the possibilities that lie beyond society, outside patriarchy, and within the future" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 7). Atwood is also concerned with the "possibilities that lie...within the future" as she demonstrates in her futuristic fantasy, *The Handmaid's Tale*. This future may seem bleak, but this does not mean that Atwood has a pessimistic outlook. She pursues one possible future, and describes it as a "dangerous and hostile place". Rather than seeing the future "through rose-coloured glasses", Atwood offers reality in a rather surreal setting (Rigney, pp. 132-133).

The statement made in the introduction that metaphoric landscape is a powerful tool that has changed and continues to change the way that society views women

and that women view society relates to this notion of pursuing one possible future. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood deliberately exaggerates one society's attitude towards women in order to highlight what she sees as the attitude towards women in 1980's society. As the triangular pattern in *Life Before Man* allows the reader to change perspectives throughout the novel, the angle from which Atwood writes *The Handmaid's Tale* enables her to show her readers the archaic attitudes that the futuristic Republic of Gilead has towards women. In doing this, she is also stating her own view, as a woman, of that society. The connection between the two perspectives, society's view of women and women's view of society, is cyclical in its relationship. Woolf and Atwood cannot help but interject the woman's view of society as they describe society's view of women. This relationship is similar to the individual/group connection that Woolf pursues in *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. The web-like structure of such a relationship signifies the dependency of the one upon the other; they are each other's support.

If the sea is Woolf's most apparent metaphoric configuration, then the wilderness is Atwood's most apparent. In novels, such as *Surfacing* and *Cat's Eye*, Atwood examines "the forces of the wild, fluidity and the unknown" (Horner and Zlosnik, p. 7). As in Woolf, this metaphoric configuration allows Atwood to explore the possibilities of the future and of freedom, two concerns that place her in Fullbrook's study of ethical responsibilities. Atwood bases most of her work on the

second part of the relationship between society and women, that is the way that women view society. Her characters search for place in their community, yet they change the way that they view the community rather than allowing their society to change them. Atwood shapes transitional heroines who recognise their internal attitudes towards society and realize these attitudes have confined them more than society has itself.

This thesis has shown that Woolf and Atwood approach boundaries in different ways but for similar reasons. Whereas Woolf uses metaphoric landscape to explore the way that her characters' inner struggle mirrors the external surroundings, Atwood uses the technique to examine the way that the external surroundings cause her characters to reevaluate their position in the community. There is still a reflection occurring, but Woolf and Atwood are on different sides of the mirror. Atwood is mainly concerned with the political, whereas Woolf focuses on the psychological. Here again is the distinction between the group (Atwood) and the individual (Woolf). Atwood goes from B to A, and Woolf goes from A to B. They are both working with the same equation, but they approach it from opposite sides. Metaphoric landscape is the tool that allows Woolf and Atwood to pursue their goals, and it connects the two authors, illustrating a common denominator between these women writers.

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END NOTES

- 1 Ellen Moers: Author of Literary Women: The great writers (1976).
- 2 Elaine Showalter: Author of A Literature of Their Own: British women novelists from Bronte to Lessing (1977) and The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on women, literature and theory (1986).
- 3 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar: Authors of The Madwoman in the Attic: The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination (1979) and No Man's Land: The place of the woman writer in the twentieth-century, Vol. 1: The war of the words and Vol. 2: Sexchanges (1988 and 1989)
- 4 Edith Newbold Wharton: American novelist who wrote The House of Mirth (1905) and The Age of Innocence (1920).
- 5 Charlotte Perkins Gilman: American feminist writer who produced The Yellow Wallpaper (1899), What Diana Did (1910) and The Crux (1911).
- 6 Kate O' Flaherty Chopin: American writer whose works include At Fault (1890) and The Awakening (1899).
- 7 Bloomsbury Group: A circle of university students and artists that began meeting at the Stephen household in 1904. The group included Virginia Woolf, J.M. Keynes, Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey.
- 8 Sir Leslie Stephen: Author of History of English Thought in the 18th Century (1876) and editor of the Dictionary of National Biography, his life's work. He first married Thackeray's daughter, Minny, and then married Julia Duckworth. This second marriage produced Virginia Woolf.

9 Giles Lytton Strachey: Biographer and essayist who wrote Eminent Victorians (1918). He was a member of the Bloomsbury Group.

10 Roger Eliot Fry: Art critic and painter who established the *Burlington Magazine* in 1903. He was a member of the Bloomsbury Group and director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City from 1905 - 1910.

11 John Maynard Keynes: An economist and member of the Bloomsbury Group who produced A General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money (1936).

12 Sigmund Freud: Creator of psychoanalysis who practiced in Vienna. His concepts of neurology, psychology and sexual development influenced twentieth-century thinking.

13 James Augustine Aloysius Joyce: An Irish novelist whose works include Dubliners (1914), A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1915), Ulysses (1922) and Finnegan's Wake (1939).

14 Leonard Woolf: He was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, and he married Virginia Stephen in 1912. He helped to create The Hogarth Press in 1917.

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