

Synopsis of the proposed Ph.D. thesis entitled

The Fiction of Mavis Gallant : A Post-Modern Perspective

by :

Shri R. G. Chavan

Professor,

Bharti Vidyapeeth College of Engineering,

Near Chitranagari, Kolhapur.

Research Guide

Dr. P. A. Attar

Professor & Head,

Department of English,

Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Chapter I

Introduction

I. I. Changing Contours of Canadian Literature

Canadian fiction published in the early phase of the 20th century reflected high quality work and the improvement was not only seen in the quality of craftsmanship but also in the increased degree of originality. In fiction, late nineteenth Century authors were canonized for their ability to appropriate Canadian materials to the form of the European national historical romance. *A Legend of Quebec* consolidated the myth that English Canada's literary identity was to be forged by moulding French Canada's colourful history and distinctive society to popular forms of English and American fiction. Canadian best-sellers during the last decades of the nineteenth century were facile romances of French Canada, like Gilbert Parker's *Seats of the Mighty* (1896), and quaint stories of rural French Canadian life modeled on American local colour fiction.

Many of Canada's strongest First Nations authors are women, among them Ruby Slipperjack, Joan Crate and Lee Maracle, and some of their most compelling writing is autobiographical, such as Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973). The work of native writers has recently become available in two important anthologies, viz. *All My Relations* (1990) edited by the native writer, Thomas King, and *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (1992), co-edited by Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie.

Concern about the presence of First Nations people in Canadian life and literature had already been raised in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974), one of the most important Canadian novels of the past twenty years.

Ironically, as critics of the 1970s attempted to delineate and delimit uniquely Canadian literary themes and approaches, such as survival (Margaret Atwood's *Survival*), a mythic relationship with the land (Northrop Frye's *The Bush garden* and D.G. Jone's *Butterfly on Rock*) or the bicultural inheritance (Ronald Sutherland's *Second Image*), their generalizations were being deconstructed by the authors themselves, who opened Canadian writing to unexpected, problematic narrative and thematic concerns. The easy manoeuvring among traditional and innovative forms of novel, story criticism and poetry now typical of many authors, including Robert Kroetsch (for an example of his work, see *What the Crow Said*) Michael Ondaaje, Margaret Atwood and George Bowering, indicates an increasing flexibility of genre and narrative stance.

New literary ideologies have been accompanied by new social ideologies. In historical fiction, the ironic questioning of Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977) has replaced the earnest nationalism of earlier authors. Jay Kogawa's account of the treatment of Japanese Canadians in her award-winning poetic novel, *Obasan* (1981), swiftly integrated the historical tragedy of one group of Canada's non-white immigrants into the country's literary consciousness.

During 1950s and sixties the most provocative as well as one of the most brilliant Canadian poets, Layton took as his mission the demolition of the Anglo-Canadian complacency with powerful lyrics celebrating intellectual and physical passion, as in the final stanza of "*Whatever Else Poetry is Freedom.*"

Frances Brooke wrote the first ever Canadian novel, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) and established a pattern of defensive writing that continued for more than a century. Her work set the stone rolling for the rich bulk of Canadian fiction that was to follow. It wouldn't be wrong to say that she also laid the foundation of the Canadian women's fiction, which later on was perfected by Margaret Atwood, Margaret Lawrence, Audrey Thomas Mavis Gallant and others.

Much Canadian fiction between 1960 and 1973 demonstrated a continuity with the past. It was academic, sometimes arcane, usually middle class in its affirmation and rejection of values, and it was concerned with the psychic isolation that recurs so frequently as a motif in modern literature.

The short story was, in the 1960s, possibly under the influence of film, reborn as an exciting art form. Inevitably, as there were over 1,100 stories by over 550 authors published in Canadian periodicals between 1960 and 1973, many were written to formula or with little artistic control. To list the practitioners that reviewers found the most successful is to

list the chief prose writers of the period; Atwood, Blaise, Mat Cohen, Elliott, Gallant, Garner, Godfrey, Helwig (for *The Streets of summer*, 1969), Hood, Laurence, Levine, Lowry, MacEwen, Metcalf, Munro, Newman, Nowlan, Richler, Rule, Smith, Thomas, Wiebe. The work of Mavis Gallant can be seen in this context also, questioning the enclosures caused by marriage and family and providing assertions of independent identity. Beside her struggles to control style and create character, various other books might seem slight. With talents like Godfrey's and Atwood's Laurence's and Butler's Gallant's Kroetsch's and Wiebe's, Munro's and Matt Cohen's, Canadian fiction in 1973 was still developing. But these writers and their contemporaries, during the preceding decade, had already produced some intellectually sharp and stylistically adept short stories and novels.

Northrop Frye remarks on "the colossal verbal explosion that has taken place in Canada since 1960". And indeed, quantitatively, there has been an extraordinary upswing in literary production, fostered by many circumstances, including cheaper printing processes, public subsidies to publishing, and a kind of creative upsurge, in some way connected with the rising up of national pride, without which these mechanical forms of assistance would have been useless. In most areas of writing the growth has been both qualitative and quantitative. A fresh sureness of voice and touch has appeared in poetry, where a surprisingly high proportion of the hundreds of new

books – often by new poets – that have appeared each year have been distinctive in both tone and accomplishment. With a new sense of the past as myth as well as fact, the historians and biographers during the past decade and a half have been mapping out all the neglected reaches of the record of Canada as a cluster of regions and peoples rather than as a nation in the older European sense. Drama has moved out of the restricting field of radio, and plays that are both actable on stage and publishable as books have appeared with astonishing frequency over the past decade. Finally, criticism has achieved the kind of maturity and subtlety which is one of the signs of a literature's coming of age. In fiction alone the situation has been different. There are not more books, but those that are published in the 1970's are surprisingly better in quality than all except a few novels of past decades, and their variety of approach has increased phenomenally.

Some fourteen hundred volumes of fiction were published by Canadians between 1880 and 1920, an average of thirty-five a year. Between 1920 and 1940, according to Desmond Pacey, writing in the same History, the annual average of Canadian works of fiction remained almost exactly the same, with seven hundred books appearing over twenty years. Between 1940 and 1960, according to figures presented by Hugo McPherson, there appears to have been an actual drop in publication figures, since he counts up only 570 works of fiction appearing over two decades, but he did not count

books published by Canadians abroad, so that the annual figure can probably be taken as very near to the thirty-five that had prevailed so consistently between 1880 and 1940. Spot checks of two years during this period revealed figures of thirty-five and forty respectively, bringing us curiously close to that average of thirty-five volumes per year which prevailed between 1880 and 1940.

Yet despite the fact that no greater numbers of novels are being published by Canadians now than in 1890 or 1930 or 1950 and although far smaller areas on bookstore shelves are now occupied by works of fiction, there is no evidence that in Canada the novel is a dying or even a sickly genre; on the contrary, the novel and the short story both occupy positions of prestige in the 1970s, among both critics and scholars, which no kind of Canadian fiction occupied in earlier decades.

The great change which has happened, while the number of books of fiction published in Canada remains so constant over almost a century, is that the quality of craftsmanship has improved and the degree of original creation has increased steadily, decade by decade, since the 1920s. As Northrop Frye remarked of the period between 1880 and 1920, "not all the fiction is romance, but nearly all of it is formula-writing." Of Canadian fiction in the 1970s, it can be said that, while romance in a somewhat different form does indeed exist, only a small proportion of the books that is published can be regarded as formula writing, which survives

mainly in the curious subculture represented by nurse romances, inferior crime novels, and soft porn.

Realism as ordinarily defined (in terms of either Godwin's "*Things as they are*" or Zola's naturalism or the Marxists' social realism) had not played a very significant role in Canadian fiction. Where an important novelist such as Frederick Philip Grove or Morley Callaghan or Hugh Mac Lennan or Mordecai Richler – has used techniques generally regarded as "realist," the realism has almost always turned out to be one of the secondary elements in what is primarily a moral drama (Grove), a homiletic parable (Callaghan), an imaginative gloss on history (MacLennan), or a satire (Richler) which uses fantasy as much as realism to gain its ends.

A few Canadian writers could indeed be called realists in the same way as we apply that label to American novelists like Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser. Robert Stead, the early twentieth century novelist of the prairies and author of *The Homesteaders* (1916) and *Grain* (1926), was perhaps the most important early representative of the tradition. A genuine realist of a later generation, Hugh Garner, retains some standing even today in the Canadian literary world, and is respected for his short stories and novels of Toronto working-class life, such as *Cabbagetown* (1950). During the 1930s a few isolated novels of some merit might have been classed as vaguely "social realist," such as Irene Baird's still impressive

chronicle of class struggle, *Waste Heritage* (1939), perhaps the best of its kind to be written in Canada.

But the main development of Canadian fiction in fact bypasses the matter of realism, European or North American, largely because Canadians, faced with the wilderness on one side and a dangerously powerful neighbour on the other, had little doubt as to the actual nature of their predicament; what they needed was the combination of mythology and ideology that would enable them to emerge from mere escapism and present a countervision more real than actuality. Hence the weakness of realism as a tradition in literature or, for that matter, in the visual arts, where a national consciousness was first expressed through the highly coloured and emphatically outlined formalism of the Group of Seven and Emily Carr.

What one does see, observing the transition that began in the later 1920s, is the change in the novel from formulaic and commercially motivated romance to a genuine Canadian twentieth century romanticism, which must use fantasy and dreams as paths to reality, which must accept myth as the structure that subsumes history, which in its ultimate degree of the fantastic must recognize and unite with its opposite, satire, the logically absurd extension of realism.

Little Canadian fiction that was published before 1900 now seems worth rereading either for pleasure or for the kind of subliminally directed information that, at its most sensitive,

literature can project over the centuries. The basic purpose of the early literature of any colonial culture, like the basic purpose of transplanted peasant folk arts, is not to define the future but to consecrate the past. Faced by the wilderness, man seeks to assert the familiar, not to evoke the unknown, and so colonial literature generally attempts to re-enact against the backdrop of a new land the achievements of an abandoned way of life. Nothing could be more devastating as a symbol of this attitude than the fact that the English Oliver Goldsmith, who wrote "*The Deserted Village*," should be followed by a Canadian Oliver Goldsmith, seeking to repair the damage to the good life with that immeasurably more banal poem, *The Rising Village* (1825).

In eighteenth-century Frances Brooke, writing the first of all novels of Canada sets a pattern until in the years after Confederation the American threat grew less urgent and the northern wilderness more penetrable. The novel is perhaps the genre that most requires a sense of involvement with the actual, the touch of verisimilitude necessary to authenticate the transfiguration of fantasy. And the nineteenth century in Canadian literature was not unjustly defined by the early critic John Bourinot, who in 1893 remarked favourably on the achievements of Canadians in history, poetry, and the essay, but added that "there is one respect in which Canadians have never won any marked success, and that is the novel or romance."

The most vigorous early Canadian fiction was in fact written by satirists in the Maritime provinces who had no thought of writing novels, such as Thomas McCulloch in *Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* (1860) and Thomas Haliburton in *The Clockmarker* (1836). Both McCulloch and Haliburton wrote episodically, each defining his series as *sermons* in fiction, and their purpose of presenting the ills of society rather than developing the inner and individual worlds of that society's inhabitants, which prevented them from ever creating the kind of self-consistent world of the imagination which is the true fictional achievement.

McCulloch and Haliburton established a long Canadian lineage of ironists and satirists, and they encouraged among Canadians a fatal illusion that they are a humorous people, but in terms of the novel it was an impasse into which they led. Even the much revered Stephen Leacock, perhaps the best-known Canadian writer in the early decades of the 20th century, endowed with an extraordinary ironic sensibility and a great fund of sharp and true wisdom, failed in the essential fictional task because all his aims were, in the end, didactic rather than creative.

For most of the early Canadian novelists, writing was a way of earning or supplementing a living, with added as a special bonus – the hope of entertaining or edifying one's readers. An impressive proportion of early Canadian fiction

writers were clergymen of evangelical bent, only one of whom had the kind of talent that transfigured the Reverend Charles William Gordon into the novelist Ralph Connor and in the process developed one of the three or four fictional voices that still speak out of the Canadian nineteenth century with a degree of conviction.

One is the solitary masterpiece of James De Mille, an academic who for the most part wasted a genuine talent on writing humorous potboilers and boys adventure stories for the American market. *A strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* is the only book by De Mille that continues to be read: it never found a publisher during his life and was not brought out until 1888, eight years after his death.

An even sharper mind than De Mille's is evident in Sara Jeannette Duncan's best book, *The Imperialist* (1994). Sara Jeannette Duncan was one of the many Canadians, like Mordecai Richler, Norman Levine and Margaret Laurence who matured their talents in long years abroad, in Duncan's case in England and especially in India, which became the setting of many of her novels. Like Henry James, who much influenced her, she was greatly concerned with the accentuation of both virtues and failings that takes place when people transplant themselves into alien settings, like Canadians in Britain and the British in India, yet her qualities as a writer are most admirably shown in the only one of her novels that is set in

Canada. *The Imperialist*' is a many-levelled novel of sophistication and wit such as no other Canadian wrote before 1914 and few have written since, a study of political motivations but also of small-town Canadian manners, observed with an eye for the comedy as well as the pathos of ambition and written with great skill and detachment.

A similar, though less successful, effort to “understand and make the reader see” is to be found in the work of the early twentieth-century writer Frederick Niven, Chilean born and oriented in his writing towards western Canada as well as towards the Scotland of his childhood. Niven, again, was a writer who used some of the techniques of realism for other purposes, since basically he was a fictional historian – rather than a historical novelist – dedicated to presenting history as adventure.

His most ambitious novels – the trilogy concerning developments on the prairies and in the Rockies from the early to the late nineteenth century, *The Flying Years* (1935), *Mine Inheritance* (1940) and *The Transplanted* (1944) - never received the attention that was due their extraordinarily authentic re-creation of time and place. Niven was weak in developing those conventional elements of the novel, character and plot; he tended to produce episodic pageants rather than sustained narratives.

It is a long step from the urban and urbane concerns of Sara Jeannette Duncan, but not so far from the action-in-a-

landscape approach of Niven, to the handful of turn-of-the-century writers who produced for the first time a characteristic Canadian group expression in prose that can be compared with the more solid and celebrated achievement of the much more personally knit Group of Seven in painting. These were the nature writers, the outdoorsmen, who emerge with Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts during the last years of the nineteenth century. The outdoors story and the animal story became very popular around 1900, and this was the first period in which Canadian writers began to draw the attention of the whole English-reading world.

Of the two leading exponents of the animal story, Seton was the better naturalist and tended to be the more didactic, striving with many lapses into pathos – to portray the actual lives of animals as nearly as possible, and in this sense he was a realist.

A much more successful exercise in bringing man into a fictionally viable relationship with the wilderness is Martin Allerdale Grainger's single novel, *Woodsmen of the West* (1908), a fine small work which marks an almost unrecognized transition point in Canadian writing. If one seeks a work of true realism in Canadian fiction, *Woodsmen of the West* is probably as near to a perfect example as one is likely to come by.

'*Woodsmen of the West*' was a striking example of a

phenomenon very common in Canada – the novelist who writes only one book, or only one good book, either because he is writing out of a vividly remembered but limited body of direct experience, as Grainger did, or because he has an intense but equally limited imaginative vision which can be encompassed within a single book. The novels derived from direct experience are really by-products of the oddities of life in a pioneer society, and often, when they are rendered with natural artistry, as in *Woodsmen of the West*, they project a purer sense of locality than the writings of more professional novelists. Another especially pleasing example of this kind of book is that haunting fictional account, derived from family traditions, of the nineteenth-century Irish immigration to Canada. *The Yellow Briar* (1933) by “Patrick Slater” (John Mitchell).

Most of these solitary masterpieces, although they cannot be ignored by anyone who wishes to appreciate the variety of modern Canadian fiction, take their places on the verge of the genre. When poets write novels they are usually individual feats of virtuosity that somehow emerge out of their poetry writing, the kind of things that in an age more tolerant of the long poem might have been rendered in satiric or romantic verse (such as Byron wrote in his time) and which have little relation to the general trends of contemporary fiction. It is certain that none of the books just mentioned, not even *Beautiful Losers* for all its dazzlement of the academic critics,

has had much effect on the kind of books professional novelists write. Nevertheless, one solitary novel exemplifying a highly personal vision, Sheila Watson's *'Double Hook'* (1959), did have a great influence on younger fiction writers.

As the twentieth century continues, leaving behind it the troubled complacencies of the Edwardian age, characteristic Canadian ways of writing became more evident, especially in poetry and in fiction, although probably a majority of the novels being written in Canada in the thirties and even in the forties were in general character, if not in setting, hardly distinguishable from the romances or adventure stories being written elsewhere in the English-reading world, and even the novelists of that time whom we consider now to be the pioneers of present-day Canada fiction often carry with them the vestiges of alien influence.

In the decades after 1918 there were still only a few Canadian novelists to whom we need to pay attention. During the period between the wars the most popular Canadian novelist was probably Mazo de la Roche (She was certainly the most popular abroad, largely because she was writing a kind of international lady-novelism in which the setting was Canadian in a peculiar and distorted way), although if we consider fiction in a wider sense she had a rival in Stephen Leacock, who struck the chord of Canadian ironic self-deprecation so accurately that he still enjoys a repute

considerably above his true merits. The writers who in retrospect appear to have given in that generation the most authentic fictional expression of Canada and the Canadian consciousness, two men stand far above their contemporaries. They are the German novelist Frederick Philip Grove, who transformed himself into one of the two most memorable fictional chroniclers of Canadian prairies life, and Morley Callaghan, the Torontonion who chronicled the travails of people attempting to live with some meaning in the developing metropolis of eastern Canada.

When Canada was established, the first necessary act to ensure the survival of Confederation was the acquisition and settlement of the prairies, and one of the basic differences between Francophone and Anglophone Canada – one of the sources of the present conflict – is that the people of Quebec took virtually no part in the great Canadian sweep westward that built up after 1870. The prairies were the place where the English and the immigrant peoples of continental Europe struggled to establish their roots in earth and achieved the one Canadian compromise that shows some appearance of lasting.

Novelists tend to respond to this harsh environment and its immoderate emotions with a combination of realistic method and symbolist intent, moving on with later writers like Robert Kroetsch into a kind of super realistic fantasy. And it is this combination of approaches that has almost certainly made Frederick Philip Grove, despite his extraordinarily clumsy

constructions and his ponderousness in thought and language, the most significant to contemporary readers of the prairie novelists who wrote between the wars.

Grove arrived bearing with him, as part of his carefully concealed mental baggage, the heritages of the two significant European movements of his time : naturalism and symbolism. *'The Master Mason's House'*, which he published in Germany as Felix Paul Greve in 1906 (it has had to wait until 1976 for Canadian publication in an English translation), is a late naturalist novel with expressionist overtones.

Desmond Pacey, Grove's first biographer, argued in the *Literary history of Canada*, Grove's *Settlers of the March* was "the first novel to introduce into Canada the naturalism which, finding its chief source in Emile Zola, spread over the whole Western world in the late decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth".

Morley Callaghan is in terms of effective achievement a writer of the late twenties and the thirties. It was during these decades that almost all his marvelously laconic short stories (collected in *Morley Callaghan's Stories*, 1959) were written, and it was during the latter decade that his three best novels appeared; *'Such is My Beloved'* (1934). *'They Shall Inherit the Earth'* (1935) and *'More Joy in Heaven'* (1937).

There is no writer other than MacLennan whom one could plausibly consider the Canadian Balzac, seeking to construct

his country's special '*Comedie Humaine*' and trusting that if the themes are honest the forms will take care of themselves. At times he is splendid in every respect; '*Teach Man's Son*', which many critics ignore, is one of the best Canadian novels, precisely because the thematic impulse is subordinated to the Odyssean structure that delineates MacLennan's personal mythology.

There was something of the catalytic imagination about Ethel Wilson, emerging for so few years, so late in life, to project an original, urban vision across the landscape of a young literature, and there is no doubt that her influence on younger writers such as Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood came from more than mere friendship. The mention of Laurence and Atwood leads us, of course, into the highly active present of Canadian fiction.

Or should one start in the complementary direction and consider how many Canadian writers have developed themselves as expatriates, and out of a combination of physical experience and cultural absorption have contrived to enrich their own writing and the Canadian fictional tradition as well, edging it further, by the introduction of exotica, in the direction of fantasy? There is Mavis Gallant, for example, who went to Paris and never came back; there is Mordecai Richler, who went to London and did come back, although what he will write as a returned expatriate still remains to be demonstrated. But

other writers also went away and returned enriched to write their best work in Canada: Audrey Thomas and Dave Godfrey and, above all, Margaret Laurence, all of whom spent immensely impressionable periods in Africa and wrote such novels about their experiences as Thomas's *Mrs. Blood* (1970), Godfrey's *New Ancestors* (1970) and Laurence's *This Side Jordan* (1960). In the case of Laurence, Africa provided the insights which unlocked her ability to perceive and to write about her own heritage, her own country, and there emerged that splendid series of time-obsessed myths of the Canadian prairie town, from *The Stone Angel* (1964) down to *The Diviners* (1974), which Margaret Laurence has told us – in what one hopes will be an unfulfilled warning – may be her last novel.

Perhaps the most striking phenomenon of recent years in Canadian writing has been the tendency to loosen verisimilitude in the direction of fantasy and to abandon the chronological pattern with effect following cause and consequence following action which characterized most of the novels written before the later 1950s.

There are not indeed as many new novelists in Canada during the 1970s as there are new poets. To write a publishable novel, after all, still demands more industry and discipline than to write a publishable piece of verse. But the situation has changed to the extent that it is no longer possible

to take one or two central figures and say that essentially this is their decade. As past decades seemed those of Grove and Callaghan, or of MacLennan and Ross. Today, amazingly many good fiction writers are working in Canada, and the variety of approaches and talents is more impressive than any dimly perceptible common attitude.

I – II Canadian Society in Postmodern Age

The seeds of postmodernity were sown in the Canadian Socio-cultural environment by the ethnic as well as linguistic diversity of the Canadian population.

Although Canada was changing in the second half of the twentieth century, it remained largely a nation of European origins. In 1985, just under half of Canada's twenty-five million people claimed to be of British or French descent. Almost 20 percent listed a European country other than Britain or France as their nation of ancestry. Only 4 percent claimed Asian, African, or Latin American origins. Just short of seven million Canadians, or 28 percent of the population, reported mixed ethnic origins. While 78 percent of Outbackers reported French as their ethnic origin and 80 percent of Newfoundlanders claimed only British descent, westerners and Ontarians reported a variety of backgrounds.

In the climate of diversity, groups were more assertive about preserving their cultural heritage a typical postmodern condition that avoided cultural and national centrality. Federal bilingualism and biculturalism programs, which were introduced in 1969, led minority ethnic groups to lobby for federal and provincial grants which became known as multiculturalism. In 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed a secretary of state for multiculturalism. The federal government and the provinces with the greatest ethnic mix

began to fund ethnic organizations and festivals as well as heritage language instruction in the schools. Nation of a central concept did not, therefore preoccupy the consciousness of the Canadian writers.

Ethnic diversity helped to mute prejudices that were once so prevalent in Canada, and opinion surveys indicated the growth of tolerance among Canadians. Still, discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas continued to face many non-whites, particularly African Canadians and Native peoples. Although human rights legislation in the 1970s ameliorated the situation somewhat, it could not eliminate racism from Canadian society.

Encouraged by the Black Power movement in the United States, African Canadians in the 1960s became more assertive in their struggle against discrimination. A new generation of black leaders, many of them recent immigrants from the West Indies and Africa, refused to accept second-class citizenship. In Nova Scotia., which had over 30 percent of Canada's black population in 1961, blacks faced discrimination in the job market and could expect to live in poorer housing and receive less schooling than whites. Although black organizations, many of them church inspired, had struggled against the most blatant forms of discrimination, including segregation in restaurants and theatres they were unable to break down the racist attitudes that kept their people in the ranks of the underclass.

The plight of blacks in Nova Scotia received international attention when the City of Halifax decided to demolish Africville. Located on the shores of Bedford Basin, Africville had been home to Halifax's black population since the middle of the nineteenth century. The community had been shamefully neglected by the city authorities.

Canadians displayed some complacency on the issue of racism. They were, after all, able to compare their society favourably with that of their southern neighbours, where race relations often boiled over into violence. Such self-satisfaction began to evaporate in the early 1990s. A series of police shootings of unarmed blacks in Montreal and Toronto led to accusations that many police officers were racists who stereotyped all blacks as dangerous criminals. Neo-Nazi skinheads – largely unemployed white male youths – attacked non-whites of Asian and African origin and desecrated Jewish cemeteries. Gays also became targets for violent, even murderous homophobes. Intolerance had its violent side, even in Canada.

For most Canadians, education was perceived as the key to success in the uncertain world that was rapidly unfolding. While groups such as Native and African Canadians continued to lag behind the average, by the 1990s Canadians were far better educated than any previous generation. Over half of Canadians had nine grades or less of schooling in 1951, but

only 18 percent had so little formal education in 1986 compared to 189000 in 1951. By the 1980s about one Canadian adult in ten was a university graduate, and more than one income recipient in three had postsecondary qualifications.

As education levels and income increased, so too did material expectation. Many Canadians were living in consumer heaven, even if it meant lifelong indebtedness. Statistics Canada reported that in 1990, three-quarters of all households had automatic washing machines, clothes dryers, and cable television, and two-thirds had microwave ovens, VCRs, and taperecorders. Sixteen percent had home computers. While fewer homes in poorer regions had all this gadgetry, the spread of high-tech products was on the increase everywhere. Even Quebec, where elites had for so long preached clerical anti-materialism, had become firmly entrenched as a secular, consumerist society.

The nuclear family consisting of husband, a wife and several children remained the ideal for most Canadians, but with each census it accounted for a smaller proportion of households. Divorce laws were liberalized in 1969, allowing more unhappy marriages to be dissolved and increasing the number of single-parent households. "The pill," which was widely prescribed in the 1960s, gave women the option of delaying childbirth or indeed of not having children at all. Reflecting somewhat greater tolerance of homosexuality,

same-sex couples “came out” in unprecedented numbers. Some employers and provincial governments began to recognize gay and lesbian partners as families for the purposes of benefits and social welfare programs. Common-law marriages, once associated with the poorer classes, became popular across the economic spectrum, particularly among younger adults. Divorce and remarriage substantially increased the number of “blended” families, which might include a couple’s biological children as well as each partner’s offspring from earlier marriages. Developments in reproductive technology further blurred notions of family. Surrogate mothers, egg donors, sperm donors, and processes like in vitro fertilization, sex pre-determination and embryo screening made reproductive practices increasingly complex and raised fundamental ethical questions about the bounds of medical sciences.

Between 1960 and 1990, Quebec experienced a dramatic transformation. Intellectual ferment in the 1950s was a harbinger of social change, but it took the death of Premier Duplessis in 1959 to remove the bottleneck to political action. In the 1960s, francophones in Quebec began to defy religious injunctions and wrest control of their economy from outside influences. Increasingly, they considered themselves as Quebecois rather than Canadians and abandoned their sense of community with French Canadians in the rest of Canada.

I- III Mavis Gallant : A Biographical Sketch

Mavis Gallant, Mavis de Trafford Young was born in Montreal in 1922. She entered at the age of four a strict French-Catholic boarding school where a protestant child of Scots heritage, she was something of an anomaly. Her father's early death and her peripatetic education (she attended over seventeen schools in Canada and the United States) prepared her for an independent and by choice solitary life. After high-school, she worked briefly for the National Film Board and then became a reporter for the Montreal standard. Gallant had begun to write fiction during these years but was disinclined to submit her work for publication. Although two of her stories *Good Morning and Goodbye* and *Three Brick Walls* - were published as early as 1944 in the Montreal little magazine *Preview* (because a friend forwarded them to its editor, Patrick Anderson), she sent out her manuscripts herself only after she had decided in 1950 to quit reporting and become a full-time writer. At twenty-eight. after a brief marriage, Gallant left Canada for Europe settling eventually in Paris. She submitted her first story to the *New Yorker*, which returned it, saying that it was too Canadian for their readers but that they wanted to see more of her work. (That story, *The Flowers of Spring* was subsequently published in *Northern Review* in its issue of June/July 1950) The *New Yorker*, however, did publish her second submission in its issue of September 1, 1951 since then most of her stories – even her 'Canadian' ones have appeared first in that magazine.

Over the years Gallant has written highly polished urban short stories and novellas. They have been collected in '*The Other Paris* (1956)' *My Heart is Broken* (British title : *An Unmarried Man's Summer*. 1964)' '*The Pegnitz Junction* (1973)', linked stories about the sources of German fascism. '*The End of the world and Other Stories* (1974)', selected by Robert Weaver : '*From the Fifteenth District* (1979)' and a collection of stories about Canadians, '*Home Truths* (1981)', which won a Governor General's Award. Some of Gallant's most recent short fiction has moved away from the deliberately brittle, ironic story that has formed the bulk of her writing. These very short post-modern pieces, on the whole humorous and non-narrative in nature, have yet to be collected. She has also written two novels, '*Green Water. Green Sky* (1959)' and '*A Fairly Good Time* (1970)', which like her stories, are subtle and penetrating character studies. She occasionally writes non-fiction as well, reporting and reviewing from her position as an observer of France. Her long essay in '*The Affair of Gabrielle Russier* (1971)', a book about a complex French legal scandal involving a teacher and her student, led to her current project: a non-fiction book about another famous episode in French law and history, the Dreyfus case.

Gallant who has immersed herself in French culture and life for over fifty years and has been bilingual from childhood, writes only in English, believing that one needs a strong

complete language fully understood to anchor one's understanding. She has always been concerned with the individual's experience of an unfamiliar culture and her decision to write in English while seeking out the nature and differences of other cultures is a key to understanding her work. Her stories, which capture the universal sense of alienation that has dominated modern society are often about exiled and isolated people. To survive emotionally, her characters struggle – while hanging on to threads of their former cultures to understand foreign environments that are alien both literally and psychologically. They are cut off not simply from their physical homeland but also from other people. Even at home they stand apart unable to make contact, unable to join those around them. In *'About Geneva'* the sense of psychic distance between generations is intensified by the loss of traditional codes. As in the fiction of Henry James, the truncated form of communication that prevails takes place in the twilight of an obsolescent world.

Gallant's method of portraying characters obliquely often by focusing on specific social customs and on unconscious behaviour, recalls Proust as well as James. Little is said directly communication is an elaborate unspoken ritual but what is said is of great importance. Consequently her dialogue is filled with nuances. Gallant's detached characters unable to make outspoken judgements, are akin to those found in stories by Sinclair Ross, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood and

Clarke Blaise. They share a malady often portrayed in modern Canadian fiction, burdened by history yet isolated by it, they find society moving away from the familiar patterns that both bind and reassure them. Gallant, like other Canadian writers, shows her characters reacting with restraint and surviving, without comment or evaluation because there was no help for it”.

Although the setting of much of Gallant’s writing takes place outside of the Canadian locale, she has continued many associations with Canada and has retained, along with her English language, a cultural identity with her homeland. In 1982 she returned to Canada for the premier of her first play, *What is to be done ?*, at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto and for the period 1983-4, she accepted a position as a writer – in residence at the University of Toronto. Gallant’s talent has always been best deployed in shorter fiction. The first of her two novels, *‘Green water Green Sky’*, is no longer than many novellas and this story of the moral destruction of a girl by her foolish protective mother is so episodic in structure that it reads rather like a cycle of related short stories. The second novel, *‘A Fairly Good Time’* is longer and much more closely knit using with great skill a variety of devices, journals, letters interior monologues recollective flashbacks – to illuminate the central story of the failure of a marriage between a Canadian girl and a member of a stuffy French family.

The difficulty of entering an alien culture is a theme that runs through many of Gallant's stories. Frequently they are about Anglo-Saxons-British as well as Canadians leading empty and often spiteful lives in France or Italy. One collection, '*The Pegnitz Junction*,' deals with the alienation of a whole people, the post – 1945 Germans not from their native land but from the past they seek desperately to forget. Even in '*Home truths*', a collection of her Canadian stories, Canadians are shown as 'foreigners' not merely when they are abroad. Perhaps the most impressive cycle in that collection, the *Linnet Muir stories*, concerns the failure of a young returning Montrealer to find her bearings even in the city where she was born and spent her childhood. It is perilous to generalize about well over 100 stories that show a great variety of situations, characterization, and approach, but most concern people who have built up a protection from the world and who in the end have been made to realize how precarious such defences are and how hiding from life has only increased their vulnerability. Gallant's stories are witty and often humorous in their manner of expression yet pathetic in their ultimate effect detached in viewpoint at times to the seeming verge of callousness- they are nevertheless so involving that the final emotion is always nearer compassion than contempt. At times Gallant's writing seems satirical but she is not a true satirist for the satirist writes in the hope that mankind can be reformed. Gallant seems to conclude, sadly, that the people she writes of cannot be changed. This makes her an objective observer, a postmodern attitude of a lack of any ideology through which to portray character and situation.

I. IV. The Canadian Postmodern Fiction :

The 1960s are generally accepted as the years that saw the burgeoning of Canadian fiction. The provocations were diverse: nationalist sentiment, governmental support for publishers and writers, and the general feeling that, in cultural terms, Canada had finally ceased to be what Earle Birney called a “high-school land deadset in adolescence.” Despite the continued strong presence of traditional realist fiction by Hugh MacLennan, Morley Callaghan, Robertson Davies, W.O. Mitchell, and others, something new began to appear in the seventies and eighties; postmodernism had arrived in Canada. But the form it took was distinctly Canadian. To make clear this distinctiveness, one should first define what one means by this overused and underdefined – term. From the usage of the term in describing literature, painting, video, and photography, postmodernism seems to designate cultural practices that are fundamentally self-reflexive, in other words, art that is self-consciously artifice, art that is textuality aware of its production and reception as a cultural artifact and that is as related to the past of other art as to the present reality of society. This description, however, could also apply to modernist art, with its belief in aesthetic autonomy and self-sufficiency. The continuity is real and important, but the distinction between the two is that, in postmodernism, textual self-reflexivity is paradoxically made the means to a new and overt engagement with the social and the historical, which has

the effect of challenging our traditional humanist beliefs that the function of art is society. For Example both Sheila Watson's *Double Hook* and Margaret Laurence's *Diviners* are metafictional works, aware of their processes of creating order through myth and art. Despite what some would call postmodern techniques (fragmentation and parody), both reveal more a modernist search for order in the face of moral and social chaos than a postmodern urge to render both problematic and provisional any such desire for order (or "truth") through imagination. What to many American critics is archetypically postmodern – the extreme self-referential textuality of suffocation (Federman) - is yet another form of this (late) modernism, the logical extreme of its aesthetic and aestheticism tenets and its ultimate faith in the human imagination. While clearly derived from these modernist roots, postmodernism is a moral paradoxical and problematic beast; it both inscribes and subverts the powers and conventions of art: it uses and abuses them in an attempt to challenge both modernist artistic autonomy and the conventional notion of realist transparent reference.

Canada's particular moment of cultural history today has produced a form of fiction that uses and abuses, installs and undercuts, prevailing values and conventions in order to provoke a questioning of all that "goes without saying" in culture. Postmodern writers are always "agents provocateurs" taking potshots at the culture in which they know they are

unavoidably implicated but which they still wish to submit to a critique. This almost inevitably puts them in a marginal or “ex-centric” position with regard to the dominant culture because the paradox of underlining and undermining cultural “universals”, of revealing the writers’ grounding in the particular, implicitly challenges any notions of centrality in or centralization of culture. Since the margin might also describe Canada’s perceived international position, perhaps the postmodern ex-centric could even be seen as part of the nation’s identity. In postmodernism, though the center and the periphery do not just change places, nor is the margin conceived as only a place of transgression; the periphery is the frontier, the place of possibility.

Margins also challenge the idea of borders as limits. Marshall McLuhan once called Canada a borderline case, and certainly it is a vast nation with little sense of firm geographical center (except in terms of the American border) or ethnic unity (the multicultural mosaic is not a melting pot). In fact, Canada might be said to have quite a firm suspicion of centralizing tendencies, be they national, political, or cultural. In Robert Kroetsch’s words, “modern literature closed the boundaries; what is needed is a breaking across these boundaries, a postmodern literature.”

Canadian writers, then are perhaps primed for the paradoxes of the postmodern by their split sense of identity, both regional and national and by their history. They may feel

the link between those postmodernist contradictions and what Robert Kroetsch calls “the total ambiguity that is so essentially Canadian, be it in terms of two solitudes, the bush garden, Jungian opposites” (Kroetsch and Bessai 208). The postmodern irony that refuses resolution of contraries – except in the most provisional of terms – would appear to be a useful cultural framework in which to discuss, for instance, the obsessive dualities in the work of Margaret Atwood (body-mind; male-female; culture-nature; reason-instinct; time-space; prose narrative-lyric poetry) or the echoing doubling of (and within) the characters and plots of Kroetsch’s novels. Perhaps postmodern is the best way to describe the genre paradoxes of the work of Michael Ondaatje (biography ? fiction ? poetry?) or Alice Munro (short story collection ? novel?). And certainly Canadian fiction is full of examples of the postmodern internalized challenge to the boundaries of specifically “high art” genres: we find comic books and movies (Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers*), murder mysteries (Findley’s *Telling of Lies*), and sports tales (Kinsella’s *Shoeless Joe*).

In “*Progressions towards Sainthood: There is Nothing to Do but Die*,” Arithavan Herk offers a fictional dialogue between Jeanne d’ Arc and Louis Riel on many topics, including the cultural representations of the ex-centric by both “date-compilers” (50) and creative writers (George Bernard Shaw and Rudy Wiebe). Though separated by time and gender, the woman and the Canadian find they have much in

common. (This affinity will not surprise historians of Canadian literature, who have long noticed the strong female presence within the Can lit canon: from Moodie and Traill through Ostenso and Wilson to Laurence, Gallant, Atwood, Thomas, Munro, and so on.) Women and Canadian Writers seem to share a necessary, self-defining challenge to the dominant (male: British and American) traditions. What Stan Fogel calls Margaret Atwood's obsession with "character formation and the difficulty of maintaining ontological security" (116) is true of much feminist fiction. And the reason is obvious – and it is not that women writers are more conservative and traditionally realist. The reason is that one can only assume and challenge selfhood (character formation) or subjectivity when one has attained it. Subjectivity in the Western humanist tradition has been defined in terms of rationality (the Cartesian cogito), individuality, and power – in other words, those domains traditionally denied women in return for the female realms of intuition, familial collectivity, and submission.

If women have not yet been allowed access to (male-defined) subjectivity, then it is very difficult for them to contest it, as the (male) poststructuralist philosophers have been doing lately. Feminist writing may thus appear more conservative, but, in fact, it is just different. Women must define their subjectivity before they can question it; they must first assert the selfhood they have been denied by the dominant culture. Their doubled inscribing and then challenging of the subject

have been major influences on postmodernism's resolutely paradoxical nature. There is an analogy here with the situation of the Canadian writer, female or male. Why do Canadians still feel the need to publish books with titles like *A Passion for Identity* (Mandel and Taras) ? What Fogel sees as important to postmodernism in the United States - its deconstruction of national myths and identity - is only possible within Canada once those myths and identity have been defined. Like women writers in general, Canadian novelists must return to their history (as do Weber, Bowering, Konawa, and many others) in order to discover, before they can contest, their national myths. First however, they must deconstruct British social and literary myths in order to redefine their colonial history: myths such as the glory of war (Findley's *Wars*) or imperialistic exploration (Bowering's *Burning Water*). Through generic parody, they have contested the canonical myths and forms of European (and American) literature; the picaresque (van Herk's *No Fixed Address*), the *Kunsterroman* (Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*), the Grail legend (Thomas's *Mrs. Blood*).

A number of critics lately (Howells : Irvine) have noted the relation between the national search for a Canadian cultural identity and the feminist seeking for a distinctive female identity in terms of the paradoxical (and postmodern) recognition and contesting of colonial positions with respect to the power of dominating cultures. They have pointed to

shared themes of powerlessness, victimization, and alienation, as well as to a certain ambivalence or ambiguity. Lorna Irvine believes that the female voice “politically and culturally personifies Canada”. On a national level, the realm of male aggression is said to be analogous with the United States, while Britain represents the stilted force of tradition. As Mavis Gallant put it. “The father in Canada seemed no more than an apostle transmitting a paternal message from the Father in England – the Father of us all” (269). Different from Quebec women writers, however, with their more overtly radical challenges, Canadian women writing in English (along with many of their male counterparts) use a disguised form of subversion (Irvine 25) that implicitly questions prevailing authority. In so doing, they also contest the related humanist notions of originality and uniqueness, tied in with (male) notions of individuality.

Atwood does not just “use language in a largely referential way, providing verisimilitude that is a staple of realist fiction and that authenticates the world and the word’s relationship to it” (Fogel 102), though she does do this; she also subverts the authority of that word world relation in a most postmodern that is, contradictory –way. Like Kroetsch, Wiebe, George Bowering, Jack Hodgins, and others, Atwood uses and abuses the conventions of both language and narrative in her fiction in an attempt to make us question any naïve critical notions we might have about modernist formalism (art as

inherently autonomous) and about realist transparency (art as simply a mirror of the social). Postmodern art situates itself squarely in the context of its own reception and creation as social and political actualities, as acts rooted in a particular society with inevitable political intentions and consequences. For many Canadian novelists, the act of making fictions is an unavoidably ideological act, a process of creating meaning in a social context. Along with the novels of Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Umberto Eco, and E.L. Doctorow, to name but a few, much Canadian fiction presents itself as investigating the relation between art and what we choose to call reality, between artistic discourse and the structures of social and cultural power.

The sixties saw inscribed into history previously absented ex-centrics; those defined by differences in class, gender, race, ethnic group, and sexual preference. And the years since have seen their inscription into fiction in forms that vary from the historicity of the native people and Metis (in Wiebe's work) to the metaphoricity of the freaks in Paul Quarrington's *Home Game*. The sixties, for all their silliness and presentism, were years of challenges to authority that left their mark on postmodernism in Canada, as elsewhere. It was also the time of an upsurge in Canadian nationalist politics and of the rise of the women's movement. Not surprisingly, the fiction of the writers formed ideologically and intellectually in these years is often engaged fiction, dealing with issues ranging from national

identity to gender politics. Margaret Atwood has called writers “eye-witnesses, I-witnesses.” This juxtaposition suggests why she, as a novelist with a distinct moral and political point of view, is attracted to Amnesty International: “all it does is tell stories. It makes the story known. Such stories have a moral force, a moral authority which is undeniable.” In her *Bodily Harm* or even *Life before Man*, the moral is the political, “having to do with power: who’s got it, who wants it, how it operates” (Second Words 203, 350, 354). As a Canadian and a woman, she protests any tendency toward easy passivity and naiveté; she refuses to allow either Canadians or women to deny their complicity in the power structures that may subject them.

Although much of the impulse behind the postmodern came from the sixties, those years also come under severe criticism from postmodernism, which both exploits and contests the values that gave it birth. Perhaps it is not surprising, then that the art of a period adopting such a multiply conditioned notion of truth might be a very self-conscious art, that is fiction might be metafiction, that its writers might also be critics. In Canada, the theoretical and the literary have had an especially close connection because of the presence of a great number of these writer theorists; Robert Kroetsch, Frank Davey, George Bowering, Stephen Scobie, Dennis Lee, and, to some extent, Margaret Atwood. Through these and others, the impact of poststructuralist philosophy, linguistics, semiotics, reader-

response theory, and Marxist and feminist critiques has been simultaneously felt by Canadian criticism and literature. One common and particularly theoretically self-conscious form of fiction seems paradigmatic of the paradoxes that characterize the postmodern. We may call it historiographic metafiction - fiction that is intensely self-reflexive but also clearly grounded in historical, social, and political realities.

It is easy to see that postmodernism in its broadest sense is a name we have conveniently given to culture's narcissistic obsession with its own workings – both past and present. In academic and popular circles today books abound that offer us new social models, new frameworks of knowledge, new analyses of strategies of power. This phenomenon may well betray our loss of faith in what were once the certainties of liberal humanist culture. But that loss need not be debilitating. In postmodern literature as in architecture, it can mean a new vitality, a new willingness to dialogue with history on new terms. It can mark a move away from the expectation of sure and single meaning to a recognition of the value of difference and multiplicity, a turning from passive trust in system to an acceptance of responsibility for the fact that art and theory are both actively signifying practices – in other words, that it is we who both make sense of it and make our culture.

The issues that mobilized many Canadians after 1960 also engaged the nation's artists. Canada's artistic production, particularly in literature, was impressive and

included many women and men who received international acclaim, among them Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Robertson Davies, Hubert Aquin, Timothy Indlay, Mordecai Richler, and Marie-Claire Blais. Works that gained international popularity often had non-Canadian settings and universal themes. Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), a haunting study of war and its aftermath, won Britain's distinguished Booker Prize. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) described a totalitarian state in which absolute patriarchy is realized.

Works of such variety and quality meant that "CanLit", disdained by Canadian universities before the 1970s, became a mainstay of most English departments by the 1980s. There was also a massive increase in the production of the academic works on the history, politics, and sociology of Canada, many of which were assisted by grants from the federally funded Canada Council or Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

I.V. Mavis Gallant - Her Novelistic Vision :

Many of Gallant's stories have highly complex structures involving the interplay of varying points of view. Some of them like the novella '*The Pegnitz Junction*'; move beyond ordinary mental connections into psychic areas where conversation and even recollections are replaced by strange telepathic awarenesses. Here and in '*The four seasons*' which opens *From the Fifteenth District*, the handling of incident and the way the visible and audible outer world cuts away from the inner world and back again reminds one of Gallant's early training in the cutting room of the NFB. But if the handling of impressions in such stories has a cinematic quality there is a distinctly dramatic feeling in the juxtaposition of scenes and in the strength of dialogue (Whether spoken or understood). Gallant writes a clear supple prose and the verbal texture of her writing is impeccable-never a wrongly chosen word. She has such a fine eye for detail-settings, appearances, mannerisms, ways of speaking-and such scenes of the appropriate interrelationships of those details that her stories always have a remarkably visual quality that makes the words seem like a translucent veil. Thus in many of her stories she achieves an extraordinary double effect. The scene is clearly observed as concrete as a painting and yet one is always moving through it into the characters' states of mind, which are so convincing because they are related constantly to the physical here and-now.

Gallant's non-fiction writings have been scanty and uncollected but some of them are memorable. They include her account of experiences and observations during the abortive revolutionary situation in France during 1968. The events in *May, a Paris Notebook* (New Yorker 4 sept, 21 Sept. 1968) in which she gives a rare personal assessment of the country she has so long inhabited; her long introduction to *The Affair of Gabrielle Russier* (1971), an account of the ordeal of a thirty-year-old French schoolteacher who had a love affair with an adolescent student, and her extensive review article in *The New York Times Book review* (6 Oct. 1974) of Michael Corfino's *Daughter of a Revolutionary*, a book centring on Alexander Herzen's daughter Natalie. For some years Gallant has been working on a study, now approaching publication, of that perennial spring of French national anger and guilt, *The Dreyfus case*.

Because of her self-created exile and her custom of publishing her stories mainly in a single American magazine, Gallant's excellence was recognized slowly in her native country. In the first edition of the *Literary history of Canada* (1965) even the titles of her books were unmentioned: not until the early 1970s did Canadian publishers become interested in issuing her works under their imprints. Canadian critics were equally slow in recognizing Gallant;

In the mid-fifties two writers who went on to have productive careers published their first collections : Hugh

Garner with *The Yellow Sweater and Other Stories* (1952) and Mavis Gallant with *The Other Paris* (1956). Through the whole of the 1950s only a handful of writers - Hugh Garner, Mavis Gallant, Morley Callaghan, Thomas Raddall - were able to publish collections of their short stories. In Canada, as in England and the United States, it was still assumed that books of short stories wouldn't sell. This situation began to change dramatically in Canada in the 1960s, and it could be argued that in the next two decades the short story became the most interesting and varied literary genre in this country. Two major commercial publishing houses, McClelland and Stewart and Macmillan of Canada, - have had numerous distinguished short-story writers on their lists, McClelland and Stewart with Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Rudy Wiebe, Alistair MacLeod, among others; and Macmillan with Alice Munro, Mavis Gallant, Jack Hodgins, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and others.

Two writers who have something in common as expatriates are Mavis Gallant and Norman Levine. Gallant lives in Paris. Most of her subtle and distinguished stories take place in France and other parts of Europe. But in *Home truths* (1981) half a dozen stories about a young woman, Linnet Muir, marvelously blend Gallant's international literary existence with a superb sense of place, Montreal, during the Second World War.

Mavis Gallant is undoubtedly a Canadian classic; until relatively recently, however, many people in this country would have begrudged her recognition even as a Canadian let alone as a classic. Her first collection of stories, *'The Other Paris'*, was published in the United States in 1956 and in England the next year. But despite her brilliance and international reputation, Canada year after year resolutely ignored Mavis Gallant's achievement. Robert Weaver edited a selection of her stories entitled, *'The End of the World and Other Stories'* for the New Canadian Library in 1974, but general approval was withheld until about 1978, when Geoff Hancock brought out a Mavis Gallant issue of Canadian Fiction Magazine.

Mavis Gallant chose to live in Paris; she chose to write about Europe and Europeans though she has also written about Quebec and the United States; she published nearly all her stories in *The New Yorker*. None of these facts endeared her to the cultural nationalists. She won the Governor General's Award in 1981 for *'Home Truths'*, a collection of stories with Canadian settings. She should have won it for *'From the Fifteenth District'*, published two years earlier but she was not even nominated for the award; but those stories were set in Europe.

'The Pegnitz Junction' : A Novella and Five Short Stories (1973) and *'From the Fifteenth District' : A Novella and Eight Short Stories* (1979) are Mavis Gallant's most consistently powerful collections to date. She has represented herself with

two compelling stories. “*An Autobiography*” and “*Irina*”, taken from these two volumes. If length had not been a consideration, she would have been chosen to represent herself by a story surely destined for classic status, “*Speck’s Idea*”, from her collection ‘*Overhead in a Balloon: Stories of Paris*’ (1985).

Another possible reason for the tardy acceptance of Mavis Gallant is that her stories make big demands on the reader. They are complex, highly intelligent, wry, and ironic. Her rootedness in the real - often a reality that seems ‘foreign to the Canadian consciousness – is another possible reason for the slowness of her acceptance in Canada. She is a writer passionately interested in politics and we have to be able to recognize a wide range of reference and allusion to European history and culture if we are to respond adequately to the experience of her stories. In an interview by Debra Martens, Mavis Gallant says of “*The Pegnitz Junction*”,. “I wrote it in high spirits, and it was such fun to write because a great deal of it has some references to German writing parodies and take-offs and skits and all sorts of things that people didn’t get.... !!

In the Canadian Fiction Magazine interview by Geoff Hancock, Mavis Gallant gives some background for her deep interest in politics. She talks of “being twenty-two, being the intensely leftwing political romantic I was, passionately anti-fascist,” and seeing the first pictures out of the concentration

camps, she was bewildered that Germany could have allowed this to happen. And she thought: “If we wanted to find out how and why this happened, it was the Germans we had to question. There was hardly a culture or a civilization I would have placed as high as the German.”

Thinking back, Mavis Gallant comments: “I never lost interest in what had happened, the why of it, I mean. Nothing I ever read satisfied me. I had the feeling that in every day living I would find the origin of the worm – the worm that had destroyed the structure. The stories in *“Pegnitz Junction”* are, to me, intensely political for that reason. It is not a book about Fascism, but a book about where Fascism comes from. That is why I like it better than anything else. Because I finally answered my own question. Not the historical causes of Fascism – just its small possibilities in people.”

Her interest in politics is not in party politics, in advancing a theory or a cause. She is concerned with the emotional lives of individuals and families within social and political structures. In the Debra Martens interview she says: “I would think that every thing is political, in a certain sense, in people’s lives. They don’t always realize it; they’re either the victims of it or not aware of it. I don’t think I could consider people, even in a small domestic entanglement – even if I didn’t mention it or write about it – without saying what the structure was that they lived in, and what created it, and what

at that particular moment was acting on it..." But always her concern is the individual within the structure.

Gallant's stories are about themselves and nothing else, about fiction, themeless, referring to nothing "outside," and so on; but it is to say that discussion of character, like discussion of setting, risks falling flatly into the world or dissolving into the details of the text if some attention is not paid to this question of how fictional elements work at formal levels, perhaps before they designate things, or contents, or correspondences beyond themselves. In a recent essay, Gallant comments on what fiction is about:

"Against the sustained tick of a watch, fiction takes the measure of a life, a season, a look exchanged, the turning point, desire as brief as a dream, the grief and terror that after childhood we cease to express. The life, the look, the grief are without permanence. The watch continues to tick where the story stops." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 26 (1978)

That a concern for fiction's treatment of time should so govern Gallant's remarks seem appropriate, given the disposition of her own stories. "The Moslem Wife," the finest story in *From the Fifteenth District*, provides us with an opportunity to consider one of the many movements in Gallant's fiction where readers see revealed "the measure of a life, a season, a look exchanged, the turning point." There is a relation between two worlds of time in Gallant's fiction - between memory's and history's claims upon time - as a broken dialogue, because Gallant's stories often suggest a fitful stammering or stuttering of self at these words of time. In "the Moslem Wife," There is revelatory collision of history

with memory, in a moment illuminated by a quality called the “light of imagination.” Asher in the “*Moslem wife*” of the story’s title, could see in this light, she might be able to read or to tell a “complete story”.

The story traces Netta’s marriage, separation, and reunion with Jack Ross, who goes to America during the war; while he’s away, the hotel in the south of France which Netta has inherited from her father is occupied by the Italians, then the Germans and “certain French,” so that Netta is forced to forget Jack and learn about history at first hand. When Jack returns, Netta is confronted with, and haunted by, two visions, two worlds of time as she sits with her husband outside a café. She understands that Jack has a “short memory” and so a “comfortable imagination”, that he is haunted by neither memory’s nor history’s ghosts, so that he can blithely choose a table “nearly under a poor lad’s bound, a dangling feet” - the ghost of a hanged partisan haunting Netta’s memory. Jack wants Netta back; she tries to resist the comfortable undertow of habit, but at the moment a ray of reflected sunlight catches her eye:

“Desperately seeking the waiter, she turned to the café behind them and saw the last light of the long afternoon strike the mirror about the bar – a flash in a tunnel; hands juggling with fire. That unexpected play, at a remote, borne indoors, displayed to anyone who could stare without blinking, was a complete story. It was the brightness on the looking glass,

the only part of a life, or a love, or a promise, that could never be concealed, changed, or corrupted”(*Moslem Wife*).

There is a close similarity here to the language of Gallant’s comments about fiction quoted above, as well as to the language of Jean Price’s story. Now this language radiates amidst the converging sparks and flashes of exterior and interior illumination, of sunlight and insight, the illumination of a moment. Sunlight, from the world, reflected off a mirror, borne indoors, dances “all over the square” as the “light of imagination”. The moment is revelatory, but Netta, the obedient Moslem wife, returns to her locked situation with Jack, who is a ‘practical romantic, dying to get Netta to bed right away”. Netta’s and Jack’s reunion depends upon Netta’s renouncing her ghosts for Jack’s buoyancy, upon her reassuming the mantle of the Moslem wife. But the story’s central movement presents us with a powerful “light of imagination” striking Netta with a “complete story” told in a flash of time, a story she can’t read, since she finally needs Jack more than she needs insight. Netta can’t stand too much reality. She needs Jack’s sense that this is life’s “morning - the first light on the mirror, “ even though it is late afternoon. Netta sees something happening in a moment charged with light, and she is a stronger, older, wiser character than Carol Frazier, for whom history has settled over romance as a grey disappointment, a dreary drizzle over her moonlight Paris. But for Netta, too, the habit of relationship wins out over the dislocating shock of insight, and the story resumes its predicted

pattern, although not without startling readers with a moment of disruptive illumination.

The movement in which Netta Asher sees the light of imagination dancing all over the square becomes a revelatory moment for Gallant's readers. The consequences of the broken dialogue between history and memory are sustained, for a telling moment, in a powerful evocation of the genius of fiction to illuminate, mirror, and reflect its own imaginative apprehension of time. Gallant's stories tell time in the light of imagination, even as well hear the inevitable ticking of the watch.

I- VI Feminist and Post Modernist Concern in Canadian Fiction Theoretical Considerations :

The appearance of Feminism in the 1910s' signaled a new phase in the debate and agitation about women's rights and freedoms that had flared for hundreds of years in the United States. People in the nineteenth century did not say feminism. They spoke of the advancement of woman for the cause of woman, woman's right's and woman's suffrage. Most exclusively, they spoke of the woman movement, to denote the many ways women moved out of their homes to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggles for civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot. Nineteenth century women's consistent usage of the singular woman symbolized, in a word, the unity of the female sex. It proposed that all women have one cause, one movement.

But to the twentieth century ears the singular generic woman sounds awkward, the woman movement, ungrammatical. At the very point in the 1910s – the height of the suffrage campaign - when the woman movement began to sound archaic , the word feminism came into frequent use. As an ism (an ideology) it presupposed a set of principles not necessarily belonging to every woman nor limited to woman. The shift has not been noticed by recent historians, who, like most users of English language, readily adopted

the neologism 'feminism' and applied it retrospectively and generally to claim for women's rights.

Women's efforts in 1910's and 1920s laid the groundwork and exposed the fault lines of modern feminism. Feminism is hard to define. It is tempting to denote all the long past efforts to advance women's status, as the Oxford English Dictionary did when it first included the modern word (not until 1933 supplement). The term resists boundaries; unlike the 19th century vocabulary, feminism allows a range of possible relations between belief and action, a range of possible denotations of ideology or movement.

First is belief in what is usually referred to as sex equality, but which might be more clearly expressed in the negative, as opposition to sex hierarchy. Equality is such a difficult quantity to apply to human beings (because it is colloquially taken to mean sameness). Second, feminism may have a working definition which presupposes that women's condition is socially constructed, that is historically shaped by human social usage rather than simply predestined by God or nature. The third point, tied to the second, is about gender group identity feminism posits that women perceive themselves not only as a biological sex but (perhaps even more importantly) as a social grouping. Related to that understanding is some level of identification with "the group called women"

Simon de Beauvoir disputed women's consciousness of themselves as a group when she declared in her magnum

opus of 1949. *The Second Sex* that “women do not say we, “In her observation, “proletarians” and “Negroes” did, but women did not display the common consciousness of saying we except at some congresses of feminists or similar formal demonstrations”. Men and women are alike as human beings, and yet categorically different from each other; their samenesses and differences derive from nature and culture, how inextricably entwined, we can hardly know. Only as a gender group they differ from one another.

The modern, modernity, modernism often form a take off point for the discussion of the postmodern. Postmodernism is part of the contextual culture of the sixties in which the ‘different’ was real. Hence it problematizes all discourses and all givens, and celebrates heterogeneity, multiplicity and particularity. The postmodern awareness of the structurality of language and experience and the desire to go beyond these, resulting in the production of meaning through intertextual play of texts and contexts of writers and readers.

The foregrounding of the act of enunciation is an important feature of postmodern writing. Howells points out that feminist theory keys into the deconstructive projects of postmodernism with its challenges to the concept of stable, coherent selfhood and of established discourses. Postmodernism and feminism are two streams of ideology that cross. As Hutcheon puts it, “Feminisms work to change systems, not merely to dedoxify them. If feminism is a politics, postmodernism is not. Green too makes distinctions between kinds of feminisms and kinds of postmodernisms and

reaches the conclusion that feminism has affinity with a postmodernism that questions the notion of a unitary subject without eliminating subjectivity, as it questions historiography without turning its back on history. Hutcheon maintains that feminism has affected postmodernism in demonstrating how cultural production is carried on within a social context and an ideology. On the other hand postmodernism's ironic and parodic representational strategies have offered feminist artists an effective way of working within and yet challenging dominant metanarrative discourses. Mavis Gallant does not claim herself to be a feminist writer. However, she portrays the female characters, who are oppressed by the domineering patriarchal practices. The women in her fiction are alienated and oppressed, and in search of identity. This is also the fate of the children in her stories. Carol in '*The Other Paris*', is pitted against insensitive husband, Thomas, who has utterly commercial attitude. Carmella in '*The Four Seasons*', is exploited by Mr. Unwin, who does not pay her, her wages completely. In another story, '*In the Tunnel*', who is exploited first by a professor of sociology, and then by Roy Cooper, who is sadistic and cruel. In the story, '*An Alien Flower*', Bibi, a teen-age girl, who has lost her past and her identity. Linnet Muir, in *The Linnet Muir stories*, comes to Canada in search of her past, which eludes her.

The female characters in Gallant's fiction are either alienated, or oppressed, or they have lost their identity. They live in the margins of the foreign society as servants or as paying guests. If married they are maladjusted on account of their sadistic husband, or they have been left alone to defend for themselves.

The term postmodernism has been in currency in critical discourse for a long time now and especially so since the 1980s. The problem very often is one of defining what postmodernism is or is not. The prefix 'post' in the term seems to suggest that postmodernism is a movement or a school of thought that supplanted and/or succeeded modernism. At the same time postmodernism is not a priori a reactionary enterprise vis-à-vis modernism because it is modernism that enables it to express itself.

Postmodernism, like modernism, is a cultural phenomenon that reflects profound changes in society and culture within which it is strongly rooted. If modernism, participating in what Habermas refers to as the Modernist Project valorizes notions of order, authority and universality, postmodernism, reflecting the changed socio-cultural ambience of the post-War year, endorses notions of heterogeneity, multiplicity and particularity.

Postmodernism, however, is not a critical formula or a set of rules. It is an alternative discourse that exists in a dialogic relation with other discourses. It problematizes other discourses by questioning what Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* calls the what-goes-without-saying in critical and conceptual frameworks of these discourses.

Postmodernism thus, questions and problematizes all givens, or what Lyotard calls the "meta" narratives (Lyotard 26) but it offers no final answers or resolutions.

Lyotard Says : "A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a

philosopher; the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art is looking for. (Layotard 81)”

The 1960s as is well-known, is a significant decade in both the Canadian as well as the international context. The 1960s heralded the emergence of anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial voices in the form of movements such as Women’s Lib, Black Power, and Hippyism which challenged received hegemonies and hierarchies. The period marked the beginning of a new era that demanded recognition of the validity and even necessity of diversity and plurality as against the traditionally totalizing and homogenizing practices.

In Canada, the 1960s signified the completion of a hundred years of Confederation and engendered a wave of nationalistic fervour across Canada. The Centenary decade provided a greater-than-before impetus to the desire to resolve the age-old Canadian problematic of the quest for a distinctive identity. Aided by financial and other support from the government and other agencies, therefore, there occurred in Canada what Northrop Frye called” a verbal explosion” (Frye 319) in subsequent years and the unignorable corpus of Canadian writings produced as a result rendered the question whether there is Canadian literature or not, irrelevant. Given the acute need to reckon with the problem of inadequate self-definition, however, Canadian writers showed a propensity to evolving and asserting the Canadian identity by describing and defining what they believed were quintessential and archetypal Canadian motifs and metaphors. During the Canadian

'renaissance' therefore, what Frank Davey refers to as "thematic criticism" (Davey 1984), most insistently endeavoured to 'fix' Canadian culture and literature into one or other loosely fitting generalization 'Survival' of Atwood being the most in / famous – with a view to asserting the exclusiveness and distinctiveness of Canadian culture and literature.

Robert Kroetsch, like Davey, also contests the validity of acquiring identity through the naming act. In his writings, therefore, he repudiates the modernist / humanists preoccupation with acquiring a monolithic and coherent subjectivity and privileges the idea of seeking a pluralistic and provisional Canadian identity. The heterogeneous and multi-cultural mix of Canadian society, in his opinion, disallows a centred Canadian identity. For Kroetsch, therefore, the whole enterprise of superimposing a monolithic notion of the Canadian identity on the polyvalent Canadian reality is questionable and untenable. This enforced logicity and coherence, he believes, ignores and negates the differences in culture that can neither be denied nor inscribed / included within the generic label 'Canadian'. The open-ended postmodern fictive structures hence provide the most appropriate means to tell/make up the Canadian story. In transforming the quest for identity from definable content to innovative form, Kroetsch undermines the humanist notion of subjectivity as something there to be discovered or as a given presence and thus expresses a contextual discourse on identity.

Kroetsch contextualizes his radically different and paradoxical proposition in his novels to show that "a good piece of criticism is an

extension of the text” (Hancock 40). As noted earlier, postmodernism does not signal a complete rupture with modernism nor does it wholly repudiate it. Rather, it questions and problematizes its givens. Postmodernism, however, challenges the authorial authoritarianism and undermines such a proposition by foregrounding the fictionality of the fiction-making process through self-referentiality which exposes free play and slippage.

Postmodern historiographic fiction perhaps most deliberately contextualizes the postmodern interrogation of fact and fiction divisionism by subverting and contradicting the modernist view of history as a scientific and an objective discipline. In traditionally oral cultures there existed no distinction between history (fact) and myth (invention). Hence *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* in India, for example, were (and still continue to be) itihās – history. It was only after the Enlightenment that history became a formalized structure different from myth. Thus, as against the rational, written and systematized ‘truth’ of history, myth was distinguished as irrational, oral and invented fiction.

Before identifying the postmodernist paradigms in Canadian women’s fiction, it is necessary to explore, confirm and consolidate its identity marks in their totality. It has been fascinating to discover the Canadianness of Canadian women’s writing as the very texture of all postmodernist feminist fiction all over the world. Canadian paradigms of postmodernist feminist writing emerge from the basic pro(e) vocations that work beneath all postmodernist art. The

pervasive influence of the wilderness, the dominant cultural myth of Canada, proves to be the most fertile element for the female imagination to revise, restructure and demythify in order to chart out a private fictional world for the female identity to occupy as its own exclusive realm. The woman's national identity in such a geocultural condition is disjointed, marginalized and scattered, and alienated from the mainstream.

The Canadian feminist fiction deconstructs the "traditional cultural dependencies" in its question for a physical and metaphysical freedom. Its thrust is the subversion or displacing of the authority of other traditions in order to acquire an autonomy in terms of a subjective tradition that originally was rejected as marginal. This radical act of decentering leading to a willful occupation of the traditionally peripheral is the Canadian distinctiveness of women's writing. This is significantly related to the history of Canada's colonization and liberation. It informs the emergence of a new literary tradition that strongly protests in gender-marked terms the inherent inadequacies of decolonization.

In contemporary Canadian women's fiction, deconstruction of the fictional artifact with the collaboration of the reader leads to a reconstruction of meanings that point to radical definitions of freedom and selfhood. A fragmented self-reflexive discourse that accepts tension both as matter and manner, of which realism continuously gets fractured by fantasy, characterizes Canadian postmodernist feminist writing. Some of those heroines are portraits of the artist along Joycean lines. Audrey Thomas' heroine as letter-writer

(Latakia) is intensely conscious of the relevance of writing as order in the thick of disorder. Morage Gunn, the novelist-protagonist in *The Diviners*, also emphasizes the power of women's writing in creating the illusion of order out of the chaos of experiences and also in remaking the historical past into a private and more meaningful reality. The elusiveness of its ending, its tentative explorations of the protagonist's personality, and its sprawling, sweeping structure sustained on the confessional frame make this novel a powerful feminist postmodernist discourse in Canadian sensibility. The novel unrolls itself during the writer protagonist's process of writing a fiction which is and is not her own story. The postmodernist cult of waiting as searching and self-learning is illustrated in *The Diviners*. *Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women* is also a female Bildungsroman, a portrait of the artist as a girl and a young woman. Del, the protagonist, is her own chronicler. The narrative point of view is kept under consummate control while it follows the history of the heroine's growing up, maintaining an ironic distance between voice and event. The Bildungsroman is a distinctive form of postmodernist feminist literature.

Writing as a Canadian and as a woman inevitably makes one a postmodernist. It is a political and existentialist act, which involves decanonization, decolonization and militant resistance leading to the building up of alternative worlds of private power. Postmodernism in the Canadian context is sustained on postcoloniality not merely as a condition but also as a literary and political value. Canadian feminist fiction counters patriarchal

assertiveness with inconclusiveness and multiple stances. It is an act of liberation, recall, anticipation, pausing on the verge of endless conclusions.

Feminist criticism takes on a new dimension in its attempt to set postmodernism as a complementary and sustaining force in feminist theory and politics. Feminism has deep roots in the epistemology of liberalism and Marxism by virtue of its political dimensions.

Feminism has however come a long way from earlier patterns that have categorically been displaced. The feminine phase, which had sought to identify the nature of women within a masculine ideology, gave place to the feminist liberal views of equality and the leveling of differences between the sexes.

One of the major components of postmodernism is the decanonization of all existing master codes, conventions, institutions and authorities. This warrants that any text that seeks to displace the dominant discourse, becomes postmodern.

The ways of displacement can be many. Women have written books, diaries, letters expressing the very nature of women is writing, the suppression of writing, about silence, madness, marginality, and negativity and difference, not to mention the sketches of femininity and feminine identities, difference and similarities.

However, for critics like Toril Moi, the very idea of narrowing in on the feminine, feminist and revolutionary is to create a pitfall, a trap which places women back in the patriarchal order – on the side

of the body and subjectivity, close to the senses and nature. But in being relegated to this seeming periphery, women writers have begun to explore the nuances and multiplicities of their own natures in discourses that are open-ended. The dichotomy between nature and culture, object and subject, rational and irrational in the modern episteme is characterized by the assumption that woman has an essential nature which is linked to the natural world. However, both postmodernists and recent feminist theorists assert that any attempt to formulate a universalist concept of woman is futile. This decentring of woman is almost akin to the decentring of man in the postmodernist episteme in which there are no essential subjects or objects, but only individuals caught in a network of historical and psychological power relationships.

Postmodernism in Canada is an interplay of paradoxes, a fragmentation of values in order to question and to subvert and a deferment of meanings, since it is closely tied to the need to sustain distinct cultural identities. Canada being a mosaic of cultures, this undermining and undercutting of cultures marginalizes writers and assigns them a part in the periphery in other words artists are decentred and their works are not accepted as affirming universalities. Their writings are not longer rooted in particular regions affirming absolutes, but are always at the periphery, hanging precariously at the edge. Frank Davey has suggested that only the collapse of modernism as a normative and hierarchical model made it possible for regional and peripheral literatures to survive and thrive:

“The modernist collapse is evident through Canadian writing....

The modernists sought to control both their world and their art; the postmodernists seek to participate in anarchic cooperation with the elements of an environment in which no one element fully controls any other.... Most of the Canadian writing of the sixties and seventies has taken process, discontinuity, and organic shape as its values rather than the humanistic ideal of the well-wrought urn”.

The cultural mosaic in Canada necessitates a rethinking not only of the differences with the Other but also in terms of the impossibilities of centring oneself within relative values. Postmodernism in Canadian Literature does not imply setting up a series of binary oppositions and polarities. They are only the starting points for richer associations. The Canadian self was considered to be a hyphenated self and hence absolutes had never existed. Existentialism was possible in the rest of the world during the modern phase because there was already a clear-cut subject/object dichotomy. Hence women writers needed to define their subjectivity before they could question it. Postmodernism became an effective weapon for Canadian writers for defining the lack of absolutes and questioning the paradoxes at the core of discourses. The female voice for Lorna Irvine, “politically and culturally personifies Canada.” The search for Canadian identity and distinctive gender identity are a paradoxical process. For Canada, the ex-centric moving population makes it impossible to identify a total Canadian identity. Similarly, generalizing an identity for womanhood would be a falsity. The identity rests in the differences.

Women writers like Lorna Irvine, Mavis Gallant in attempting to explore a deeper reality, are caught between two languages – the “father tongue” and “the language of the womb.” Suspended between the two they end up with a split relationship to language.” This split

makes the writer a fractured female identity, making it difficult to either centre or to know self. The doubleness of woman's speech makes for a shattered identity that begins to write stories to express this. Language and genre consciousness become more obsessive for they are doubly marginalized.

It is interesting to take a look at the numerous women writers of the short story in Canada. Margaret Atwood remarks that women writers have made contributions of a high order to the tradition, and that the literary explosion in the sixties and seventies is remarkable. What is perhaps more interesting is the rich labyrinth of fragmented discontinuities that are delineated.

Feminism at one level is a discourse of power politics, at another, it is characterized by a more complex subversive position and an increasing awareness of the principle of 'difference', and the continual deferment of meanings. Atwood is a supreme example of how the Canadian postmodern feminist operates. As Derrida has put it in *Speech and Phenomena*;

“What we are describing as primordial representation can be provisionally designated with this term only within the closure whose limits we are seeking to transgress by setting down and demonstrating various contradictory or untenable propositions within it, attempting thereby to institute a kind of insecurity and open it up to the outside. This can be done only from a certain inside”.

One would like to conclude with an example from a text by Alice Munro. Traditionally accepted as a realistic writer of Western Ontario, and a feminist writer who explores the intricacies of feminist consciousness, Alice Munro has in texts like “*Spelling*” sought to move outside categorizations. A wave of rethinking has swept in with critics like Coral Ann Howells, identifying two dominant contradictory discourses in her stories :

.... "Realism and fantasy confront each other as kinds of fictional discourse in a relationship of mutual opposition that may take various forms. With Alice Munro it seems to be a relationship of mutual contrariety.... Where each discourse co-exists with the other, (Munro exploits) the discontinuities between these two kinds of discourse in order to discover, though the gaps revealed in both, both new ways of perceiving experience and a language for such perception".

In her collection *Who Do You Think You Are*, Alice Munro establishes a series of discontinuities between these two dominant discourses. The general structure is a parody of the picaresque novel, and undertakes a quest of the female self that is placed between objective reality and perception.

Many other women writers like Mavis Gallant, Sandra Birdsell, and Edna Alford have opted for postmodern representational techniques and the postmodern episteme to analyze female experience. The analysis of the short stories attempted within the scope throws into prominence the variety of representations of women that are possible within the postcolonial space. As Foucault claims, Truth is not something outwardly, but rather a product of individual regimes of truth and is therefore inseparable from power. Truth therefore is protean in nature and is shaped by existing situations. Thus, the postcolonial Canadian woman writer creates a female space with the full realization that there are no absolutes and that no text is an independent entity but a step in the continual process of the rewriting of texts. She uses the short text, the truncated form of the novel to challenge the authority of the modern ideology, for it offers her an elastic space to analyze the process of narration in relation to female experiences that are constantly being reshaped within the postmodern epistemology.

1.VII A review of criticism on Mavis Gallant

Mavis Gallant has lived in Paris since 1950, spending the year 1983-84 as writer in residence at the University of Toronto. Since 1951, after some early publications in *Preview* and *Northern Review*, she has published almost exclusively in *The New Yorker*. Almost as a reminder of her neglect of Canada, she did not receive a Governor General's Award until she published *Home Truths* in 1981, a work that bears the revealing subtitle "*Selected Canadian Stories*." It could be asserted that other collections are at least as accomplished, notably from *The Fifteenth District*; and hence, the award implies that had Gallant chosen to make a more Canadian career, indigenous awards might have been more generous, Mavis Gallant's reply seems to have been, "my enterprise is writing, which I do to the best of my ability; yours is discernment, which you do within your horizons". It has been remarked that "Our inability to acknowledge the value of Gallant's work is, after all, ultimately a reflection of our cultural parochialism. How parochial we are may be measured by a simple fact. Marguerite Yourcenar has lived the same amount of time in the United States. Not only is her prose widely admired in France, and by Gallant herself (*Home Truths* xiii), but she is also the first woman to have been elected to the *Académie Française*. If Gallant had chosen to remain in Canada..... Perhaps one conclusion to that sentence would be that we all would have

been impoverished as a result. One of the aspects of such impoverishment would be that Gallant would not have been required to face with such acuity the problem of exile and debasement, which may be found everywhere in her work. It has been suggested, furthermore, by one of her earliest commentators that the "liberty of movement" that life abroad provides, gave her "a certain artistic freedom," followed by "a certain exhilaration" (Wilson 6) But the price has been that she has provoked a certain hostility among members of the Canadian literary establishment to which she has responded eloquently in the introductory remarks to *Home Truths*. The very fact that she felt moved to make an apologia underscores the degree of her awareness of the sensitivity of the Canadian reading public. Indeed, to be read in Canada is to be "on trial" (*Home Truths xii*), suggesting that culture in this country carries with it an aura of criminal offence. How, then, to feel at home in a country where what you say as fiction may be treated as fraud, where writing itself may be considered "an act of intellectual deception" (*Home Truths xii*)? This is a question that becomes particularly acute when one distinguishes allegiances, as Gallant has done, between the nation of one's birth and the world of art. That she has chosen to do so is reason enough to celebrate her; that she has persisted to write as she does, despite her reception "at home," is even greater reason.

What is the world to which she has chosen to give her allegiance ? Rather than considering the kinds of writers - French, German, and American – with whom Gallant has a prompt familiarity, attention ought to be directed to her sense of herself as a writer. Her selfawareness is determined by the declaration; “I am a Canadian and a writer and a woman” (“*An Interview*” 62). The emphasis placed upon verb and conjunctions charge her assertion with a kind of copulative energy that seems to make each persona almost interchangeable. One seems to thrive upon the other, and all the elements conjoined seems to endow Gallant with a clarity of understanding that is reinforced by her summary statement on the matter: One’s identity – the real one - is never a problem” (“An Interview” 62). One cannot help but feel, however, the more one meditates upon those characters who dominate the scene of her fiction, that such assertions are made in the face of a certain skepticism; which inheres in the erosion of time, experience, history, the mark especially of someone keenly attuned to the moment remembered, the peculiar Stimmung that events have in their passage. Gallant’s work, whether in ” so frequently praised for its understanding of the working of Fascism, or in the more recent “*Speck’s Idea*. “No one is more aware of this than Gallant herself, who has remarked: “I can’t imagine writing anything that doesn’t have humour. Every situation has an element of farce. I have a friend..... who went through

Auschwitz – my God, one says that as though one were going through finishing school” (*Gabriel* 24). To say “the war” is to refer to the predominance of the Second World War as a presence, explicit or not, in her work. The war is a determination, and its force may be observed in the record of her recollection of first looking upon photographs from the concentration camps in 1945. It is significant that Gallant believed then, as she does now, that in order to understand what has occurred, an explanation must not be solicited from the victims, but from the Germans; she shares this position with Hugh MacLennan. To find an answer, she observes, was “desperately important to people like myself who were twenty-two and had to live with this shambles” (“*An Interview*” 40). As Janice Kulyk Keefer has argued, for Gallant, “female experience in which passivity, captive and sometimes complicit suffering have been traditionally the norm, becomes archetypal of the human experience of history in an age in which “total war” has eclipsed all other concepts of conflict” (“*Mavis Gallant*” 296), and Gallant’s career has been a sustained search through the shambles of the twentieth century to know why war happened. No less significant is the fact that she calls her German stories, her meditations on catastrophe, “a kind of personal research” (“*An Interview*” 39), and the problem for her is not the brute facts themselves, nor even the larger issues that form the discourse of political history. The war is not actual, in the French sense, with Gallant, but filtered by

reminiscence,; her fictions are *An archaeology of war* (Woodcock 82). Her characters, therefore, are inevitably they are either emblems of the shambles of war or, like Gallant's narrators, figures who pick their way through it. The war, then, formed a certain sensibility in Gallant that was exquisitely attuned to language, and she realized, even at 22, that the article she had been commissioned to write had turned the war into kitsch. Hence it is equally valid to say that Gallant's career has also been a search for a certain shaping discourse without which all the talk of war and its wake would become, as kitsch becomes, gestures of immorality and cynicism. To neglect Gallant's understanding of language, then, is as careless as it is to overlook her attentiveness to how things fall apart. This is why it is well to remember a comment Gallant made about Yourcenar, that her "subject is not cruelty, but heresy" ("*Limpid*" 185). Hence, it might be asserted that Gallant's own move to Paris, another heresy, has played a significant role in her use of language. For, as she remarks of Yourcenar, "Writers who choose domicile for a foreign place, for whatever reason, usually treat their native language like a delicate timepiece, making certain it runs exactly and that no dust gets inside" ("*Limpid*" 189). Such a statement is true, if only in the rarest of instances, and Thomas Mann, James Joyce, and, to choose a contemporary, Milan Kundera, all deserve mention as writers for whom language is the ultimate country.

Gallant sees herself as a Canadian, and a writer, and a woman. These are synonymous words for her and that together constitute an identity. But beneath her wonderful wisecracks about “national identity” (*Home Truths xiii*), and about the cultural Philistinism of her fellow citizens, it is difficult for her to escape the fact that for her, “expatriate” is not an apt term to describe a Canadian living elsewhere, for the condition is “a natural product” (“*An Interview*” 62). A Canadian is, it would seem, by nature of but not in, and thus endowed with attributes similar to those of a woman in a patriarchal world. To accept these conditions is to become by definition, a heretic refusing the official version, whose text consequently becomes the articulation of such a state, such a country. Life and history, as Keefer has remarked, happen to *Canadians elsewhere* (289), such that Gallant’s texts, to speak without generalizing, are continual alibis that forever gloss the official account into a condition of irony, playfully shifting and displacing meaning until the shambles constitutes its own economy and polish, and we discover that we are at home wherever we have always been.

Ronald Hatch, Debra Martens, and Bernice Schrank all have entered directly into the subject of the shambles of European society since 1943. Through his elaborate reading of two stories published in 1963, Hatch addresses as the issue of the Fascist sensibility and its effect upon memory and, concomitantly, the identity of the character.

He takes as his point of departure Gallant's first encounter with the effects of Nazism in the shape of photographs of the concentration camps. The problem as Gallant began to understand it, was the failure of language to articulate what had occurred. What is to be done with the past and our memory of it and ourselves is the question her work poses on many levels. Gallant's response, as Hatch argues through his examination of two Germans who had fought for the Nazis, is to draw our attention to the distortions of language, image, and particularly the discourse of films, all of which allow the borders of past and present, life and art to dissolve. As self-awareness consequently becomes amorphous, the ability to determine historical meaning becomes increasingly weakened, limiting the character to protective, but dangerous, notions of the past. Martens explores analogous problems, particularly through her comparison of Gallant with the Austrian novelist Joseph Roth. The subject for each, as Gallant remarks of Yourcenar, is heresy, a particular obsession with the past that acquires for the characters of both authors the dimensions of neurosis. Characters either remain immobilized by their recollections of the past, or are in some way unaware of it. Only the unaware seem capable of moving into a future, and therefore liberating consciousness. Schrank's project is an analysis of the collection. *My Heart Is Broken*, whose stories range from the late 1990s to the early 1960s. Focusing upon a point made by Hatch, she argues that one of the functions

of literature and film is to confirm the character in a conservative, sentimental f. Such discourses not only distort the past, but they also tend to hold the character in some way suspended, detached from the world, so that a spectator's passivity is guaranteed. The character becomes subject to the kinds of political manipulation manifest both in the texts that Hatch and Martens examine, and in the texts later collected in *The Pegnitz Junction*.

Godard, distinguishes her enterprise from that of earlier critics, who have, for the most part, placed Gallant somewhere in the mode of modern, psychological realism. At the same time, she recuperates Schrank's work on popular culture to indicate how irony functions in the dismantling of conventional plots within the self-reflexivity of the text. Godard notes that Gallant returns the reader to the text as part of its operation, and in so doing, the author's sense of play emerges with intricacy and delicacy. Gallant's status as a woman and a Canadian makes her at once ambiguous and an embarrassment for English Canadian critical discourse. In a word, she is uncanny – both, somehow, familiar and frightening. By examining the unheimlich in the text of psychiatry, Murray replaces Gallant's text within the discussion of fiction and psychology, particularly with respect to the function of repression by which themes of oppression and exile reemerge within a context where life and literature melt into each other. Thus it is shown how the reader has often and unwittingly been

participating in the making of Gallant's text, which itself continually represses the material, at the expense of the psychic reality, to use Freud's distinction.

Winfried Siemerling's project is to analyse the play of fiction, which is a lie that, nevertheless, tells a truth; or, as Murray might say, a lie that represses a truth that the reading process brings out of hiding, inasmuch as truth is the unhidden (or *aletheia*, in Greek). Furthermore, as we know fictions may hypostatize the past, and memory will repeat it, so creating a truth. Thus irony participates in the making of heresies, as well as the remaking of other texts, as Gallant draws Flaubert and Proust into her own texts as guides from, and dismantlers of, the past. It also permits, finally, the character to become a locus of polysemous possibility, which Lawrence Mathews emphasizes in his study of *From the Fifteenth District*, particularly in the ironical use of the character within the passage of time. Because of the function of time in Gallant's understanding of narrative, truth becomes radically problematic, forcing the reader not only to acquiesce in continual shifts of perspective, but also to be prepared to accept that the search for meaning in Gallant's text is vain and, therefore, an object of satire. *A Fairly Good Time*, focuses on a text that teaches one that Gallant must be read constantly, that is, decoded. This means, that Gallant's character finds herself in a labyrinth – and her task is to come to terms with that subtle, shifting,

heretical scene in which the self is to be created from the shambles it finds are the domains of its existence. For truth, indeed, lies in fiction. The way out, for Gallant, is the way in, and especially the way in to a text that is designed to shatter expectations, subvert our sense of language, find truth in ironic guise, and suggest, finally, that our image on the mirror is often so much the contrary of what we profess to value that we must accept the unheimlich as where we will have to be at home.

Stevens Peters article "*Perils of Compassion*" comprises the most comprehensive published criticism of Mavis Gallant's fiction. It nevertheless deals only with the three novels which had been published at that time. Stevens suggests that the concern for familial relationships which is evident in Gallant's stories is found in her novels as a "double-edged theme of closeness and domination". The analysis of each work focuses the three novels but barely mentions the fourth and concluding section of *Green Water, Green Sky*. He considers *A Fairly Good Time* Gallant's finest achievement and describes it as "a very carefully wrought book, full of incisive characterizations and penetrating ironies."

Edmund Wilson, in his book *O Canada*, praises Gallant's work on the whole, although he feels her short stories are too fragmented and appear to be "not so much real short stories as episodes from some longer fiction". Nevertheless, Wilson

cites Gallant as “a brilliant example of the Canadian cosmopolitan” and finds that the expatriate status affords her a certain artistic freedom”.

Margaret Atwood in “*Survival*” Only mentions two of Gallant’s short stories, “*The Legacy*” and “*Bernadette*”, and her view of them seems to be determined by the dictates of her thesis. She regards “*The Legacy*”, for instance, as “a good summation of the route taken by Canadian fictional characters in their unsuccessful efforts to escape from their families”.

Weaver Robert in his “Introduction” which is six page piece, does not aspire to be more than a brief introduction of Mavis Gallant for the readers. Weaver provides a biographical sketch of Gallant as well as a commentary on her two novels and thirteen short stories that are included in the volume. He devotes two pages to Gallant’s two major non-fiction works, “*Things Overlooked Before*” and “*Reflections*”, an inordinate space considering that he mentions only a limited number of the short stories upon which her reputation most heavily depends. He concludes with the observation that in the forefront of Gallant’s work “are those human figures, fragmented by life, so often expatriated in one way or another, that she observes with amusement and affection, with pity and sadness, and frequently with a kind of bitchy impatience that seems to me to be peculiarly her trademark”.

The carefully selected and polished language is the foundation on which is built an examination of the present realities of women's lives as they struggle for a sense of selfhood or wrestle with conflicting demands of husbands / lovers or deal with the complex web of miscomprehensions. In all these situations, conflicting emotional demands or role expectations are threatening to split women apart. This is the area where the struggle of contemporary women to redefine conventions is at its sharpest. The careful surfaces that Mavis Gallant has created ensure that her stories appeal to the heart. Mavis Gallant prolific writer of novels, novellas and short stories, is always innovative in the presentation of her themes.

No doubt, most of these critics have to contribute in their own ways to the understanding of Gallant's novels. However my assessment of the novelist makes a point of departure in the sense that it tries to make a comprehensive assessment of her fiction. In the present thesis my attempt has been to make a full length study of Mavis Gallant as a Canadian writer with special reference to various themes and techniques used by her. As a creative writer, she takes a stance of a feminist, and therefore I believe that the feminist theory, if it is to be useful, must be recognised as being provisional and for convenience only.

The present dissertation modestly attempts a thematic study of the following literary work of Mavis Gallant :

The Literary works :

The titles of her novellas and collections of short stories are as follows :-

- (1) *The Other Paris* (1956)
- (2) *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959)
- (3) *Its Image On the Mirror* (1964)
- (4) *My Heart Is Broken* (1964)
- (5) *A Fairly Good time* (1970)
- (6) *The Pegnitz Junction* (1973)
- (7) *From the Fifteenth District* (1973)
- (8) *The End of the World and Other Stories* (1974)
- (9) *Home Truths* (1981)
- (10) *Overhead in a Balloon : Stories of Paris* (1985)

Mavis Gallant, through her novels, novellas and short stories, throws light upon the life, status and the roles played by contemporary women in the society. The emotional upheavals that these women encounter, various conflicts they face, their struggle to identify the self within them, their efforts to preserve their identity in the male dominated world are some of the issues Mavis Gallant voices through her literature. They also create problems in relationships and that is why it is ideal to divide Mavis Gallant's work into phases such as the search for the self or the identity and the conflicts in relationships.

Notes & References :

- * George Woodcock, *The World of Canadian Writing* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1980) 18.
- * Ibid., 20.
- * Ibid., 21.
- * Ibid., 24.
- * Ibid., 31.
- * Ibid., 31.
- Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 235.
- * Geoff Hancock, ed., *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No.28 (1978), special Gallant issue.
- * Grazia Merler, *Mavis Gallant : Narrative Patterns and Devices* (Ottawa : Tecumseh, 1978).
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
- * Ibid., 82.
- * Ibid., 118.
- * Ronald Hatch, Review, *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No.34,35 (1980), pp. 172-74.
- * Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York : Vintage, 1974) XVI.
- * Ibid., 267.
- * Toril Moi, *Feminist Theory and Simon de Beauvoir* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1990)

Notes & References :

- * *Canadian Fiction magazine* 28 (1978) (special Gallant issue): 18-67.
- * Gabriel, Barbara, "Fairly Good Times: An Interview with Mavis Gallant." *Canadian Forum* Feb. 1987:23-27.
- * Gallant, Mavis. "An Interview with Mavis Gallant". With Geoff Hancock.
- * Introduction, *Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories*. By Mavis Gallant. Toronto: Macmillan, 1981. xi-xxii.
- * Keefer, Janice Kulyk, "Mavis Gallant and the Angel of History." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 55 (1986): 282-301.
- * Malcolm, Douglas, "An Annotated Bibliography of Works by and about Mavis Gallant." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978) [special Gallant issue]: 115-33.
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
- * Wilson, Edmund, *O Canada: An American's Noes on Canadian Culture*. New York: Farrar, 1963.
- * Woodcock, George, "Memory, Imagination, Artifice: The Latest Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978) [special Gallant issue]: 74-92.
- * "When We Were Nearly Young," *The New Yorker*, 15 Oct. 1960, pp. 38-42.
- * William H. *Modern Canadian Essays* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976);

Chapter II

**History and Fiction, Memory and
Imagination in Mavis Gallant's Stories**

MAVIS GALLANT'S STORIES retrace the past along the fault-lines between history and fiction, memory and imagination. Set in run down pensions, or villas, or hotels, often on or near a border, often during a time of transition, her stories, evoke an uncannily precise, local sense of postwar Italy, France, and Germany. The most important element in the texture and craft of Gallant's fiction – the element which seems at first to make her stories read so true to life – is her exacting use of detail; but the major effect of this fine web of detail is to confirm the abstracting powers of what Roland Barthes has called the “indirect language” of literature. Barthes suggests that in order for the language of literature not to name the “ultimate meaning” of things, it names thing” in detail,” because “the best way for a language to be indirect is to refer as constantly as possible to objects and not to their concepts. “The workings of this paradox, writes Barthes, explain the “concrete vocation of literary writing.” Barthes” comments should alert us to the dangers of assuming too little when we read realist fiction, and warn us away from reading stories like Gallant's as simple slices of life.

At one edge of Gallant's fiction - generally but not exclusively in her earlier work – it is tempting to say that her stories' strengths are reportorial, documentary. The issue is more obviously and more richly complicated in later stories, particularly in the Linnet Muir stories. Sometimes this

documentary impulse seems so strong that editors and bibliographers vacillate between anthologizing or cataloguing a work as a story or as an essay, as fiction or as non-fiction, sometimes opting for one, sometimes the other, sometimes both.

The function of setting in Gallant's fiction can be clarified by drawing on two stories published over twenty years apart – “*The Other Paris*” (1953), the title story of Gallant's first book of stories published in 1956) and “*In Youth Is Pleasure*,” the first of the Linnet Muir stories, published first in *The New Yorker* in 1973. ‘ These, like many Gallant stories, are shaped by as George Woodcock has called, the “helical patterning of memory” as it encounters, evades, or reinvents setting . “In both stories, the realization of setting is juxtaposed with setting remembered, providing readers with insight into the ways in which characters' memories play over the past to shape fictions which either remove them from history or replace them within it.

In “*The Other Paris*,” one invention of setting occurs through Carol Frazier's memory, which is the medium for Carol's story making about Paris – both her dream Paris and the “other” historical Paris. In “*In Youth is Pleasure*,” setting is realized through Linnet Muir's memory, through her recollections and her insights into her childhood inventions of a fabulous Montreal, inventions which she dissolves in the

course of telling her story. Carol Frazier is a young American innocent abroad who comes to work in the post in Paris of the fifties and gets engaged to Howard, her American boss. She has a momentary, potentially revelatory encounter with Felix, a young Frenchman orphaned during the war, but she is left at story's end poised to retreat to North America and into marriage. In flight through the fictions of memory from the postwar Paris she has had an unsettling glimpse of – Felix's girl friend Odile's city. The narrator shows us Carol inventing, shaping her romantic memories of Paris into a story of the spot. *The Other Paris*, in spite of what she sees, what she is forced to see over and over again before her eyes, are the crucial events in the story's plot.

The story closes with the distasteful strangeness that would slip away; for 'love' she would think once more, 'Paris,' and, after a while, happily married, mercifully removed in time, she would remember it and describe it and finally believe it as it has never been at all." "Carol's memory will be selectively creative; the agency of memory will impose form and so create meaning, but ironically, this meaning will deny experience. Carol's projected re-creation of her past is an art which loosely but ironically follows the sequence of a writer's re-creation of the past: first, as if she were going to write a story, (and she is), Carol remembers something (call it subject, Paris, content, event, sensation); then she describes (she will shape, form, structure, pattern – turn these nouns into verbs, turn static

content into signifying form) and finally believes (the end result, perhaps, of “sincerely imagining”, something Carol does a lot in this story). But when Carol remembers and describes and finally believes it, as it has never been at all, she evades Paris and retreats from the history of her experience, and she is judged accordingly throughout the story.

“In *Youth is Pleasure* “shows an opposed use of setting. In this story, depictions of setting chart a narrator’s movement through memory, beyond memory, and into the present, Linnet returns to Montreal from New York at eighteen to strike out on her own and also to discover the “truth” (at least, in others’ memories) about her father’s death. Like many other Gallant stories, this one circles around what Gallant has called a “locked” situation (the uncertain outcome of Carol’s engagement, Linner’s grappling with an unanswered, perhaps unanswerable question), and it weaves a course between setting encountered, as it merges with and emerges from setting remembered. Linnet had moved at ten from Montreal to a city in Ontario, where her memory of Montreal “took shape,” as she puts it:

“I retained, I rebuilt a superior civilization. In that drowned world, Sherbrooke Street seemed to be glittering and white; the vision of a house upon that street was so painful that I was obliged to banish it from the memorialIf I say that Cleopatra floated down the Chateauguay River, that the Winter Palace was stormed on Sherbrooke Street, that Trafalgar was fought on Lake St. Louis, I mean it naturally; they were the natural background of my exile and fidelity.” (H.T. 210)

This is the voice of a character for more conscious and reflective than Carol, and clearly the meanings of memory are both more complex and ambiguous here. The uses of settings in both stories engage readers in the directions and indirections taken by characters’ (and sometimes narrators’) “helical patterning of memory” In this context, documentary realism is a form serving a purpose; it is a means and not an

end. It poses the prospect of meticulously realized settings against characters' "memorials," or inventions of setting. And whether we call these creations reflexive, or self-referential, or impressionist, or aspects of them or form, one conclusion that we might draw is that realism in Gallant's fiction reflects as much as it refers, pointing towards the world with a particular emphasis on the ways in which the past is either called into being or banished into exile.

The significant ambiguities of setting in Gallant's fiction are inseparable from the functions of her characters. Analyses of Gallant's characters as autonomous wholes, as discrete lifelike individuals, are likely to bring the reader sharply up against what appears to be at once a sheer, impermeable surface and an impenetrable wall of character traits – as if beneath this surface there were a "deeper" layer of meaning or being, as if behind this wall there lay a garden more fertile with significance.

Carol Frazier's story making dramatizes a character's fight from one world of time into another, from the flat grey reality of postwar Paris into the haven of memory's reassuringly romantic Paris.

"*Its Image on the Mirror*" is itself mirrored in another story published in *My Heart Is Broken*. "The Cost of Living" tells the tale of two Australian sisters, its time from the Bohemian sister's point of view, and this time in Paris.

Along with this first major expression of the broken dialogue between memory and history in Gallant's fiction the stories of *The Other Paris* begin to suggest many of Gallant's other major themes. "About Geneva" is a fine early example of a story about the subtle but also savage battles within families, and "Senor Pinedo" is in its way as political a story as those collected in *The Pegnitz Junction*. "The Picnic" is representative of those stories which bring domestic codes of conduct into sharp focus by displacing characters in alien settings, most often in Europe: two other stories, both set in Canada, read almost like reminiscences with light, comic resolutions ("Wing's Chips." *The Deceptions of Marie-Blanche*). Like all of Gallant's fiction, these early stories record a closely observed surface of details, of atmosphere and setting, without shading into forms like the memories, the documentary, the personal narrative, or the essay.

Most of the narrators of *The Other Paris* are ironic and detached, taking up an objective or a dispassionate stance, framing characters in settings, establishing situations. When first-person narrators remember, they report their memories, rather than reflect on memory's process or meaning. As Gallant's fiction develops, reporters and documentary reports, objective narrators and distanced, ironic narration begin to evolve into more inventive and reflective structures, implicitly or explicitly raising questions about narrative perspective, narrative truth, the significance of memory, history, and the

recreation or recollection of the past.

“The Other Paris” turns on the moment of Carol Frazier’s encounter with history in the postwar Paris of the fifties, followed by her retreat into memory’s fictions. The narrator invites us to read the story Carol tells herself about Paris as an evasive romanticization, one that will form her “disappointing” experience into a pleasant fiction, a “coherent picture, accurate but untrue,” Carol is one of the first of Gallant’s characters to suffer the ambiguities of a doubled vision: “The Other Paris” follows the course of Carol’s engagement to her American boss, an engagement which has to survive Carol’s attempts to bridge the gulf between the possibilities of love in the real postwar Paris and her romantic vision of love in the Paris of her dreams”. (EW-112)

Carol, twenty-two, has come to work in Paris and quickly becomes engaged to Howard Mitchell, who is “sober, old enough to know his own mind, and absolutely reliable” (4). A young North American girl abroad, Carol brings to Paris and her engagement an unworldliness nurtured by the “helpful” practicality of classroom talks: The fact that Carol was not in love with Howard Mitchell did not dismay her in the least. From a series of helpful college lectures on marriage she had learned that a common interest, such as a liking for Irish settlers, was the true basis for happiness, and that the illusion of love was a blight imposed by the film industry, and almost entirely responsible for the high rate of divorce. (3-4).

The sharp irony here is directed first at the nonsensically commonsensical worldview which would dispense this kind of practical classroom wisdom; by extension – although already tempered with an allowance for Carol is innocent sincerity- the irony is also directed at her character. The narrator lays

bare Carol's naivete and the contours of the worldview that serves as the cornerstone for Howard's "absolute reliability"; the price that Carol must pay for her distinctively North American brand of determined innocence is the radical separation of the banished "illusion of love" from the precincts of the real Paris, a dull, rainy city, which repeatedly disappoints her.

The comic disparity between Carol's romanticized Paris and the Paris she encounters daily provides the simplest of the story's oppositions. On this level, Carol's disappointments are unambiguous: waiting for love to unfold as it properly should. Carol searches for a Paris of "famous parks," "read about" rather than lived in, its men characters in the books of "English lady novelists": She finds transplanted Coca Cola signs "men who needed a haircut," and "shabby girls bundled into raincoats" (6-7).

Carol looks and waits for the appropriately romantic (and at the same time comfortably middle-class) environment in which love will naturally blossom; retrospectively (and hypothetically) she "sincerely imagines" – which in this story is closely linked with believing – romantic contexts for romantic events: "If anyone had asked Carol at what precise moment she fell in love. Or where Howard Mitchell proposed to her, she would have imagined, quite sincerely, a scene that involved all at once the Seine, moonlight, barrows of violets, acacias in

flower, and a confused, misty background of the Eiffel Tower and little crooked streets.” (3)

The comedy of Carol’s engagement is played out against a background which continually threatens to become foreground – the real postwar Paris. A city in which Parisians themselves are out of time and place. Odile, A secretary in Carol’s office, is a representative figure, complaining to Carol over lunch about her family’s economic decline since the war; like so many of Gallant’s postwar Europeans, Odile “touché(s) on the present only to complain in terms of the past”. (8).

Felix, Odile’s young lover, completes the quartet. He is closest to Carol in age. But most removed from her by dint of her perception of his status and class. Unemployed, without working papers, Felix is a product of the massive displacements resulting from the war. He, as much as Odile, is a “typical” postwar Parisian – a refugee. Anticipating her moment of contact with Felix at the end of the story, Carol compares his situation with hers but then “los(es) track” in a passage through which we hear how effectively this narrator’s tonal variations co-modulate: “She and Felix, then, were closer in age than he was to Odile, or she herself was to Howard. When I was in school, he was in school, she thought. When the war stopped, we were fourteen and fifteen..... But here she lost track, for where Carol had a holiday, Felix’s parents had been killed.” (10) For Felix, for Europe, the war did not simply “stop”; there was no North American “holiday” from the more immediately apparent effects of history.

Carol's fictionalizing – what she imagines, what she reconstructs through memory and will finally believe – must be understood in the double context of what she brings to Paris and what she finds there. The narrator persistently calls our attention to this attempted synthesis of dream world and real world, inviting us to read Carol's kind of story-making as a process closely linked with the manoeuvres of North American memory reshaping European history. These connections between events and characters' transformations of events into ironic stories form the structure of "*The Other Paris*," so that its plot becomes a double one.

There are four major events in the story. The story opens at Madame Germaine's, she is fitting Carol for her wedding dress. Looking out the window of the flat, Carol sees a dreary, unpromising spring. The story then cuts away from the narrative present as the narrator fills in the events of the past six months and describes the four principal characters. The second episode takes place the previous Christmas, when Carol had pleaded with Howard to take her to hear the carols sung at Place Vendome. Predictably, the excursion results in one of Carol's disappointments at the actual event's unromantic nature. Then near the end of winter, Odile invites Carol and Howard to her sister Martine's recital. Carol is excited at the prospect of finally gaining entrance to her romantic Paris, but again, reality disappoints and Carol dimly realizes that her conception of Paris and what she actually

encounters are in some sense irreconcilable. Returning to the narrative present, we rejoin Carol and Odile, who have just left Madame Germaine's flat. Odile persuades Carol, against her will, to visit Felix, and they walk to Felix's disreputable Left Bank apartment. Carol, ill at ease, is left alone with Felix when Odile unceremoniously falls asleep on the bed. Felix escorts Carol to the Metro, where in a final confrontation, they come together which provides an important context within which to read the story, a context which meshes with the set of oppositions between the real Paris and Carol's moonlit fantasies.

The opening scene provides Odile with an occasion to tell the dressmaker the story of Carol's engagement to Howard. Carol herself is detached; there is "evidently no conversation to be had" with her (2),. Odile's exchange with the dressmaker is a melodramatic excerpt from a modern fairy-tale;

"Just imagine ! Miss Frazier came to Paris to work last autumn, and fell in love with the head of her department."

"Non!" Madame Germaine recoiled as if no other client had ever brought off such an extraordinary thing.

"Fell in love with Mr. Mitchell," said Odile, nodding. "At first sight, lecoup de foudre."

"At first sight ?" said the dressmarker. She looked fondly at Carol.

“Something no one would have expected.” Said Odile.
“Although Mr. Mitchell is charming. Charming.”

“I think we ought to go,” said Carol. (2)

The next “story” has more complex implications. Carol goes to the carol signing at the Place Vendome hoping to find the raw content for a “warm memory” : “Here, she imagined, with the gentle fall of the snow and the small, rosy choirboys singing between lighted Christmas trees, she would find something a warm memory that would, later, bring her closer to Howard a glimpse of the Paris other people liked” (11-12).

This midwinter retrospective, narrated between the two scenes at the dressmaker’s, fills in our understanding of Carol and Odile. So that when they emerge from the dressmaker’s . they come out as more substantial figures than they were one moment (and twelve pages) earlier. So it is not incongruous that as she looks out the window. Carol sees no sign of spring, and yet a moment later she agrees with Odile that winter is finally over. Indeed, the whole final scene is charged with significance which has accrued from intervening episodes. Nuances of description and dialogue recall earlier descriptions, earlier dialogue. The setting of Carol’s “Sincerely imagined” proposal scene, for example. “a scene that involved all at once the Seine, moonlight, barrows of violets.... And a confused, misty background of the Eiffel Tower and little crooked streets,” ironically recalls the description of the neighborhood Felix lives in, which

Carol “ did not like the look of”: They crossed the boulevard and a few crooked, narrow streets filled with curbside barrows and marketing crowds. It was a section of Paris Carol had not seen; although it was on the Left bank, it was not pretty, not picturesque”.

What is picturesque in her imagination makes Carol uncomfortable when she finds its antithesis in the world. Appropriately, it is Felix’s neighbourhood that most closely resembles Carol’s picture-postcard Paris, just as it is Felix who comes closest to touching Carol. Here as elsewhere, descriptions of setting recall earlier settings: by ironically realizing one of Carol’s “sincerely believed” visions, Gallant shows us the process Carol undergoes of successfully avoiding an education. We read of Carol’s discomfort in Felix’s dingy room, her “breathless Embarrassment” when it becomes clear to her that Felix and Odile are lovers; immediately we recall the earlier observation that “indeed, Carol rated the chances of love in a cottage or furnished room at zero”.

The strength of “*The Other Paris*” emerges in part from its near documentary presentation of postwar Paris and its social, political, cultural, and historical climate. These cultural qualities inhere intangible descriptions of shabbily-dressed Parisians, of gloomy restaurants, theatres, and apartments, and ofcourse of the perpetual drizzle, which is so pervasive that it begins to seem figurative. These aspects of setting form the background and the foreground for Carol’s trials: the story’s strength as realist fiction is complemented by its

reflexive qualities, which begin with the attention paid to characters' stories about Carol's engagement and end with the sharply ironic focus on Carol's story-making memory. In "*The Other Paris*," memory is the means through which Carol transforms potentially educative experience into a lullaby. In this sense, the story is an account of an ambiguous initiation, one which is also a retreat – a recurring theme in Gallant's fiction.

The conflict between documentary versions and romantic visions is not always as sharp as it is in "*The Other Paris*." In several early Gallant stories, narrators transcribe settings without explicit reference to the shaping process of memory or of imagination. Artifice is muted, more conspicuous in its apparent absence. The shaping of actuality goes unnoticed – so much so that Gallant's editors and bibliographers disagree over whether or not these stories are more properly essays and discuss the close relation between the two forms in Gallant's work. The mediating, forming, reflexive patterns of artifice shape content into form-ironically-before our eyes in the stories within "*The Other Paris*"; this shaping process is less apparent in stories like "*Wing's Chips*" (1954), "*The Deceptions of Marie-Blanche*" (1953), "*Senor Pinedo*" (1954), and "*When We Were Nearly Young*" (1960). These stories in which a first-person narrator remembers without commenting on the shaping force of memory, are at the transcriptive, documentary edge of Gallant's fictional world, with a straight

forward, chronological narrative line and a narrator at once detached enough to observe and engaged enough to comment on social rituals in their settings.

“The Four Seasons” is one of the few of her own stories which Gallant has discussed, and her remarks about its origins provide us with insight into one kind of source for her fiction:

The story of the little servant girl had been told to me by the girl herself, by then a woman. She had been employed when she was eleven or twelve by an English family in the south of France. I set the story in Italy, for a number of reasons. The child was Italian. She had something the matter with one hip and one shoulder all her life, as the result of carrying the children of this couple around when she herself was still quite small. They paid her very little at first, and then nothing at all. When the war broke out the family went back to England. They told her they had no money and would pay her after the war. She told me about how she had cried. And how her mother had beaten her because she did not believe this story. The family came back to their villa after the war and paid the girl in pre-war francs. Do you know what that meant? A few cents. And there they sat, in their charming villa, comfortable, respected. I used to look at them and think, “You bloody hypocrites.” (FFD-43)

Although it is the Unwins’ exploitation of Carmela, the servant girl, that forms the nucleus of the story, the story’s setting in Italy provides Gallant with another opportunity to explore the rise of fascism and its “small possibilities in people” one of the impulses behind *The Pegnitz Junction*. In “*The Four Seasons*,” The Unwins’ enthusiastic response to Mussolini’s rise (in their view, he is bringing long-needed “order” to Italy) becomes a measure of their own totalitarian leanings, but it also establishes a connection between their treatment of Carmela and their view of Italy (and of their position in Italy as privileged, even patriarchal foreigners). The story of the Unwins

and Carmela is so deeply embedded in a reflection of the English colony's response to Mussolini that finally the Unwins' exploitation of Carmela seems to merge with Italy's entrance into the war.

From the story's beginning, the British presence in Italy is depicted as a superimposed abstraction. Carmela's school in Castel Vittorio was built long before the thirties by a Dr. Barnes with "no better use for his money," and Carmela's education there leaves her with no lasting or practical knowledge about her own country. All she remembers from the school are the three portraits on the wall, none of which will provide her with the kind of knowledge she needs – one of Dr. Barnes, one of Mussolini, and one of the King bedecked with medals. Alongside these three, but suggestively "somewhat adrift," given what the story will reveal about human suffering and exploitation, is an image of the Sacred Heart.

Carmela's voyage from her village to the coast to work for the Unwins becomes an innocent's descent into the fallen adult world, and the course of her education takes her through the hell of the Unwins' vision. But it is not only the English colony and the Unwins in particular who live in this foreign and fallen world; the story also presents subtle portraits of the Italians' involvement with the foreign colony and of their own responses to the approaching war. On Carmela's first errand for the Unwins, for example, she suddenly recognizes a man

from Castel Vittorio, now a chauffeur to the “Marchesa,” an American who lives alongside the Unwins. As befits his new station, the chauffeur makes no sign that he recognizes Carmela (although when he sees her at the Unwins in her own connection with the colony – he grants her a “diffident nod” (6). This deception, she instantly realizes, has been her first lesson in the social hierarchies which will order her “real” life: “Her real life was beginning now, and she never doubted its meaning. Among the powerful and the strange she would be mute and watchful. She would swim like a little fish, and learn to breathe underwater” (5). More telling than this portrait of the sycophantic chauffeur, however, are the depictions of Carmela’s little brother and his Italian boss. When the deportation of Jews from Italy starts, a lucrative traffic in smuggling them across the border into Monaco in fishing boats begins, and Lucio, formerly a stonemason, buys an interest in a boat and takes “Carmela’s brother along” (28). Like Carmela, her brother is a child who is keenly perceptive about the social strata in the colony, but only dimly aware of the causes or nature of the larger changes he witnesses; and Lucio sees the new situation simply as a chance to make a profit. Nor is Carmela’s mother excluded from censure for her lack of awareness or compassion: she sends Carmela a message to stay with the Unwins as long as possible because the family will need the money, and she cannot rely on Carmela’s brother, who was “perhaps earning something with the boat traffic of

Jews, but how long could it last? And what was the little boy's share?

The story follows the course of Carmela's rapid and forced initiation into the social organization of the colony. Unknown to the Unwins, she quickly learns English and so becomes adept at catching the drift of their conversations or the gist of letters left lying around; more significantly, she becomes expert at reading their moods and attitudes. This is revealed most effectively when Carmela serves tea on the occasion of Mr. Dunn's, the new padre's visit to the Unwins. Mr. Unwin is an agnostic who will eventually undermine the padre because she fears his efforts to effect any kind of change in the colony: on this first visit, Carmela sees that the padre is missing all of the cues from the assembled guests at the Unwins that it is serious business to suggest changes in the way the church has tended its flock. Present at the Unwins for this confrontation are Miss Barnes – descendant of the Dr. Barnes mentioned in the story's opening and therefore a contemporary representative of the longstanding tradition of a "benevolent" British presence in Italy – and Miss Lewis, a "bolshie" young Englishwoman from Miss Barnes' perspective, who infuriates Mrs. Unwin by lecturing her about her verbal abuse of Carmela. The opposition to one of the padre's proposed changes nicely captures the Unwins' and Miss Barnes' determined clinging to the past: when he mentions that the church clock is slow and that he "might have the time

put right, “ he is met with hysterical responses, culminating in a screamed command from Mrs. Unwin to have “no involvement” of any kind with anything (21). It is only at this point that Mr. Dunn realizes that Mrs. Unwin and Miss Barnes are in dead earnest, nor is he to preach boring sermons like his predecessor, Mr. Unwin warns him. It is inevitable, given Mrs. Unwin’s stance, that the padre will make a vindictive enemy of her when he speaks out, however obliquely, against intolerance, or about courage and tyranny, and on an Easter Sunday he crosses the line forever when he mentions Hitler by name.

Like many of Gallant’s finest stories, “*The Four Seasons*” turns on a series of repetitions in which early scenes and details are subtly altered later in the story, both to suggest the completion of a pattern and to suggest crucial changes within that pattern. Early in the story Carmela, on her first walk from the Unwins’ house to the marketplace, sees her surroundings utterly foreign and fabulous – “a clinic with a windbreak of cypress trees and ochre walls and black licorice balconies, “for example (4). Her most fairy-tale vision is of a café, from which she hears a woman – the Marchesa, Mrs. Unwin’s mortal enemy – describing some ugly new houses under construction:

“Hideous. I hope they fall down on top of the builder, Unwin put money in it, too, but he’s bankrupt. “The woman who made these remarks was sitting under the pale-blue awning of a café so splendid that Carmela felt bound to look the other way. She caught, like her flash of the sea, small rough tables and colored ices in silver dishes.” (FFD-4)

Throughout the story, Carmela has replied to Mrs. Unwin's baffling chatter with cryptic remarks of her own, such as "Every flower has its season" (4) or "Every creature has its moment" (13). Carmela's "moment" comes late in the story and attests to the general collapse of moral order around her. The Unwins, realizing their danger, are fleeing to England; Mr. Unwin has offered to drive Carmela to a bus stop to start her on her way home. On the way, he spots the padre at the cafe which was the scene of Carmela's earlier vision, and they join the padre for an ice cream. The approaching chaos has collapsed the social order; Carmela is now seated with her former employer and with the padre, and she is served one of the fabulous dishes of ice cream. While she eats the ice cream, too dazed to believe in her good fortune, the padre tries to tell Mr. Unwin that he will not be bullied, that he is going to stand firm in his convictions. But Mr. Unwin is too intent on unburdening his story of his miserable marriage to Mrs. Unwin to listen to the padre. Responding to Unwin's lament, the padre tells him to "(T)hink about the sacraments – whether you believe in them or not. You might arrive in a roundabout way. Do you see?" (32). But Unwin is too far sunk in his own unhappiness to believe in sacraments; and when the padre turns to Carmela she responds: "I have just eaten my way into heaven" (34). On one level, we might be tempted to understand Carmela's reply as an innocent statement, and her reference to heaven as innocent vernacular,

referring to the miraculous turn of events whereby she has found herself seated at this table, eating this ice cream; the distance she has come from the beginning of the story does seem miraculous. But the occasion of this moment is her departure from the Unwins, with no money to show her mother; the padre has been denounced by anonymous letters, almost certainly written by Mrs. Unwin; and “heaven” seems an abstraction powerless to invoke compassion or charity in any of the story’s characters in the face of the war. Her reply then, must in some measure be understood ironically as her recognition of the only realm in which “heaven” is likely to be possible at this time – in the momentary, miraculous, and ephemeral appeasement of her hunger. So too the padre’s reply to Carmela – “Then I haven’t entirely failed” - must be read as a rueful admission of his elemental failure to awaken in the Unwins or in anyone else a sense of their involvement or moral responsibility (34).

The closing paragraph of the story firmly establishes what will impress itself most vividly on Carmela’s memory as she makes her way home from the coast to Castel Vittorio. She will not remember her experience in any chronological sequence, but only in terms of what will have the most lasting and powerful effect on her. In further confirmation of the impact of the “heavenly” experience of eating the ice cream, Carmela sees “towering clouds that seemed like cream piled on a glass plate” (34). Her earlier childhood memories, of “Dr. Barnes,

Mussolini and the King in wooden frames,” are “closer” than her memory of the padre and Unwin, who are “already the far past. “But what Carmela keeps most vividly from her seasons on the coast is the earlier image of Dr. Chaffee: “(B)oth (the padre and Unwin) then were lost behind Dr. Chaffee in his dark suit stumbling up the hill. He lifted his hand. What she retained, for the present, was one smile, one gesture, one man’s calm blessing” (35). Like Dr. Chaffee, Carmela has become a refugee and a victim, exploited in her childhood and then abandoned in her own country; the only lasting image of her experience with the Unwins will be Dr. Chaffee’s “calm blessing,” a gesture whose significance she can only imagine. In the “Four Seasons,” *Gallant* makes brilliant use of a child’s exploitation to particularize a country’s drift toward chaos: the Unwins’ situation finally reflects both the English colony’s precarious position at the outbreak of the war, and Italy’s passive acquiescence in the rise of fascism.

Notes & References :

- * Grazia Merler cited "A *Wonderful Country*" (Gallant's only story to appear in *The Montreal Standard*, 1946) as a newspaper article (Grazia Merler, *Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices* [Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1978]);
 - * Geoff Hancock, "An Interview With *mavis Gallant*," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No.28(1978), p-45.
 - * "Its Image on the Mirror," in *My Heart Is Broken* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 57-155.
 - * "Mavis Gallant, "What Is Style ?" in *Making It New: Contemporary Canadian Stories*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: Methuen, 1981), pp. 72-73.
 - * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
 - * ("*Memory, Imagination, Arrifice: The Late Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant*," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No. 28, [1978], p-75).
 - * Robert Weaver, "Introduction," *The End of the World and Other Stories*, New Canadian Library, No. 191 (Toronto; McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p.12.
 - * "*The Orther Paris*," in *The Other Paris* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), pp. 1-30; "*In Youth Is Pleasure*," in *Home Truths* (Toronto; Macmillan, 1981), pp218-37.
 - * "*The Cost of Living*," in *My Heart Is Broken*, pp. 157-93.
- All further references to this work appear in the text.

Chapter III

**Assessment of Mavis Gallant's Short
Fictions - Novellas and Short Stories**

Absolute Plausibility, though not mimesis as such, taken to be one of the principal goals of fiction, the vision, no matter how fantastic, must convince the reader through its self-consistency. And absolute plausibility demands absolute artifice, not faith to actuality, which is why Flaubert outshines Zola and Chekhov outlives Guy de Maupassant. It is also why Mavis Gallant, though little recognized in Canada, outwrites most other Canadians. If one had to define her short fictions – novellas and short stories – setting aside obvious matters of theme and narrative construction, one would – and shall – talk about the impeccable verbal texture and the marvellous painterly surface of the scene imagined through the translucent veil of words, the kind of surface that derives from a close and highly visual sense of the interrelationship of sharply observed detail.

It would need a whole volume for the kind of study that might examine and relate the autonomous worlds of all Mavis Gallant's short fictions, of which there must be about a hundred, by no means all of them collected into volumes. If I decide to restrict myself to sixteen stories, which fall into three rather clearly defined groups in terms of terrain and theme, they are all fairly late stories, the first of them dating from the early 1960s and most from the 1970s, at least in terms of publication. Given Mavis Gallant's inclination to work intermittently on stories over long periods, the date of publication is not an entirely reliable clue to the time when

writing first began, though it usually is an indication of the completion point of the work which emerges out of the long process of reordering and reduction to which every story by Gallant is subjected almost as if it were sculpture.”

These sixteen stories all concern people who in some way or other are alone, isolated, expatriated, even when they remain within their families or return to their fatherlands. One of the most significant features of Mavis Gallant’s fiction is that, while she has never restricted herself to writing about Canada or about Canadians, and has written more than most creators of fiction on people of other cultures whose inner lives she could enter only imaginatively, she has never, during her period as a mature writer, written from immediate observation of people living in her here-and-now. Distance in time and place seems always necessary.

Almost all the stories have been written in Paris, where Gallant has lived most of the time since she left Canada in 1950. By now she has so lived herself into the Gallic environment that most of her friends speak French, and the depth of her involvement in French affairs is shown very clearly in “*The Events in May : A Paris Notebook*” (The New Yorker, 14 September, 21 September 1968), which recounted her adventures and observations during the abortive revolutionary situation of 1968 in France.

The “*Notebook*” dealt almost exclusively with French people and their reactions to events around them, and it

showed the same sharp observation of action, speech and setting that one finds in Gallant's stories. There were parts, one felt, that only needed to be taken out of the linear diary form and reshaped by the helical patterning of memory for them to become the nuclei of excellent stories. Perhaps one day they will, but Mavis Gallant rarely wrote in fiction about these Parisians among whom she lived. She once wrote in "*The Cost of Living*," about the two young French bohemians (only one of them a Parisian) who are less important than the two Australian sisters whom they exploit and whose education in "*The Cost of Living*" – to be interpreted emotionally as well as financially – provides the theme as well as the title of the story.

Similarly, though Mavis Gallant has written on occasion about Canadians in Europe, who are said to find it hard to accept the lifestyles they encounter, it took her twenty years after her departure from Montreal to turn to the imaginative reconstruction of the vanished city of her childhood and youth, in the five interlinked *Linnet Muir stories* which have appeared in *The New Yorker*. These examples of memory transmuted, which in intention at least bring Mavis Gallant very close to the Proust she has admired so greatly, form one group among the stories. It is virtually impossible to escape memory as a potent factor in Mavis Gallant's stories, and the next group of fictions, while they do not draw on the memory of personal experience, are imaginative constructions in which remembered observations and remembered history play a great

part. They concern the Germans (a people Mavis Gallant does not know from experience as well as she knows the Canadians or the French or even the English), and specifically the post Nazi Germans. One novella and six stories are here involved. The novella and five of the stories comprise the volume entitled *The Pegnitz Junction*; one other German story. “*The Latehomecomer*,” appeared in *The New Yorker* (8 July 1974).

The last group are tales of people trapped as foreigners in the meretricious vacation worlds of continental Europe. The main characters in most of these stories - all set on the Riviera are English, remnants of a decaying imperial order, at once predators and victims. These are “*An Unmarried Man’s Summer*” (*My Heart is Broken*, 1964), “*The Tunnel*” (*The End of the World and Other Stories*, 1974), and “*The Four Seasons*” (*The New Yorker*, 16 June 1975). The fourth, “*Iriana*” (*The New Yorker*, 2 December 1974), is one of those rare stories in which Mavis Gallant touches on the literary life. Its eponymous heroine is the widow – Russian by descent – of a famous Swiss novelist, but here too there is an English character who is not quite minor.

These four stories I shall discuss first, since they are more closely linked than the other groups with the earlier and perhaps more familiar Gallant stories about English-speaking foreigners travelling or uneasily resident in Europe, which form the greater part of her earlier volumes. *The Other Paris*

(1956) and *My Heart is Broken*. And they show fairly constant Gallant characteristics.

To begin, there is no real generic division, so far as Gallant is concerned, between short stories, novellas and novels, she rather writes the kind of story which Chekhov and de Maupassant so often produced, in which an episode is treated as if it were a detached fragment of life, and the psychological insight or the moving symbol or even the ironic quip at existence is regarded as sufficient justification for the telling.

Mavis Gallant never uses fiction with such aphoristic intent; she is neither an episodic writer nor an intentional symbolist, though in her own way she is certainly an ironist. Her stories are rarely bounded by time or place. Where the overt action is trapped in a brief encounter at one place, memory is always there to deepen and extend whatever action we have witnessed ; some times the memory emerges in dialogue, sometimes in the thoughts of the participants, sometimes it is offered by the narrator, and this multiplicity of viewpoints is again typical of Mavis Gallant, and creates a kind of story never bounded by what “happens” within it, always extending in time beyond the overt present, and tending, no matter what way of evoking memory is used, to produce a kind of fictional “life,” however condensed it may be.

This kind of biographical sweep is one of the special features of Gallant's fiction, making a story like "*An Unmarried Man's Summer*" the life portrait not only, of an individual but also of a whole doomed caste of Englishmen. It means that her stories are never like fish hauled out of the flow of existence and left to gasp rapidly to their ends; they are, rather, left to swim in their element, which is the imagination that rejects the beginnings and ends necessary to linear fiction. Every one of the four stories now being discussed is in this sense suspended in mid-flow; the readers are made aware of the past that has brought them to this particular eddy in time, and they even could have an inkling of how the future might flow on out of the eddy. Gallant's novellas, and her novels, only differ from the short stories in their greater complexity and in the fact that more of a life is worked out within the observed present of the fiction.

The point made about Mavis Gallant's lack of an inclination towards intentional symbolism is really related to this aspect of her fiction. It is not a naturalistic fiction, but it is a fiction of enhanced reality, in which life is reshaped by artifice, but not distorted; part of the artifice is in fact to give this imaginative reshaping of existence a verisimilitude more self-consistent than that of existence itself. This means that what the story actually contains and not what it may suggest is of primary importance. The final effect of the story may be symbolic, but it is not written with symbolic intent in the same

way as, say, plays like Ibsen's *Wild Duck* and Chekhov's *Seagull*, in which the named and central symbol becomes so important that the very action is shaped to fit it and in the end the ultimate goal of the whole work seems to have been no more than to give the symbol a manifestation in human life.

The difference can be seen if we look directly at "*In the Tunnel*." In this longish story a Canadian girl named Sarah, infatuated with a half-baked professor of sociology, is shipped off by her father to Grenoble, which she immediately leaves by the Route Napoleon, heading for the Mediterranean. Here she falls in with an Englishman, a former colonial civil servant named Roy Cooper, who charms her into going to live with him in the Tunnel, which turns out to be "a long windowless room with an arched whitewashed ceiling," in the grounds of a bungalow in the hills away from the sea, belonging to a couple named Tim and Meg Reeve, who actually detest the Mediterranean and have come here as refugees from the enormities of Labour Government in Britain.

Sarah falls hopelessly, masochistically, in love with Roy, who turns out to be appropriately sadistic, a typical English cad in whom the colonial years of witnessing hangings and inspecting prisons have encouraged a natural cruelty and a brutal conservatism. The Reeves are lower middle class "characters," speaking an absurd private language, feeding coarsely, despising everyone who is not English, and treating their impossible dogs (the "boys") to endless "chucky bits."

They openly talk of Sarah as yet another in Roy's long succession of feminine appendages, and Sarah shows herself endlessly vulnerable. "In love she had to show her own face, and speak in a true voice, and she was visible from all directions."

Everything seems to go well until Sarah cracks her ankle and limps around with a grotesque swelling on her leg. Roy immediately turns away from her with distaste; his sadism is accompanied by an aesthete's repugnance for anything ugly or imperfect (he describes hangings as ways of ridding the world of flawed people), and Sarah's flaw, however accidentally produced, robs him even of desire, let alone the love he pretended to feel. He turns insultingly cold and, after a final monstrous incident in which they go on a picnic to visit a chapel housing a painting of the hanged Judas, and Sarah gets drunk on the liquor from a jar of plums in brandy, he refuses even to speak to her, and she trails away, swollen ankle and all, in despair. It is only at this moment, as Sarah goes on to her next failure in love, that the Reeves show themselves under their coarse exteriors, as possessing the remnants of human kindness, covered over by layers of prejudice that clog their perceptions and allow them to reveal their good qualities only under stress and always too late.

The Tunnel is there in the solid center of the story, the place where Sarah and Roy live, typical of the smuttier fringe of life on the Cote d'Azur. Victim and predator are trapped

within this one room so that when the relationship becomes impossible, when the predator is sated, the only way out is for one – the victim – to go. Thus we first see the Tunnel as part of the actual area of living. It is the physical setting and in part the physical cause of what happens rather than – primarily – its symbol. But on another level it is a figure suggesting the tunnel of self-repetition in which each of the characters lives, the narrowness of insight and of view that limits their sense of life. Sarah at least can flee; for Roy and the Reeves the tunnels are unending, with darkness all the way. But the symbol is secondary and consequent; it is not contained within the story as the real Tunnel is.

Less obvious in its cruelty, though as devastating in revealing the futility that marks the life of a class of people for whom history has no further use, "*An Unmarried Man's Summer*" is the tale of Walter Henderson, a harmless homosexual living on the Riviera with his Italian valet Angelo, a repellent youth whom Walter rescued from slum life when he was still a graceful boy. Walter has not always been what we see him in the present of the story, when he is living in the villa called Les Anemones (where only irises grow), pursuing an empty routine "where nothing could be more upsetting than a punctured tire or more thrilling than a sunny day." The story coils from past into present and back to past again, telling us through flash after flash of memory about Walter's past, about the wartime heroism he has chosen to forget, about the

childhood which in the summer of the story comes galloping back when his beloved sister and her born-to-failure Anglo-Irish husband, on their way home from an effort at farming in South Africa, plant themselves on him with their two indisciplined children.

There is a sharp ironic tone to "*An Unmarried Man's Summer*," in which Gallant is pursuing one of her favourite aims, to reveal the inconsistency between expectations – particularly romantic expectations – and reality. Summers are the dullest times in Walter's years, when his phone never rings because the rich ladies on whom he dances attendance have gone away to avoid the hordes of summer vacationers, whom he escapes by hiding in his villa with Angelo and his old cat, William of Orange. Theoretically, the arrival of his sister, to whom he was once deeply attached, should relieve the seasonal tedium. In fact, it merely disrupts Walter's routine of life-avoidance and tangles the web of illusion in which he prefers to remain suspended.

Walter's brother-in-law is coarse and boring. His sister perpetually criticizes him, trying to show up the emptiness of his parasitic existence. And parents and children alike spoil Angelo, who turns under their influence into a sulky lout far different from the appealing boy Walter had thought he would always remain; they even try to entice him away to work on the farm they propose to start in England. When they go,

leaving behind them a discontented and intolerable Angelo, the summer is ended, the rich ladies come back, and Walter remakes the invasion into a series of amusing stories as he returns to the empty relationships that make his life.

“He tells his stories in peaceful dining rooms, to a circle of loving, attentive faces. He is surrounded by the faces of women. Their eyes are fixed on him dotingly, but in homage to another man: a young lover killed in the 1914 war; an adored but faithless son.” (EW 48)

People in Mavis Gallant’s stories tend to live vicariously and on a surface whose perturbations show their inner storms; tend to reveal pathos rather than tragedy. What she writes is a kind of comedy of manners, dry as Austen, sharp as Peacock. Her characters have tragic flaws enough, but catastrophe always looms, either in past or future, and rarely materializes in the present of the stories. People are not seen to die, though deaths may be remembered or foreseen or happen in the distance. And as in Greek tragedy, a great power is often built up by the mere sense of violence offstage or of doom impending but delayed.

A good example of this aspect of Mavis Gallant’s work is “*The Four Seasons*,” a story about expatriates on the Italian Riviera, seen through the eyes of Carmela, an Italian village girl who becomes a maid to the Unwins, a feckless English couple living rather meagerly by providing a variety of services – a real estate bureau, hand printing, etc. for the local foreign community. The story is bounded by Carmela’s arrival one

Easter and her departure a year afterwards, and the stages of her experience are marked by sections corresponding to the four seasons of the title – spring, summer, autumn, winter, with a final section devoted to the spring of her departure when Italy enters World War II and the English leave.

On one level it is the story of Carmela's education through her encounter with these always incomprehensible foreigners. On the other it is a picture of expatriate society seen through Carmela's eyes; the distancing of her view enables us to watch from the outside, as we would in a theatre, the behavior of these people who reveal themselves by what they say and do, not by what they think. In this sense the story is very dramatic, its key scenes being passages of dialogue that take place mostly in rooms and in which some people who deeply influence the action are spoken of but never appear. The use of Carmela as an observer enables us to gain a close knowledge of expatriate behavior without too many scenes in which characters are directly involved. To give one example, a great deal is made by English ladies of the rash pulpit remarks of the new young clergyman in view of the difficult political situation in this year of European war, but we are never taken to church and we encounter the priest only twice, once in Mrs. Unwin's house and once in a café. Yet by the reactions of the expatriates we are able to understand not only their prejudices but also the fears they hardly dare express.

For behind all that goes on overtly, behind the chitchat in villas and the compulsive cheeseparing manoeuvres of the Unwins (who live with vague scandals in their background), stands the reality of war. Nobody is killed, and when Italy finally enters the conflict it looks as though the English colony will all escape, even if they are beggared in the process. Only the Jews are arrested, yet even their fates are in suspension, threatened but not consummated. Near the Franco-Italian border Carmela sees the wise and amiable Dr. Chaffee being led under armed guard.

“As though he had seen on her face an expression he wanted, he halted, smiled, shook his head. He was saying “No” to something. Terrified, she peeked again, and this time he lifted his hand, palm outward, in a curious greeting that was not a salute. He was pushed on. She never saw him again.” (FFD 59)

In the end it is not the Unwins who have exploited her that Carmela most vividly remembers, but this encounter whose tragic intimations she appears to sense: “What she retained, for the present, was one smile, one gesture, one man’s calm blessing.”

“*Irina*” takes us out of the moribund society of English expatriates on the Riviera to the between-world of Switzerland that is the frontier of the Germany of *The Pegnitz Junction*. Irina’s own origins are not Germanic but Russian-Swiss, and there is a clue to them in the fact that two months before the story appeared in *The New Yorker* Mavis Gallant published in the *New York Times Book Review* (6 October 1974) an

extensive review of *Daughter of a Revolutionary*, whose central figure is Natalie Herzen; after associating with those formidable revolutionaries, Michael Bakunin and Sergei Nechaev, Natalie lived out her long life as a Swiss lady of Russian birth and independent means. Irina's antecedents are deliberately left rather vague, to show how far, until widowed, she fell in the shadow of her husband, Richard Notte, one of those dynamically boring 'European literary men, rather like Romain Rolland, who were on the right side in every good cause, writing, speaking, signing manifestos, and behaving with profligate generosity to everyone but their own families, who were expected to exist in self-sacrificing austerity.

"He could on occasion enjoy wine and praise and restaurants and good looking women, but those festive outbreaks were on the rim of his real life, as remote from his children - as strange and distorted to them - as some other country's colonial wars." (FFD 64)

The early part of "*Irina*" is seen through the eyes of a third person narrator; it is a look at the literary life, and significantly it is an outside look. Gallant, as she remarked to Geoffrey Hancock in an interview published in the *Canadian Fiction Magazine* (No.28, 1978), found after she had written the story that she identified not with her fellow writer, the formidable Notte, but with Irina, his patient wife. And this implicit rejection of the great man of letters prompts one to remark, in parenthesis, how little of the conventionally literary there is in Gallant's attitude or even her work. She avoids

literary circles and has not theories about writing; she does not compose self-consciously in advance, but, as she reveals in the interview already mentioned, writes it all down in a compulsive rush and then reduces and polishes, it is then that her power of artifice comes into play and the composition that emerges is likely to be spatial like a painting rather than linear like conventional fiction, and the visual appeal to the mind's eye is as important in it as the verbal appeal to the mind's ear. There is perhaps a vestige of Gallant's past of left-wing enthusiasms in *Notte*, but that past she has abandoned completely, and this may be why she attaches it to a male writer made safely dead by the time the story begins. Her mature work is in no way male and ideological; it is feminine and intuitive, and the rightness of detail and surface which are so striking come not from intellectual deliberation but from a sense of rightness as irrational but as true as absolute pitch.

"In loving and unloving families alike," the narrator remarks, "the same problem arises after a death. What to do about the widow?" Irina in fact arranges matters quietly but very much to her own satisfaction, so that it is she whom we find in control of the posthumous fate of *Notte's* papers, and displaying a caustic and independent good sense in assessing their importance. Yet her children still feel obliged to carry out a kind of King-Lear-in-miniature act by entertaining her by turns at Christmas. Finally the Christmas comes when every son and daughter is abroad or engaged or in trouble, and there is nowhere for Irina to go. The solution is to send Riri, her grandson, to spend the season with her, and the boy sets off with great self-sufficiency, arriving to find that his grandmother already has a visitor, an old Englishman named Mr. Aiken. The rest of the story is seen a little through Irina's eyes, but mainly through Riri's and what the child's eye reveals is the liberation which

can come with someone else's death, for Irina now follows a vague and comfortable life that is very much her own, indulging without needing them, her children's anxieties about her, thinking a little of the great Notte-her recollections of whom bore Riri-but finding in her renewed friendship with Aiken the sweet pleasure of looking down a path her life might have taken but did not. Hers is the marvelous self-sufficiency which realizes that "anything can be settled for a few days a time, but not for longer." (FFD 71)

In the four stories memory is important both as method and content, and the past, whose relationship to the present may seem as much spatial as chronological, is vitally there in our awareness. To an even greater extent this is true of the *Linnet Muir stories*, which are nothing less than deep immersions in memory, diving's into a sunken world. A condition in which memory takes one constantly between past and present seems to Gallant a normal state of mind. And that gives a special significance to the group of stories about Germany, mostly included in *The Pegnitz Junction*, which are quite different from anything else she has written.

They are about people whose memories have become atrophied; about people who have drawn blinds over the past. In writing such anti-Proustian stories Mavis Gallant was deliberately abandoning the very approach through reminiscence, with all its possibilities of suggestive indirection, which she had used so successfully in her earlier stories. She was entering into situations where the present had to be observed and recorded directly and starkly since memory had become so shrivelled and distorted that only what was before

one's eye could give a clue to the past. Memory can play a part only in the limited sense of the author's remembered observations. Such a rigorous departure from an accustomed manner is a test, and Mavis Gallant passed it well; her German stories are some of her most impressive, and she is right when she says to Geoffrey Hancock that the novella "*The Pegnitz Junction*" is "the best thing I've ever written."

In the same interview, Gallant traces these stories to her interest in "the war and Fascism" and sees their origin in a set of photographs of concentration camp victims which she was given to write a newspaper story about before she left Montreal. Once she had got over the immediate horror, the deeper questions began occurring to her. "What we absolutely had to find out was what has happened in a civilized country, why the barriers of culture, of religion, hadn't held, what had broken down and why." The question remained with her and she went to Germany "like a spy" to find out for herself. "*The Pegnitz Junction*," she says, "is not a book about Fascism, but it's certainly a book about where it came from."

In the last paragraph it is repeated what Mavis Gallant says elsewhere because she presents in her stories something different from what is seen through her own experience of marrying into a German family and of having gone to the country to live at fairly close quarters with Germans at least every other year since 1950. What Mavis Gallant really discovered,

and what she presents in these stories, is not where “Fascim” (One would prefer the exact word Nazism) came from, since that world of Nazi origins hardly exists in the memories of Germans who are not historians, but rather the emerging world of modern Germany which the Nazi age like a black curtain has cut off from the traditional past, so that only men in their eighties talk of “the good old Kaiserzeit” and nobody talks of the Weimar age.

One should deal especially with “*The Pegnitz Junction*” itself, since this novella has a unique interest on a number of levels, but first one would say that what strikes one most about the other German stories is that they are almost all about people whose pasts have been mentally and even physically obliterated: people, in other words, who are exiled in the most dreaded way of all, by being banished from themselves, As the narrator says in “*An Alien Flower*,” when she talks about her daughter born since the war: “I saw then that Roma’s myths might include misery and sadness, but my myths were bombed, vanished and whatever remained had to be cleaned and polished and kept bright.”

The central character of “*An Alien Flower*” is a girl named Bibi, doomed to the suicide that eventually overtakes her, who comes to western Germany out of Silesia by way of refugee camps, having lost a past she may have forgotten deliberately, or involuntarily we are never sure which.

“She never mentioned her family or said how they had died. I could only guess that they must have vanished in the normal way of a recent period - killed at the front, or lost without trace in the east, or burned alive in air raids. Who were the Brunings? Was she ashamed of them? Were they Socialists, radicals, troublemakers, black-marketeters, prostitutes, wife-beaters, informers, Witnesses of Jehovah? Whoever the Brunings were, Bibi was their survivor, and she was as pure as the rest of us in the sense that she was alone, swept clean of friends and childhood myths and of childhood itself. But someone, at some time, must have existed and must have called her Bibi. A diminutive is not a thing you invent for yourself.”(PJ44)

The use of the word “pure” in this context is significant, since it expresses the desire to see suffering as expiation, but it has a certain grim irony when one associates it with the narrator’s remark that: “Anyone who had ever known me or loved me had been killed in one period of seven weeks. “The idea of purification and the idea of forgetting or losing the past are closely linked in these stories. In *“The Old Friends,* “ a police commissioner has a sentimental attachment to an actress, Helena, cherished in West Germany as a token Jewess, one who, as a child inexplicably survived the death camps. “Her true dream is of purification, of the river never profaned, from which she wakes astonished – for the real error was not that she was sent away but that she is here, in a garden, alive.” For the commissioner, knowing “like any policeman..... one meaning for every word,” he cannot deny the horror of the experiences forced on his friend as a child, but he seeks desperately in his mind for a

reason to think it all a mistake, something for which a single erring bureaucrat could be punished, rather than something for which his people as a whole might bear some responsibility.

“He would like it to have been, somehow, not German. When she says that she was moved through transit camps on the edge of the old Germany, then he can say, “So, most of it was on foreign soil” He wants to hear how hated the guards were when they were Slovak, or Ukrainian. The vast complex of camps in Silesia is on land that has become Polish now, so it is as if those camps had never been German at all. Each time she says a foreign place-name he is forgiven, absolved. What does it matter to her ? Reality was confounded long ago”.(PJ31)

Then there is Ernst, the demobilized Foreign Legionary in “Ernst in Civilian Clothes,” whom we encounter in the Paris flat of his friend Willi; Ernst is about to return to the Germany he left as a teenage prisoner many years before. Ernst, we are told.

“Knows more than Willi because he has been a soldier all his life. He knows there are no limits to folly and pain, except fatigue and the failing of imagination. He has always known more than Willi, but he can be of no help to him, because of his own life-saving powers of forgetfulness”(PJ 38).

When Thomas Bestermann, in “*The Latehomecomer*,” returns from France, where he has stayed too long because the records of his past (and hence his official identity) were lost, he meets a man named Willy Wehler who with a certain peasant cunning (“All Willy had to do was sniff the air”) has managed to slip through the Nazi age without becoming as

scarred as most survivors. He pushed back his chair (in later years he would be able to push a table away with his stomach) and got to his feet. He had to tip his head to look up into my eyes. He said he wanted to give me advice that would be useful to me as a latehomecomer. His advice was to forget. "Forget everything," he said, "Forget, forget, forget. That was what I said to my good neighbour Herr Silber when I bought his wife's topaz brooch and earrings before he emigrated to Palestine. I said, 'Dear herr Silber, look forward, never back, and forget, forget, forget.'"

In "*An Autobiography*" the narrator, a schoolmistress in Switzerland whose German professor father was shot by Russians in Hungary, had met in her poor refugee days a boy named Peter who as a child-like Helena in "*The Old Friends*" – miraculously escaped death by being arbitrarily taken out of one of the contingents of Jews headed for the gas chambers. Now when she is firmly settled in the womb-like refuge of Switzerland, she encounters Peter once again and realizes that he has become a mythomane, constantly changing his past to suit the company, but for that reason uneasy with someone who knew him in his actual past.

"But I had traveled nearly as much as Peter, and over some of the same frontiers. He could not impress me.... He knew it was not good talking about the past, because we were certain to remember it differently. He daren't be nostalgic about anything, because of his inventions. He would never be certain if the memory he was feeling tender about was true". (PJ 42)

And even during that German past which everyone in Mavis Gallant's stories wants to avoid or to remember as it never was, those fared best who had the power of shedding their earlier pasts and hence their identities. An example is Uncle Theo, an amiable Schweikish nobody in the Bavarian story, "*O Lasting peace.*" Uncle Theo avoided involvement in the war almost literally by losing himself. When he went for his medical examination he found that all the physical defects he could rake up were insufficient to get him rejected.

"He put on his clothes, still arguing, and was told to take a file with his name on it to a room upstairs. It was on his way up that he had his revelation. Everything concerning his person was in that file. If the file disappeared, then Uncle Theo did, too. He turned and walked straight out of the front door. He did not destroy the file, in case they should come round asking; he intended to say he had not understood the instructions. No one came, and soon after this his workroom was bombed and the file became ashes. When Uncle Theo was arrested it was for quite another reason, having to do with black-market connections. He went first to prison, then, when the jail was bombed, to a camp. Here he wore on his striped jacket the black sleeve patch that meant "anti-social" It is generally thought that he wore the red patch, meaning "political" As things are now, it gives him status."(PJ 53)

And so Uncle Theo lives on, a survivor by evasion who enjoys the repute and pension of a hero in a Germany that does not want to remember too precisely.

A striking feature of Gallant's German stories is the importance of childhood. There are those whose lives are shaped by ruined childhoods - Bibi and Helena, Thomas the latehomecomer who was bearing arms in his teens, and Ernst

who was incorporated as a boy in the Werewolves. But children are also seen to offer promise of a future in which there will be a memory of a real past, and it is significant that both the characters Michael in "*An Alien Flower*" and Thomas in "*The Latchomecomer*", will marry girls who are mere children in the present of the stories. This is the generation that will again be able to think of "misery and sadness."

In "*The Pegnitz Junction*" we are on the verge of this world where renewal may be thought of. One of the important characters is the little boy Bert, four years old. And the central figure is Christine, eighteen years old and so too young to have any personal memory of the Nazi past. She comes indeed from a place where the re-creation of an older past has made it unnecessary to remember what went on more recently: "a small bombed baroque German city, where all that was worthwhile keeping had been rebuilt and which now looked as pink and golden as a pretty child and as new as morning." Yet she does not need to ignore the real past because she does not know much about it; she carries with her a volume of the writings of Dietrich Boenhoffer, one of the anti-Nazi martyrs.

It is through Christine that "*The Pegnitz Junction*" assumes its special quality. It is the most experimental of Gallant's works, in which she makes no attempt at that special Gallant realism where the web of memory provides the mental links that make for plausibility,. Here she is trying to create, in

a structure as much dramatic as fictional, a kind of psychic membrane in which recollection is replaced by telepathy.

Christine, it is obvious from the description which opens the story, is the kind of person who becomes a psychic medium or around whom poltergeist phenomena are likely to happen.

“She had a striking density of expression in photographs, though she seemed unchanging and passive in life, and had caught sight of her own face looking totally empty-minded when, in fact, her thoughts and feelings were pushing her in some wild direction. She had heard a man say of her that you could leave her in a café for two hours and come back to find she was still smoking the same cigarette...” (PJ 45)

Although Christine is engaged to a theological student, she is erotically involved with Herbert, and with him and his son, Little Bert, she makes a trip to Paris. The main part of the novella is devoted to a frustrating journey home which takes them to the Pegnitz Junction. There is an airport strike at Orly, so they return by train. When they change at the German border they find that railway movements have been diverted because of heath fires, and instead of going straight home they must travel in a great arc, changing at a station close up to the barbed wire and watchtowers of East Germany, and finally reaching Pegnitz Junction, where the train to Berlin should be awaiting them. It is not, and when the novella ends they are still at Pegnitz, waiting.

“The Pegnitz Junction” is a work of much complexity, and deserves an essay of its own. There are three aspects that mark its distinctiveness among Mavis Gallant’s stories. The first is the intrusion of what appears to be a much stronger element of intentional symbolism than one finds elsewhere in Mavis Gallant’s writings. One cannot avoid seeing the train journey as an elaborate figure, representing the wanderings, without an as yet assured destination, of a Germany which has not recovered a sense of its role in history and, indeed, fears what that role might be if it were discovered.” (New Yorker Random House 1973)

Then there is the peculiar relationship between Christine and the other passengers. With Herbert it is mostly a simple matter of conversation and her inner thoughts about their relationship, and with Little Bert it is a question of exchanging fantasies. But when she encounters other people on the journey, Christine falls into a state of psychic openness, so that messages are exchanged, and their flows of thought emerge to multiply the range of viewpoints

Their immediate fellow passengers are a Norwegian professional singer with a mania for yogic breathings and an old woman who is constantly munching food from the large bags she has brought with her. The Norwegian, occupied with singing and breathing, has merely a few comments to offer, but from the mind of the old woman there emerges an extraordinary unspoken monologue. Surprisingly – in the context of these stories – it is a reminiscent one that reconstructs a past elsewhere ; she lived through the dark years in America and came back to Germany to bury her husband and water his grave after the war ended. But there

are remoter messages which trip the levers of Christine's telepathic sense. When the train stops at a level crossing, she suddenly enters the minds of the people waiting, and at the station on the East German border she catches a refugee's memories of the girl in his lost village. Then, at *Pegnitz Junction*, there is the pregnant country girl who pretends to be an American army wife, from whom Christine receives the strangest message of all: the contents of a letter about racketeering in PX stores from one GI to another that she is carrying in her bag. Not only does this technique give a dramatic quality to the novella, since it becomes so largely a pattern of voices heard in the mind's ear, but there is a cinematic element in the way the outer, visible and audible world cuts away from the inner world and back again; one is reminded of Mavis Gallant's days in NFB cutting room.

Finally, there is centrality of the child, Little Bert who is present and intervening throughout the novella, occasionally making an Emperor's clothes remark of penetrating aptness, but most of the time involved in his fantasy of the life of the sponge he calls Bruno, which he shares with Christine, but over which he seeks to maintain control, so that he rejects versions of Bruno's adventures that go beyond his ideas of plausibility. For Bruno after all – as Bert makes clear on occasion – is merely a sponge to which he has given a life. History – the irradiation of actuality by imagination – seems to be stirring in this infant mind.

The final group of stories for discussion is the Linnet Muir cycle, set in Montreal between the 1920s and the 1940s. Mavis Gallant had already used Montreal as a setting in her novella of the 1950s, "*Its Image in a Mirror*" (included in *My Heart is broken*) and in stories like "Bearnadette," written at the same period. But the Linnet Muir stories, which have not all been published and will presumably form a volume on their own, are so closely interlinked that one sees them as the chronologically discontinuous chapters in a major novel avowedly devoted to *la recherché du temps Perdu*.

The Proustian phrase is deliberately used since Mavis Gallant's own account of the origin of the stories in the Hancock interview leaves little doubt that an impulse of involuntary memory set them moving and that in general they represent a release of the imagination into memory and the past, after the self-disciplines of writing about the world of *The Pegnitz Junction* where time seems irretrievably lost.

The Linnet Muir stories are no more autobiographical than Proust's great fictional quest, and no less so. Linnet Muir is about as near to Mavis Gallant as the linnet (a modest English songbird) is to the mavis, which is the Scottish name for the magnificent European song thrush. There are things in common between writer and character, and just as many dissimilarities. Gallant, like Linnet, spent her childhood in Montreal where she was born. Her father died when she was young, and at the age

of eighteen one of the first things she did on returning to Montreal – this was 1940 – was to try and find out how he died. A few people and a few incidents thus stepped from real life into the stories. But everything has been reshaped and transmuted in the imagination so that what emerges is a work of fiction on several levels. It is a portrait of *Linnet Muir* as a child isolated in her family, and later as a young woman between eighteen and twenty isolated in her fatherland. But it is even more, as Gallant herself has insisted, a reconstruction of a city and a way of life which have now been irrevocably engulfed in time past but which, as Gallant has said were “unique in North America, if not the world” because the two Montreals, the French and the Anglo-Scottish, were so completely shut off from each other. And, since in this way these stories form a fiction about a collectivity rather than about individuals, one of their striking features is that the narrator, through whose consciousness everything is seen and who is the one continuing character, does not stand out more vividly in our minds than most of the other characters; all of them down to the slightest, are portrayed with an almost pre-Raphaelite sharpness of vision.

Certainly we have not had the “very, very long story..... about the war” which Mavis Gallant talks of and which is intended to terminate the series. But what we do have is already an extraordinary addition to that peculiarly Canadian

type of fiction concerned with the changing relationships of cultural groups.

In order of appearance in *The new Yorker*, which one assumes is roughly the order of completion, the first story, "*In Youth is Pleasure*", sets the theme by showing Linnet in search of the lost world of her childhood. A girl of eighteen, having suffered the contemptuous ignorance of Americans about the country above their borders, she returns to Montreal with a few dollars and immense self-confidence. Almost without thought, she seeks out the French Canadian nurse of her childhood, and is given unquestioning hospitality. But when she moves into the other Montreal, that of her own people, and tries to find out about her father, she encounters reserve, distrust, even fear. The search for her father is significant in view of Gallant's own theory that perhaps the one distinctive Canadian theme is to be found in the role of the father, who in our literature seems always more important than the mother. Linnet remembers her mother in somewhat derogatory terms as a person who "smiled, talked, charmed anyone she didn't happen to be related to swim in scandal like a partisan among the people." But the search for the father is, in a very real sense, the beginning of Linnet's search for truth. She never really does find out how he died; all she can assemble is a cluster of conflicting rumours and theories, so that she is never sure whether he actually died of the tuberculosis of the spine that

attacked him in his early thirties or shot himself with a revolver she remembered seeing in a drawer in her childhood. In the end she shapes the past in her own mind: "I thought he had died of homesickness: sickness for England was the consumption, the gun, the everything." She realizes all at once that this is not her past. "I had looked into a drawer that did not belong to me." But what she finds in the process is that the world which saw him die with such indifference was a narrow provincial world where wealth and influence were the only virtues, the world of the Montreal tycoons.

"Between Zero and One" and "Varieties of Exile" are further stories about Linnet's experiences when she returns to Montreal, and they are dedicated to obsolescent kinds of people. In the first story Linnet works in a Montreal draughtsman's office (as Jean Price does in "Its Image in the Mirror") and all the people around her, until a woman bitter from a failed marriage joins the staff, are either men too old to fight in World War II but full of recollections of an earlier conflict, or unfit men. It is an entirely English world – an office that does not contain a single francophone, a collection of men with the prejudices of their time who neither know nor wish to know the other nation that shares Quebec with them. Canada, for them, is English; its loyalties are imperial. And they have accepted limitations for themselves as well as for their world. It is a world to which Linnet does not belong, any more than does Frank Cairns, the remittance man in "Varieties of Exile," with whom she strikes up the precarious relationship of two people out of their place and world when she encounters him on the train going from her summer lodgings into Montreal. Frank and his kind, the castoff young men of English families, were the nearest thing in Canada to the superfluous men of Russian literature, and as a species they vanished when World War II dried up the flow of cash from home and most of them went back to fight for a country that had thrown them out. Strangely enough, if the men in the office taught Linnet how narrow

life can be made, Frank Cairns, who seems happy only when he is going home, helps to open her mind with his own restless questing, and when she hears of his death she is happy that “he would never need to return to the commuting train and the loneliness and be forced to relive his own past.”(HT 71)

All these three stories display memory doubly at work. Linnet the narrator is looking back thirty years to another Linnet exploring a lost Montreal whose doom was sealed by the social changes World War II began in Canada. But the Linnet of thirty years ago in turn is remembering, seeing her own childhood again as she experiences aspects of the city of which she was unaware when she lived protected in the family which is the subject of the two stories that follow and that up to the present complete the published cycle: “*Voices Lost in the Snow*” and “*The Doctor*.” They are stories of a family of the age between the wars: father and mother still young, but already separated by work (“I do not know where my father spent his working life; just elsewhere”) and by relationships, for in “*Voices Lost in the Snow*” the father, who is already dying though nobody knows it, takes the child to see a woman, an estranged friend of her mother, with whom he still maintains contact.

In these stories, once again we have the sharp visuality of Gallant’s earlier work, and the gripping evocations of a Montreal that has long vanished beneath the blows of the wrecker’s ball.

“The reddish brown of the stone houses, the curve and slope of the streets, the constantly changing sky were satisfactory in a way that I now realize must have been aesthetically comfortable. This is what I saw when I read ‘city’ in a book; I had no means of knowing that ‘city’ one day would also mean drap, filthy, flat, or that city blocks could turn into dull squares without mystery.”(HT 74)

As “*The Doctor*” shows, Linnet’s family inhabits a shifting frontier territory where the two cultures of Montreal meet, as they rarely do elsewhere.

“This overlapping in one room of French and English, of Catholic and Protestant – my parents’ way of being, and so to me life itself – was as unlikely, as unnatural to the Montreal climate as a school of tropical fish. Only later would I discover that most other people simply floated in mossy little ponds labeled “French and Catholic” or “English and Protestant,” never wondering what it might be like to step ashore, or wondering, perhaps, but weighing up the danger. To be out of a pond is” to be in unmapped territory.”(HT 83)

A frequency guest to her parents’ house is Dr. Chauchard who in another role is the pediatrician attending Linnet at the age of eight. The bicultural salons are dominated by a flamboyant Mrs. Erskine, who has been the wife of two unsuccessful diplomats and moves in Montreal society escorted by Chauchard (now transformed into genial Uncle Raoul) and various attendant young Quebecois intellectuals. But even such encounters take place in a no-man’s land so insecure that the common language is always English, and Linnet does not know, until Dr. Chauchard dies, that he had another life in which he was a notable Quebec poet, as she discovers on seeing his obituaries, one for the pious member of his family, one for the doctor, one for the writer.

“That third notice was an earthquake, the collapse of the cities we build over the past to cover seams and cracks we cannot account for. He must have been writing when my parents knew him. Why they neglected to speak of it is something too shameful to dwell on ; he probably never mentioned it, knowing they would believe it impossible. French books were from France; English books from England or the United States. It would not have entered their minds that the languages they heard spoken around them could be written, too.”(HT 82)

There are vignettes of a dead time; of a lost world; of a vanished city. Yet it is easy to lay too much stress on the social-historical nature of the *Linnet Muir stories*. (Though Gallant herself gives some support to such emphasis when she talks of the “political” nature of her stories.) They are so successful as records of an age because they are inhabited by people so carefully drawn and individually realized that the past comes alive, in its superbly evoked setting, as experience even more than as history. And that is the true rediscovery of time.

Notes & References :

- * Auchincloss, Eve
New York Review of Books, 25 June 1964. pp. 17-18
- * Ayre, John
Saturday Night, Sept. 1973, pp. 33-36.
"The Sophisticated world of Mavis Gallant"
- * Cassill, R.V.
Book World, 31 May 1970. p.5 *Review of A Fairly Good Time*
- * Corke, Hiliary
Listener, 19 Aug. 1965. p. 281
Review of An Unmarried Man's Summer
- * Dobbs, Kildaire
Toronto Star. 2 June 1973. p. 73
review of *The Pegnitz Junction*
- * Fulford, Robet
Maclean's 5 Sept. 1964. p.45
This review of "*My Heart Is Broken*",
- * Feld Rose
Saturday Review, 25 Feb. 1956. p. 17
Review of "*The Other Paris*"
- * Gill Brendan
New Yorker, 19 Sept. 1970. pp. 132-133
Review of "*A Fairly Good Time*"
- * Janeway, Elizabeth
Saturday Review, 18 April 1964 pp. 45-46.
Review of "*My Heart Is Broken*".

Notes & References :

- * Jennings, Elizabeth
Listener, 18 Aug. 1960. p. 273.
Review of Green Water, Green Sky.
- * Johnson, Sydney
Montreal Star, 24 Oct. 1959. p.30
"Four Gallant Studies"
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto :
Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
- * 3New York times Book Review, 7 June 1970 pp. 5, 34
Review of "*A Fairly Good Time*".
- * *O Canada*, by Edmund Wilson
New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1964, pp. 5-6
- * *Survival*, by Margaret Atwood
Toronto, Anansi, 1972 pp. 132-133-224.
- * *Shovelling Trouble*, by Mordecai Richler
Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1972 p. 147
- * "*The Moslem Wife*," in *From the Fifteenth District: A
Novella and Eight Short Stories* (Toronto: Macmillan,
1979), p-73. All Further references to this work appear in
the text.
- * *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*,
by Norah Story.
Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1967. pp. 268, 306

Chapter IV

**Comparative Assessment of Mavis Gallant and her
contemporaries Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood
and Margaret Laurence**

Mavis Gallant's stories and novels are distinct from the fiction of her English Canadian contemporaries – among them, several writers of the first rank – by virtue of their form and style, the nature of their intelligence, and their breadth and depth of vision. Alice Munro's stories reveal a similar command of craft. But Munro's style and vision evoke a fictional world most powerful in its regional resonances. Margaret Atwood's irony can be similarly incisive, but most often in the service of more particularly Canadian and North American ends; Gallant's irony, which can construct a hard-edged comedy of manners as skillfully and effectively as Austen's, can also lay bare the workings of memory, of a relationship, a family, a society – most often in the wider context of postwar Western history. Margaret Laurence's rendering of Western Canadian women's lives is more complete; but when Gallant's stories recreate Canadian life, her intelligence is typically more politically informed. And her vision remains comprehensive. North American and European. It is the pervasive European colouration of many of Gallant's stories, which emerges from her close attention to European post-war history and culture. That distinguishes her fiction from the work of such accomplished Canadian writers as Clark Blaise, Hugh Hood, John Metcalf, and Audrey Thomas. Gallant's distinctively alloyed North American and European vision, which is inseparable from the most highly finished and economical style in contemporary English-Canadian writing, challenges, engages, and educates her readers at the same time that it invites sustained critical study.

Gallant is reticent in print and in interviews about the inspiration, composition, and meaning of her stories, and her narrative voice suggests an unyielding detachment from the characters and

situations (one that does not preclude compassion) that is well suited to the kind of subtle satire and humorous effects at which she excels. Her stories exhibit a precise control of language, with sparing use of metaphor, and often focus on exiles and foreigners in Europe or North America who have erected barriers between themselves and an alien environment. Gallant's deft evocation of the language and gesture of such characters highlights the limited nature of the communication that results from such isolation and alienation.

The stories of Mavis Gallant have remained remarkably consistent in subject matter and setting over more than thirty years. Her first collection, *The Other Paris* (1956) – containing stories from 1952 to 1954 – presents the four settings that appear in three quarters of all Gallant's stories; Paris, Quebec, the French Riviera, and Germany. Also evident here is her preoccupation with the rootless foreigner-American, Canadian, or European-stranded in a European setting. Gallant portrays an outsider's vision of the postwar world, as seen through the eyes of exiles, often from a child's point of view. In the social world of these stories isolation, self-delusion, and diminished or non-existent communication abound. Only the endings, where Gallant's final paragraphs soften the dispassionate perspective, identify them with early rather than later work. This gentler tone can be seen in the closing lines of 'About Geneva,' and 'Going Ashore'.

The Other Paris contains stories with a European setting (nine) and a Canadian setting (three). *The Quebec stories*, here as elsewhere, focus either on the dilemma of the displaced Anglophone child ('Wing's Chips') or on the family tensions and conspiracies

surrounding an unmarried daughter (*'Deceptions of Marie Blanche'*, *'The Legacy'*). The European stories depict the uneasy exile of Americans (*'A Day Like Any Other'*) or their occupation of various European locations (*'The Picnic,' 'Autumn Day'*).

These Americans – the Marshall family in *'The Picnic,'* and the young soldier Walt and his teenaged bride Cissy in *'Autumn Day'* – are part of the postwar American occupation of Europe. Caught between the military hierarchy and power they represent, and the older lines of class, wealth, and culture that still define French and Austrian life, they can do nothing right. Young Cissy is out of place among the wrack of Europeans washed up at Herr Enrich's farmhouse outside Salzburg. In this story, all lines of communication are down: husbands and wives do not talk; letters remain unread or undelivered. Each of the characters longs to confess, and yet the greatest crime is the telling of secrets; all communication between people becomes a possible act of social espionage.

In *'The Picnic'* Gallant portrays the clash of cultures between the French townspeople and the Americans at a nearby army post. Major Marshall and his wife are involved in a cold war with their coquettish elderly French landlady, Madame Pegurin, and their children's fascination with her is seen by Mrs. Marshall as a threat to their proper upbringing. The Major is in charge of organizing a picnic in the town, planned as an act of rapprochement – 'a symbol of unity between two nations' – but even at this festivity the battle lines between cultures remain. In response to a suggestion that French folk dances be included in the day's activities, the Major is firm: 'Baseball is as far as I'll go.' He must, however, persuade Madame Pegurin, the charming, trivial, and flirtatious old-guard

Frenchwoman, that her attendance at the picnic is important symbolically, Madame, who dislikes foreigners, is clever, devious, and manipulative, and tries to outflank the Major at every turn:

“He had convinced Madame Pegurin that she was a symbol only after a prolonged teatime wordplay that bordered on flirtation. This was second nature to Madame Pegurin, but the major had bogged down quickly. He kept coming around to the point, and Madame Pegurin found the point uninteresting.”(EW 15)

The Americans in ‘*A Day Like Any Other*’ are part of the economic, not the military, occupation. Exiled from their own country by Mr. Kennedy’s selfish hypochondria, the family is stranded in Europe. They live from day to day; for both mother and children time is something to be ‘passed’, as they await the invalid’s pleasure – his recovery, removal, or more remotely, death. Here again, Gallant chooses the plight of the children of exiles to examine the spiritual confusion and restlessness engendered by peripatetic lives.

Children on whom the burden of decoding adult innuendo is seen to fall are again the focus in ‘*About Geneva*’. Whereas, in the reigning social and familial silence of ‘*A Day Like Any Other*,’ and ‘*Autumn Day*,’ ‘telling’ is considered dangerous, it becomes an act of power in ‘*About Geneva*’ – forbidden to the repressed adults, but still possible to the children, who have not yet been completely socialized according to their divorced mother’s and their grandmother’s stultifying codes of propriety in life and language. From the innuendo and body language of the two women in ‘*About Geneva*’, Ursula and Colin learn that information can be conveyed without actually being guilty of ‘Telling’ about their visit to their father in Geneva. Ursula raises eyebrows by offering negative comments on his companion’s housekeeping, but Colin is too young to

understand fully the manoeuvres so well mastered by his sister. Having fed the swans in Geneva is infinitely more important to his child's imagination than his father's domestic life, but he lies to attract attention, saying that he was sick on the plane. Ironically this fib becomes, for his grandmother, his most satisfactory revelation about Geneva.

'Isn't that child in bed yet?' called Granny. 'Does he want his supper?'

'No,' said Colin.

'No,' said his mother, 'He was sick on the plane.'

'I thought so,' Granny said. 'That, at least, is a fact.'

The cryptic communications and misunderstandings in 'About Geneva' stem not only from reticence but also from self-delusion, a human frailty that flourishes among the exiles in the world of Gallant's fiction. For example, Carol, the American girl in '*The Other Paris*,' perhaps the best story in the collection, nurtures an illusion of a tantalizingly romantic 'other' vision of Paris, just around the corner from the drab, rain-washed Paris streets she inhabits. On the threshold of a loveless marriage to Howard, an American economist, she yearns to unlock the 'secret' of the Paris 'she had read about'. But when confronted with the passion and squalor of an authentic love affair – between her French co-worker Odile and the refugee Felix – she is appalled. At the story's end, Carol muses about her future;

"Soon she sensed the comforting vision of Paris as she had once imagined it would overlap the reality. To have met and married Howard there would sound romantic and interesting, more and more so as time passed. She would forget the rain and her unshared confusion and loneliness, and remember instead the

Paris of films, the street lamps with their tinsel icicles, the funny concert hall where the ceiling collapsed, and there would be, at last, a coherent picture, accurate but untrue. The memory of Felix and Odile and all their distasteful strangeness would slip away for 'love' she would think, once more, 'Paris,' and after a while, happily married, mercifully removed in time, she would remember it and describe it and finally believe it as it had never been at all.(OP-14)

Though this ending is replete with ironies, its tone is one of compassion. Looking out of windows and into possible futures, or romantic pasts, the characters in this early collection see prospects that are less bleak than those offered to their peers in later Gallant stories. Thus the neglected twelve-year-old Emina in '*Going Ashore*', unhappy with her nomadic life on a luxury liner with her shallow and flirtatious single mother, cherishes a delusion of safe arrival, of solid ground in a welcoming haven, that is still alive in the closing paragraphs of that story

"Yes, they were nearly there. She could see the gulls swooping and soaring, and something on the horizon – a shape, a rock, a whole continent untouched and unexplored. A tide of newness came in with the salty air, she thought of new land, new dresses, clean, untouched, unworn. A new life, She knelt, patient, holding the curtain, waiting to see the approach to shore".(EW-18)

One of the strengths of the collection and of all Gallant's stories involving children is her ability to capture the child's perspective without a trace of condescension. The narrator makes us feel the fascinations, obsessions, and mysteries of a child's life ('*Wing's Chips*'). But also its terrors ('*Going Ashore.*' '*A Day Like Any Other*').

Also notable in these stories is Gallant's skill in fusing subject and setting. The Riviera stories provide the best illustration of her ability to make the place and the event cohere and interpenetrate. Gallant portrays the lodging houses and hotels of the Riviera stories of exile, isolation, and self-delusion. Particularly in later stories such as '*An Unmarried Man's Summer.*' The Riviera, which harbours

refugees from other epochs, becomes a museum of mores, a fitting place to study the habits and the habitat of dying breeds.

Another characteristic of the stories in this collection – to become a feature of all Gallant's later writing – is the laconic but telling irony that she employs, seemingly without national bias. She can transform a simple detail, such as the food eaten by her characters, into an expose of their personalities. Here she reveals the essence of Paula Marshall, the vapid American wife in *'The Picnic'* .:

“Paula was suspicious of extravagant tastes or pleasures. She enjoyed the nursery food she gave the children, sharing without question their peas and lamb chops, their bland and innocent desserts. Once, long ago, she had broken off an engagement only because she had detected in the young man's eyes a look of sensuous bliss as he ate strawberries and cream. And now her own children came to the table full of rum-soaked sponge cake and looked with condescension at their lemon jello “. (EW 20)

If there is any defect in these stories, it lies in the not-yet-perfected narrative voice. In four of them Gallant uses a first-person narrator instead of the detached third-person commentator that would eventually become her hallmark. In *'Wing's Chips'* the first-person retrospective successfully recreates the experience of the little girl whose artist father defines convention by living among French Canadians and refusing to join the paid labour force, preferring instead to practice his art. The father, however, does paint a sign for the fish-and-chip shop belonging to the Wing family, and though the commission results from a misunderstanding of the word 'painter', and no money ever changes hands, the daughter is proud of this 'proof' that her father is finally 'an ordinary workingman just like anybody else' such as

'*The Deceptions of Marie-Blanche*,' 'Autumn Day', and 'Senor Pinedo,' the first-person narrative is less deftly handled. The 'I' in 'Deceptions' is a family figure completely peripheral to the main courtship action; and in 'Senor Pinedo' an even more faceless 'I' hovers in the corner of the story. In later collections Gallant would phase out the peripheral I-observer, although often retaining the retrospective 'I' for stories of childhood (for example, 'The Wedding Ring', 1969).

Her next collection, *My Heart is Broken* (1964), differs from its predecessor in containing a 'short novel', *Its Image on the Mirror*." Eight stories make up the rest of the volume, including two from Quebec ('Bernadette' and the title story), and three Riviera stories, two of which are among the best Gallant ever wrote: 'Acceptance of Their Ways', and 'An Unmarried Man's Summer'.

In these two stories Gallant continues her examination of the truncated lives of people displaced to the Riviera, a backwater where, even in the 1950s, a semblance of the secure pre-war lifestyle can be maintained. The three gentlewomen (one is the impostor Lily Little) in 'Acceptance of Their Way's' (1960) are shown living a circumscribed life on this 'quiet shore', and indulging in the only pastime feasible in their isolation, that of excoriating each other. The seemingly mild domestic setting of the lodging house emerges under Gallant's scrutiny as a battleground where words and food are the main weapons. But Lily, who 'looked soft', but who 'could have bitten a real pearl in two and enjoyed the pieces', disassembles in order to get on;

"If Lily had settled for this bleached existence, it was explained by a sentence scrawled over a page of her locked diary; 'I live with gentlewomen now.'" And there was a finality about the statement that implied acceptance of their ways".(EW 52)

The other Riviera story, '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*' (1963), introduces another dominant theme in Gallant's fiction - the effect of the Second World War on Europe and its inhabitants. Walter, the English bachelor of the title, horribly burned in the war, has retreated to a villa where he ekes out an existence with a meager pension, and amuses himself by playing gigolo to ageing British and American widows, while awaiting eviction from the house on the inevitable return of its owners.

Gallant uses a clever metaphor of the mosaic to portray the kind of order Walter imposes on his transient way of life;

"A mosaic picture of Walter's life early in the summer of his forty-fifth year would have shown him dead center, where nothing can seem more upsetting than a punctured tire or more thrilling than a sunny day". (EW 72)

In the elegantly crafted mosaic of his life, Walter has included his two servants – Angelo, the teen-aged illegal immigrant, and Mme Rossi, the femme de ménage : "the figures make a balanced and nearly perfect design supported by a frieze of pallida iris....' But this 'perfect design' is disrupted by the summer visit of Walter's sister and her family, who invade the quiet villa with the tug-of-war of middle-class family life. On their departure, both Walter and Angelo are upset- Walter by a yearning, hitherto unsuspected, for the affection and esteem of his niece, and Angelo by a longing for family life and a promise of the wider world. As Walter prepares to transform the events of the summer into a witty tale for the entertainment of the widows, the reader understands that all

of Walter's life is story material – a fictitious mosaic that comes to life only in the embroidered retelling where Walter's fabrications transform the empty reality. Their mode of existence is cruel to Angelo, and stultifying for Walter; but both pathetically, remain frozen into the false harmony of the mosaic design.

It is typical of Gallant's approach that the story should end not with pathos but with irony. The detached tone of her narrative voice allows no sentimental illusions to flourish in the mind of the reader. This story also features – as do many others - an evocation of the Second World War as a line of demarcation between an idyllic past and a turbulent present. '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*' is one of the earliest Gallant stories in which she makes palpable the weight of the war and its accompanying history that presses down on the characters. There are scars not only on Walter's body, but on his premises: 'Walter has a faded old Viva on the door to his garage,' a 'relic of the Italian occupation of the coast.'

A precursor of Angelo appears in the earlier story '*Bernadette*' (1957), which, though set in Montreal, offers a similar picture of a master-servant relationship. The young French Canadian, Bernadette, is baffled by the liberal attitudes of her employers and drifts passively into a pregnancy that may shatter the household.

A much stronger, though shorter, story is '*My Heart*

is Broken', set in a mining camp in the north woods of Quebec. Jeannie, like Bernadette, is a figure of curiously tainted innocence; her ignorance steams from a refusal to know. The central riddle of the story – who assaulted Jeannie, if anyone, and why? – is never cleared up. Gallant's spare dialogue suggests hidden depths of meaning, but offers few facts.

Much of the haunting power of this story emanates from the enigma, from the silences that loom larger than the spoken word. This pared-down technique is also used in one of the Paris stories in this volume, '*Sunday Afternoon*', whose dialogue – reminiscent of Hemingway's – reveals the hidden tensions among three people in a small apartment, by hinting at the ripple of sex, sexism, and politics beneath the scattering of words on the surface.

In the early seventies, McClelland and Stewart decided to include a selection of Gallant's stories in their New Canadian Library series, and *The End of the World and Other Stories*, edited by Robert Weaver, was published in 1974. It included three stories from each of the two previous collections, and seven that had been published in *The New Yorker* between 1967 and 1971.

'*The End of the World*' includes a group of Gallant's shortest stories. '*The Wedding Ring*' (1969), at 1,500 words, is the shortest and the best of three first-person narratives that include '*The End of the World*' (1967), and '*The Prodigal Parent*'

(1969). All three present a world of pain and dislocation that follows a child's estrangement from a parent. In 'The Wedding Ring' the terrible hurt of the daughter is cast into relief by the almost lyrical quality of the imagery and description. The concrete images crisply set out at the opening of the story convey both the clarity and the fragmentation of childhood memories;

"On my window sill is a pack of cards, a bell, a dog's brush, a book about a girl named Jewel who is a Christian scientist and won't let anyone take her temperature.... And a white jug holding field flowers. The water in the jug has evaporated; the sand-and-amber flowers seem made of paper". (EW 125)

In this dry, papery world, the little girl craves love and recognition from her fey, vixenish mother, and finds it in one brief summer day when they wash their hair together in a stream. For the child it is a baptism of happiness and unity. The memory of that one moment of identification with her mother seems to transcend a history of separation and longing, and gives her, as retrospective adult narrator, a means of understanding her mother's action in casting off her wedding ring. Entering imaginatively into the act, the grown up daughter pictures its resting place;

"First it slipped under one of those sharp bluish stones, then a beetle moved it. It left its print on a cushion of moss after the first winter".

In a final act of reconciliation and forgiveness, she acknowledges, and even seems to cherish, an intangible inheritance from her mother;

“No one else could have worn it. My mother’s hands were small, like mine”.

All the stories in *The Pegnitz Junction; A Novella and Five Short Stories* (1973) are about Germans, and were written out of a need to understand the sources of fascism, “its small possibilities in people”. In 1977 Gallant said: “This is the favourite of my books; the title story, the novella, is the favourite of all my writing.” In this novella an unmarried German couple and a little boy-Christine. Herbert, and his son – leave Paris after a week’s holiday and travel by train, arriving after many delays at Pegnitz, the junction where they change trains for the homeward journey. Through Christine we enter the heads of other passengers and of people seen or met at stations. Their utterances, their thoughts, and the actions that mask their thoughts, are skillfully interwoven in this collage of lifelike, ordinary Germans. The collection is unified by its alternating focus - between the Characters in the foreground and a background of history – theirs, the country’s and Europe’s. In “*The Old Friends.*” For example, a simple, pleasant ritual encounter between a respectable Commissioner and the ageing actress he sporadically courts, is played out against a tense backdrop of the holocaust and its impact on both their past lives. As in so many of Gallant’s later stories, the characters’ pasts are embedded in their being. The German Police Commissioner, an ordinary man, still feels the weight of guilt when Helena alludes to her Jewish origins. A

survivor of transit camps, she seems to have outlived her hell, to have returned, impossibly, to a vacated Eden, the hotel garden where she sips champagne with the Commissioner. But the very tension between foreground and background signals that the innocence and bonhomie of the present-day Eden is both carefully crafted and tenuously maintained.

'Ernst in Civilian Clothes', a cryptic story, spare in style and emotion, also dwells on the war's legacy of displacement – both geographical and psychic-as it charts a day in the life of the ex-Legionnaire, returning to a German 'homeland' that was not his birthplace. Having expediently lost and gained national identity several times in his young life, Ernst no longer possesses a sense of what the truth is, personally or historically: 'Everyone is lying: he will invent his own truth. Is it important if one-tenth of a lie is true ?'

Ernst is sunk in a delusion much more dangerous than that of Carol in the early story *'The Other Paris'*. In her case, the delusion of a romantic Paris and of her own participation in it is a personal one, pathetic but forgivable. The stories of *The Pegnitz Junction*, however, are pervaded with delusions about the separation between wartime values and the realities of the present that emerge as damaging perversions of the truth.

It was not until the publication in Toronto of

Gallant's "*From the Fifteenth District* (1979)" that her writing began to receive prominent attention in Canada. This collection – the title refers to the fifteenth arrondissement of Paris-returns to one of Gallant's favourite territories in three of her best Riviera stories; '*The Four Seasons*' (1975), '*The Moslem Wife*' (1976), and '*The Remission*' (1979). All three chronicle the impact of the war on a woman. Barbara, Carmela, and Netta, though very different, are consummate survivors. As the world crumbles around them, they change and adapt, mutating into a species suited to the new world created by war and its aftermath. The metaphor of mutation, best developed in '*The Remission*', articulates the downfall of one kind of pre-war European male – Alec – and the rise of a younger, more adaptable species, personified in the opportunist Eric. Between them sits Alec's wife Barbara, whose eventual reversal of loyalties is perhaps the most spectacular mutation of all. Barbara installs her lover, the brash Eric, in her household, even as Alec is dying slowly in the nearby French hospital. In the memories of her children, this unceremonious changing of the guard signals the end of an Edenic childhood existence and their initiation into a harsher world where they will be perpetual exiles and expatriates.

'*The Four Seasons*', a story about the thirteen-year-old Italian peasant Carmela, portrays one small life battered by the shifting tides of world events; it ranks with the best of

Gallant's evocations of a child's view of the world. Carmela's naïve, yet instinctively shrewd, outlook exposes the insular, caste-ridden expatriate English society of pre-war Liguria. Here Gallant has perfected the controlled distancing of her narrative tone, which allows sympathy with Carmela and understanding of her plight, but prevents sentimental illusions about her. Abandoned by the retreating English family, Carmela does what she can to ensure survival. Her request for wages is rejected by Mrs. Unwin: 'But Carmela, you seemed so fond of the children !' Denied money, Carmela decides to take at least what food she needs for her long journey home:

“The larder was till unlocked. She took a loaf of bread and cut it in three pieces and hid the pieces in her case. Many years later, it came to her that in lieu of wages she should have taken a stone (a precious stone) from the leather box. Only fear would have kept her from doing it, if she had thought of it”. (FFD 171)

Carmela is treated as a Thief when she leaves; her employers seem unaware that the bread amounts to a mere token of what is owed to the girl who has been raising their children;

“When Mrs. Unwin searched Carmela's case - Carmela expected that; everyone did it with servants – she found the bread, looked at it without understanding, and closed the lid. Carmela waited to be told more”.(FFD 9)

The distilled omniscience of Gallant's narrator, which seeps through in the observation, 'Many years later, it came to her.... Is a device used in several stories in this volume (for example in '*Potter*' and '*The Remission*'). This technique

increases the perspectives on the events narrated, and implies that in the end all truths are relative truths.

In '*Potter*', a very long story, the truths narrated are those of the sporadic love affair between Piotr, a Polish intellectual, and Laurie, a young Canadian vagabond, who lives a free life as house-sitter, beggar, and mistress in Europe. *Potter* (Laurie's uneducated western pronunciation of 'Piotr') is fascinated with the freedom that Laurie embodies; to him, shackled to the past, to his country's history, to visas, permits, and passports, Laurie is almost dangerously unfettered, ignorant of her own shallow history, and serenely unmindful of national boundaries as she drifts from lover to lover. The narrator of '*Potter*' is a third-person voice of limited omniscience and extreme urbanity that conveys all of Piotr's thoughts and motivations, his past and his future, but deals with Laurie only in terms of what is known to Piotr, to whom the western Laurie is inscrutable. In this story Gallant refines the 'Many years later' technique used in '*The Four Seasons*' by making the narrator allied to Piotr, but not identical with him; nor is the narrator Piotr-in-the-future, but perhaps Piotr distilled, rarefied, and freed from the constraints of time. Gallant often uses phrases like 'In his later memories...' to draw attention to Piotr's recollection of events surrounding the love affair, and to suggest his future reconstruction of them. This technique subtly implies that the selection of events presented forms only one version

of the story. Truth from this narrative perspective, is a relative thing; the past for such Gallant narrators contains only a selection of possible stories, each of which is simply one re-creation of plausible truths.

Another narrative trait first exhibited in *From the Fifteenth District* is the flattened documentary tone of the brief title story, which reports an '*epidemic of haunting*' in this Parisian district and concentrates on three particular case studies. Borrowing the factual third-person style (and some of the jargon) of courtroom journalism, Gallant successfully inverts stereotypes by presenting absurdities in a logical, cut-and-dried manner: 'Mrs. Carlotte Essling, nee Holmquist, complains of being haunted by her husband, Professor Augustus Essling, the philosopher and historian.' The haunting is treated as a civic nuisance. Mrs. Essling 'suggests that the police find some method of keeping him [her husband's ghost] off the streets. The police ought to threaten him; frighten him; put the fear of the Devil into him.'

This ironic account of a fairly conventional haunting is the last in a trio of case studies that begins with an inverted haunting: a ghost is haunted by the congregation of the church he visits once a year on the anniversary of his own death. The ghost complains that all the superstitious nonsense engendered by his annual visit is an invasion of

his privacy. Between these two 'ghost stories', and also occurring in the Fifteenth District of Paris, is a domestic tragedy of poverty and disease, whose distressing end is conveyed in the metaphorical haunting of the dead immigrant, Mrs. Ibrahim, by doctors and social workers, belatedly anatomizing her 'case.' The account, peppered with bureaucratic jargon – 'ratification and approval,' 'social investigator,' 'relinquished her right to a domicile' - resembles a deposition given to the police, and the careful taking of evidence in the interest of seeing justice done. Mrs. Ibrahim, deceased mother of twelve children, 'asks that her account of the afternoon [of her death] be registered with the police as the true version, and that copies be sent to the Doctor and the social investigator, with a courteous request for peace and silence'.

Nothing like justice is done in any of these 'cases', although the complainant pleads to some invisible court for peace, privacy, dignity, and the right to die(or live) without public outcry and outrage. Underlying the stories is Gallant's satire on the failure of bureaucracy, and the paradoxical reliance on its methods even by its victim. Gallant would return to this ironic documentary style in several recent satirical stories, including '*Leaving the Party*' (uncollected), and '*The Assembly*' (*Overhead in a Balloon*).

Home Truths (1981) is a collection of stories, some of them early, with Canadian characters and settings. With its

feisty title and Canadian content, this volume might well have been groomed for approval by the Canadian literary establishment (it won a Governor General's Award). It is divided into three sections, the first of which, entitled '*At Home*', contains stories with exclusively Canadian settings. Some of these are among Gallant's earliest stories; '*Thank You For the Lovely Tea*' (1956). The second section, '*Canadians Abroad*', reprints two of her best studies of exile, '*In the Tunnel*' (1971) and '*The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street*' (1963), and also includes two less interesting stories, '*Bonaventure*' (1966) and '*Virus X*' (1965).

Of these, '*The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street*' is the most frequently anthologized. It is a study of two exiled Canadians, the irresponsible social climber, Peter Frazier, and the earnest prairie girl, Agnes Brusen. Peter has drifted to Geneva in search of an undemanding job that will enable him to maintain his tenuous links with the world of diplomats and socialists. He meets Agnes when they are assigned to the same office in some unnamed and presumably functionless 'agency'. Although both are Canadians, Agnes and Peter are polar opposites, from two different worlds that of the Norwegian immigrant in Saskatchewan, and that of an upper-class Ontario dynasty. In the aftermath of a disastrous costume party, Agnes and Peter share a moment of awkward communion, in which Agnes offers her most treasured memory of solitude and isolation:

“I’ve never been alone before. When I was a kid I would get up in the summer before the others, and I’d see the ice wagon going down the street..... That was the best. It’s the best you can hope to have. In a big family, if you want to be alone, you have to get up before the rest of them. You get up early in the morning in the summer and it’s you, you, once in your life alone in the universe. You think you know everything that can happen.... Nothing is ever like that again.”(MHB 254)

Though his social instincts rebel against it, Peter is touched by the confidence, and even feels drawn to Agnes by her revelation that she shares his sense of solitude, and of living in a world fallen away from an early and impossible ideal. Although ‘nothing happened’ between them, Agnes becomes ‘the only secret Peter has from his wife’. The tawdry but glamorous Sheilah would never understand what they shared: ‘They were both Canadians, so they had this much together – the knowledge of the little you dare admit.’ Gallant’s ice-wagon, though appearing so fleetingly in the story, haunts its pages, and becomes an austere but evocative symbol of the solace of solitude at the core of the human heart.

The third and final section of *Home Truths*, ‘*Linnet Muir*’, contains a group of six stories, each dealing with the life of an intelligent young woman in Montreal. It is to these stories that readers and critics look for the autobiographical material that Gallant so continually denies her public. Linnet breaks free from her family and ‘the prison of her childhood’ and finds in wartime Montreal ‘the natural background of (her) exile and fidelity.’ The resemblance to Gallant herself becomes

persuasive when Linnet – a name that, like ‘Mavis’, is the name of a songbird – reveals herself as a writer: ‘Anything I could not decipher I turned into fiction, which was my way of untangling knots’ (*Varieties of Exile*). This gathering of six stories includes four from this period of personal revolution in wartime dislocation, and two from Linnet’s childhood – ‘*Voices Lost in the Snow*’, and ‘*The Doctor*’. The final piece in the group, ‘*Truth with a Capital T*’, differs in tone from the others, the satire being gentler and lighter. Humour is paramount in this story, particularly in the opening pages, as Linnet recounts her struggle to find ‘Truth with a capital T’ in her job as a writer of captions for newspaper photographs.

Two clusters of stories dominate *Overhead in a Balloon* (1985): a group of three dealing with petty jealousy and infighting in the European literary community (‘*A Painful Affair*’, ‘*A Flying Start*’, and ‘*Grippes and Poche*’) and four retrospective first-person narratives centring on the elusive Magdalena (‘*A recollection*’, ‘*Rue de Lille*’, ‘*The Colonel’s Child*’, and ‘*Lena*’).

The title story, however, belongs to a third group, and thus offers a misleadingly bouncy title for what is an austere volume, in which the humour is strictly literary. ‘*Overhead in a Balloon*’ is linked thematically with ‘*Speck’s Idea*’, the story of almost novella length that opens the collection. Both stories explore the byways of the Parisian art world: not the glamour

of the larger galleries and the *Old Masters*, but the decayed gentility of the small side-street galleries where minor works and trends are lionized. In '*Speck's Idea*' the owner of such a gallery campaigns for an exhibition that will make a name for himself and for the gallery. Sandor Speck's discreet battle with an artist's widow is played out against a background of city terrorism – a constant threat of death and anarchy that, like the gallery itself, has its roots in the past. Both conflicts in this story, the artistic and the political, are merely surface skirmishes in a much older and deeper war between the forces of civilization and those of anarchy. The companion story, '*Overhead in a Balloon*', involves a tactical war over living accommodation and again features the plight of the outsider. Contained in the balloon metaphor is a sense of the outsider set adrift in a foreign element where behaviour and language are over his head. Walter – the Swiss gallery assistant in '*Speck's Idea*' – risks a 'long, dangerous trapeze sloop of friendship' with a French artist and moves in with him and his relations; 'for the first time since he had left Bern to work in Paris, he felt close to France.' But the friendship fails to develop, the French family becomes increasingly enigmatic to him – what is said to him 'is clear, but a kind of secret' – and he senses that 'one of these days he was going to lose momentum and be left dangling without a safety net'. While Walter vacations with his family in Bern, where there are 'no secrets, no mysteries', the owner of the

house (a weekend balloonist) sits in Walter's apartment, planning his eviction; the plastic dust-sheets Walter had spread over his furniture lie 'like crumpled parachutes in a corner'.

The crucial question of accommodation in a crowded Parisian world recurs in the stories that deal with the rivalry between the French man of letters, Henri Grippes, and the English writer, Victor Prism. Gallant's depiction of the battles between these two old literary war-horses produces an effect of dry hilarity-the result of a series of cumulative satiric thrusts. In '*A Painful Affair*' Grippes and Prism conduct a pointed and none-too-genteel scuffle over the rights to enjoy the patronage and memory of a deceased literary benefactor; Mary Margaret Pugh, who 'did not believe in art, only in artists.' A similar atmosphere of literary jostling pervades the second story in the Grippes cluster, '*A Flying Start*'. Here Gallant lampoons the creaking machinery of the French literary establishment, its espousal of ponderous Herculean labours, in this case the editing of a massive volume to be titled *Living Authors of the Fourth Republic*. Inevitably the writing of the work takes so long that the title and contents begin to date. Some of the 'living' authors presumably vacate the category, and the Fourth Republic slides into the Fifth long before Grippes and his ilk have made their contributions to its pages. One working title of this project, *Contemporary Writers, Women and Others*,

reveals Gallant's satirical view of the sectarianism and narrow-mindedness of the French literary establishment. In the third and final Grippes story, '*Grippes and Poche*', the incorrigible writer takes on not the literati but the bureaucracy. Grippes engages in a life-long struggles with O. Poche, a civil servant with the Income Tax Department who audits Grippes' income; the plundering is distinctly mutual. Grippes uses Poche as the model for a string of middle-class male characters in a series of well received novels. In this story the parasitic relationship between art and life stands revealed as a kind of sordid symbiosis, which characterizes not only these three Grippes stories, '*But Also*', '*Speck's Idea*' and '*Overhead in a Balloon*'.

In a different vein are the stories from the second cluster – the Magdalena stories – which form a solid block of four towards the end of the volume. These hark back technically to some of Gallant's earliest stories, using a first person narrator with a retrospective point of view. Gallant's short satires had shown a movement away from the first person (which was awkwardly employed in some stories from *The Other Paris*), and towards a distilled third-person point of view, such as that employed in the Grippes stories. But in the Magdalena group the first person narrator, Magdalena's husband, chronicles his past and that of his two wives in interlocking narrative loops that circle through the four stories. Throughout, Lena plays the part of the alluring, unattainable

woman, to whom the narrator was technically married, but whom he has never possessed in any sense of the world. In 'A Recollection', the Jewish Magdalena escapes with her young husband from the advancing Germans, fleeing into a glamorous shadow-world of survival and obscurity, from which she later emerges to plague the narrator's second wife, Juliette ('Rue de Lille', 'The Colonel's Child'). The image of Juliette, seen knitting at the end of 'Rue de Lille', captures her relation to the perversely surviving Lena; 'She was knitting squares of wool to be sewn together to make a blanket; there was always somewhere a flood or an earthquake or a flow of refugees, and those who outlasted jeopardy had to be covered.' As one who has 'outlasted jeopardy', Lena is reminiscent of the ageing actress of an earlier story, 'The Old Friends'; both women conceal uncomfortable historical and racial memories under a façade of charm. In the final story of the group, 'Lena', the title character is 'eighty and bedridden' but still indomitable, having outlived the narrator's second, and younger, wife. With an improbable tenacity, Lena assumes a place in the narrator's life, not just in his past, but also at the centre of his present life. Even her hospital bed is occupied territory: 'Magdalena cannot be evicted - not just like that. She has no family, and nowhere to go.' The relationship between the narrator and Lena present a dilemma common in Mavis Gallant's fiction – the impossibility of 'evicting' the uncomfortable elements of the past to create a comfortable and convenient present.

The strengths and concerns of *Overhead in a Balloon* are virtually identical with those of Gallant's earliest collections. Some of the realism and incipient sentiment of early stories have given way to a more stylized treatment, and the tone is more detached, placing greater emphasis on collective wrongs rather than on individual foibles. But Gallant's overriding interest in the sub-text of daily life—the messages in the unspoken word, the hidden gesture—is still evident in a late story such as 'Speck's Idea'. Over three decades Gallant's fiction has moved through the same fictional territory — mainly post-war Europe, but also the Montreal and environs of her early years — poking at the surface appearances of the world, exposing underlying truths, few of them pleasant. On the one hand, hers is a fiction of social and political satire, exposing the hypocrisy of institutionalized reconstruction of history. On another level her work also reveals that much hypocrisy inevitably stems from individual psychology; the personal and the particular are always present in Gallant's fiction, even in the most stylized of the late stories. With their multi-layered European sensibility, Gallant's stories have a more sophisticated appeal than do those of her contemporaries and successors in the Canadian short story. And the distilled omniscience of her characteristic narrator — whose voice speaks from an elevated plane, with knowledge of the past and insight into the future — has marked out a fictional territory that Gallant owns.

Alice Munro's first short-story collection. *Dance of*

the Happy Shades, won a Governor General's Award for fiction in 1968, only five years after Hugh Garner's collection had won the same award. That the short story could twice within several years beat out heavy competition from the novel was an indication of the genre's new resurgence and popularity in the sixties. Garner himself wrote the forward to *Dance of the Happy Shades*, and in some ways Munro's early stories belonged in the Garner tradition – fiction of the ordinary person, written in ordinary language. Munro has since produced four more collections of her stories, of small-town life in Southwestern Ontario; *Something I've been meaning to Tell You* (1974), *Who Do You Think You Are ?* (1978). *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982) and *The Progress of Love* (1986).

Her first collection, however, was notable for several stories whose technical complexity indicated that she was already moving far beyond the well-made magazine story that Garner wrote so skillfully. His form owed a debt to the rigorously structured *O. Henry* story of the early twentieth century. In the typical Garner story action is one-dimensional and unified; the story has a 'point' and moves relentlessly towards it. But the structure in much of Munro's fiction (and increasingly in her later stories) is spatial rather than linear. As she has said, she sees the story not as a 'road, taking me somewhere', but more as a 'house' for the reader to move around in and to 'stay in' for a while.

"With a screen around it for summer, and a big a vase of paper apple blossoms. A tall, frail woman came into the room drying her

hands on a dishtowel, which she flung into a chair. Her mouth was full of blue-white chain teeth, the long cords trembled in her neck”.

After chatting briefly with the woman – Lois’s mother – the narrator describes the smell of the place and the mother’s voice and extracts from the atmosphere a sense of the ‘quality’ Munro seeks to convey: ‘The smell, the slovenly, confiding voice – something about this life I had not known, something about these people.’ The ‘something’ he senses is the difference between the ‘innocence’ of his own background and the ‘sly and sad’ knowingness of Lois’s.

The most distinctive feature of Munro’s stories is the leisurely, digressive unfolding of the narrative. In its simplest form this nonlinear structure involves a diversion of the reader’s interest. Munro will engage the reader’s attention with one set of circumstances and turn to another, seemingly peripheral, set of events or characters for the denouement, as in *‘How I Met My Husband’*. The adolescent housemaid Edie becomes infatuated with an older itinerant pilot, and after his departure spends months waiting for an expected letter to appear in her employer’s mailbox. The reader, primed by the title, waits for a romantic fulfillment to be embodied in that letter. In the last few paragraphs we learn that Edie becomes acquainted with the postman while waiting at the mailbox, and that she eventually realizes that ‘No letter was ever going to come’ and that she ‘was not made’ to be the sort of woman who waits ‘year after year’ for something that may never

happen. Nevertheless we are surprised to learn in the final paragraph that she married the postman and settled down to a happy domestic life. Despite this 'twist', the effect of the story does not depend on 'what happens' but on the experience that led to it. Edie's story reveals the depth of romantic yearning that may underlie mundane lives – a yearning that in some sense we share, since otherwise we would not be surprised by the 'twist'.

Munro's digressive narrative strategies become more complex in her later stories, leaving the relatively simple structure of *'How I Met My Husband'* far behind. Her latest collections, *The Moons of Jupiter* and *The Progress of Love*, demonstrate that narrative digression and progression are one and the same. *'White Dump'*, from *The Progress of Love*, epitomizes Munro's meandering narrative technique at its most refined. Here the approaches to the 'quality' of the story are at least three-fold, corresponding roughly to the three-part division of the narrative. Each section presents the viewpoint of a different female figure-Denise, her grandmother Sophie, and Denise's mother Isabel. Despite this apparent focus on the three generations of women, our attention is deflected sideways to the male figure, Denise's father Laurence, who emerges as the central enigma in the story. In the first section Laurence appears as his daughter sees him in the present – remarried, irritatingly conservative – and as she remembers

him in the past, on his fortieth birthday, for which young Denise had prepared a special treat; a flight in a small plane. On this outing Isabel initiates an affair with the bold, husky pilot of the plane, a fact that is not revealed until the third section of the story, from Isabel's point of view. Between Denise's section and the completion of the story is Sophie's section, where the ferociously iconoclastic and scholarly grandmother is interrupted in her morning swim by a trio of longhaired 'hippies' who take her bathrobe and cigarettes. This outrage occurs on the same fateful birthday, but the account is not complete until section three, when we learn of the family's reaction to Sophie's arrival, irate and buck-naked, for the celebratory breakfast.

The discontinuous narrative accords with Munro's vision of people 'living in flashes', and her concern with capturing events from different individuals' perspectives. Thus Sophie's nudity, forced upon her by the theft of her bathrobe, is not something to 'cover up' but merely the culmination of a long series of changes and invasions' of her world; to Isabel it is more calculated than careless, a means of making her son Laurence look foolish. Laurence sees his mother's nudity as an embarrassment, a public display of her independence from social convention, a position she has maintained ever since proudly giving birth to Laurence out of wedlock forty years ago. To young Denise it is a pivotal revelation of the effects of age on the female body. Each response bears indirectly on the aftermath of the betrayal that will take place later in the day.

Isabel's adultery will set her free from the prison of conventional family happiness in which Laurence is contentedly caged. Denise will leave other illusions of childhood behind her. And, high up in the plane, Sophie achieves a wider angle of vision on the world.

The ultimate deflection in the story concerns its title. The '*white dump*', the castoff icing and marshmallow from a biscuit factory, is described by Isabel as a childhood dream;

"It was something about the White Dump – that there was so much and it was so white and shiny. It was like a kid's dream – the most wonderful promising thing you could ever see" (WD 10) .

Embedded in all three stories of narrative diversion – '*How I Met My Husband*', '*White Dump*' and '*Hard-Luck Stories*' - is a similar notion of the dual nature of love. The form of each story seems to imitate the feelings of the character, feelings that veer from the approved, intelligent course of love and marriage, towards the romance of the imperfect, illicit love affair. Readers acquire sophistication, Munro says; lovers do not. Julie of '*Hard-Luck Stories*' sees a 'twist' because she does not sense a predictable ending; she is not a sophisticated reader of life's story. The narrator, on the other hand, is. With her bitter version of the past in the story with-a-story, she harnesses the power of fiction in order to punish Douglas and, paradoxically, to set him free.

In some stories the narrative point of view may be

unified and singular, and yet still perversely difficult and elusive, such as that of the contradictory first-person female 'I; in *Tell me Yes or No's*' (Something I've Been meaning to Tell You'.

The irruption of the legendary into the everyday world is a common occurrence in Munro's fiction, one often signaled by allusions to the motifs and characters of fairy tale and myth. In '*Something*' the love triangle of King Arthur, Guinever, and Lancelot is evoked to counterpoint the Arthur, Char, and Et triangle.

This fantasy is self-consciously constructed; the narrator's parenthetical aside calls attention to her wish to flesh out the details, to anchor her story in 'reality'. But despite the seemingly solid ground of the cake and the Globe and Mail, the reader is soon lost in the maze of fantasy that follows.

These horror stories occupy a privileged position in Flo's repertoire, and in Rose's imaginative grasp of her town's social history. Rose, however, cannot connect the 'shady melodramatic past' with the resent reality, with Becky Tyde in the red shoes, or with her own humiliating beatings by a father temporarily transformed by hatred into a monster. But both the stories and the beating episodes have a certain ritual shape and function; both are trotted out to meet certain family situations, and to fill the gap between the palpable and the unmentionable in this 'most prudish' of families.

The stories in Munro's latest collection, *The Progress of Love* (1986) retain much of the diversity and the enigma of those in *The Moons of Jupiter*. Several exhibit the diversionary narrative that swerves between events past and present – *Monsieur Les Deux Chapeaux*, for example, and 'The Progress of Love' (which has also been dramatized on television). First published in *The New Yorker* (where many of Munro's recent stories have appeared), the title story, like so much of Munro's fiction since the early seventies, takes a familiar narrative detour back into the past lives of characters in quest of understanding of present situations. The narrator, Fame, explores the life of her mother, Marietta, and the ravages wrought upon it by her grandmother's near-suicide. After seeing her mother standing with the noose around her neck, Marietta can never again love or forgive her father for his treatment of her mother. This hatred colours her life and she warns Fame against it:

Although better known as a novelist and a distinguished poet, Margaret Atwood also excels in the writing of short stories. In addition to her two collections, *Dancing Girls* (1977) and *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983), *Murder in the Dark* (1983) contains short prose pieces that skirt the edge of the short-story form without declaring absolute allegiance; the difficulty of categorizing these engaging and sometimes whimsical pieces is suggested by the book's subtitle, *Short Fictions and Prose Poems*. But even in the first two collections Atwood continually tests the boundaries of the short story,

offering her reader ample opportunity to flex the muscles of the imagination.

Atwood's stories are narrated in a variety of voices, from various points of view, and are set in an array of geographical locations. Their most pronounced tone is that of a visionary discontent—the voice of a narrator who sees, describes with great acuity, and understands human dilemmas, but is powerless to affect the outcome. At their most satirical they feature a highly educated and sensitive narrator who seems bemused by the small vagaries of human nature and pop culture but is lucidly aware of the implications of global issues. Even her first-person narrators evince an obsessive sense of their own difference from other people, and of their detachment from the world. Often the stories appear to seek the alignment of the reader with such a character, making the experience of reading seem like an entry into an 'other' world where the certainty and solidity of the familiar world are inverted. Language itself becomes one of these 'other' worlds, a difficult and dangerous territory. But the abrupt inversions and reversals of perspective in the stories often culminate in a visionary experience that provides an almost mystical closure.

Nevertheless in the first collection, *Dancing Girls*, some of the stories seem far removed from mystical experience of any kind, sharing a solid, unromantic female protagonist, differently named, but recognizably the same type. This

clumsy and myopic antiheroine (Christine, in *'The Man from Mar's, or Ann of 'Dancing Girls'*) conceals her body (usually unfashionably ample) in layers of bulky clothing. The protagonist of *'Hair Jewellery'*, for example, describes her wearing apparel: 'Most of my clothes were the same they were—all too big, perhaps I believed that if my clothes are large and shapeless, if they formed a sort of tent around me, I would be less visible.' The odd clothes are assumed as a disguise, but soon tighten into a skin, becoming the most real and memorable part of her experience: Christine, Ann, Louise, and the nameless narrators of *'Hair Jewellery'* and *'Under Glass' are all cocoon'* women, though the transformation they await promises horror more often than beauty.

Atwood sometimes plays consciously with notions of the Gothic in *'Hair Jewellery'* (for example, where the protagonist is a graduate student in Literature), but usually its elements are concealed, until they spring out unexpectedly from moments in the lives of ordinary people who are both deformed and transformed by strong emotion. Despite a preoccupation with the thin boundary between the mundane and the monstrous, however, the stories, are not melodramatic. They exhibit, in fact, a remarkably cool tone, a distinct Atwoodian 'voice' composed in equal parts of irony, self-deprecation, and disembodied detachment.

Atwood's characteristic narrative point of view is presented by a third person of limited omniscience. In some stories this limited perspective seems at one with the main character, and modulates into a form of indirect interior monologue (for example, with Alma of *'The Salt Garden'*). In the stories in *Dancing Girls* that are told from a first-person point of view – *'Under Glass'*, *'The Grave of the Famous Post'*, *'Rape Fantasies'*, *'Hair Jewellery'*, and *'Lives of the Poets'* – the tone ranges from the meditative confessional of *'Under Glass'* or *'The Grave of the Famous Poet'* to the naively garrulous and deceptively debunking tone of *'Rape Fantasies'*.

'Bluebeard's Egg', like *'The Resplendent Quetzal'*, is one of Atwood's finest stories - emotionally resonant, and breathtaking in its ability to conjure the menace that lurks in the everyday. As the third wife of an eminent doctor, a 'heart man'. Sally has no intimations of menace as *'Bluebeard's Egg'* opens. The strength of the story lies in its ambiguity. Ed remains an enigma; we never know if he is innocently asleep at the end of the story or pretending – 'as if asleep'. Neither do we know if Sally will play out the role of Bluebeard's third wife, the one who outwits him and unmasks his villainy, or if she is destined to join the ranks of discarded wives floating dismembered in their own blood. Atwood creates a macabre echo between the fairy-tale dismemberment and contemporary heart surgery, giving Ed a mysterious, almost sexual, power over women because he sees their hearts, and even takes a knife to them.

'*Bluebeard's Egg*' is the crowning achievement of this collection; but a less flashy and disturbing kind of story also commands attention. In the opening and closing stories of *Bluebeard's Egg* – 'Significant Moments in the *Life of My Mother*' and '*Unearthing Suite*' - Atwood uses an easy 'autobiographical' style, creating the kind of personal history that is common in Alice Munro's stories,

The exploration of story, its material and function, continues in *Murder in the Dark*, Atwood's collection of short prose pieces. The book is divided into four parts; *Murder in the Dark* encapsulates all the recurrent themes of Atwood's short fiction. It is perhaps not coincidental that Atwood's own story endings so often sidestep death or dullness by ascending to a visionary plane. Her writing has a feminist stance, but this comes more from her rethinking of the boundaries of plot, closure, diction, and voice, than from any polemic within the narrative. A bleak playfulness pervades the stories a sense of the writer's contest not only with language and form but with the reader as well. It is the deadly seriousness of that playfulness that gives rise to much of the humour and satire, and indeed to the visionary depth, of Atwood's short stories.

In this rush of new writing the modernist short story would become only one strand in a new tradition that was widening out to include American post-modernist influences and other international trends. The realistic story that was so

deeply entrenched in Canadian writing was well suited to a literature that was largely regional and essentially conservative strategies, writing realistic stories with a limited point of view that leads the narrative through a series of pointed moments – in which psychological truths outweigh the events of plot – to the achievement of a revelation. A realistic tradition stretching back through Callaghan and Knister to D.C. Scott was extended by Norman Levine, John Metcalf, Alistair MacLeod, Margaret Laurence, and many others.

A writer who leans towards the conservative tradition in the short story is Norman Levine (b.1923), whose collection *One Way Ticket* (1961) would be followed by four more over the next two decades, including *Champagne Barn* in 1984. Like Mavis Gallant, Levine wrote from a self-imposed exile—he lived until 1980 in Cornwall—and his stories often deal with the pain of returning to a place outgrown. Sometimes these returns are purely imagined, but in other stories they are actual pilgrimages, as in ‘*By a Frozen River*’, in which the narrator, a writer, comes to a small town in Northern Ontario to reacquaint himself with a winter he has almost forgotten. He discovers that there is much else about himself that has been lost and must be recaptured.

In contrast to the work of the *Montreal Story Tellers* are the realistic, strongly moral stories that Margaret Laurence (1926-1986) began to publish around this time. Laurence’s

first collection. *The Tomorrow-tamer* (1963), which grew out of her residence in Somalia and Ghana, contains her strongest, most memorable stories. Thought to be outside the mainstream of Canadian literature, because of their exotic setting and subject, they have not often been anthologized – though ‘The Voices of Adamo’ and ‘A Gourdful of Glory’ were included in Robert Weaver’s *Canadian Short Stories; Second Series* (1968). Laurence’s second collection. *A Bird in the House* (1970), is Canadian in setting and immediately established itself at the heart of the canon both for literary study and for popular reading. Set in Laurence’s fictional *Manitoba town of Manawaka*, these eight linked stories explore the childhood world of Vanessa MacLeod, a young artist struggling to free herself from the ‘brick battlements’ of an exacting grandfather and his rigidly maintained Scots heritage. Most often anthologized is ‘*The Loons*’, a lament for the passing of an entire way of life among the Indians, epitomized by the haunting call of loons. More evocative of the Canadian sensibility, however, are the stories ‘*To Set our House in Order*’ and ‘*Mask of the Bear*’ in which young Vanessa strives to understand her grandfather’s world of order and public masks, which stands in rigid opposition to her own ideals of freedom and disarray.

Another group of recent short-story writers – many of them female – have, like Atwood and of Munro, leavened the strong Canadian tradition of realism with newer techniques drawn from the American short story. Chief among them is

American-born Audrey Thomas (b.1935). The date of her first collection, *Ten Green Bottles* (1967) makes Thomas the first to stake out a new form and a completely new area of female experience for the Canadian short story. The lead story in this collection – *Ladies and Escorts* (1977), and *Goodbye Harold, Good Luck* (1986) – Thomas continued to use metafictional techniques to map the murky relationship between life and art, subjecting language to a fierce scrutiny that is equaled only in Atwood's stories. Etymologies, both exact and fanciful, subvert the accepted meaning of words, as in the title of one early story 'Iniram' ('martini' backwards), or in a later story, '*Mothering Sunday*,' which opens with this meditation on meaning;

Thomas also harnesses the post-modern techniques of fabulation ('*The Princess and the Zucchini*') and of metafiction ('*The Man with Clam Eyes*') to remake words and stories from a female perspective. She is not therefore purely a post-modern writer.

Although Thomas borrows techniques (disrupted temporal sequences, elements of fantasy, and obedience to fable rather than to plot) from the American post-modernists Cover, Glass, and Berth, she like Atwood, transforms them into tools for exploring a particularly female reality whose significance and solidity are never in question.

Gallant enjoyed clarifying her point about religion in France, where the Church “is smaller now” and the second religion is Islam. “It’s Catholic, Muslim, Jewish,” she said, then broke into a high-pitched voice while making a falling gesture with her hands, “and way down there, a few Protestants, poor little things, an endangered species.” While the Church may be in decline in France, its presence is inherently part of the life of the nation: “But it’s a culture,” Gallant explained, “that’s it.” She made several points in this concise, emphatic way. There was much matter behind any one instance, but there’s no time for clarification; she assumes you’re with her and moves on.

“One of the things I’ve always noticed in France: that they use Christian and Catholic to mean the same thing. I remember a woman once saying to me, ‘Although I am a Christian, I have nothing against Jews or Protestants.’ “The genial satire on display here gave way to a sharper sort of humour on other topics. She was (correctly, it turns out) dubious about the odds of Segolene Royal becoming France’s first woman president, because while “women have rights in France, still the men have an attitude” – one that she demonstrated, worldlessly, by putting her face into a Gaullic male grimace at the notion of a woman assuming the country’s highest office. As for the 1968 Generation, now the establishment in France, she was particularly lethal in her assessment of the Socialists: These are people who have ideas but have never had to wait for a bus,” She was equally efficient with writers whom she holds in low regard. “He’s basically bourgeois,” she said, dismissing the controversial Michel Houellebecq.”

Encounters between people, around which move whole constellations of discreet meanings. To engage such art requires a commitment of intellect and imagination capable of meeting and withstanding Gallant's vision of the world; a sometimes fatalistic, sometimes sympathetic regard for the all-to-human longings and occasionally funny cruelties that people visit upon each other. And this is a regard that proceeds from an unflinching commitment to revelation for its own sake.

“Unlike the student of theology, he (Herbert) had not put up barriers such as too much talk, self-analysis, or second thoughts. In fact, he tended to limit the number of subjects he would discuss. He had no hold on her mind, nor any interest in gaining one. The mind that he constantly took stock of was his child's apparently he could not be captivated in the same way by two people at once. He often said he thought he could not live without her, but a few minutes later he seemed unable to remember what he had just said, or to imagine how his voice must have sounded to her. (PJ 4)”

Christine and Herbert are no exceptions. None of the characters is spared by Mavis Gallant's disparaging pen: they all come out in a rather dismal light.

This holds for the first two sections of the story, *Pegnitz Junction*. Those sections, namely the background description, the stay in Paris and the outset of the train journey (PJ 3-14) followed by the stopover at Strasbourg (PJ 14-16) ,

are more traditional than the last two but already combine a variety of narrative techniques announcing the subsequent experiments. With the constant shifts from an omniscient point of view to Christine's the reader often wonders whose voice he hears, whether a negative comment is objective or whether the comment is a reflection of Christine's frustration with her present situation. Similarly conversations can be confusing. Direct speech is often not marked except for an inquit form at first, so towards the end of a long passage one never knows whether one deals with direct speech or reported thought. Dashes have a clear function ; they often mark the beginning and end of passages in free indirect discourse. However if the letters tend to let Christine's voice be heard they sometimes present another voice: occasionally within Christine's inner monologue one can hear Herbert's voice, as if one heard a voice within a voice. At times a missing word is to answer this multiplicity of voices as abrupt transitions between sentences force the reader to infer links between the sentences. He/she is to tie bits and pieces together so as to have a more coherent picture of the characters or situations. The reader inevitably adds another voice to the story; by supplementing the links he/she draws on his/her experience and colours the text differently. So for each abrupt transition there is always more than one possible connection, and the reader is invited to contribute to the polyphony.

In the last two sections the same combination of techniques can be found. However during the journey through the Rhine valley into Germany with a scene at a *castle* (pp. 16.34) followed by the rerouted train journey, a stopover in the country and the final stopover at *Pegnitz Junction* (pp.34-88), the text offers an unexpected presentation of psychic experiences. Christine actually serves as a medium disclosing the inner and outer lives of other people who happen to be in her vicinity. This paranormal turn of the narrative is surprising but former details give away Christine's exceptional ability. When Christine, distressed by the Parisian night porter's outburst, looks out of the window she sees a scene of her past as if it belonged to the narrative present. Similarly, at times, her face looks 'totally empty-minded, when in fact her thought and feelings (are) pushing her in some wild direction ' (p.4). Obviously these two characteristics already announce her unusual insight into people's lives and her exceptional mind-reading skill.

Episodes of people's lives – past, present and future – are thus recorded as if by an omniscient narrator whereas it is Christine who decodes such information. Her perception of other people's lives allows her to know what is going on in each person's consciousness. Here she picks up their inner monologue so that the facts are related in free indirect discourse as with the old diabetic woman, the would--

be-American young woman and Herbert to mention only a few. There her clairvoyance allows her to see in people totally unrelated to her, which gives the impression that the narration is omniscient. The first such passage (pp. 27-34) might have inspired Bunuel. A nouveau riche referred to as Uncle Ludwig as if he had been introduced before is seen on an excursion. He goes with his provincial and obtuse family to a castle where he wants to buy Christmas trees for the winter market. The assumed omniscient narrator relates their further intrusive behaviour in the castle which they suppose to be a museum, reports their conversation and even goes as far as to announce their imminent deaths from cancer or murder. The preparatory scenes to the murder and the murder itself are even described in detail. Without further transition the relation shifts back to the train firm where Christine looks at this odd party of people. The train trembled and slid round a curve, out of sight of the dappled lawn and the people climbing slowly up to the castle, on their last excursion together (p.34). The information leaves the reader with Christine witnessing their entering the castle grounds, that is, at the beginning of their visit. Who is to thank for the previous report would remain an unanswered question if it were not for Mavis Gallant's experiment with narrative techniques. Similarly the photographer's private life could easily be revealed by an omniscient narrator if it were not for Christine's gift. By then the reader may assume that such private matters are transmitted through Christine's mind

regardless of their omniscient rendering. Likewise when the train slows down at a level crossing several figures are focused on. One of them is a pregnant woman who seems to attract the attention of three male travelers, amongst others Herbert. This leads to a confusing comment that 'we are going to learn something more about Herbert' (p.41). The nature of the addresser and/or addressee remain vague. As a result the reader regularly wonders whether the narrator is merely omniscient or transmits Christine's voice itself transmitting other characters' voices.

Through Christine, the focaliser, the reader can also perceive the voice of tradition, both literary and musical. Kafka's '*The Castle*' is definitely brought to mind in the passage with uncle Ludwig and his party. With the four conscripts waiting at the level crossing (p.42) another interesting reference to the literary sphere is offered. Seen in the narrative present and future, the conscripts recall Wilhelm Busch's satirical strips. A similar allusion is found in the episode with the little girls going home from camp and invading Christine and Herbert's compartment (p.20-22). Their physique, their alternate bullying and charming behaviour, their submissive attitude in their family's presence, their mean relatives – all evoke the satirized figures so familiar to German citizens. Further on, the leader of a group of middle-class concertgoers tries to (wipe) out of their memories every vexation and

discomfort they (have) been feeling' (p. 69). To lull them he gives them a long list of writers, philosophers, composers and musicians – further vibrating voices of the German-speaking cultural tradition.

But the polyphonic narration is further enriched by historical, political, racist and social voices. History is ever present for 'images of the past, specifically of the war, intrude everywhere into the present, which gives a sense of historical *deja vu*. The past weighs on Christine and influences her imagination or rather colours her present perception of things. When they are ordered to keep windows shut because of fires along the railway, Christine immediately imagines 'the holocaust they might become' (p.36). Throughout the novella the past war is obliterated or considered a far-off situation for it unsettles the characters. At the Gare de l'Est a 'plaque commemorated a time of ancient misery, so ancient that two of the travelers had not been born then, and Herbert, the eldest, had been about the age of little Bert' (p.11). Herbert feels so embarrassed about it that he only speaks French in public so as to pass himself off as French. He also constantly erases allusions to the Second World War supposedly to protect his son but also for sheer fear of its memory. But reminders abound. The simple-witted porter at the hotel calls them 'Dirty Boches' (p.8). One of their fellow travelers, a Norwegian bass baritone, mentions the German reparations. Herbert who dislikes 'opening up the dossier' (p.49) is forced

to consider the matter. Then at their first stopover they cannot overlook the barbed wire separating the West from the East. Refugee-like travelers too curiously conjure up past atrocities, as does the conductor's repeated authoritarian behaviour. That Christine reads Dietrich Bonhoeffer's essays is yet another allusion to the political past as the pastor who had planned to overthrow Hitler was hanged in a concentration camp. The choice of *Pegnitz Junction* as the station from which the rerouted travelers can go back home is not haphazard either: it is the last junction in West Germany, the obvious way into East Germany so that Christine and her fellow travelers are seen between two options – the capitalist West and the Marxist East. They eventually only hear the voice of the system they belong to, namely that favouring free enterprise. A man who longs to be in his native village across the barbed wire is silently harangued by Christine advocating the voice of the West :

“What are you doing here ? Why spend a vacation in a dead landscape ? Marine wouldn't look even if she remembered you. Wouldn't couldn't she has forgotten how. Her face turns the other way now. Decide what the rest of your life is to be. Whatever you are now you might be forever, give or take a few conversions and lapses from faith. (PJ 60)”

If, in this case, Christine emits a political voice, she can also transmit another voice, social this time. Language, attire and manners separate uncle Ludwig's common but wealthy party from the decorous but impoverished castle

owners. The landed gentry speak 'with such a correct and beautiful accent' (p.28) that the parvenus are baffled. They in turn astound the aristocrats whose privacy they violate without even realizing that they might be upsetting their established ways. Their dress, while evoking the world of fashion, further increases the gap: the aristocrats wear elegant and stylish country outfits whereas the nouveau riche clique exhibit the showy "Sunday urban best" (p.30) and hairstyle fashionable in the 1950s. Funnily enough, they are convinced that the castle owner is English rather than German 'because of all the aristocratic scoundrels they had seen in films' (p.28). However, the narrator notes, he is 'as removed from them as any foreigner might have been (p.28). As to Uncle Ludwig himself 'now that he was rich he was not thought ignorant any more, but simply eccentric' (p.29). Even Jorgen, Uncle Ludwig's right hand, gives vent to social prejudice in the episode prior to his announced death. When he surveys the belongings of his debtor he notices that apart from a small rug 'everything else was trash, probably bought second-hand to begin with' (p.33). Christine herself is a representative of the upper middle class. She is used to comfort and resents the poor conditions in which she has to travel. Her complaint to Herbert – 'I believe this train has a steam engine. How can they, when we have first class tickets ? (p.17) – indicates the bond to her social class. Yet in France she was 'outraged by the undemocratic Paris metro with its first-and second class tickets' (p.17) Then

she was most probably voicing her fiance's left-wing beliefs, not her own. Equally class conscious, Herbert labels the furniture of their compartment as 'middle class' (p.18). A racist too, he does not want his son to get anywhere near the frontier coffeehouse patronized by guest workers: these foreigners have brought new diseases into the country. Incidentally this racial consideration echoes the prejudice of Herbert's mother when she returned, a bitter woman, from the camps. However on account of his intellectual conscience Herbert does not want his son to 'breathe the slightest whiff of racial animosity' (p.61). Bert would definitely breathe it if he shared Christine's power of mind. Indeed the fat old woman in their compartment verbalizes her anti-Semitism in her telegraphic inner monologue. She justifies one instance as follows :

"In 1940-against wild utterances and attempts to drag the USA into the conflict on the wrong side. The President of the USA at the time was a Dutch Jew, his father a diamond cutter from Rotterdam stole the Russian imperial jewels after the Bolshevik revolution, had to emigrate to avoid capture and prison sentence. Within ten years they were running the whole country... Their real name was Roszenfeldt (PJ 39)"

This obvious misconception is the clear expression of the anti-Semitic discourse prevailing in some American circles at the time. She also reflects that in America she and her closest relatives would only have voted four times in forty years, a sign of their lack of social conscience. Undoubtedly, while listening to the voices Christine perceives, the reader

has to bring back to memory this web of historical, political, racist and social facts.

In addition the mind has to be reframed to accommodate yet another dimension, a universal voice heard in neutral statements. When Christine, angered by the lack of comfort, passes in review their first-class compartment her criticism is counterbalanced by a statement that decreases its impact. Indeed the universal 'one' does not reject the compartment as unfit since 'the most one could say was that it would do for first class (p.17) but it does not reject Christine's criticism either. This points to the all-too-human subjective perception of things. When satisfied with one's psychic evolution the situation is acceptable, but if, like Christine, one is disappointed with one's psychic and spiritual life it becomes intolerable. Later, as she tries to reflect on their situation, she manages to encompass three different levels of perception by using the pronoun 'one' :

"But sometimes on those days one feels more. More than just one's irritation. I mean. Everything opens, like a pomegranate. More things have gone wrong than one imagined....." (PJ 26)

This observation reveals her aggravation with the lack of comfort, her awareness of their failed relationship as well as her realization that civilization has taken the wrong turn. With the extended vision as well as with the numerous superimposed voices an even more intricate task faces the reader.

That the reader is constantly perplexed need not surprise, the more so as few clues indicate that an episode is a manifestation of Christine's gift. Even Christine's definition of information is vague:

"Christine thought that she knew when 'information' truly was and had known for some time. She could see it plainly in fact, it consisted of fine silver crystals forming a pattern, dancing, separating, dissolving in a glittering trail along the window. The crystals flowed swiftly, faster than smoke, more beautiful and less durable than snowflakes. (PJ 23)"

True, here and there she announces 'creaking thoughts', 'crystals' or 'interferences'. But most clues are muddling for they often come after the transference of thought so that the doubt still remains. To make matters worse one could argue that the alleged clue is no evidence of Christine's prior clairvoyance. A case in point concerns her comment following the local curator's silent diatribe against a narrow-minded perception of art. As he thinks out a way of putting his counter-arguments Christine reveals 'that Herbert could have helped him, because he was good at that kind of letter' (p.65). The same ambiguity is sustained with the stranger met in the country at one of their stopovers. The narrator recounts the distressful experience of a child during the war as he and his parents fled from their village. Now years later the child, grown a man, returns to this village and meets Christine. She sees that 'he knew she knew everything', and she has a conversation with him 'as they silently (pass) each other'

(p.60). So the reader has to be on the look out for the old significant world. Typographical clues can also be confusing. At times, thought transference is revealed through italics. But more than one character's inner monologue is made explicitly this way. Thus the reader has to keep in mind the different threads and styles of, for example, the old diabetic woman. Herbert and the pregnant German woman passing herself off as American. Otherwise he/she cannot grasp the essence of their lives.

Though the disclosure of those people's thoughts and preoccupations one gets a pretty grim picture of a sample of the German population after World War II. The old woman sitting in the same compartment gives vent to her viperfish resentment against a past situation she never explicitly opposed. She is clearly only absorbed in getting her share of the inheritance her husband left to his niece. As to the would-be American young woman, her one concern is to obtain compensation from her lover for having got her pregnant. Herbert cannot get over his wife's breaking up with him and is indifferent to others except for his son. Uncle Ludwig's sole comfort in life is his wealth, which gives him means to conceal his lack of education. The elegant concert goers would not admit that the Hitler's time 'was a sad time for art in the country' (p.70). Just as Christine, who 'might have felt pity for the fragile neck and the tired shadows around (Bert's) eyes', but is repelled by 'the dirty knuckles, the bread-and-butter breath,

the height insist voice' (p.38), the reader cannot sympathise with the characters. Literally put off by their mean, self-centered and inauthentic existences, he/she leaves them without the slightest compassion, trapped in their train, their disconnected self-created hell.

However, in spite of the most negative picture emerging from the multiple voices of post-war German society, the prospects brighten towards the end. Christine, the one who is constantly 'as reluctant as ever to make up her mind' (p.87) about anything, whether a detail or a major issue, manages to take a decision concerning her life. Being a Pegnitz Junction she is to experience an epiphany leading her to meet her lot; the maddening stopover at *Pegnitz Junction* is the inevitable pause for reflection before taking a new and decisive orientation. With the new perspective gained through meeting others – both inwardly and outwardly – she is brought to decide what the turn of her life should be. She decides to stop pretending - a characteristic of all the characters in the story. She no longer thinks of putting up a show for proprieties' sake: she starts acting as a real mother would, feeling sincerely sorry for the child's discomfort and herself feeling comforted by his presence, by 'his breath on her arm (p.80). She gently explains her decision to Bert: You must stop calling me "the lady" when you speak to your father. Try to learn to say "Christine" (p. 80). , she says to the little boy who cannot grasp the full meaning of this statement. This being said she

resumes the story of a family whose five sons all have the same name with a different pronunciation for each, a story which 'suggests the brotherhood of man. Interestingly enough, Christine tells it when she should get on a move for their train has arrived. This implies that she is no longer eager to take the train of social life with its norms, insincere feelings and failed communication. So by accepting to leave her track and relate to others she eventually emerges as a character capable of understanding and spontaneous generosity in spite of the gloomy world around her. Her acceptance, tardy though it may be, is a sign that nothing is ever fixed in society. The reader may look forward to a new age cleansed of the petty-mindedness of post-war Germany, to a new age where one need not be ashamed of the human condition.

A wealth of references to spatial constituents charges the atmosphere of Mavis Gallant's Linnet Muir sequence *Home Truths* (HT 217-330)² As those stories are the sublimated product of memory numerous crucial images call on spatial polarities. These terms combined with other stylistic devices expose local cultural phenomena with precision.: laying out the stories' fictional landscape amounts to determining what Linnet, the protagonist/narrator, senses as the social, religious and cultural limitations imposed on all the characters. This reality emerges from her recollections of her life in Montreal as a child and then as a late teenager, that is, in the nineteen-

twenties and forties. A fictionalized projection of Gallant at the time (HT xxii), Linnet gives a rather grim picture of her compatriots and their outlook on life, as if time had not erased the memory of the frustrations she (and thus Gallant too) experienced in her youth. Significantly, Linnet perceives the space in which the characters move as shrunken, a concomitant of the local cultural, social and religious oppressiveness: definitely not overwhelmed by nostalgia, Gallant resorts to spatially laden language to throw an ironic light on those restrictions.

In the representation of the city, which is “not so much..... a physical location as a psychological state” (Jarrett 174), the spatial references are coloured with numerous undertones. The emotional coloration of spatial elements plays a considerable role in the reconstructions of locations. For instance, while in New York, Linnet is longing for a heavily distorted Montreal:

“My memory of Montreal took shape while I was there. It was not a jumble of rooms.... But the faithful record of the true survivor. I retained, I rebuilt a superior civilization. In that drowned world, Sherbrooke Street seemed to be glittering and white; the vision of a house upon that street was so painful that I was obliged to banish it from the memorial. The small hot rooms of a summer cottage became enormous and cool. If I say that Cleopatra floated down the Chateauguay River, that the Winter Palace was stormed on Sherbrooke Street. that Trafalgar was fought on Lake St. Lewis, I mean it naturally; they were the natural backgrounds of my exile and fidelity. (HT 223).”

Linnet could not describe more clearly how memory works, how its beautifying process involves spatial changes. “small” becomes “enormous,” “hot” becomes “cool,” a “drowned world” seems “glittering and white,” and movement renders common places magical. The initial verb “took shape” even points to spatial invention/spatial memory. Once actual comparison cannot challenge it, memory embellishes the remembered object, place or person and even sets out to negate the existence of “the jumble of rooms” in which the Muirs used to live, and opposes to it the pretended faithfulness of real memory – the memory generating positive reminiscences. In comparison with the clarity of perception – that is of the present experience – the past becomes a “downed world” whose haziness alters and modifies things for the better; by referring to her expanding memory, Linnet makes Montreal look small. Similarly, the achromatic purity (“glittering and white”) of the recollection imparts Linnet’s will to forget the stronger chromatic unpleasant, components of her past. Actual evidence of modification backs up the argument; houses – essential components of the urban landscape – are obliterated. Yet they “(bear) the essence of the notion of home” (Bachelard 5), which amounts to bringing a sheltering and reassuring warmth. That she equates her remembrances with a memorial evokes a parallel between them and funeral orations where defects; weaknesses and shortcomings are left unmentioned and/or beautified (HT 6).

The long balanced sentence (HT 7-8) at the end punctuates the earnest yet illusory perception of the past as do the initial phrases “seemed to be” and “became enormous.” The first dramatic section (HT 7) with its periodic structure paralleling three “that” clauses of pure geographic fantasy postpones the main ideas and stresses its importance; no harm is meant; imagination is allowed licence. The second section (HT 8), a shorter and thus more powerful main clause, restates the first one in objective, explanatory, abstract terms and no longer in spatial visual images: “exile” and “fidelity” merge to sharpen the nostalgic yearning for an otherwise disillusioned world.

“Montreal, in memory, was a leafy citadel where I knew every tree.... Sherbrooke Street had been the dream street, pure white..... It was a moat I was not allowed to cross alone; it was lined with gigantic spreading trees through which light fell like a rain of coins (HT 235).”

The sense of space and nature present in the description makes the magic quality of Linnet’s recollection, its expansion into myth. Glittering colours, magnitude, vegetation - these transform remembrances for the better. Memory’s actual counterpart, it appears from the next quotation, lacks grandeur, indeed might as well not exist:

“One day, standing at a corner, waiting for the light to change, I understood that the Sherbrooke Street of my exile – my Mecca, my Jerusalem – was Only this. The limitless green where in a perpetual spring I had been taken to play was the campus of McGill University. A house, whose beauty had brought tears to my sleep..... was a narrow stone thing with a shop on the ground floor and offices above..... Through the bare panes of what might have been the sitting

room, with its private window seats, I saw neon strip lighting along a ceiling, Reality, as always, was narrow and dull. (HT 235-236)”

Linnet exposes the shock of disillusionment by humorously contrasting the sordid reality with the magnificent picture of her memory equated with mystic places of worship. Boundless expanses in unchanging propitious weather materialises as grounds which the reader soon recognises as bounded and exposed to harsh weather. The magnificent house capable of moving Linnet to extreme emotions turns out to be an unqualifiable building, at the most cramped and unpoetic. Crude artificial lighting replaces warm and comfortable decorations. Only bleakness prevails as marked by the repetition of the adjective “narrow”. The accumulation of confining terms related to the actual setting serving as a basis for memories is striking. The contrast between the “aesthetically comfortable” (HT 292) character of her recollections and the spatial discovery that the word city means “drab, filthy, flat, or that city blocks could turn into dull squares without mystery” (HT 292) shakes Linnet with dismay, as the cumulative disparaging adjectives emphasise.

The same correction of reality marks Linnet’s memory of Dr. Chauhard’s house. The only one to grasp her sensitivity and grant her marked favours, Dr. Chauchard is the person closest to her except for an old bonne (also a French-Canadian of a good old Quebecois family, who has fallen on hard times.)

“The house he came to remained for a long time enormous in my memory, though the few like it still standing – “still living,” I nearly say – are narrow, with thin, steep staircases and close, high-ceilinged rooms. (HT 302).”

The description of her recollection and of the actual house again shows how selective – and even corrective – memory is. This confrontation of remembrance and its object confers fluidity to the perception of culture. What is and what might ideally be the difference between the adult’s perception of space and the child’s naturally deformed remembrance of it thus alternatively evoked, produce the undulating motion of self-enquiry. Significantly, the above quotation also discloses a spatial reality, namely that Montreal’s architecture in part illustrates the harsh principles of Presbyterianism. Some areas still display houses with Scottish characteristics like Chauchard’s “narrow, with thin, steep staircases and close, high-ceilinged rooms, (they are) the work of Edinburgh architects and (date) from when Montreal was a Scottish city” (HT 302). Their narrowness and height convey the imperative that people should follow the narrow path and look upwards “to open (their) eyes upon the heavens’ (Knox 4; 294) so as to be “delivered from all fear, all torment and all temptation” (Knox 2: 109). As they are given no space nor freedom to exist (Sartre, 73-102).

In “*Between Zero and One*” (HT 238-260), the prevalent restrictions on emotional freedom, perceived by

the narrator and protagonist if not by the other characters, are reflected in the topographical details. The décor in which the action – or rather inaction – takes place is described in spatial terms of restrictive psychological impact. Linnet makes revealing comments on the atmosphere at work.

“I remember a day of dark spring snowstorms, ourselves, reflected on the black windows, the pools of warm, light here and there, the green-shaded lamps, the dramatic hiss and gurgle of the radiators that always sounded like the background to some emotional outburst, the sudden slackening at the end of the afternoon when every molecule of oxygen in the room had turned into poison. (HT 240)”

The protagonist's associative memory has lost none of the irritating sounds, smells, colours and heat. Rather than offering comfort in contrast to the unfavourable climate, the interior locale Linnet describes seems to reproduce it. In spite of occasional patches of shaded light, the pictures evoke a dark, stifling atmosphere punctuated by the infuriating noises of the radiators. These depressing images piled up in the loose sentence echo the characters' frustrations with their meaningless lives. When – if at all – will an “emotional outburst” liberate them? One can hardly imagine their lives without the slow moving lift, a symbol for the exiguity, smallness, and limitedness of their world:

“I climbed to the office in a slow reassuring elevator with iron grille doors, sharing it with inexpressive women and men – clearly the trodden-on. No matter how familiar our faces became, we never spoke. The only sound, apart from the creaking cable, was the gasping

and choking of a poor man who had been gassed at the Somme and whose lungs were said to be in shreds. He had an old man's pale eyes and wore a high stiff collar and stared straight before him, like everyone else. (HT 246)"

Imprisoned in life as in the lift with an iron fence preventing emotions from coming out, the characters follow the path society designated them, Linnet makes fun of the normative rules that dictate the slow pace of the flock. Communication between people who have not been formally introduced is impossible. The only person who departs from the norm is the gassed veteran from the First World War but then his is a message of oppression, a cry for emotional and physical freedom. However, apart from his gasp for air and his choking which may be seen as an incapacity rather than as a symptom of restricting social norms, he conforms. His collar is stiff and the look on his face is as blank as a fish's. Clearly, real communication cannot exist among citizens abiding by the local inhibitions which religion exacerbates. Whatever they do, they are overcome with their sense of sin, for man is "never able to fulfill the works of the *Law in perfection*" (Knox 2: 107) so that they live in the terror of God, in the terror of the "plagues to fall upon (them) in particular for (their) grievous offences" (Knox 4: 295). " Bearing the stamp of imported pre-war British behavioural patterns, the characters have typically cool, shy and repressed attitudes registered in the physical background.

With the subtle collage of random memories from her past life and extra-temporal reflections on cultural issues, Linnet evokes a provincial world where emotions, rather than having a positive effect on mores, have to be repressed. As soon as she mentions crossing the border between the United States and Canada, spatial and human barrenness strike the reader: Linnet discovers “a curiously empty country, where the faces of people [give] nothing away” (HT 222; emphasis added). It soon appears, from the accumulation of comments in passing, that “like’ and ‘don’t like’ [are such] heavy emotional statements” (HT 229) that Canadians keep “their reactions, like their lovemaking, in the dark” (HT 230). The confinement in the dark of their shameful and unavowed self marks the national repression, predominant in all fields. Questioning her country’s ban on spontaneous responses, Linnet eventually discloses the ironic advantages of composure, in a detached voice rather like that of an anthropologist assessing the value of social behaviour in some far-off country:

“Now, of course there is much to be said on the other side: people who do not display what they feel have practical advantages [1]. They can go away to be killed as if they didn’t mind [2]; they can see their sons off to war without a blink [3] Their upbringing is intended for a crisis [4] When it comes, they behave themselves [5]. But it is murder in everyday life-truly murder [6]. The dead of heart and spirit litter the landscape [7] Still, keeping a straight face makes life tolerable under stress [8]. It makes public life tolerable – that is all I am saying [9]; because in private people still got drunk, went after each other with bottles and knives..... [10]. (HT 227-228; numbers between brackets added).”

The initial balanced sentence (1) considers the impact of countenance in abstract terms and concedes it a beneficial function. The examples of advantages emphasized by the loose structures of sentence (2) and the verbs of motion show the tip of the iceberg: they assert with insistence the importance of the façade and relegate feelings to a dark corner. The next purposefully short simple sentence (3) sets out a theorem that the narrator subsequently proves by reducing it to the absurd (4-8). By first delaying and preparing the way for the main thought, namely the ability to behave in cold blood, the next periodic sentence (5) alerts the reader to the assumed importance of repressed emotional responses. However, the following statement (6) brings the reduction to the real crisis: murder (Playing the momentary crisis against murder in everyday life ironically punctuates the ridiculous attachment to apathy). The resulting waste invades the emotional landscape: a purely spatial image (7) involving no motion whatsoever (“litter the landscape”) enhances the climactic message. But then, as if to tease the reader somewhat more, Linnet praises impassiveness (8): it “makes life tolerable under stress.” The concession, though, is short-lived: it is immediately corrected and restricted to the italicized public life (9). And the correction reinforced in the re-statement (10) suddenly echoes a different voice. Linnet gets involved and recollects violent – and thus energetic scenes of private lives, which annihilates the hypothetical value of restraint and denounces it.

And indeed the numerous references to behavioural responses interspersed here and there cynically show the negative effect self-control has on human beings. Most of the characters are about to lose their sanity from frustration and repression;

“...the winter tunnels, the sudden darkness that April day, the years he had of this long green room, the knowledge that he would die and be buried “Assistant Chief Engineer Grade II” without having overtaken Chief Engineer McCreery had simply we have to keep us sensible. (HT 240)”

The cumulative spatial –descriptions of depressing restrictive impact pave the way for the final metaphor pointing to the precariousness of people’s psychological balance. Linnet equates repression with the dark winter weather whose spatiality is made palpable through the tunnel image. Further comments of spatial impact prove that her colleagues’ psychological imbalance results from their education and its success in “making them) invisible to (themselves)” (HT 243). Adults thus live in a “world of falsehood and evasion” (HT 229) where everything is “hushed, muffled, disguised” (HT 230). The overwhelming anger resulting from the age-old-inflicted “deprivation of the senses, mortification of mind and body” (HT 345) is anything but surprising. Easily angry, easily offended” (HT 247) married women and especially prone to be bitter. These, the reader is told, keep “(yelling) – to husbands, to children, to docs, to postmen, to a neighbor’s child” (HT 263). The epitome of what restriction and lack of

opening both privately and professionally do to people is to be found in Mrs. Ireland, one of Linnet's colleagues. Named after the bettered wife of England – the normative ruler whose inhibiting repression causes discontent – she is a battered wife too. In spite of all her degrees, she does not know any better than to explode in wrath at any moment. One can but appreciate the double pun contained in her name – an evocation of a fragile psychological and political landscape – and understand the sarcastic criticism of the still pervasive constraining British norms.

Linnet's recollection of the population whether it evokes past or present situations deforms the picture derisively. She repeatedly ridicules the emptiness of her compatriots' lives in spatial terms that incidentally determine the difference between men and women:

“When I was young I thought that men had small lives of their own creation. I could not see why, born enfranchised, without the obstacles and constraints attendant on women, they set such close limits for themselves and why, once the limits had been reached, they seemed so taken aback.... There was a space a life I used to call “between Zero and One” and then came a long mystery. I supposed that men came up to their wall, their terminal point, quite a long way after One. (HT 238).”

The images conjured up in this passage evidently reveal what Linnet thinks of the people around her. A posteriori, the vague reference to age intimates that the narrator is considerably removed from her childhood and teens. Indeed, it points to the distance between the time when Linnet, the

protagonist, perceives facts and the time when Linnet, the narrator, relates them. From the start men's lives are shown as exiguous of their own volition. Linnet's incomprehension of such a narrow choice – their “close limits” – is marked by the opposition between men being “born enfranchised” and “the obstacles and constraints attendant on women. “Spatial polarities thus immediately allude to the inequality of the sexes as well as to her puzzlement over the men's surprise at being limited. Life is also considered in terms of space and numbers, but the latter leave so little scope that it suggests how little Linnet expects from life. She cannot decode the “long mystery” after One either for her age, or for her sex. And yet, ironically, men do not seem to go beyond One, at least if one considers what the male characters do with their lives:

“Why didn't they move, walk, stretch, run ? Each of them seemed to inhabit an invisible square; the square was shared with my desk, my graph, my elastic bands. The contents of the square were tested each morning..... Sometimes one glimpsed another world, like an extra room (“it was my daughter made me lunch today” – said with a shrug, lest it be taken for boasting) or a wish outdistanced, reduced, shrunken, trailing somewhere in the mind: “I often wanted..... “ (HT 246-247).”

The initial question and its asyndeton enhance the lack of scope characteristic of men's lives: the succession of negated and no coordinated verbs of motion reduces their range to virtually nothing. And indeed the next comment defines their world as “an invisible square” whose confines

are reminiscent of nests through the latter's association with primal images" that "bring out the primitiveness" (Bachelard 91) in man. The men's careful checking of their belongings each morning is indeed not far from a bird's feverish struggle to build a perfect nest for itself and its next of kin. The irony, though, lies in the totally selfish character of the endeavour stressed by the italicized first-person possessive pronoun. However an opening seems to lead onto another secret room, one whose existence is immediately denied for fear of revealing one's feelings. Emotions cannot come to the fore as obviously reflected in the meaningless content of the reported speech: it simply reveals an insignificant scene in the life of a supposedly free man. Further confirmation of the negative character attributed to emotions appears in the comparison of this other world to "a wish outdistanced, reduced, shrunken, trailing somewhere in the mind, namely to a microscopic hidden corner of one's heart signaled by the past participles of spatial contraction.

If men lead limited lives, women enjoy even less scope." As Linnet caustically remarks, their opportunities are painfully restricted because of the "obstacles and constraints" hampering them. There is the constricted space "between Zero and One," as marked by the space allocated to them :

"A few girls equipped with rickety typewriters and adding machines sat grouped at the far end of the room, separated from the men by a balustrade. I was the first woman ever permitted to work on

the men's side of the fence. A pigeon among the cats was how it sometimes felt (HT 242)."

The secretaries' remote location in the room and the physical separation between them and the men stress the hopelessness of their banishment. The strikingly short sentence with the reversed cliché stressing the foray into the animal world appropriately conveys Linnet's feeling of entrapment in a world that does not grant women any rights. Further descriptions of their situation in "the darkest part, away from the window" (HT 255) spatially confirm the minimal respect granted them. Linnet resents the separation and equates it to women being "penned in like sheep" (HT 226) or "parked like third-class immigrants" (HT 255) – two phrases proclaiming the spatial constraints imposed on them and her revulsion at their degraded status. Men so deeply resent the uniqueness of Linnet's position "on the men's side of the fence" that they cannot refrain from venting their feelings: she repeatedly hears, "if it hadn't been for the god-damned war we would never have hired even one of the god-damned women" (HT 317). Linnet goes on to disclose that even outside work, "where women were concerned men were satisfied with next to nothing. If every woman was a situation, she was somehow always the same situation, and what was expected from the woman-the situation – was so limited it was insulting" (HT 262). Considering the nonexistent respect for women at work, their humiliating reduction to an abstract concept of

unchanging nature is anything but surprising.

The variations on the theme “a pigeon among the cats” illustrate that there were two races, those who tread on people’s lives, and the others” (HT 244). Thus Linnet’s first appearance at work arouses her male colleagues’ resentment against her presence :

“And so, in an ambience of doubt, apprehension, foreboding, incipient danger, and plain hostility, for the first time in the history of the office a girl was allowed to sit with the men. And it was here, at the desk facing Bertie Knox’s on the only uncomfortable chair in the room, that I felt for the first time that almost palpable atmosphere of sexual curiosity, sexual resentment and sexual fear that the presence of a woman can create where she is not wanted. If part of the resentment vanished when it became clear that I did not know what I was doing, the feeling that women were “trouble” never disappeared. (HT 243-244)”

In this passage, the succession of periodic sentences increases the weight of the final main clauses whose offensiveness echoes the hostile male discourse. As she sits opposite Bertie Knox, the fictional counterpart of John Knox whose teachings established “the divinely ordained superiority of men over women” (Ridley 270), the spatial confrontation takes on a further dimension: religion confirms the inferiority of women and justifies male contempt. The piling up of feelings with overlapping meanings also makes for a tangible perception of the atmosphere, so much so that the reader shudders from resolve the cumulative pinning down of male antagonism to women reinforces its extent, indeed

universalizes it.

Worse still, women discriminate too. Bettered as she is, Mrs. Ireland does not seek support from other women; she makes their situation worse:

“Girl?” She [Mrs Ireland] could never keep her voice down, ever. “There” ll not to be a girl in this office again, if I have a say. Girls make me sick sore, and weary.”

“I thought about that for a long time. I had believed it was only because of the men that girls were parked like third-class immigrants at the far end of the room – the darkest part, away from the windows – with the indignity of being watched by Supervisor, whose sole function was just that. But there, up on the life raft, stepping on girls’ fingers, was Mrs. Ireland, too. If that was so, why didn’t Mrs. Ireland get along with the men, and why did they positively and openly hate her....? (HT 255).”

Mrs. Ireland’s rejection of “girls” (the commonly masculine derogatory term for women) and the double metaphor (“life raft” and “stepping on girls’ fingers”) enhance the secretaries’ hopeless exclusion from professional recognition Mrs. Ireland’s revulsion paralleled with male arrogance only reinforces the abominable reality made palpable through the relegation to obscure and remote areas. The first metaphor concerning Mrs. Ireland’s position “up on the life raft” spatially proclaims the universality of the age-old discrimination - whether women come first or last. The puzzling question as to why the men do not esteem Mrs. Ireland, their equal in intelligence and education – if not their superior - confirms the inequality, indeed poses its

inescapability. As to the second image showing Mrs. Ireland fighting for her own survival, it just confines all the more to women's, not to say "girls", scope for responsible action.

No more welcome than women, children live in a confined atmosphere. Their situation is so undesirable that Linnet sums up her own experiences as those undergone in the "prison of childhood" (HT 225): parents – or rather adults in general - are inflexibly strict with children, as if to punish them for some primeval sin linked with their actual birth.

"Halfway between our two great wars, parents whose own early years had been shaped with Edwardian firmness were apt to lead a tone of finality to quite simple remarks: "Because I say so" was the answer to "Why?," and a child's response to "What did I just tell you?" could seldom be anything but "Not to" - not to say, do, touch, remove, go out, argue, reject, eat, pick up, open, shout, appear to sulk, appear to be cross. Dark riddles filled the corners of life because no enlightenment was thought required. Asking questions was "being tiresome," while persistent curiosity got one nowhere, at least nowhere of interest. (HT 282)."

Translated in visual images, the detached sociological comment on educational methods derides the rigid reality of children's life. No perspective is granted to children; the adults' final retorts allow no opening. Repressive threats and orders mar relations for good, for children cannot be themselves nor move about freely. Any natural instinct has to be curbed: the series of juxtaposed prohibited actions highlights the overwhelming ban on spontaneous reactions. Overpowered, children do not even have a little bright corner to hide in: they

are brought up in total darkness, with no possible escape nor enlightening discovery. Parents' answer to their children's need to know the reason for a decision "seems to speak out of the lights, the stones, the snow; out of the crucial second when inner and outer forces join, and the environment becomes part of the enemy too" (HT 293). Far from abating the children's wretchedness, the spatial analogy and the enmity of outer space exposes their predicament more acutely.

Exiled in the twenties, children cannot aspire to a better position in the forties :

"How much has changed ? Observe the drift of words descending from adult to child – the fall of personal questions, observations, unnecessary instructions, Before long the listener seems blanketed. He must have the voice as authority muffled, a human through snow. The tone has changed – it may be coaxing, even plaintive – but the words have barely altered. They still claim the ancient right-of-way through a young life. (HT 282)"

Invited to participate in the sociological enquiry, the reader soon discovers that adults still use their hierarchical authority (like God's in paradise) to sentence children to life imprisonment. The apposition of drifting words and its asyndeton render the forcefulness with which adults exert their power; interestingly expressed in terms of space (the "drift of words descending" and the "fall of questions"), their control announces further cosmic imagery involving heaven and hell. No longer addressed directly, the reader visualizes, indeed

physically experiences, the “drift of words” as blanketing. The drowned out voice of authority thus aptly evokes an insignificant change: authoritarian vigour has withdrawn in favour of luring and lament. But the content of the discourse remains the same; parental prerogative cannot be done away with – a mocking hint at the universally abusive character of education.

Under the adverse circumstances, children feel miserable. Linnet indirectly reports her own helplessness in the description of the time lapse :

“There was one sunken hour on January afternoons, just before the street lamps were lighted, that was the gray of true wretchedness, as if one’s heart and stomach had turned into the same dull, cottony stuff as the sky; it was attached to a feeling of loss, of helpless sadness, unknown to children in other latitudes. (HT 311)”

Equated with the distressing atmosphere of winter twilight, children’s despair becomes an inescapable fact; the more so as the loose sentence echoes their neglect and the emptiness of their lives; they experience their inner space – “one’s heart and stomach” – as equally revolting as their outer space – “the dull, cottony stuff (of) the sky.” However, the source of Linnet’s injured, indeed repressed, sensitivity, her depressing lot bears fruit. Drop by drop, she filters her emotions as if through “the cottony stuff of the sky,” the spatial symbol of her unhappiness that will eventually engender her art. Her childhood experiences indeed contribute to the

pervading spatial imagery of her stories: her visual rendering of emotions colours the narration of her past anxieties. Another cause for anguish, Linnet's childhood excursions to town with her father are remembered in terms of space:

“These Saturdays have turned into one whitish afternoon, a windless snowfall, a steep street. Two persons descend the street, stepping carefully. The child, reminded every day to keep her hands still gesticulates wildly – there is the flash of a red mitten. I will never overtake this pair. Their voices are lost in snow. (HT 283).”

Memory turns numerous outings into one, assimilating them all with one spatial perception; achromatic, without a breath of air but enough snow to drown voices, it characteristically takes the walkers downward for it recalls unpleasant moments. The red mitten flashing in the white surrounding a striking colour in the otherwise white, thus emotionless, landscape – stresses the child's vitality confirmed by her erratic movements. But this image belongs to the past and cannot be retraced; time has changed the data – the father no longer is; the child has grown into an adult. Their voices, like their figures, are drowned in snow: past events belong to an inaccessible time where spatial and temporal components merge in haziness. The excursions often take the pair to a doctor or a teacher with whom the child stays while the father runs errands or pays visits to friends. The subsequent meetings at the station traumatize the child for fear she should be late and miss both her father and the train. Her dreams after her father's death clearly translate her obsessive anxiety in spatial terms:

“..... after his death, which would not be long in coming, I would dream that someone important had taken a train without me. My route to the meeting place – deviated, betrayed by stopped clocks – was always downhill. As soon as I was old enough to understand from my reading of myths and legends that this journey was a pursuit of darkness, its terminal point a sunless underworld, the dream vanished. (HT 284).”

Darkness, abandonment, deviation, obstacles, declivity, all these dominate Linnet’s dreams and pave the route of childhood, another descent into hell.

Movement is evoked throughout the sequence since Linnet moves back and forth between the past and the present as the shift in tenses implies. Her past experiences – almost forgotten or at least removed from her – weigh on her in such a way that returning home is like embarking on a “journey into a new life and a past dream” (HT 228): movement thus translates her eagerness to plunge into life. She even has “a sensation of loud, ruthless power, like an enormous waterfall. The past, the part (she) would rather not have lived, (becomes) small and remote, a dark pinpoint” (HT 225). Life and its opportunities lie ahead: the energetic spatial simile expresses her hope for a better future. The past and its unpleasant reality disappear: reduced to nought, they cease to have an impact on her “A gate shut on a part of (her) life” (HT 221), she moves on with optimism. Thus in the stream of life with its inevitable hardships, she is heard saying: “Sink or

swim ? Of Course I swam” (226) thereby extending the preceding water imagery with the implicit determination to overcome adversity.

“My life was my own revolution- the tyrants deposed, the constitution wrenched from unwilling hands; I was, all by myself the liberated crowd setting the place on fire; I was the flags, the trees, the bannered windows, the flower-decked trains. The singing and the skyrockets of the 1848 (revolution) I so trustingly believed would emerge out of the war were me, no one but me, and, as in the lyrical first days of any revolution, as in the first days of any love affair, there wasn't the whisper of a voice to tell me, “You might compromise.” (HT 225-226).”

Suggestive of the intense determination with which she fights, the extended metaphor and its spatial components leave no doubt about Linnet's designs. The first section in the enumeration announces her will to change, indeed to purge the country of its despots in charge of wielding antiquated, yet cherished, dogmas. The second one symbolizes the individual character of her enterprise while the third one pays tribute to her freedom, authenticity, openness and evolution. ‘The signing and the skyrockets’ proclaim her acute happiness while the parallel between love and revolution rejects concessions. In short, the passage confirms her firm intention to change things and not to let narrow-minded dicta undermine her self-confidence.

The rigidity with which everything is set comes out even in art. Like other countries with split-up communities, the titles of art works are “identified in two languages” (HT 299), even when they do not call for translation. The physical presence on paper of both titles ridicules the immutable refusal to make an effort, a cold refusal to understand the other group. Unfortunately such limitations take away the poetical breath of any writer:

“I could write without hearing anyone, but poetry was leaving me. It was not an abrupt removal but like a recurring tide whose high-water mark recedes inch by inch. Presently I was deep inland and the sea was gone. (HT 248).”

An echo to the set of rules imposed on journalists flowing from a dried up “intellectual bath” (HT 320-321), the sea imagery aptly conveys Linnet’s progressively declining literary inspiration. It also reverberates with James Joyce’s imagery: inland, poetic inspiration perishes as paralysis prevails; at sea, paralysis is defeated by new, and unconstraining, horizons, Freedom of thought and lyric creativeness can only be restored through the rhythmic rocking of the waves. But originality is not looked for in Canada: Linnet’s audition with Miss Urn, whose name recalls Keats’ ode and its celebration of beauty in static art (Jarrett 177n4), ironically illustrates Canada’s attachment to old values:

“Miss Urn received me in a small room of a dingy office suite on St. Catherine Street. We sat down on opposite sides of a table. I was rendered shy by her bearing, which had a headmistress quality, and perplexed by her acceptance – it was the voice any North American actor will pick up after six months of looking for work in the West End, but I did not know that. (HT 250)”

The small space in which the audition takes place mirrors the narrow mindedness of artistic demand. The location in town reminds the readers of prudish maidens venerating St. Catherine in the hope of finding a husband while the actual street exhibiting sex shops calls for a further comic comparison. The stress put on the spatial opposition that separates Miss Urn and Linnet also marks a contrast in their outlook. Free of taboo and open to novelty, Linnet reads a passage of Thornton Wilder’s *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Her choice of a play then on show in New York is a first offence. That it is a “selfconscious” play, and therefore a challenge, rules it out in the eyes of Miss Urn, who favours Dodie Smith’s unthreatening, cosy family play, *Dear Octopus*. To make matters worse, Linnet on her different wave length misreads the second play as she mistakes it for a parody. Genuine creativity is thus annihilated since bigotry and intolerance control art.

Open-mindedness definitely does not distinguish WASP Canadians. Strictly adhering to British norms, they have also adopted their model’s imperialist attitudes. Whatever is not English is met with contempt and rejection as not “part of

the Empire and the Crown” (HT 245). In a sardonic mood, Linnet defines their insularism in opposition to her parents’ innovative approach:

“This overlapping in one room of French and English, of Catholic and Protestant – my parents’ way of being and so to me life itself-was as unlikely, as unnatural to the Montreal climate as a school of tropical fish. Only later would I discover that most other people simply floated in mossy little ponds labeled “French and Catholic” or “English and Protestant,” never wondering what it might be like to step ashore; perhaps, but weighing up the danger. To be out of a pond is to be in unmapped territory. The earth might be flat; you could fall over the edge quite easily. (HT 305).”

The comparison of bilingual, and at the same time bi-confessional, groups in Montreal to “a school of tropical fish” spatially establishes that the “two tribes (know) nothing whatsoever about each other” (9HT 245). The localization of each community in “mossy little ponds” extends the piscatorial and spatial simile. That they are labeled accordingly merely evidences the local ossification and fear of assimilation. The latter prevents any one of them from edging through the tangles of moss towards the other pond. The previously spatially laden image is further expanded upon in geographical terms. The passage implies that, frightened to be left on their own, they seek the security of the label of the group. Floating rather than following a definite course, the spatial equivalent of “being” rather than “existing” (Sartre 73-102), they cannot possibly consider opening themselves up, for their attachment to the community confers assurance, if not

arrogance, on them and a feeling of superiority recalling their forefathers' when they landed in Canada.

In a country characterized by its “national pigheadedness” (HT 261), outsiders have no access to real citizenship. Immigrants are easy to spot for origins can never be discarded in a society abiding by strict normative rules. Immigrants are so badly received that if a Canadian woman of old stock marries an immigrant she had better keep her maiden name, at least if she wants to succeed professionally. As Linnet explains: “in Canada you (are) also whatever your father (happened) to be, which in my case (is) English” (HT 220). Accents of course can betray one's origins; Linnet herself shows how it functions in Canada:

“I can see every face, hear every syllable, which evoked, for me, a street, a suburb, a kind of schooling. I could just hear out of someone saying to me, “Say, Linnet, couja just gimme a hand here please ?” born here, born in Glasgow; immigrated early, late; raised in Montreal, no, farther west. (HT 239).”

Linnet directs her wit at her own ability to localize people's origins by their accents and to pin them down to a type of education, area or even street. As in all rural and provincial communities, it is of the utmost significance to know if one really belongs, what landmarks one can claim. Once part and parcel of the community, it is essential to safeguard its cohesion and specificity by protecting it against intruders.

To make matters worse some people cultivate their “foreignness.” Linnet remembers her father refusing the process of cultural integration out of pride of his origins, just as many British citizens living in the colonies. And indeed, after years of residence in Canada, this Englishman by birth dies more British than Canadian. But what is true for him should not necessarily hold for his offspring. Nevertheless, owing to the system, Linnet is considered an immigrant on two counts for her return also turns her into a newcomer for those long established. Significantly, at the beginning of “In Youth Is Pleasure,” Linnet reveals that her father’s “death turned [her] life into a helpless migration” (HT 219) a spatial image involving reductive movement. Thus both his birth and death contribute to isolate her from others and to take her on the road paved by outcasts. She ends up “being an outsider in her own home” (Howells 102) for she “(has) neither the wealth nor the influence a provincial society requires to make a passport valid” (HT 232).

Similarly, the remittance man (a Briton banished young for some obscure disgrace) Linnet meets one summer and observes in an attempt to understand her own reality, retains his Britishness till death. Initially cut off from all his ties, he ends up totally isolated for he “was raised to behave well in situations that might never occur, trained to become a genteel poor on continents where even the concept of genteel poverty never existed” (HT 269). To her, he is “a curio cabinet” (HT 275) from which she takes everything out “piece by piece,

[examines] the objects [and sets] them down” (HT 275) once she has understood what it contains. She points out that remittance men are “like children, perpetually on their way to a harsh school.... [who are] sent ‘home’ to childhoods of secret grieving among strangers” (HT 269). This spatial metaphor curiously echoes her own experience : she was sent to a convent at the age of four “where Jansenist discipline still had a foot on the neck of the twentieth century and where, as an added enchantment, (she) was certain not to hear a word of English” (HT 299; emphasis added). She too was totally cut off from her milieu and had to live by the rules of a world she could not relate to. Like the remittance man who “would never live in England, not as it is now” (HT 275) she feels “apart from everyone, isolated” (HT 280). So when she hears that he died during the war she rejoices that he will never “be forced to relive his own past” (HT 280). One inevitably wonders how he could for he had no identity, therefore no past can be ascribed to him. This is made explicit when Linnet discovers the story she once wrote (although she does not remember when) about the remittance man’s mysterious friend –“ a man from somewhere living elsewhere” (HT 281). He is thus positively different from the remittance man – but also, as the vague localizers imply, a fiction, an abstraction without real substance, indeed a man from nowhere living nowhere. The other immigrants she meets are equally trapped. They try to integrate by applying for citizenship, changing their names and

eating cornflakes, but in vain. At any time, they may be reminded of their alien origins: they cannot shun the effects of xenophobia.

To escape from such a stifling and incomprehensible atmosphere, Linnet turns to writing. “Anything (she cannot) decipher (she turns) into fiction, which (is) a way of untangling knots” (HT 261), the complex knots of her identity. To the reader’s delight her suffering is transformed into art, the art revealed in the stories she casually narrates and defines through an extended spatial metaphor: “every day is a new parcel one unwraps, layer on layer of tissue paper covering bits of crystal, scraps of words in a foreign language, pure white stones” (HT 248). She filters, drop by drop, her recollections and reveals the jewels of her art. The reader follows her meandering path as she is looking for herself in others and opening the secret drawer of one character after another. But soon she is seen shutting it again promptly: she feels that she should not “(look) inside a drawer that (does) not belong to (her)” (HT 234), nor “(put) life through a sieve” (HT 281). Why she should not is in fact echoed by her recognition of the local smallness, the limits of an art bred by suggestions and inhibitions, and her latent awareness concerning her own self. Once she has grasped the emptiness of the immigrants’ reality she is no longer interested in them because they can teach her nothing new.

By then no one can serve her as a model to understand who or what she really is; she is another, different from others. For throughout her quest, she intuitively senses that in the end she will only find “another variety of exile” (HT 281).

Estranged within her family, her hometown, her country, her sole remedy is writing. Generated by her need to understand herself and anchored in her re-discovery of her native Montreal, her prose eventually discloses the multiple facets of her culture. It emerges from the three layers of memory and historical time involved in her narration: twice removed from her childhood, Linnet, the narrator, looks back on the memories of her childhood as a teenager. This contributes to the detachment with which she can extract the numerous components of Canadian culture whose spatial reflection plays an important role in delineating local limitations. Concerned with aspects of the three dimensions, the spatial polarities used divide the world essentially into high and low, up and down, above and below or beneath, leaving those related to length and width in the background, with sometimes a reference to lengthy routes or processes. The up/down polarity and its related expressions evoke images of survival and decline and as such enhance the cultural pressures. Often linked with Linnet’s attitude, to life, the concept “up” and its equivalents by and large imply endurance and vital force or refer to an imaginary or utopian reality, whereas the concept “down” and its corresponding phrases,

associated with obtuse behaviour and drabness, point to dissolution and annihilation. Movement contrasts mobility with immobility, going up with going down, floating with drowning, ascending with falling. Lack of movement is characteristic of restrained Canadians, while movement and water imagery stress Linnet's free response and willingness to live unhampered. Similarly, colours typify Linnet's lively and affective response, so that the achromatic black, white and grey seem to invade the landscape of emotional repression. Finally, Gallantian polarities involving measures and proportions comprise oppositions such as exiguous and vast, small and big, narrow and wide, close and far, limited and limitless, enclosed and open, fenced-in and unfenced. Contrary to the first concept of this binary opposition evidencing the local constriction and narrow-mindedness, the second concept reinforces Linnet's desire to question dogmas, to live freely and fully. In short, the positive polarity of each spatial binary opposition refers to either Linnet's desire to keep body and soul together or to an imaginary / utopian reality; on the other hand, the negative one emphasizes either the latter's real dull counterpart or Linnet's fellow citizens' compliance with the local intolerance. It thus appears from the spatial imagery that any group, be it social, political, religious or linguistic, refuses to accept any intrusion, let alone admit the worth of a custom, attitude or belief different from the age-old approved norm. Gallant's consistent use of spatial polarities

tinged with irony confirms that what she explained about Montreal in an interview holds for her fictional Canada at large. “All those small words of race and language and religion and class, all shut away from one another, a series of airtight compartments” (Hancock 25). Enslaved by their blind obedience to social and religious rules, Gallant’s Canadians can neither live nor let live. Those with scope, flee from the place, as Mavis Gallant herself did in her twenties; the others stay behind and succumb to the weight of obligations and frustration. Their deep-rooted refrain and repression inherited from the first immigrants hamper communication and estranges them from themselves. Irreversibly inhibited, they have no future ahead: their bleak lives and their disappointing perspectives offer no outlet nor compensation. In the end, the spatial and achromatic illustration of the dryness, isolation and displacement at the heart of Gallant’s Canadian experience derisively appears in all its oppressive and alienating reality.

Notes & References :

- * Bieler, Zoe
Montreal Star, 30 Aug. 1955. p.26
"Visiting Author Finds Montreal Changed in last Five Years"
- * Campbell, Francean
Montreal Star, 26 Sept. 1970. p.17
"Meet Mavis Gallant, Maybe"
- * George Woodcock, *The World of Canadian Writing* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1980) 18.
Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 235.
- * Geoff Hancock, ed., *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No.28 (1978), special Gallant issue.
Ibid., 20.
Ibid., 21.
Ibid., 24.
Ibid., 31.
Ibid., 31.
- * Grazia Merler, *Mavis Gallant : Narrative Patterns and Devices* (Ottawa : Tecumseh, 1978)
- * Gallant, Mavis, *Home Truths : Scelected Canadian Stories*. Laurentian Library 71, toronto : Macmillan, 1981
- * Hancock, geoffrey. *"An Interview with Mavis Gallant"* *Canadian Fiction Magazine* No.28 (1978): 18-67
- * Howells, Coral An. *Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s*. London: Methuen, 1987.

- Intrett, Mary. "The presentation of Montreal in Mavis Gallant's 'Between Zero and One' and of Toronto in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*." *Canadian Studies (Talence)* 29 (1990): 173-181
- Knox, John. *The Works of John Knox*. Ed. David Laing. 4 vols. Edinburgh: Bannatyne.
- * Interviews With Mavis Gallant
Two CBC Interviews one with Earle Beattie for Athology (May 24, 1969) and *one with Fletcher Markle for Telescope* (January 22 and 29, 1969).
- * Janeway, Elizabeth
New York Times Book Review, 3 Oct. 1971. pp. 4.42
Review of The Affair of Gabrielle Russier
- * Kulyk Keefer, Janice. *Reading Mavis Gallant*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Lotman, Jurij. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan Slavic Contributions, 1977,
- * Layton Avia
Montreal Star, 9 June 1973 p.34
Review of The Pegnitz Junction
- * Levy, Barbara
Saturday Review, 25 Sept. 1971. p.50
Review of The Affair of Gabrielle Russier
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
 Ibid., 82.

Ibid., 118.

- * New York times Book Review, 7 June 1970 pp. 5, 34
Review of "A Fairly Good Time".
- * Pendergast, Constance
Saturday Review. 17 Oct. 1959 p.19
Review of Green Water, Green Sky
- * Ronald Hatch, Review, *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No. 34 -
35 (1980), pp. 172-74.
- * Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley
(New York : Vintage, 1974) XVI.
Ibid., 267.
- * Schaub, Danielle. "*Mavis Gallant's Montreal: A Harbour
for Immigrants ?*" *Canadian Studies (Talence)* 29 (1990) :
195-201.
- * "Squeezed '*Between Zero and One*' : Feminine Space in
Mavis Gallant's *Home Truths*" *Recherches anglaises et.
americaines* 22 (1989) : 53-59
- * Toril Moi, *Feminist Theory and Simon de Beauvoir*
(Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1990)3.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Chapter - V Conclusion

This thesis undertook analysis of the fiction of Mavis Gallant from the postmodern perspective. It is quite obvious from the first introductory chapter that Mavis Gallant, though a Canadian writer, born and brought up in Canada, had left Canada in 1950, and since then led the life of an expatriate writer, moving in the European countries, examining the life of the people of different nationalities rendered rootless after the Second World War. She herself is, in a way, rootless by her own choice. But this has enabled her to observe and record the life of a great variety of these people estranged from their countries, their families and even their language and culture. What therefore, characterizes Mavis Gallant as a postmodernist writer is her being a complete expatriate and the absence in her of any nationalistic spirit as such Canadian characters do appear in her fiction, and some of her stories have Canadian background, but she is much more an internationalist than a Canadian writer. The problems she deals with relate to the people who are displaced on account of Second World War. They are quite a mixed lot, the British, the German, the French, etc.

The stories and novellas of Mavis Gallant explore the physical realities and the emotional problems of men and women, who have to make adjustments and compromises in a foreign land with foreign people and their ways of living. The

stories like *'Acceptance of Their Ways'*, *'The Other Paris'*, *'The Picnic'*, *'An unmarried Man's Summer'*, etc. demonstrate how lonely, frustrated, and pathetic life these people live, and at the same time try to retain their national identity and their language. Their alienation has been the major theme in Gallant's fiction. In "*Green Water, Green Sky*", for example, Bonnie, the woman under forty, wanders from one city to the other in Europe, with her little daughter. In "*A Fairly Good Time*", the protagonist, Shirley Higgins, a widow, is stranded in Europe, marries second time, and is stranded again in Paris, because her husband leaves her on account of the respectability of his family. All Gallant's characters are thus fragmented, alienated, running around seeking happiness that eludes them. This is typical postmodern condition they live in, being rootless and without identity. Mrs. Freeport, in *'Acceptance of Their Ways'*, is stranded in Italy, but could not stand her life in Italy without the sound of English, so she keeps Lily as a paying guest, who can speak some kind of English. And Lily has to stay with Mrs. Freeport because she cannot get a cheaper establishment around.

The stories and novellas of Gallant are largely realistic, showing sharp observation of action, speech and setting. Yet she appears mostly to explore memory either through the narration or dialogues, leading to the use of multiple points of view, which creates an impression of the story extending

beyond the present. This gives a new dimension to her handling of realism in her fiction. The story of Walter, for example, in '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*' is narrated through the flashes of memory, flitting from the present to the past, and again from the past to the present. Her Linnet Muir stories also draw on the deep immersion into the memory of the narrator. However, this device of exploring memory has limited function, which is a departure from the accustomed manner of the experimental novel.

Gallant has made use of the device of psychic membrane, a sort of telepathy, in her novella '*The Pegnitz Junction*', which is perhaps the most experimental of her fiction. The protagonist, Christine, becomes a psychic medium, and is able to exchange messages with the fellow travelers in the train. Yet another post-modernistic element in Gallant's fiction is her subversion of the prevailing values and conventions. She interrogates everything that is assumed and taken for granted. Post-modern writers normally take an ex-centric position from which to critique the dominant culture, and Gallant, as an outsider, an expatriate, is in a position to be a detached observer, to subvert the traditional practices and beliefs. She occupies the position at the margin, like her country, Canada, at the margin in the international field

Apparently, Gallant's stories are like reportorial or documentary kind of narrations. They are full of details of the

people and places, of the household things, etc. In her Linnet Muir stories, for example, such detailing is so strong that they appear more essays than stories. However, this realistic setting is juxtaposed with the memory of the past shaping the stories. In '*The Other Paris*', the memories of Carol Frazier organize the story by juxtaposing the Paris of her dreams with the other historical Paris. And in the story, '*In Youth is Pleasure*', Linnet Muir's childhood inventions and memory become part of the realistic setting. Gallant's realism is thus mixed with the stream of the consciousness of the past, but Gallant takes care that the memories of the characters in her stories are selectively creative, they shape the form of the stories.

Mavis Gallant is an ironist in her own way. Her irony is directed especially at the men in the expatriate families, who are grossly commercial and insensitive like, for example, Howard in '*The Other Paris*', Major Marshall in '*The Picnic*', who pathetically tries to create a show of unity between the American army and the native French, by arranging a picnic. He is induced to do it on account of the suggestion of two female research workers, who tell the American General that a picnic would be a symbol of unity between the two nations. In the story, '*My Heart Is Broken*', Jeannie dresses up for an evening walk, as she says, putting on a hat, and applying the scent, the Evening in Paris. She takes the road through the

bush. She later reports that she is raped. But, ironically, her complaint is about the man who does not like her at all. She would not have minded the rape if he had liked her, but he did not, and this had broken her heart.

In the story '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*'. Gallant ironically shows the disparity between expectations and reality. Walter, in this story, thinks that his sister's arrival would reduce his tedious life in the summer season. However, his sister keeps him nagging and criticizing whatever he does, while her husband, Walter's brother-in-law, is unmannerly and boring company for him. Later on, at the end of the summer, the rich ladies come back, and Walter tells them amusing stories of his adventures, but the ladies who listen to him are actually deep in the memory of their young lover killed in war, or the son who has left them. Walter's life is full of such empty relationships, which Gallant illustrates with ironic details.

The post-modernistic atmosphere is built up in the stories through the stories of isolation, self-delusion and very low or almost non-existent communication between characters. The characters, who are exiled from their countries, find it difficult to belong in the foreign societies and their culture. In '*The Picnic*', for instance, there is the clash of cultures between the French towns people and the Americans. The American, Mrs. Marshall, feels the company of the French landlady, Madame Pegurin to be a threat to the upbringing of her children.

But, the children, on the other hand, are attracted towards the Madame, who herself has troubles with the Americans. The tenants, the Gould family, imposed on her, and their hoodlum children are a great nuisance to her quiet life. The Americans, who are stranded in Europe for one reason or the other, are disliked by the native people. The Americans in the story '*A Day Like any Other*', are there for economic reasons, and live their life from day to day in boredom. The worst sufferers are the children, who have to move with the parents, and who are confused on account of this peripatetic life. In '*The Other Paris*', Carol, who nurses dreams about Paris, is disillusioned by the drab life of the suburban Paris full of squalor and poverty. She is married to Howard, an American Economist, who is impervious to the rains, the sunshine, the beauty of the other Paris that Carol has in her dreams. Gallant, thus juxtaposes illusion and reality, expectations and the real life around. In the story, '*Going Ashore*', twelve year old Emina is also very unhappy with moving from place to place on a luxury liner, and dreams of new land, new clean dresses, and new life after reaching the solid ground and a welcoming haven.

The locales and the people in Gallant's fiction are a mixed lot, belonging to different nationalities and culture, different social and economic strata and differing in their manners and morals. They are a heterogeneous community,

a typically post-modernistic set-up in which people seem to live transient kind of life. They are on the move looking forward to go back to their country. The feeling of being stranded pervades their lives. In her stories such as '*Acceptance of Their Ways*' and '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*', Gallant portays the truncated lives of people in the French Riviera. The women in her stories appear to live very constrained kind of life in this backwater area where the pre-war life style still exists. Lily, who is a sort of paying guest in the family of two gentlewomen, in '*Acceptance of Their Ways*', is bored with these women, whose only pastime is to bicker over food and some insignificant details of their daily life. Lily has to accept their way of life, making a show enjoying their company. In the other story, '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*', the existence of Walters depends on a *meager* pension, and his stay in the house is threatened by the owners of the house coming up any time. There is anxiety and uncertainty in the air.

Pain and dislocation, indeterminate conditions of living, children being estranged from their parents, separation and longing are the aspects of the life of people in Gallant's fiction. For example, the stories such as '*The Prodigal Parent*', and the '*Wedding Ring*', present the life of the children separated from their parents. In the '*Wedding Ring*' the narrator is a child, who tells us that the graves of her parents were her only property. The mother, herself as a child, felt divorced from

the landscape as her parents were divorced, and she too was an estranged child. These estranged children, thrown together, do not care for each other, nor do they feel for their parents. In '*The Prodigal Parent*', the daughter, Rhoda, is reluctant to give shelter to her old ailing father.

Another element of post-modernism in Gallant's stories is her modification of the traditional genre of realistic fiction, making use of devices such as mapping the past into the present or in other worlds, memory mapping. In '*The Pegnitz Junction*' she uses magical realism, investing a magical power in the central character, Christine, who can enter the heads of other fellow passengers and of the people seen and met at the stations. The novel is like a strange collage of the inner thoughts of several characters, mostly the Germans. The Norwegian yogic practitioner, the elderly woman eating something all the time, the American army-wife running along the train, everyone had a running stream of memories of war, of being alien prisoners, and so on. Christine's mind is the receptacle of all their thoughts, intermittently, registering in her mind. Christine's lover, Herbert, also plays this mind game, telling Christine that he has folded and sealed his imaginary letter of protest about the train and was mailing it in his head to newspapers in Frankfurt, etc. Christine keeps reading the thoughts in the mind of a scarred foreigner looking for a grave, the curator upset over the headline in the newspaper, vilifying

the German women. In the train at Pegnitz, Christine still gets vibrations of the inner thoughts of the American Girl looking for a bus to Pottenstein, and addressing someone called 'Ken'. The German woman carrying smack narrates how she narrowly escaped by hiding it under the conveyor belt. Christine reads her mental agitations. Even Herbert, sitting in the train keeps thinking of his wife separated from him, who threatened him and exploited him for money. The trip via Pegnitz Junction is thus Christine's journey through the mind-scape of the passengers in the train and at the station.

In the story, '*From the Fifteenth District*', Gallant uses another magic-realist theme of a ghost haunting others and also itself being haunted by the living beings. The narration is a flat documentary kind of narration. The ghost of Major Emery Travella, killed while defusing a bomb, complains that he is haunted by the entire congregation of St. Michael church. The complaint is lodged with the police. Another ghost, of Mrs. Ibrahim, a thirty seven year old man and a mother of twelve children, complains that she is haunted by Dr. Chalmeton and by Miss. Alicia Fohrenbach, social investigator, who try to seek approval for their versions of her death. The stories are a satire on the bureaucratic investigation.

Most of the stories and novellas written by Gallant deal with the impact of the war on woman, the survivors of the war, and the victims of the postwar conditions. Some of these

stories also show the downfall of the male of the pre-war times, giving place to the younger generation, who are more adaptable to the postwar social conditions. The men and women have changed their values and have become opportunistic, like Barbara, Carmela and Netta in '*The Four Seasons*', '*The Remission*', and '*The Moslem Wife*'. Barbara, Alec's wife, changes her loyalty to Eric, who is also opportunistic like her. The postwar world is harsher and signals the end of the old time values and the sense of family responsibility.

In some of her stories, Gallant has portrayed people whose pasts have been mentally and even physically obliterated. They are the exiles not just from their countries but even from themselves. This one can say, is the extreme post-modern condition for them. For example, a girl named Bibi in the story '*An Alien Flower*', who comes to Germany as a refugee from Silesia, has lost her past, She never talks about her family. Bibi appears to be a pet name given to her by some member of her family, the father or the mother, but she does not know who. She is utterly alone, no friends, no childhood memory, no past. In the story, '*The Old Friends*', the police commissioner cannot deny the horrible experiences forced on a girl child, who is now an actress, Helena. He desperately wants to forget this past. He would like to forget his being a German. He pretends that the prisoner camps in Poland were not at all the German prisoner camps, as they

were on the Polish land, blissfully forgetting that Poland was the occupied by Germany. There are characters such as Thomas Bestermann, in '*The Latehomecomer*' who are in search of their past. Bestermann comes across a man named Willy Wehler, who is a miraculous survivor of the Nazi age, whose advice to everyone was to 'forget, forget everything'. This aversion to the past is a typical aspect of Gallant's German stories.

Gallant does not call herself a feminist writer, but her feminist leanings often become apparent in her fiction as well as in her non-fiction. In her book, '*The Affair of Gabrielle Russier* (1971), is in a way, a document for women's liberation, in which she criticizes the Latin attitude towards men and women. She points out how it is discriminatory and unjust to women. A womanizer like Don Juan is admired while a woman like Gabrielle is condemned as a whore, and a pervert, a disgrace to womanhood. This is typical of a patriarchal society, in which men enjoy freedom of sexual relationship while women are restrained by an old moral code. In her stories Gallant mainly presents the portraits of the life of the expatriates, with pity and sadness and sometimes with amusement and affection. In her fiction, the women in the postwar society show their independence in sexual relationship as well as in the family matters. In the story, '*The Moslem Wife*', the protagonist, Netta, realizes the difference between the male and the female

attitude to sex. She realizes the sex and love have nothing in common, only a coincidence sometimes. The men are born knowing this and women learn it by accident. In her story, '*The Other Paris*', the protagonist, Carol, has a vision of love through the example of Odile and Felix, who love each other despite Felix being a parasite and Odile, a silly, immoral and old woman, who shared a small dingy room in the slum of Paris. And yet Odile and Felix are able to experience love, which Carol craves for.

Some critics do not consider Mavis Gallant to be a postmodernist writer pointing out that the elements like intertextuality are found even in *Paradise Lost* and *Prelude*. However, intertextuality is not the only post-modernistic element in Gallant's fiction. Her internationalism, the subversion of the genre of the realistic fiction making use of the elements of fantasy or magic-realism in her fiction, her use of multiple points of view in her narration, the device of telepathy, the very post-modern condition of her characters, their search for identity, etc. are enough to characterize her as a post-modernist writer. The characters in her fiction are rootless, in search of identity. They are either on the move or under the threat of being displaced again in the foreign land where they are unwanted. They feel culturally dislocated and divided, nursing prejudices for being British Canadians or French Canadians or Americans, etc. Gallant's stories present

characters, who feel alienated, who make pathetic efforts to belong to the foreign land, its culture and the environment. For example, the story '*About Geneva*' deals with the psychic distance between generations and the anxiety created by the loss of traditional codes of conduct. If displacement and lack of centrality are a part of the post-modern condition, the fiction of Gallant presents characters, who feel exiled not only from their land but also from their past and their identity. They try to hide from their past and become more vulnerable. They live the life of people at the margins. Whether in Europe or America or even in Canada they feel alienated, because in Canada, the Canadians do not appear to feel ethnic unity. Naturally, their split sense of identity is reflected in the fiction of the writers like Mavis Gallant. Themes of oppression and exile recur in her fiction. In some of her stories, such as '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*', she juxtaposes reality with romantic expectations, showing inconsistency in the life of the characters.

Mavis Gallant does not claim to be a feminist writer. A literary artist does not write keeping in mind any ideological frame-work. Yet, as a sensitive writer, she is aware of the plight of women in general in the expatriate communities, and portray issues related to the life of women in these communities. She deconstructs the patriarchal family code, the male attitude to women, and parodies the British as well

as American and Canadian expatriates stationed in the European countries.

I do not claim that this thesis has done justice to the analysis of Gallant's fiction. Apart from her postmodernist and feminist leanings, Gallant's fiction should be studied for its use of style, narrative technique, and the use of shifting points of view. A sociocultural study of the life of the expatriates in the post war European countries can also be undertaken.

Notes & References :

- * *A Broken Dialogue: History and Memory in Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction*, Essays on Canadian Writing, No.33 (Fall 1986), pp. 89-99)
- * *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978)
- * Constance Rooke has written specifically on "Irina" in an essay in *Writers in Aspice* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1988).
- * *Children of Wars: A Discussion of From the Fifteenth District* by Mavis Gallant', Commonwealth IX, No.1 (1986), pp. 112-120)
- * Coral Ann Howells, 'Mavis Gallant: *Home Truths*' in *Private and Fictional Worlds: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s* (London: Methuen, 1987) pp. 89-105;
- * *Contemporary Canadian Stories*
Toronto : Methuen, 1982.
- * Donald Jewison, 'Speaking of Mirrors: Imagery and Narration in Two Novellas by Mavis Gallant' *Studies in Canadian Literature* X, Nos. 1-2 (1985), pp. 94-109
- * *From the Fifteenth District : A Novella and Eight Short Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979); *Home Truths; Selected Canadian Stories* (Toronto:
- * Gallant's *Paris Notebooks : Essays & Reviews* (Toronto : Macmillan 1986
- * Interview with Mavis Gallant, by Debra Martens, appears in *So To Speak : Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1987).
- * Janice Kulyk keeper, 'Strange Fashions of Forsaking; Criticism and the Fiction of Mavis Gallant', Dalhousie

Review, LVIV, No.4 (Winter 1984-85) pp. 721-735.

- * Kulyk Keefer in her book *Reading Mavis Gallant* (Don Mills ON : Oxford University Press, 1989).
- * Leet, Herbert
Library Journal, 1 April 1956 p. 832
- * Merler's Mavis Gallant: *Narrative Patterns and Devices* (Ottawa: Tecumesch Press, 1978)
- * *Mavis Gallant's World of Women: A Feminist Perspective*, Atlantis, X, No.2 (Spring 1985), pp.11-29.
Special issue of Canadian Fiction Magazine on Mavis Gallant (No. 28, 1978)
- * *My heart is Broken* : Eight Stories and a Short Novel (New York : Random House, 1964)
- * Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction: *History and Memory in the Light of Imagination*. Univ. of British Columbia, Press 1983.
- * Mac Manus, Patricia
New York Times Book Review, 1 Nov. 1959. p.41.
- * Neil K. Besuer in his book *The Light of Imagination : Mavis Gallant's Fiction* (Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- * Peden, William
New York Times Book Review, 26 Feb. 1956. p. 28
- * Ronald Hatch's articles *Mavis gallant: Returning Home*, Atlantis, No.4(Fall 1978), pp. 95-102 and "*Mavis Gallant and the Expatriate Character*."
- * *Reading Mavis Gallant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989).

- * Reppoport, Janis
Globe and Mail, 7 June 1973. p.31
Review of *The Pegnitz Junction*.
- * Rascoe Judith
Christian Science Monitor, 4 June 1970. p.7.
- * *The Light of Imagination : Mavis Galant's Fiction*,
(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- * *The Other Paris; Stories* (Cambridge, Mass : Houghtop
Mifflin, 1956);
- * Taubmann, Robert
New Statesman, 3 sept. 1965. p.329
- * *The Pegnitz: Junction : A Novella and Five Short Stories*
(New York : Random House, 1973) *The End of the World
and Other Stories*, New Canadian Library No.91 (Toronto:
McClelland and Stewart, 1974);
- * *Waugh, Patrician Metafiction : The Theory and Practice
of Self-Conscious Fiction. London : Routledge (New
Accents), 1984.*
- * Wright, Paul
Montreal Star, 26 Sept. 1970. p.17,
Review of *A Fairly Good Time*

Select Bibliography

[This list includes all works mentioned in this study and some others that I found useful but had no opportunity to cite directly. Bibliographical particulars, whatever they occur, indicate particulars of the editions referred to in this study.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY :

Primary Sources :

Novellas and Collections of Short Stories :

Gallant, Mavis, *The Other Paris*, Houghton Mifflin :
Cambridge, 1956.

_____ *Green Water Green Sky*, Houghton Mifflin :
Cambridge, 1959.

_____ *Its Image On the Mirror*, Random House : New
York, 1956.

_____ *My Heart is Broken*, Random House :
New York 1964

_____ *A Fairly Good Time*, Random House :
New York 1970

_____ *The Pegnitz junction* Random House :
New York, 1973

_____ *From The Fifteenth District* Random House :
New York 1973

_____ *The End of the World and Other Stories*,
McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974.

_____ *Home Truths*, random House
New York 1981

_____ *Overhead in a Balloon* : Stories of Paris,
McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1985

Secondary Sources :

- * Abrams, M. H. A. *Glossary of Literary Terms*, New Delhi; Harcourt India Pvt. Ltd., 1999
- * Ammons, Elizabeth, Trudier Harris, Ann Kibbey, Amy Ling, Janic Radway. ed. *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- * Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Models: Feminism and Early Modernism*. London: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- * Atwood Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972.
- * Ayre, John Saturday Night, Sept. 1973 p.33-36. "The Sophisticated World of Mavis Gallant"
- * Auchincloss, Eve
New York Review of Books, 25 June 1964. pp. 17-18
- * *A Broken Dialogue: history and Memory in Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction*, Essays on Canadian Writing, No.33 (Fall 1986), pp. 89-99)
- * Bieler, Zoe
Montreal Star, 30 Aug. 1955. p.26
"Visiting Author Finds Montreal Changed in last Five Years"
- * Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.

- * Beauvoir, Simon de. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage, 1997.
- * Benstock, Shari, *Textualising the Feminine: On the Limits of Genre*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- * Bowering, George. "A Great Northward Darkness: The Attack on History in Recent Canadian Fiction". *Imaginary Hand: Essays by George Bowering*. Vol. 1, The Writer and The Critic Series. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1988.
- * Campbell, Francean
Montreal Star, 26 Sept. 1970. p.17
"Meet Mavis Gallant, Maybe"
- * Cassill, R.V.
Book World, 31 May 1970. p.5 Review of *A Fairly Good Time*
- * Corke, Hiliary
Listener, 19 Aug. 1965. p. 281
Review of 'An Unmarried Man's Summer'
- * *Canadian Fiction magazine* 28 (1978) (special Gallant issue): 18-67.

Introduction, Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories. By Mavis Gallant. Toronto: Mavmillan, 1981. xi-xxii.
- * Constance Rooke has written specifically on "Irina" in an essay in *Writers in Aspice* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1988).
- * Coral Ann Howells, 'Mavis Gallant: Home Truths' in *Private and Fictional Worlds: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s* (London: Methuen, 1987) pp. 89-105;

Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction: *History and Memory in the Light of Imagination*'. Diss. Univ. of British Columbia, 1983.

- * *Contemporary Canadian Stories*
Toronto : Methuen, 1982.
- * Cameron, Deborah. *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*.
London: Macmillan. 1985.
- * Chodorow, Nancy. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*.
New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- * Cott. Nancy F. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*.
London: Yale University Press, 1987.
- * Cranny-Francis, Anne. *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses
of Generic Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
- * Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism,
Linguistics and The Study of Literature*. New York: Cornel
University Press, 1975.
- * *Children of Wars: A Discussion of From the Fifteenth
District by Mavis Gallant*', Commonwealth IX, No.1 (1986),
pp. 112-120)
- * Davey, Frank. *From There to Here: A Guide to English-
Canadian Literature, Since 1960*. Erin: P. Porcepic, 1975.
*Surviving The Paraphrase: Eleven Essays on Canadian
Literature*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1984.
- * Donald Hatch's articles *Mavis Gallant: Returning Home*',
Atlantis, No.4(Fall 1978), pp. 95-102 and "*Mavis Gallant
and the Expatriate Character*."

- * Donald Jewison, 'Speaking of Mirrors: Imagery and Narration in Two Novellas by Mavis Gallant' *Studies in Canadian Literature* X, Nos. 1-2 (1985), pp. 94-109
- * Dobbs, Kildaire
Toronto Star. 2 June 1973. p. 73
review of *The Pegnitz Junction*
- * Dinnerstein, Dorothy. *The Mermaid and Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. New York: Harper Colophone Books, 1977.
- * Eco, Umberto. "Overinterpreting Texts", *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1992.
- * Eicher. Terry and Jesse D. Geller. ed. *Fathers and Daughters: Portraits in Fiction*. New York; Penguin Books, 1991.

The Encyclopediad Americana. New York: Americana Corporation, 1963.

The World Book Encyclopediad - World Book International. London: 1997.
- * Fulford, Robet
Maclean's 5 Sept. 1964. p.45
This review of "My Heart Is Broken",
- * Feld Rose
Saturday Review, 25 Feb. 1956. p. 17
Review of "The Other Paris"

- * Gabriel, Barbara, "*Fairly Good Times: An Interview with Mavis Gallant.*" Canadian Forum Feb. 1987:23-27.
- * Gallant, Mavis. "*An Interview with Mavis Gallant*". With Geoff Hancock.
- * Grazia Merler cited "*A Wonderful Country*" (Gallant's only story to appear in 'The Montreal Standard', 1946) as a newspaper article (Grazia Merler, *Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices* [Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1978]); (*Memory, Imagination, Arrifice: The Late Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant*, "Canadian Fiction Magazine, No. 28, [1978], p-75).
- * Geoff Hancock, "*An Interview With mavis Gallant,*" Canadian Fiction Magazine, No.28(1978), p-45.
"Its Image on the Mirror," in *My Heart Is Broken* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 57-155.
"The Cost of Living," in 'My Heart Is Broken', pp. 157-93.
 All further references to this work appear in the text.
- * Gill Brendan
 New Yorker, 19 Sept. 1970. pp. 132 - 133
Review of "A Fairly Good Time"
- * Gallant, Mavis, *Home Truths : Scelected Canadian Stories*. Laurentian Library 71, toronto : Macmillan, 1981
- * *Gallant's Paris Notebooks : Essays & Reviews* (Toronto : Macmillan 1986

- * Gadpaille, Michelle. *The Canadian Short Story*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- * Gallop, Jane. *The Daughter's Selection: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- * Gelfant, Blanche H. *Women Writing in America: Voices in College*. London: Press of New England, 1984.
- * Gerrav, Nicci. "Feminist Justification Tragedies", *Women, Knowledge, and Reality : Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*. ed. Ann Garny and Marilyn Pearsall Boston Uniwinhyman, 1989.
- * Godard, Barbara. *Audrey Thomas and her Works*, Toronto : ECW Press, 1989.
- * Gorsky, Susan Rubinow. *Femininity To Feminism: Women and Literature in Nineteenth Century*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- * Greene, Gayle. *Changing The Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- * Greiner, Donald J. *Women without Men: Female Bonding and the American Novel of the 1980s*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.
- * Groden, Michael and Martin Kreiswith. *The John's Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, London: The John's Hopkins Univesity Press, 1994.
- * Guerin, Wilfred L., et. al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, New York : Oxford University Presss, 1999.
- * Hancock, geoffrey. "An Interview with Mavis Gallant
"Canadian Fiction Magazine No.28 (1978): 18-67

- * Howells, Coral An. *Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- * Hanson, Clare, *Short Stories and Short Fictions, 1880-1980*. New York. St. Martin's Press, 1985.
- * Harris, Wendell V., ed. *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- * Head, Dominic. *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- * Hills, Rust. *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular: An Informal Textbook*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977.
- * Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother / Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- * Hite, Molly. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*. London: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- * Holman, C. Hugh. *A Handbook to Literature*. IV ed., Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980.
- * Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, Boston: South End Press, 1984.

- * Humm, Maggie. *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990.
- * Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London : Routledge, 1988.

The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- * Irvine, Lorna. *Subversion: Canadian Fictions by Women*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1986.
- * Intrett, Mary. "The presentation of Montreal in Mavis Gallant's 'Between Zero and One' and of Toronto in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*." *Canadian Studies (Talence)* 29 (1990): 173-181
- * *Interview with Mavis Gallant*, by Debra Martens, appears in *So To speak : Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1987).
- * Janeway, Elizabeth
Saturday Review, 18 April 1964 pp. 45-46.
Review of "My Heart Is Broken".
New York times Book Review, 7 June 1970 pp. 5, 34
Review of "A Fairly Good Time".
- * Jennings, Elizabeth
Listener, 18 Aug. 1960. p. 273.
Review of 'Green Water, Green Sky'.

- * Johnson, Sydney
Montreal Star, 24 Oct. 1959. p.30
"Four Gallant Studies"
- * Janeway, Elizabeth
New York Times Book Review, 3 Oct. 1971. pp. 4.42
Review of The Affair of Gabrielle Russier
- * Janice Kulyk keefer, '*Strange Fashions of Forsaking; Criticism and the Fiction of Mavis Gallant*', Dalhousie Review, LVIV, No.4 (Winter 1984-85) pp. 721-735.
Mavis Gallant's World of Women: A Eeminist Perspective, *Atlantis*, X, No.2 (Spring 1985), pp.11-29.
- * Jacobus, Mary. *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- * James, Jancy. "*Canadian Paradigms of Postmodern Feminism*". *Postmodernism and Feminism: Canadian Contexts*. New Delhi: Pencraft Internaitonal, 1995.
- * Keefer, Janice Kulyk, "*Mavis Gallant and the Angel of History.*" university of Toronto Quarterly 55 (1986): 282-301.
- * Kaith W.J. *Canadian Literature in English*
Longuman 1985
- * Kulyk Keefer, Janice. *Reading Mavis Gallant*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1989.
- * Kulyk Keefer in her book *Reading Mavis Gallant* (Don Mills ON : Oxford University Press, 1989).
Canadian Fiction Magazine 28 (1978)

- * Kauffman, Linda, ed. *Gender and Theory: Dialogue on Feminist Criticism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989.
- * Keith, W.J. *Canadian Literature in English*. New York: Longman Group Ltd.
- * Kekman, Susan J. *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of Postmodern Feminism*. Cambridge: Quality Press, 1990.
- * Keman, Alvin. *The Death of Literature*. London; Yale University Press 1990.
- * Lotman, Jurij. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon. Ann Harbor, Michigan: *Michigan Slavic Contributions*, 1977,
- * Layton Avia
Montreal Star, 9 June 1973 p.34
Review of '*The Pognitz Junction*'
- * Levy, Barbara
Saturday Review, 25 Sept. 1971. p.50
Review of '*The Affair of Gabrielle Russier*'
Interviews With Mavis Gallant
- * Leet, Herbert
Library Journal, 1 April 1956 p. 832
- * Lal, Marshal, ed. *Feminist Spaces: Cultural Readings from India and Canada*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd., 1997.
- * Lauret, Maria. *Liberating Literature: Feminist Fiction in America*. London. Routledge, 1994.

- * Lyotard, Jean Francois. *'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge'*. trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982.
- * "Mavis Gallant, "What Is Style ?" in *Making It New: Contemporary Canadian Stories*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: Methuen, 1981), pp. 72-73.
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988) 16.
- * Malcolm, Douglas, "An Annotated Bibliography of Works by and about Mavis Gallant." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978) [special Gallant issue]: 115-33.
- * Michelle Gadpaille, *The Canadian Short Story* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988).
- * Merler's *Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices* (Ottawa: Tecumesch Press, 1978)
Special issue of Canadian Fiction Magazine on Mavis Gallant (No. 28, 1978)
- * *My heart is Broken : Eight Stories and a Short Novel* (New York : Random House, 1964)
- * Mac Manus, Patricia
New York Times Book Review, 1 Nov. 1959. p.41.
- * McHale, Brian, *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- * Miles, Rozalind. *The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel*. London: Routledge, 1987.

- * Moi, Toril, ed. *The Kristeva Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986
- * McHale, Brian. *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- * Miles, Rozalind. *The FemaleForm: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel*. London: Routledge, 1987.
- * Moi, Toril, ed. *The Kristeva Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- * *Feminist Theory and Simon de Beauvoir*. Oxford : basil Blackwell, 1990.
- * New York Times Book Review, 7 June 1970 pp. 5.34 Review of "A amirly Good Time".
- * Neil K. Besuer in his book *The Light of Imagination : Mavis Gallant's Fiction* (Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- * New W.H. *Literary History of Canada* University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- * Norah. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature* : Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1967.
- * Newton, Janice. *The Feminist Challenge to Canadian Left 1900-1918*. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.

- * Pandey, Sudhakar., Ed. *Perspectives on Canadian Fiction*.
- * Peden, William
New York Times Book Review, 26 Feb. 1956. p. 28
- * Pendergast, Constance
Saturday Review. 17 Oct. 1959 p.19
Review of Green Water, Green Sky
- * Palmer, Paulina. *Contemporary Women's Fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory*. London : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.
- * Peden, William. *The American Short Story : Continuity and Change 1940-1975*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975.
- * Perloff, Marjorie. *Postmodern Genres*. London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.
- * Perrine, Laurence. *Story and Structure*. New York: Harcourt, 1959.
- * Poster, Mark. *The Mode of Informaiton : Post-Structuralism and Social Cotext*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- * Ramamurti K.S., Ed. *Canadian Literature and Society : National Dream and Regional Reality*, Delhi, Pen International, 1996.
- * Richler, Mordeca *Shovelling Trouble* : Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1972.

- * Robert Weaver, "Introduction," *The End of the World and Other Stories*, New Canadian Library, No. 191 (Toronto; McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p.12.
"The Other Paris," p.30
- * Reading Mavis Gallant (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989.
The Other Paris; Stories (Cambridge, Mass : Houghton Mifflin, 1956);
- * Reppoport, Janis
Globe and Mail, 7 June 1973. p.31
Review of The Pegnitz Junction.
- * Rascoe Judith
Christian Science Monitor, 4 June 1970. p.7.
- * Robinson, Sally. *Engendering The Subject : Gender and Self Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction*
Albany: State University Press, 1991.
- * Roemer, Michael. *Telling Stories : Postmodernism and the Invalidation of Traditional Narrative*. London : Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995.
- * Stevens, Peter
"Perils of Compassion"
Canadian Literature, No.56, Spring 1973 pp.61-70
- * Schaub, Danielle. "Mavis Gallant's Montreal: A Harbour for Immigrants ?" *Canadian Studies (Talence)* 29 (1990) : 195-201.
- * Schenler, Miriam, ed. *The Vintage Book of Feminism: The Essential Writings of Contemporary Women's Movement*, London: Vintage, 1995.

- * Sellers, Susan. *Feminist Criticism : Theory and Practice*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- * Sherry, Ruth. *Studying Women's Writing : An Introduction*. London : Arnold 1988.
- * Simpson, David. *The Academic Postmodern and the Rule of Literature : A Report on Half-Knowledge*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- * Spencer, Jane. *The Rise of Woman Novelist : From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*. Oxford: Basil Blackwill, 1986.
- * Steele, Charles, ed. *Taking Stock : The Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel*. Ontario : ECW Press, 1982.
- * Stevenson, Jane. *Women Writers in English Literature*. Beirut : Longman, York Press, 1993.
- * Stimpson, Catherine. *Where the Meanings are : Feminist and Cultural Spaces*. New York : Routledge, 1989.
- * *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*, by Norah Story.
Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1967. pp. 268, 306.
- * "The Moslem Wife," in *From the Fifteenth District: A Novella and Eight Short Stories* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), p-73. All Further references to this work appear in the text.

Survival, by Margaret Atwood
Toronto, Anansi, 1972 pp. 132-133-224.
- * Trikha, Manorama Ed. *Canadian Literature Recent Essays*. Delhi : Pencraft International, 1984

- * “*The Orther Paris*,” in *The Other Paris* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), pp. 1-30; “*In Youth Is Pleasure*,” in *Home Truths* (Toronto; Macmillan, 1981), pp218-37.
- * Two CBC Interviews one with Earle Beattie for *Athology* (Ma 24, 1969) and one with Fletcher Markle for *Telescope* (January 22 and 29, 1969).

New York times Book Review, 7 June 1970 pp. 5, 34
Review of “*A Fairly Good Time*”.
- * *The Light of Imagination : Mavis Galant’s Fiction*,
(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- * *The Pegnitz: Junction : A Novella and Five Short Stories*
(New York : Random House, 1973) *The End of the World and Other Stories*, New Canadian Library No.91 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974);

From the Fifteenth District : A Novella and Eight Short Stories (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979); *Home Truths; Selected Canadian Stories* (Toronto):
- * Taubmann, Robert
New Statesman, 3 sept. 1965. p.329
- * Tierney, Helen, ed. *Women's Studies Encyclopaedia*.
Westport : Greenwood Press, 1999.
- * Toye, William, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1983.
- * Tucker, Lindsey. *Textual Escap(e)ades : Mobility, Modernity and Textuality in Contemporary Fiction by Women*, Westport : Greenwood Press, 1994.

- * Volosnikov, V.N. *Freudianism : A Marxist Critic*. trans. I.R. Titunik, New York : Academia Press, 1976.
- * Weaver, Robert,
"Introduction, *The End of the World and Other Stories*.
Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. pp. 7-13.
- * Wilson, Edmund, *O Canada: An American's Noes on Canadian Culture*. New York: Farrar, 1963.
- * Woodcock, George, "*Memory, Imagination, Artifice: The Latest Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant*." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978) [special Gallant issue]: 74-92.
- * "*When We Were Nearly Young*," *The New Yorker*, 15 Oct. 1960, pp. 38-42.
- * William H. *Modern Canadian Essays* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976);
- * Waugh, Patrician *Metafiction : The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London : Routledge (New Accents), 1984.
- * Wright, Paul
Montreal Star, 26 Sept. 1970. p.17,
Review of A Fairly Good Time
- * Walker, Nancy A. *Feminist Alternatives : Irony and Fantasy in Contemporary Novel by Women*. London : University Press of Mississippi, 1990.
- * Wandor, Michelene. *On Gender and Writing*. Boston : Pandora, 1983.

- * Waugh, Patricia. *Feminine Fictions : Revisiting the Postmodern*. New York : Routledge, 1989.
- * Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 1994.
- * Wharton, Edith. *The Writing of fiction*. New York : Octagon Books, 1970.
- * Wilson, Robert. "National Frontiers and International Movements : Postmodernism in Canadian Literature". *Ambivalence : Studies in Canadian Literature*, eds. Om P. Juneja and Chandra Mohan. New Delhi : Allied Publishers, 1990.
- * Woodcock, George. *The World of Canadian Writing*. Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1980.

Synopsis

Synopsis

The proposed doctoral thesis attempts to study the literary works of Mavis Gallant, a prolific contributor to Canadian short fiction from 'A Post Modern Perspective'. Her short fiction consists of short stories and novellas. She has received almost universal critical attention as one of the best Canadian short story writers since the war. Her stories adopt Canadian settings and various problems into the limits of Canadian political and personal life. Gallant's fiction reveals paradoxical disparities between peoples' experiences and their versions of reality. It shows her sensitivity to the lives of individuals and her sympathy for those whose lives are out of place with the social system that frames them.

The titles of her novellas and collections of short stories are as follows :

- (1) *The Other Paris* (1956)
- (2) *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959)
- (3) *Its Image On the Mirror* (1964)
- (4) *My Heart Is broken* (1964)
- (5) *A Fairly Good Time* (1970)
- (6) *The Pegnitz junction* (1973)
- (7) *From the Fifteenth District* (1973)
- (8) *The End of the World and Other Stories* (1974)
- (9) *Home Truths* (1981)
- (10) *Overhead in a Balloon : Stories of Paris* (1985)

The first chapter, which is an introductory one, will deal with the contemporary socio-political and cultural background of North America and Europe as Gallant's stories have a pervasive European colouring emerging from her close attention to European post-war history and culture. As a writer, she is passionately interested in politics and we have to recognize a wide range of references and allusions to European history and culture if we want to respond adequately to the world of her stories. In '*The Other Paris*', for instance she presents detached even ironic narrators who report their memories and reveal individuals confused by cultural, economic, social and political conditions. It presents Carol Frazier's dissatisfaction with her experience of the history of post-war Paris in 1950's. She refuses to see Paris in all its economic chaos and passionately searches for new directions. She desires to bring to Europe the surface optimism and affluence of Eisenhower years. Throughout '*The Other Paris*', Gallant suggests that Carol's need for a sustaining vision can be fulfilled only by facing the chaotic reality of post war Europe with its rubble and refugees.

'*The Four Seasons*' is a story about expatriates on the Italian Riviera, seen through the eyes of Carmela, an Italian village girl who becomes a maid to the Unwins, a feckless English couple living rather meagerly by providing a variety of services for the local foreign community. The story is bounded by Carmela's arrival one Easter and her departure a year afterwards and the stages of her experience are marked by

sections corresponding to the four seasons of the title - spring, summer, autumn and winter with a final section devoted to the spring of her departure when Italy enters World War-II and the English leave. On one level it is the story of Carmela's education through her encounter with these always incomprehensible foreigners, on the other hand it is a picture of expatriate society seen through Carmela's eyes.

The second chapter will deal with the development of novella and short story in Canada with reference to the generic difference between the two forms. It will also discuss the contribution of Mavis Gallant to the Canadian Novella and the short story. Gallant's works are functional laboratories for theorists of narrative techniques, of autobiography and history as fiction and of psychohistory.

The third chapter will deal with Gallant's fiction which is seen by critics as focusing on marginal figures, physical or spiritual exiles, often in troubled domestic relationships or barely controlled hostility between North American and European historical, political and social visions and especially examining memory's reports upon and recreations of the past. Her collections of short stories are peopled with all sorts of multinational exiles - whether emotional, social or geographical.

The difficulty of entering an alien culture is a recurrent theme that runs through many of Gallant's stories. In her short stories, she manages to combine different perspectives so that multiplicity of voices can be heard in each. Not only omniscient

and limited narration alternate but the variety of speech presentation amplifies the number of voices heard.

The fourth chapter will deal with the comparative assessment of Mavis Gallant vis-a-vis other English Canadian writers of short fiction. Mavis Gallant's stories and novellas are distinct from the fiction of her English-Canadian contemporaries by virtue of their form and style, the nature of their intelligence and their breadth and depth of vision. Alice Munro's stories reveal a similar command of craft but Gallant's style and vision evoke a fictional world most powerful in its regional resonance. Margaret Atwood's irony can be similarly incisive but Gallant's irony can construct a hard edged comedy of manners as skilfully and effectively as Austen's. It can also lay bare the workings of memory of a relationship, a family, a society most often in the wider context of post-war western history. Margaret Atwood's rendering of western Canadian Woman's lives is more complete, but when Gallant's satires recreate Canadian life, her intelligence is typically more politically informed and her vision remains comprehensively North American and European.

The fifth and the concluding chapter tries to place Mavis Gallant in the tradition of contemporary English - Canadian writers of short fictions. Mavis Gallant's ficiton is distinct from her contemporaries. Her close attention to European post-war history and culture is also a distinguishing mark of her fiction. The concluding chapter will make a comprehensive statement on major achievements of Mavis Gallant as a Canadian Writer of short fiction.

Some critics do not consider Mavis Gallant to be a postmodernist writer pointing out that the elements like intertextuality are found even in *Paradise Lost* and *Prelude*. However, intertextuality is not the only post-modernistic element in Gallant's fiction. Her internationalism, the subversion of the genre of the realistic fiction making use of the elements of fantasy or magic-realism in her fiction, her use of multiple points of view in her narration, the device of telepathy, the very post-modern condition of her characters, their search for identity, etc. are enough to characterize her as a post-modernist writer. The characters in her fiction are rootless, in search of identity. They are either on the move or under the threat of being displaced again in the foreign land where they are unwanted. They feel culturally dislocated and divided, nursing prejudices for being British Canadians or French Canadians or Americans, etc. Gallant's stories present characters, who feel alienated, who make pathetic efforts to belong to the foreign land, its culture and the environment. For example, the story '*About Geneva*' deals with the psychic distance between generations and the anxiety created by the loss of traditional codes of conduct. If displacement and lack of centrality are a part of the post-modern condition, the fiction of Gallant presents characters, who feel exiled not only from their land but also from their past and their identity. They try to hide from their past and become more vulnerable. They live the life of people at the margins. Whether in Europe or America or even in

Canada they feel alienated, because in Canada, the Canadians do not appear to feel ethnic unity. Naturally, their split sense of identity is reflected in the fiction of the writers like Mavis Gallant. Themes of oppression and exile recur in her fiction. In some of her stories, such as '*An Unmarried Man's Summer*', she juxtaposes reality with romantic expectations, showing inconsistency in the life of the characters.

Mavis Gallant does not claim to be a feminist writer. A literary artist does not write keeping in mind any ideological frame-work. Yet, as a sensitive writer, she is aware of the plight of women in general in the expatriate communities, and portray issues related to the life of women in these communities. She deconstructs the patriarchal family code, the male attitude to women, and parodies the British as well as American and Canadian expatriates stationed in the European countries.

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY :

Works by Mavis Gallant :

Novellas and Collections of Short Stories :

- _____ Gallant, Mavis, *The Other Paris*, Houghton Mifflin : Cambridge, 1956.
- _____ *Green Water Green Sky*, Houghton Mifflin : Cambridge, 1959.
- _____ *Its Image On the Mirror*, Random House : New York, 1956.
- _____ *My Heart is Broken*, Random House : New York 1964
- _____ *A Fairly Good Time*, Random House : New York 1970
- _____ *The Pegnitz Junction* Random House : New York, 1973
- _____ *From The Fifteenth District* Random House : New York 1973
- _____ *The End of the World and Other Stories*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974.
- _____ *Home Truths*, Random House New York 1981
- _____ *Overhead in a Balloon : Stories of Paris*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1985.

Works on Mavis Gallant :

- * Atwood, Margaret, *Survival* : Toronto, Anansi, 1972
- * Richler, Mordecai. *Shovelling Trouble* : Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1972.
- * Story, Norah. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature* : Toronto, Oxford University Press : 1967

- * Wilson, Edmond. *O Canada* : New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1964.

Canadian Literature : General :

- * Kaith W.J., *Canadian Literature in English*. Longman, 1985.
- * New W.H., *Literary History of Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- * Pandey, Sudhakar., Ed. *Perspectives on Canadian Fiction*, New Delhi : Prestige Books, 1994.
- * Ramamurti K.S., Ed. *Canadian Literature and Society : National Dream and Regional Reality* Delhi, Pen International, 1996.
- * Trikha, Manorama. Ed. *Canadian Literature Recent Essays*. Delhi : Pencraft International. 1994.

(Candidate)

(Research Guide)

*To,
My Beloved Family*

**THE FICTION OF MAVIS GALLANT :
A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
BHARTI VIDYAPEETH DEEMED UNIVERSITY, PUNE
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH
UNDER THE FACULTY OF ARTS

by :

SHRI R. G. CHAVAN, M.A.

Professor,

Bharti Vidyapeeth College of Engineering,
Near Chitranagari, Kolhapur - 416 013

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

DR. P. A. ATTAR, M.A.PH.D.

Professor & Head,

Department of English,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

2011

D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled '**The Fiction of Mavis Gallant :A Postmodern Perspective**', completed and written by me has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or other similar title of this or any other university or examining body.

Place : Kolhapur

Date :

Shri R. G. Chavan

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '**The Fiction of Mavis Gallant :A Postmodern Perspective**', which is being submitted herewith for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of Bharti Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Pune, is the result of the original research work completed by Shri R.G. Chavan under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, the work embodied in this thesis has not formed earlier the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or other similar title of this or any other university or examining body.

Place : Kolhapur

Date :

(Dr.) P. A. Attar
Research Guide,
Professor and Head,
Department of English
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Submitted through :

Prof. B.B. Kad,

Dean, Faculty of Arts,

Social Sciences and Commerce,

Bharti Vidyapeeth Deemed University,

Pune - 30.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Acknowledgement	
I	Introduction	1-81
II	Chapter II History and Fiction, Memory and Imagination in Mavis Gallant's Stories	82-104
III	Chapter III Assessment of Mavis Gallant's Short Fictions - Novellas and Short Stories	105 -139
IV	Chapter IV Comparative Assessment of Mavis Gallant and her contemporaries Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood	140 - 230
V	Conclusion	231 - 247
	Select Bibliography	248 - 266

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Much of the work in preparing this thesis was possible because of the inspiration, help and courtesy shown to me by many well wishers, scholars and institutions. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the debt I owe to them.

The thesis was undertaken and completed under the supervision of Dr. P. A. Attar, Professor and Head, Department of English, Shivaji University, Kolhapur. With his critical insights, patient guidance, keen interest and watchful supervision Dr. Attar was a great source of encouragement at every stage of work. This formal acknowledgement is an inadequate expression of my gratitude to him. I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. B.B. Kad, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce, Bharti Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Pune for his valuable advice and support.

I endeavoured to pursue my research at the inspiration of Hon'ble Dr. Patangrao Kadam, Founder, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Pune and Founder Chancellor, Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Pune, Dr. Shivajirao Kadam, Vice Chancellor, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Deemed University, Pune and Hon'ble Shri Vishwajeet Alias Balasaheb Kadam, Secretary Bharati Vidyapeeth, Pune were a constant source of motivation, which enabled me to undertake this research work. My thanks are also due to Principal Kakasaheb Jadhav, Yashvantrao Mohite College, Pune for his ever willing help.

I would like to thank Prof. Chandra Mohan, President of Indian Association for Canadian Studies, Dr. Nita Ramaiya, Prof. Om P. Juneja, Dr. P. A. Abraham, Prof. Y.S. Kalamkar, whose assistance in leading me to the rich and varied treasure of Canadian literature is invaluable. My colleagues in Bharti Vidyapeeth College of Engineering, Kolhapur namely Ex. Principal Dr. J. A. Tamboli, Prof. A.B. Chougale, Prof. A.S. Patil, Prof. D.V. Sawant, Prof. R.N. Deshmukh, Lab Assistant Shri Uday Patil, Shri Pranam Shinde, Shri A.S. Mane, Shri Sudhir Patil, Shri A. N. Pawar, Shri Vishwas Patil have taken keen interest in the progress of this research. I take this opportunity to thank them for their encouraging help. Special thanks are due to Dr. R.S. Jirange, of Bharti Vidyapeeth's Y.M. College, Pune who rendered invaluable support in this endeavour.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my family whose contribution has been of great value in the making of this thesis. My family members Dr. Jaydeep, Dr. Deepali, Satyajee, Niharika were ever alert for the call of assistance and offering the required inspiration. Mention must also be made for the silent and enthusiastic contributions of Kanishka, Utkarsha and Ranvir and my wife Late Principal Dr. Ushaprabha has been the key motivating factor in this endeavour. It is my pleasure to express my gratitude to all of them.

Among the institutions, which helped me I must make a grateful mention of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Centre, New Delhi, The Canadian Study Centres at Mumbai, Baroda and Delhi, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad and Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

I must sincerely thank Shri Chandrakant G. Garad for his skillful, energetic and contributory support in the making of this thesis.

If by some mischance I have failed to acknowledge where I should have done so, I hope those concerned will accept my apologies.

Shri Ravindra Chavan

Place : Kolhapur

Date : 24th Septemeber 2010

From :

Prof. R. G. Chavan,
Bharti Vidyapeeth College
of Engineering, Kolhapur.
Date : 29/06/2010

To,
The Principal,
Bharti Vidyapeeth's
Y.M. College,
Erandwane, Pune - 38.

Subject : Second Presentation in respect of my P.hd. Thesis.

Respected Sir,

I shall be highly oblige if you permit me to attend the Second Presentation in your esteemed College in the month of July 2010. I have attended my first presentation in the month of September 2009. The subject of my Thesis is 'The Fisdiction of Mavis Gallant : A Post Modern Perspective'.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

(Prof. R. G. Chavan)

Copy to : Dr. Jirange,
Dept. of English,
B.V's. Y. M. College, Erandwane,
Pune - 38.

श्री. आर.जी. चव्हाण
फ्लॅट नं.२१/२२, रूबी अपार्टमेंट,
ताराबाई पार्क, कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३
सध्या रा. उष:प्रभा बंगला,
टी.पी.एम. चर्च रोड, सहजीवन परिसर,
सर्किट हाऊस मागे,कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३

दिनांक : ०३/०६/२०१०

प्रति,
चेअरमन /सेक्रेटरी,
रूबी अपार्टमेंट,
ताराबाई पार्क, कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३

विषय : सन १९९३ ते दि. ३०/११/१९९८ अखेरचे ऑडीट बाबत.

संदर्भ : आपली दि.२४/०६/२०१० रोजीची जाहीर नोटीस

महाशय,

आपली दि.२४/०६/२०१० रोजीची जाहीर नोटीस मिळाली. आपले वरील कालावधी संदर्भातील ऑडीट करून घेणेबाबतची आपली वेळकाढूपणा दिसून आला. यापुर्वीचे आपल्याला दि.२/५/२००७ रोजी सर्व रेकॉर्ड आपणास दिलेले आहेच. तसेच पत्रव्यवहाराच्या फाईल्स ही दिलेल्या आहेत. मी स्वतः सन १९९३ - ९४ ते दि.३०/११/१९९८ पर्यंतचे ऑडीट करून घेणे बाबत पत्र पाठविले होते. परंतु आपण सर्व रेकॉर्ड संस्थेत द्यावे असे पत्र दिल्याने ते सर्व रेकॉर्ड जे आपणाकडे पोहोचले नाही असे तुम्ही म्हणता ते ही सर्व रेकॉर्ड आपणास दिलेले आहेच, ऑडीट करून घेणेसाठी ते पुरेसे आहे. जर आपणास ऑडीट करून घ्यावयाचेच नसेल तर मी दिलेले सर्व रेकॉर्ड कृपया मला परत करावे जेणेकरून मला आपणास हवे असलेले वरील नमुद कालावधीचे ऑडीट पूर्ण करून घेणे शक्य होईल.

ऑडीट करावयाचे झालेस तसा ठराव संस्थे मध्ये होणे आवश्यक आहे त्यामध्ये वरील कालावधीची ऑडीट फी व शासनाला भरावयाची रक्कम संस्था भरावयास तयार असले बाबचा ठराव होणे आवश्यक आहे. तसा ठराव झालेबाबतची प्रत व आपणास दिलेले वरील कालावधीचे रेकॉर्ड मला मिळावे. आपण रेकॉर्ड व वरील ठराव वेळेत दिल्यास

.....२..

ऑडीट करीता झालेली दिरंगाई व गैरमेळ दूर होणेस मदत होईल व वेळेत ऑडीट करणे शक्य होईल.

कळावे,

आपला,

(श्री. आर.जी. चव्हाण)

सोबत :

- १) उपनिबंधक सहकारीसंस्था, कोल्हापूर
यांच्या दि.१२/०६/२००८ च्या पत्राची झेरॉक्स प्रत
- २) आपल्या दि.६/७/२००९ च्या जाहीर नोटीसीला
पाठविलेल्या दि.१४/७/२००९ च्या पत्राची झेरॉक्स प्रत
- ३) माझे दि.२/७/२००८ रोजीच्या पत्राची झेरॉक्स
- ४) दि.२/५/२००७ ला आपण दिलेल्या पत्राची झेरॉक्स
- ५) आपल्या दि.१/८/२००५ च्या पत्राची झेरॉक्स

प्रत माहितीसाठी :

मा. उपनिबंधक सहकारी संस्था, कोल्हापूर शहर यांचे कार्यालय
भुसारी वाडा, बिंदू चौक, कोल्हापूर यांना माहितीसाठी सादर

श्री. आर.जी. चव्हाण (निवृत्त प्राचार्य)
फ्लॉट नं.२१/२२, रूबी अपार्टमेंट,
ताराबाई पार्क, कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३
सध्या रा. उष:प्रभा बंगला,
टी.पी.एम. चर्च रोड, सहजीवन परिसर,
सर्किट हाऊस मागे,कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३

प्रति,
सेक्रेटरी,
श्री स्वामी विवेकानंद शिक्षण संस्था,,
ताराबाई पार्क, कोल्हापूर ४१६ ००३

दिनांक : २६/०८/२०१०

विषय : सन १९९६ पासून मला मिळणाऱ्या पगारातील फरकाबाबत.
संदर्भ : आपले पत्र क्र.आमद/टे १.३/१७१८/१२९२५ दि.१९/०१/२०१०

आदरणीय महोदया,

वरील संदर्भिय पत्रा प्रमाणे एल.बी.एस. कॉलेजने माझा दि.०१/०१/१९९६ पासून ते ३१/०३/२००३ (निवृत्ती तारखेपर्यंत) या कालावधीच्या पगाराच्या फरकाची स्टेटमेंट आपल्या संस्थेस व मलाही पाठविणेत आली आहे. नाम. हायकोर्ट यांचा दि.१९/०२/१९९७ चा आदेश व नाम. हायकोर्ट औरंगाबाद यांचा कंटेम्प्ट पीटीशन नं.१३१ च्या आदेशा प्रमाणे मला सिनीअर कॉलेज प्राचार्य स्केल प्रमाणे व मी घेतलेल्या पगारातील फरक रक्कम रू.२,७२,३९३/- (रूपये दोन लाख बहात्तर हजार तीनशे त्र्याणव फक्त) संस्थेने मला देणे आवश्यक आहे ती त्वरीत देणेची व्यवस्था व्हावी कारण नाम. हायकोर्ट यांचा आदेश होऊन बराच कालावधी लोटलेला आहे. मी एल.बी.एस. कॉलेज मधुन मला सिनीअर कॉलेज प्राचार्यांच्या स्केल प्रमाणे निर्धारिकरण (फिक्सेशन) करून मिळावे म्हणून वारंवार विनंती केली होती. परंतु संस्थेने अद्याप दाद दिलेली नव्हती व नाही.

तरी माझे अर्जाचा व झालेल्या कालावधीचा विचार होवून मला वरील नमुद एल.बी.एस. कॉलेजच्या स्टेटमेंट प्रमाणे फरकाची रक्कम त्वरीत मिळावी व हा वाद लवकरात लवकर मिटवून टाकावा ही विनंती.

कळावे, सहकार्यांच्या अपेक्षेत.

आपला विश्वासू,

(आर.जी. चव्हाण (निवृत्त प्राचार्य))