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The Emergence of Female Adolescent Protagonists in Selected Twentieth-Century Novels from French Canada, Germany, and Austria.

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Edith B. Vandervoort
August 2002

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In memory of Dobie and Kenya

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank all those who helped me in completing the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Modern Foreign Languages. I thank Dr. Carolyn Hodges for her guidance and encouragement, not only in her role as dissertation director but also as advisor during my graduate studies. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Nancy Lauckner and Dr. Mary Papke for their constructive comments and to Dr. Paul Barrette for sharing his expertise on the literature of Quebec. I would also like to extend my appreciation to all of my German professors for helping me attain this goal.

Most of all, I wish to thank my husband Kurt G. Vandervoort, whose patience and loving support was indispensable, and to my first teachers of language and literature, my parents Cecilie and Lorenz Biegler, for having taught me, by example, always to persevere.

Abstract

The history of adolescent protagonists in adult literature is relatively brief. Young heroes and heroines only begin to appear significantly in narratives at the turn of the twentieth century, since the concept of adolescence is relatively new. During the first half of the 1900s the number of novels written with female adolescent protagonists in countries such as Austria, Germany, and Canada varies substantially. In German-speaking countries there are relatively few novels with young heroines, although this tendency has increased since the students' and women's movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In contrast, works depicting female adolescent protagonists occur more frequently in French-Canadian novels written by female authors throughout and even before the twentieth century.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate and compare themes in four twentieth-century novels which have female adolescent protagonists. These themes include the expression of love and sexuality, the individual's relationships with friends and family members, the young woman's response to a crisis, and the influence of social institutions. Care was taken to select novels which represent different historical periods of this century. Two of the novels are from German-speaking countries: *Die Klosterschule* (1968) by the Austrian novelist Barbara Frischmuth and *Nach Mitternacht* (1937) by the German author Irmgard Keun. Two French-Canadian novels have been chosen: Gabrielle Roy's *Rue Deschambault* (1955) and Anne Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan* (1982).

In this study I have found that in order to trace a progression of independent female adolescent protagonists throughout the twentieth century, it would be necessary to examine numerous novels of this genre. From the works chosen in this study, however, it is possible to conclude that the independent nature of the young female

protagonist is a reflection of the author's motive for writing the novel rather than of the time during which the novel was written.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Context

The impulse for this study came at a time when I was researching Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus*, a story in which adolescents are featured as major characters, while adults are relegated to minor roles. Further research led me to more information about the term "adolescence" and its history. In *Growing up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction,* Barbara White explains that "American adolescence seems an inherent part of the life cycle, a universal stage of development, but it is actually a product of modern civilization. It does not really exist in so-called primitive societies" (5). In non-Western societies, an individual undergoes a formal initiation rite, such as circumcision, which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. There is no lengthy interlude between these stages, as in Western societies, except the brief period when the initiate is separated from society during which time he or she receives some instruction to prepare him or her for adulthood. The society from which he or she is separated consists of children and adults, or those who have not undergone initiation and those who have. This brief period of transition between childhood and adulthood was also common in Western societies before a modern concept of childhood was developed. In fact, although the term "adolescence" existed for a long time--the origin of the word comes from the Latin *adolescere* (to grow up)--it had no social meaning; rather, it merely designated the age when the body came to full growth (White 5-6).

Published in 1960, Philippe Ariès's work *Centuries of Childhood* traces the history of childhood in Western society. He states that children were not treated

differently from adults until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, because of these youths' weaker stature, teachers and clergy began to advocate protecting them because they were "fragile creatures of God who needed to be both safeguarded and reformed" (133). Schools also began to change from an institution where adults and children were randomly mixed together to one where groups were separated by age. A graded curriculum was also developed, adult students began to be removed from the schools completely, and stricter disciplinary measures were incorporated. School discipline meant that there was less personal liberty, even for the older students, for adolescents were not distinguished from children, and even students near the age of twenty were disciplined with the same methods used for younger children. In later centuries, severer methods of discipline were relaxed, but the underlying idea of subordination continued (White 6-7).

Although Ariès defined adolescence as a distinctive period in life, his work focused primarily on childhood. His book did, however, lead other historians to examine the emergence of adolescence. White discusses how scholars such as John and Virginia Demos and Joseph Kett found little evidence of the use of the word "adolescence" in America between 1890 and 1920; furthermore, this stage of life had barely been recognized as significant. With increased industrialization and the shift from a rural agrarian society to an urban industrial society, parents wanted their children to study extensively in order to insure a secure economic future for themselves. A structured environment was maintained for all students during and after school, and special groups led by adults and sponsored by such institutions as the school, the church, or the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) helped insure

order and discipline (White 7-8). The separation of students into groups made teenagers more conspicuous, and social workers, educators, and psychologists began to consider adolescence as a stage of life. In 1904, the psychologist G. Stanley Hall promoted this concept with his innovative book *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. In this work, Hall explains how dramatically different adolescence is from childhood and introduces the theory of "recapitulation," maintaining that adolescence is a time of turbulence.[1] While it is clear that Hall's influence lasts until the present day--adolescence is still regarded by many people as a difficult time--his ideas were not received without criticism, and his fellow psychologists accused him of overstating the stressful period of adolescence. White points out that two decades later, in *Coming of Age in Samoa,* Margaret Mead contended that this turbulence was due more to cultural rather than physiological differences.[2] Despite the criticism from

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[1] Recapitulation is a theory that states that each person passes through the stages in life to adulthood in a way similar to how humans passed through periods of time on the way to civilization. For example, the adolescent corresponds to a pre-historic human on the way to civilization, a period of time which includes the possibilities for growth. According to Hall, the period of adolescence must take a long time for a successful transition to the civilized stage, and a longer period of time signifies greater civilization. Hall warns, however, that recapitulation is often a time of danger because the individual is caught between the past, represented by savagery, and the future, represented by civilization (White 9).

[2] Derek Freeman argues that Mead's research about sexual behavior of young women in Samoa is flawed, for she was not aware that the women she was interviewing were not telling the truth. He writes: "From close examination of a wide range of evidence, it has emerged that her exciting revelations about sexual behavior were in some cases merely the extrapolations of whispered intimacies, whereas those of greatest cónsequence were the results of a prankish hoax"(1). One of the women Mead interviewed in her 1925-26 study explained to Freeman in 1987 that it is not unusual for Samoan girls to lie when they are joking (Freeman 3).

his contemporaries, Hall's book was not easily dismissed by the general public because it applied nineteenth-century evolutionary concepts and justified the changes which occurred during this stage of life: the period between childhood and adulthood was longer than in previous centuries because civilization was becoming more advanced, and adolescents needed to be supervised by adults because this stage was unique and significant (White 7-9).

In his evaluation of Hall's work, the historian Joseph Kett states that "adolescence was essentially a conception of behavior imposed on youth, rather than an empirical assessment of the way in which young people actually behaved" (243). He claims that Hall and his followers "used biology and psychology . . . to justify the promotion among young people of norms of behavior," especially conformity and passivity (243). Both Kett and Ariès believed that the prolongation of childhood into this invented stage of adolescence includes subordination (White 10). The good intentions of adult leaders or the deliberate subjugation of youths throughout history is a subject which has generated much discussion and speculation. It cannot be disputed, however, that adolescence is marked by conflict in general, and one of these conflicts is certainly the problem of imposed discipline and the perceived lack of personal freedom.

The history of how the concept of adolescence emerged and how adolescents were distinguished from children and adults makes it clear why the desire for more autonomy is one of the major themes discussed in novels featuring adolescents. Philip Stewart's article "The Child Comes of Age" traces the appearance of the child protagonist in French literature. French novels written as memoirs in the early 1700s

do not discuss childhood at all (135). Normally, the narrator begins the story at the time he becomes a socially functioning person, which, Stewart contends, is around age sixteen. He states that this is not done because the author did not want to invent details about his early childhood but rather because the narrative reflects some fundamental attitudes about childhood in general: it was neither interesting nor important (135). He cites Antoine Bret's *La Belle Allemande* and Baculard d'Arnaud's *Les Epoux malheureux* as examples of novels which demonstrated the idea that all children and their experiences in childhood are similar and that "childhood, thus seen as nothing but the empty passage of time during which the dormant personality is slowly but inconspicuously maturing, could naturally have no intrinsic interest worthy of presentation to a reader" (137). The protagonists really begin their lives when they become part of society, that is, at the end of their formal education, when they begin a life independent of their parents, or, more boldly, according to Henri Peyre, when "they reach the age for sex, which is also taken to be the age of reason" (qtd. in Stewart 138). Indeed, children are not even mentioned in the narratives, for they are off somewhere waiting to become adults, or in the case of wealthy families, simply regarded as the responsibility of their governesses or tutors. They were certainly never welcome at social functions. The familiar salon scenes only included children when they were nearly adults.

Childhood memories became more important after the theories of Freud became known, because he argued that the psychological basis of many thoughts and deeds stems from childhood experiences (Stewart 138). But in the eighteenth century, few writers besides Rousseau were aware of the importance of childhood experiences.

The novel *Emile,* "a work of discovery" (Stewart 139) for Rousseau himself, not only taught his readers the significance of childhood but also demonstrated that this period of life had many themes worth writing about, for it was "heavily charged with philosophical value too because the child was the incarnation of man's primitive and unspoiled virtues" (140). Essentially, the experiences of childhood were full of events worthy of dramatization because they could easily teach evil or spoil virtue. Rousseau's *Confessions* not only verified this theory but also showed that a narrative could be interesting when it began at childhood (140). However, a narrator's attempt to reveal himself "in all the truth of nature" would not be successfully repeated until Proust's extensive account of Marcel's childhood in *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Stewart 140).

In his discussion of works from other European countries, John Neubauer notes that literature with adolescent characters appeared in works of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. These include Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, Lesage's *Gil Blas*, and Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. Most of these novels are picaresque, and the protagonists, rather than concentrating on internal dilemmas and problems with other adolescents, as seen in modern literary works depicting adolescence, are more concerned with their own survival in the face of war, poverty, or social upheaval. The same features reappear in later picaresque novels such as Cocteau's *Thomas*, in works by Milords and Francis Carco and other works featuring adolescents who attempt to survive World War I Neubauer 76).

Youths do appear in eighteenth-century literature in novels such as Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe*, Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle* Héloïse and Goethe's *Werther*, but although clashes with social forces were portrayed in these novels, the works do not glorify the stage of adolescence, as many novelists of the turn of the twentieth century do; rather, they "glorify maturity, as the social mythology of the age glorified it, yet try to imagine a mature mode that neutralizes the threat, without sacrificing the energies, of the dangerous age" (Spacks, qtd. in Neubauer 77). The adolescent years are portrayed in little detail and adolescents' problems are different from those in modern works and include such things as the protagonist's struggle with his/her bourgeois birth, a hopeless love, or a youthful marriage but not peer group pressures or situations which threaten identity. In essence, the statement that the "eighteenth century fictional adolescents appear fixed . . .[;] youth is already what he will become " (Spacks, qtd. in Neubauer 77) applies to many of the adolescent characters of the eighteenth century. The *Bildungsroman,* which will be discussed in detail later, is a prominent genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that focuses on the transition from post-adolescence to adulthood.

In romantic literature of the nineteenth century, such as Blake's and Wordsworth's poetry and Novalis's *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais,* there is more concentration on early childhood than on adolescence. Often, the innocence of childhood is contrasted with the corruption of adulthood, and in these works, the young protagonist tends to be a fixed symbol representing paradise and the golden age (Neubauer 77-

78).[3] Many of the works of romantic literature strongly lack characterization of the adolescent, probably for the reasons discussed earlier by Stewart.

In the mid-nineteenth century, writers depicted their characters' adolescent years more frequently than in earlier centuries. Initially, such works were marginal in the sense that either the period of adolescence is not treated in great detail, as in Balzac's *Louis Lambert* and Dickens's *David Copperfield,* or they are novel fragments, such as Flaubert's *Novembre* and Dostoyevsky's *Netochka Nezvanova.* The new genre of the English "public school story" focuses on the adolescent in a secondary school setting and had a mixed readership, although some works were specifically written for schoolchildren (Neubauer 78). According to Neubauer, Thomas Hughes's English novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* established a pattern for this genre and is comparable to the secondary school novels of Germany and France. Hughes's novel is less anguished than the German school novel and focuses more on character building, that is, social experiences rather than academic ones. Another difference is that the peer group often participates in this education through sports, in the dormitories, and by the hierarchy of the grades. Rather than focusing on conflicts involving the students' studies, the books reveal boys who are more threatened by the injustices of fellow school children. Unlike the German versions of stories about young men in boarding schools, suicide rarely occurs in these novels (Neubauer 78).

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[3] The young characters in Blake's mythology and Tieck's *Der blonde Eckbert,* however, depict approaching adulthood and the loss of childhood as frightening and reminiscent of the Fall as a result of sinful exploits (Neubauer 76-77).

White states that it is considerably more difficult to trace the history of female adolescence than male adolescence because many historians have neglected to study female experiences and have assumed that they were the same as those of boys. Indeed, Kett wrote his *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* based on white male adolescence. Ariès included a few chapters about female adolescence in which he describes a brief childhood that runs into adulthood, as was the case in general for children before the nineteenth century. As soon as they were out of diapers, girls dressed as women, had many of the responsibilities of women by age ten, and were often married by age fourteen. Domestic training was the only education they received, and, therefore, many were illiterate, as were most women from the middle ages until the nineteenth century. Although formal education became available for girls at the end of the eighteenth century, most girls left school at age thirteen or fourteen to begin their duties in the household (White 15).

The female adolescent's coming of age and the themes which pertain to this event are reflected in the novels I will discuss in this study. The four novels I have chosen feature female adolescent protagonists in works by contemporary women writers from French Canada, Austria, and Germany and take place in different settings (urban and rural) and during different political situations. I will examine common themes and stylistic approaches that authors use to explore problems and characteristics of adolescents in various contexts.

Barbara Frischmuth's *Die Klosterschule,* published in 1968, treats how girls were raised in a residential Catholic boarding school of the day. Frischmuth describes how strict methods of raising young women in this school smother any attempt at

individuality or any expressions of intelligence, emotions, or sexuality. The author chooses ironic language to imitate the narrator's way of speaking, borrows quotes from the Bible and religious pamphlets which justify these methods, and gives voice to elements of education and upbringing which were always denied women: the freedom to express one's feelings and to think and to act independently.

Nach Mitternacht by Irmgard Keun, written in 1937 while the author was in exile in Holland, depicts a nineteen-year-old woman who lives in Cologne and Frankfurt as National Socialism is gaining strength. Especially significant in this novel is how politics affects many aspects of the private lives of the protagonist, her friends, and her family. In the literary style of New Objectivity *(Neue Sachlichkeit),* the author satirically describes attitudes of members of the lower-middle class, as well as of the bourgeoisie, toward Hitler's rise to power but avoids overly simplified stereotypes. The personal lives of the protagonist and her female friends also present a portrait of the lives of young women during this time.

The two Canadian novels included in this study are set in Manitoba and Quebec, Canada. Gabrielle Roy's novel *Rue Deschambault,* published in 1955, is a series of eighteen related narratives which depict the narrator's childhood and adolescent experiences in her neighborhood of Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. According to Laurie Ricou, this work could be considered "an alternative to the *Bildungsroman*" (Ricou qtd. in Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 72) because, unlike other works of this predominantly male genre, it is written in a serial format and it discusses themes related to feminism. The narrator's realistic description of the relationship between

mother and daughter demonstrates the theme of heredity present in the lives of the girls, adolescents, and women (Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 72).

The fourth novel, *Les Fous de Bassan,* by Anne Hébert, was published in 1982 but is set in 1936. It discusses the coming of age of two cousins who have grown up together, their different attitudes toward becoming women, and the inability of the men of the community to accept their loss of innocence. Hébert incorporates many themes in this work, but the most significant one for this study is that of how a community can exercise its will on these two young protagonists and protect a man who has caused their deaths by lying about important events.

This study will explore the themes of female adolescent development. The discussion of the history of adolescence earlier in this chapter cites reasons for the conflicts which many adolescents experience. Whether the adolescent is male or female, he/she will experience some of the same conflicts and, similarly, novels depicting adolescence will portray the same themes for both male and female adolescents. Because the literary portrayal of female development is less frequent than the portrayal of male development, my primary interest lies in how the various authors depict these young women and which themes they present in these fictional works. Mary Jean DeMarr and Jane S. Bakerman's text *The Adolescent in the American Novel since 1960* is particularly useful for this study. The authors discuss male and female protagonists in many recent American works, in particular the youths' response to emerging sexuality, their interaction with family and friends, their response to crisis situations, the effect of certain geographical settings on youths' development, and their reaction to fateful events. These themes are also investigated

in different contexts in Barbara White's *Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction* and Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland's *The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development.* Esther Kleinbord Labovitz's *The Myth of the Heroine: The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century* is an especially useful study because it deals with the frequency and portrayal of heroines in the *Bildungsroman.*

The discussion of the four novels will focus on the themes in DeMarr and Bakerman's book; these themes include the adolescent and her relationship with her family and friends, her first experience with love and her emerging sexuality, her reaction to a crisis situation, the influence of a specific setting or social institution on her life, and the role of fate in her life. The conclusion will compare the themes and focus on the tendencies commonly found in each novel and how these tendencies have changed in the course of the twentieth century. How these novels represent the female adolescent protagonists in the twentieth century and the society in which they live will also be analyzed, and a comparison of the narrative structure of these novels will be made.

Female Adolescent Protagonists in Germany and Austria

White extensively traces the history of adolescence for females and the trends in novels about female youth in the American context. In her article "Jugend als Epochenthema um 1900," Ortrud Gutjahr explains the emerging of female adolescent protagonists in the German context (117). Adolescence, on the one hand, can be marked as the transition from childhood to adulthood, but in a historical sense, it can be seen as a focus on youth, the new generation, and evokes a need to change from the old literature to the new. As Gutjahr explains, "[w]ird mit der Adoleszenz einerseits lebensgeschichtlich der Übergang von der Kindheit zum Erwachsenenalter und andererseits historisch der Generationenwechsel markiert, so gewinnt die Jugend darüber hinaus um 1900 als signifikantes Epochenphänomen Bedeutung" (117). This change in generation was compared with the coming of a new century, and in this way, youth gained meaning around 1900 as a significant phenomenon of the epoch. The far-reaching changes in society through industrialization, which resulted in the growth of cities, the increase in transportation, and the change of social structures, caused new artists to reject the dominant historical literature whose themes were no longer current. Thus, a young generation of prospective writers in the 1880s began a new trend in literature, which was marked by protest and dissolution. Their goal was to become modern artists and to create literature corresponding to modern times (Gutjahr 117). The result of this trend is the theme of youth expressed in the artistic movement of *Jugendstil*, as well as in the works of Robert Musil, Frank Wedekind, Hermann Hesse, and Thomas Mann, who wrote about the problems of youth and other themes relating to adolescence. But these works focus primarily on the development

of males, and the works of women of this time find only marginal or no consideration by scholars.

The female authors at the turn of the century, however, were doubly challenged with the transition to the modern era. The rejection of a tradition which they perceived as obsolete presented them with both a gender-specific and an aesthetic challenge: they wanted a life which was different from that of their mothers. These authors wanted to establish themselves as authors, not solely as mothers, and they needed to overcome an outdated literary tradition dominated by men. As Gutjahr explains,

> [w]ährend die Autoren der Jahrhundertwende sich von den Vätern (als ihrer eigenen Tradition) abzusetzen suchten, waren Autorinnen psychohistorisch vor der schier unlösbare Aufgabe gestellt, sich von den Müttern (als weibliche Tradition, die nicht fortgeführt werden kann) zu lösen und zugleich den Anschluß an die Väter zu suchen (die literarische Tradition), um zugleich auch sie zu überwinden. Dieses emanzipatorische und literarische Dilemma findet in den Texten von Autorinnen der Jahrhundertwende seinen signifikanten Niederschlag. (135).

In the canonized texts of the German male authors writing at the turn of the century, female adolescence is nearly always just a theme in relationship to masculine problems. The young girl appears in the narrative only as a temporary object of interest, with whom the adolescent interacts to free himself from middle-class expectations in order to become an artist, as in Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*. There is only marginal portrayal of adolescent girls in the male boarding school stories. For

example, in Wedekind's play *Frühlingserwachen*, the character Wendla becomes a victim of the risks and dangers of her gender and, in the context of awakening sexual desires, she is at the mercy of adults who will not educate her about human sexuality because of strict social conventions. Except for her misunderstandings about sex, the problems she encounters during her adolescence, such as the challenge to achieve her goals or possible conflicts with her teachers, are not discussed. As Gutjahr summarizes, "Ihre Problematik ist auf Pubertät im Sinne der körperlich geschlechtsspezifischen Reifung reduziert" (136-37). Texts about adolescent problems written by female authors of this time discuss other themes as part of their artistic expression. In contrast to texts by male authors, those by female authors depict adolescence as a phase, and rather than wanting to disassociate themselves from authority, their female adolescent characters' desire is to assert themselves against too many expectations imposed on them by the educator, for they wished to liberate themselves from the prevailing norms (136). Gutjahr explains the differences:

> Geht es in den Texten von Autoren vornehmlich darum, daß der Adoleszente den autoritären Reglementierungen zu trotzen versucht, indem er eine eigene künstlerische Gegenwelt aufbaut, um sich vom Kind zum Erwachsenen, vom (Spieß-) Bürger zum Künstler zu emanzipieren, so wird in vielen Texten von Autorinnen die Adoleszenz als eine Phase thematisiert, in der es kaum darum geht, sich von Autoritäten zu lösen, sondern vielmehr, sich gegen projektive Übergriffe seitens der Erzieher zu behaupten und von bereits internalisierten Vorstellungen zu befreien. (136)

The theme of youth at the turn of the century shows, on the one hand, the conflicted path of the modern artist and, on the other hand, the gender-specific problems of adolescence, which has become a significant part of the literary modern (Gutjahr 143). Narratives of male and female adolescents continue to increase during the twentieth century.[4] In the early half of the century and increasingly in the second half, several women authors have used children and adolescents as subject matter. Gutjahr mentions a number of authors who wrote novels or short stories, some of which are autobiographical, about young women. Those works include, for instance, Hedwig Dohm's novel *Schicksale einer Seele* (1899), Elsa Asenijeff's series of short stories *Unschuld: ein modernes Mädchenbuch* (1901), Lou-Andreas Salomé's volume of short stories *Im Zwischenland* (1902), and Franziska von Reventlow's *Ellen Olestjerne* (1903). I have found only a few works by women written in the period 1900 to 1930 that contain female protagonists, but after 1930 authors such as Irmgard Keun, Anna Seghers, Elizabeth Langgässer, Luise Rinser, Gertrud Kolmar, and Ilse Aichinger published some novels with young female protagonists. This trend increased after World War II, with novels such as Barbara Frischmuth's *Die Klosterschule* (1968), Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983), Waltrud Anna Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* (1985), and Marlen Haushofer's short story "Wir töten Stella" (1986), and many from the former German Democratic Republic, such as Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1969) and *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), Beate

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[4] The young characters in Blake's mythology and Tieck's *Der blonde Eckbert,* however, depict approaching adulthood and the loss of childhood as frightening and reminiscent of the Fall as a result of sinful exploits (Neubauer 76-77).

Morgenstern's *Nest im Kopf* (1988), Christa Gießler's *Unsichtbare Zügel* (1987), and Ingborg Arlt's *Das kleine Leben* (1987).

Female Adolescent Protagonists in French-Canadian Literature

My research has found that, in contrast to literature by women in German-speaking countries, Canadian women's writing in French begins to appear earlier in their literary history. David M. Hayne traces the evolution of French-Canadian literature until 1960. He reports that Quebec and other trading posts in Three Rivers and Montreal were founded in the early 1600s, and the direct royal government was established in 1663, officially marking the colony as a province of France. Catholic brothers and priests wrote accounts of their travels and discoveries in Quebec, which were among the earliest records of discovery and exploration. Marie de l'Incarnation, a Catholic nun, contributed by recounting in hundreds of letters her experiences at the Quebec post from 1639 until 1672. Pertaining to the first French-Canadian works, Hayne writes, "Bibaud's *Epitres, satires, chansons* appeared in 1830, the first French - Canadian novel is dated 1837, the first published stage comedy written by a French-Canadian belongs to the same year, and the first published tragedy came a few years later, in 1844" (148). Laure Conan published her novel *Angéline de Montbrun* four decades later in 1884 (145-51). Many other women who began writing during the first half of the twentieth century followed her lead, including such authors as Marie Le France, Thérèse Tardif, Germaine Guèvremont, and Gabrielle Roy (Paradis 332).

Dufault, in her book *Metaphors of Identity,* states that the treatment of children and adolescents is a frequent theme in works of French-Canadian authors: more than two hundred *québécois* novels written between 1837 and 1962 were found on the subject of childhood (13). This common theme serves several functions: to criticize *québécois* society; to evoke memories of injustices, such as violence and oppression; to recall the past nostalgically as a gentle and bittersweet time; and to return home to begin to understand some tragic event in childhood (13-14). In this context, the novels of several female authors are important, such as those by Anne Hébert, Claire Martin, Denise Bombardier, Monique Proulx, Gabrielle Poulin, Gabrielle Gourdeau, and Aline Chamberland. Claire Martin's novel *Dans un gant de fer* (1965-66) describes her childhood with a cruel father and her experiences in a strict Catholic convent school, of which Richard Coe comments, "it is hard for anyone outside the Province to credit the fact that such schools . . . existed and carried considerable social prestige . . . well into the nineteen-twenties," for, indeed, it depicts cruelty in the name of education (25). Denise Bombardier's novel *Une enfance à l'eau bénite* (1985) describes a similar situation in a convent school.[5] The novels of Aline Chamberland, Anne Hébert, and Monique Proulx, in turn, present violent and incestuous relationships between parent and child.

Literary critics have often compared the province of Quebec to a child, pointing out that they are similar because both are still discovering how to live

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[5] Because these novels were written during the second half of the twentieth century, an interesting topic of comparison would be Martin's and Bombarier's novels depicting life in a convent school with other convent school novels from Austria.

independently. Laurier La Pierre notes that cultural maturity cannot be expected from "une nation qui n'a pas atteint l'âge adulte dans les domaines politique et économique" (qtd. in Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 14). In contrast, according to Dufault, Ralph Sarkonak believes that Quebec reached the age of maturity in the 1960s ("Metaphors of Identity" 14). Dufault also compares political, economic, and cultural developments of Quebec with young protagonists in her study entitled "Personal and Political Childhood in Quebec: Analogies for Identity."

Jean Bouthillette makes a different comparison, one in which Quebec resembles a child who has been abandoned by its mother, when he notes that if Quebec had not been lost to England after the conquest of 1763, it would have separated independently after a process of natural maturation, much like the United States's separation from England (Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 14). Dufault proposes that childhood images in Quebec's literature not only convey the sense of loss and alienation experienced by the disconnection from France, but, further, that the examination of one's childhood could be helpful in defining cultural identity and showing progress toward a national autonomy. Although the analogy between a young child and an emerging nation is often made, it is probable that the theme of childhood developed in the literature of Quebec expresses realities which are unique to this province of Canada (Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 15). This statement would be difficult to prove, Dufault states, but it is the quest for answers which is important. She quotes Patricia Smart who maintains that, with regard to the question of national specificity, "the search for an answer has made it possible for us to hear the Canadian and Quebec voices in literature, to listen to them on their own terms and not according

to the abstract, supposedly universal models to which we used to expect them to conform" (Smart, qtd. in Dufault, "Metaphors of Identity" 15). With this thought in mind, Dufault includes in her book the theme of childhood in combination with the more politically oriented themes of *québécois* writing.

The Novel of Adolescence, the Initiation Story, and the *Bildungsroman*

In the introduction to her *Growing up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction,* White states that the novel of adolescence is often associated with the *Bildungsroman* or the initiation story. Previous critics, she cites, "define it as 'a sometimes foreshortened, always modified, bildungsroman' or an initiation novel, a longer form of the initiation story where the protagonist experiences a significant change of knowledge or character" (White 3). There are similarities and differences in these genres, and it is useful to distinguish the characteristics of each.

The *Bildungsroman*, sometimes referred to as the apprenticeship novel or the novel of formation, is defined as "a novel which recounts the youth and young manhood of a sensitive protagonist who is attempting to learn the nature of the world, discover its meaning and pattern, and acquire a philosophy of life and 'the art of living'" (Holman 39). The *Bildungsroman* has an extensive history, particularly in German literature. Fritz Martini explains that the term originated in 1819 and 1820 in two of Karl Morgenstern's lectures entitled "Über das Wesen des Bildungsromans" and "Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans." Most of Martini's article discusses Morgenstern's lectures and the latter's definition of this type of novel in comparison to other genres. This explanation clarifies how Morgenstern viewed the *Bildungsroman*

and how he defended it as "a moral means of education, as opposed to the conception of the novel as mere entertainment, pleasure, fantasy, and as an escape from reality" (24). Martini concludes that the *Bildungsroman* is not only a specific genre to which certain structural laws are applied, but it has a philosophical origin which underlies the content and themes of the novel. As he states: "It appears not as a categorical aesthetic form, but as a historical form deriving from specific and limited historical conditions in the understanding of the world and the self" (24).

In both the *Bildungsroman* and the novel of adolescence, there are autobiographical elements, and the protagonist often has a special talent. He/she may even be older than the typical American college student, who may have had similar experiences but has led too sheltered a life to contemplate traditional values and other doubts, as the *Bildungsroman* hero has typically done (White 3). John Lyons, in his study of the American college novel, states that "normally the undergraduate is not only too young to recognize 'The Everlasting No' when he meets it, but the college conspires to insulate him from the doubts experienced by the *Bildungsroman* hero" (qtd. in White 4). This applies even more to a younger protagonist or a female who may have been even more sheltered than a college-bound male (4).

In contrast to the main character of the *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist of the initiation story is not limited to an adolescent or post-adolescent. According to White, Mordecai Marcus states that the protagonist in an initiation story is young and experiences a change which leads the character toward adulthood (4). White believes Marcus is probably thinking about the adolescent, but there are initiation stories and novels that treat children, such as Katherine Porter's *The Circus,* and those that treat

adults, such as Hemingway's *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,* each dealing with an event which changes life or character. Initiation does not, therefore, always include adolescents because some characters are initiated into adulthood at an earlier or later age. By the same token, novels of adolescence do not always include initiation, for this could have occurred earlier or later in the character's life (White 4-5).

The novel of adolescence could be defined according to the protagonist's age, but not necessarily by his/her maturity or his/her acceptance of adult responsibility. Indeed, some adult fictional characters never accept responsibility yet are no longer considered adolescents, and some children must accept adult responsibilities at an early age yet are still considered children. This is the problem with setting a specific age for the beginning and end of adolescence. Adolescence itself is better classified according to W. Tasker Witham, concludes White, as "a state of life in which individuals have begun to show physical and social signs of maturing, but have not yet assumed full adult responsibility" (qtd. in White 4). Although what determines "adult responsibility" is arguable, I have selected novels that treat a specific age range and have chosen to accept the definition and the guidelines offered by White when she determined which novels to discuss in her study about adolescent females (4): the two criteria used are that the protagonists are between twelve and nineteen years of age and that the period between these years is emphasized in the narrative. My study extends this period to between ages ten and nineteen, because there are some novels depicting an adolescent showing physical and social signs of maturing and beginning to have adult responsibilities at this earlier age.

Another definition of the novel of adolescence is presented by Dagmar Grenz in the context of comparing German school novels of the early twentieth century with German novels of adolescence influenced by J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,* written in 1951. She states that because of this novel and the influence of the women's and students' movements, novels of adolescence in Germany, in contrast to those of the turn of the twentieth century, treated women as well as men. Claiming that "the novel of adolescence is a novel with a young hero who is in the midst of an existential crisis," Grenz compares works such as Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* with novels written for young people (173).

The definition which Grenz uses is more universal and therefore presents fewer problems than the ones discussed by White. Her definition, which states that the protagonist is "in the midst of an existential crisis" (Grenz 173), agrees with the trends of novels of adolescence cited by DeMarr and Bakerman in their book *The Adolescent in the American Novel since 1960.* They write that, in the depiction of major and even minor adolescent protagonists, several patterns have emerged: "Sometimes the adventures of fictional adolescents seem to be a means of authors' coming to terms with the tests imposed upon the young person striving for emancipation and self-determination" (xii).[6] This "coming to terms" is often a crisis for adolescents, as has been demonstrated by many authors of novels depicting adolescents. For instance, DeMarr and Bakerman enumerate the themes found repeatedly in novels by Alice

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[6] This is a companion volume to W. Tasker Witham's *The Adolescent in the American Novel, 1920-1960* and DeMarr and Bakerman's *Adolescent Female Portraits in the American Novel, 1961-1981: An Annotated Bibliography.*

Walker, John Updike, Toni Morrison and many others. They state that some authors have their adolescent protagonists reflect the impact of American society and its institutions or represent social classes within a family, a community or a profession, or the culture as a whole; other authors attempt to caution or prepare their audience about the difficulties of the transition to adulthood (xii).[7]

Grenz states that the novel of adolescence, which she also refers to as the school novel, emerged at the turn of the century in German-speaking countries and was a rejection of the *Bildungsroman* of the previous two centuries. She explains the differences:

> Whereas here [in the *Bildungsroman*], the hero still manages, in his clash with the world, to arrive at a reconciliation between the self's and the world's

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[7] DeMarr and Bakerman discuss novels written for adolescents in their text, but other critics such as Dagmar Grenz and Sonja Svensson maintain that there are distinct differences between novels written for a general audience and those written specifically for adolescents or children. In her study, Grenz concludes that although authors of children's literature use the novel of adolescence as a genre "and, along with it, the problem complex of the modern ego that is uncertain of itself, which already entered literary fiction in 1774 with Goethe's *Werther*" (179), the novels for adolescents are not as radical or "polyvalent" as adult literature's novel of adolescence (174). Furthermore, some novels written for adolescents are not as modern because they are written in a more traditional manner; they are less ambiguous, more conforming, and often take up the themes of the *Bildungsroman*. When they are similar to novels of adolescence, however, they are more like those of the turn of the century than contemporary novels (179).

Sonja Svensson's view on the question of whether to incorporate children's literature in national histories of literature supports my decision to exclude this genre from my study. She argues that books written for children have literary merits, reflect a nation's literary achievement, and should be respected as a literary genre. They should, however, remain a separate genre because they differ from adult literature. It is obvious, she writes, that "[i]n the beginning, books for children were an offspring of adult literature and were regarded as a means of education and upbringing rather than as works of art," but these books have also developed aesthetically and have grown in quantity (57). It is therefore important that they be recognized.

> demands, the turn of the century's novels of adolescence often end with the death of the still young protagonist, and no discovery of identity or meaning takes place. (173)

The conclusion of these novels, in which the young hero often commits suicide, is the result of unresolved conflict with the world in which the protagonist lives (Grenz 172-73). This conflict, White states, is stressed in the novel of adolescence and is the major factor differentiating it from the *Bildungsroman* and the initiation novel. Although conflict is apparent in the latter two genres, it is not the primary focus as it is in the novel of adolescence. Instead, conflict, when it appears, plays a secondary role to the character's overall development (White 12-13).

There are some unique characteristics in the narrative structure of novels with female adolescents. A possible explanation for this fact is discussed by Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, who argue that the conflicts which arise in women's narratives are reflected in a narrative structure that is recurrent and has repeated thematic tensions. These critics indicate two narrative patterns: the first is a linear progression, which is adapted from the male *Bildungsroman* and shows a chronological development from childhood to maturity. They cite examples such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, George Elliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and *Children of Violence*, and Toni Morrison's *Sula,* all of which trace a continuous development of conflicts in childhood to acceptable resolutions, although imperfect, in adulthood, thus providing a conclusion to the protagonist's apprenticeship. This progression varies in the female novel of development, sometimes with the return to the past, evolution or death (11).

The second pattern present in these narratives is the awakening, described by Rachel Vinrace, in which "development is delayed by inadequate education until adulthood, when it blossoms momentarily, then dissolves" (qtd. in Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 11). There is often no gradual progression in this course of development, and an unconventional time frame is also apparent. Novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*, Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* and Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* are prime examples of this narrative structure, for in these works the protagonists grow after they have attained their expected goal of marriage and then, after a break from a marital authority, which often includes adultery, the protagonist recognizes that she has developed (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 11-12). Rather than occurring in episodic form, however, this development is apparent in "flashes of recognition," that is, in singular moments of realization or "brief epiphanic moments" (Vinrace, qtd. in Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 12).

In novels in which the process of a girl's coming of age is the focus rather than a longer period of development, a number of separate but related themes emerge. In these coming-of-age novels one can identify such conflicts as the adolescent's desire for autonomy versus society's expectation of her involvement in the family and/or the community, the emerging woman's loyalty to other women and her attraction to men, the young woman's need for expressing sexuality versus societal expectations of suppressing it, and the event of a crisis situation, such as war or poverty, and its role in the adolescent's coming of age. Novels of adolescence concentrate on the way the protagonist comes of age and the stages that mark his or her passage to maturity, both

of which are themes; novels with female protagonists focus additionally on social expectations of gender (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 12). The narratives of the novels chosen for this study depict the adolescent years of the protagonists in detail. My discussion of these works will focus on the way in which the protagonist is depicted, the narrative structure, and the themes which are presented in various contexts and settings.

Chapter 2

Barbara Frischmuth: *Die Klosterschule*

Barbara Frischmuth was born on July 5, 1941, in Alttausee, a resort town in Styria where her parents were the proprietors of a hotel (Vansant 144). The author never knew her father, who was killed in World War II in 1943. Although her hometown was isolated, she was given a lot of freedom to swim and go wherever she pleased (Friedl 115). The luxury of such freedom ended at age ten when she began attending the residential convent school. At first she was impressed with the differences in her new life, especially the opportunity to live with so many other girls in a community and to have access to a library with many sources of information. Later she realized that she had actually traded her previous freedom for a more restricted and disciplined environment, and after four years, she asked her mother to remove her from this institution. Her mother, who was not particularly religious, had only wanted her to attend the convent school because there had been no other school for university-bound youths in the area; since Frischmuth was so unhappy--she threatened to go to work as a dishwasher--she was allowed to attend a newly-built *Gymnasium* at age fourteen (Friedl 116).

In an interview with Harald Friedl, Frischmuth admits that because she was raised in an isolated town, she was curious about exotic languages and places. She knew she wanted to become a writer and calculated that in this process she could earn her living by translating. Originally, Frischmuth wanted to study languages from the Middle East and chose Turkish because that was the only such language offered at the University of Graz. Eventually, she received a scholarship to travel to Turkey and

upon her return studied Hungarian (Friedl 115-18). Jacqueline Vansant writes that after Frischmuth received her translator's degree in 1964, she began doctoral work in Oriental studies at the University of Vienna, which, as Frischmuth notes, gave her the opportunity to live in Turkey for two years and helped her to appreciate its culture, which is reflected in her novel *Das Verschwinden des Schattens in der Sonne* (1973). In 1966 she discontinued her studies and began writing and translating. After the birth of her son Florian, the relationship between children and adults became an important theme in her works. She has written over twenty books for adults and children since her first novel was published in 1968 and was awarded the Anton-Wildgans Prize and the Literature Prize of the City of Vienna in 1973 and 1975 respectively (Vansant 144).

The themes of Barbara Frischmuth's novels vary, but a predominant theme in *Die Klosterschule* is women's experiences and limitations in a male-dominated society. Some of her novels, such as *Die Klosterschule*, reflect her interest in language and language theory and its effect on children's language. As the author herself claims, "For me, children mean a lack of inhibition, they mean spontaneity. I want to know how the world finds its way into children's language" (qtd. in Fiddler 252). Another characteristic of Frischmuth's writing is the inclusion of fantasy in many of her works. She notes: "Wenn ich sage, ich lebe mit Tieren und Feen und all diesen Wesen in einer Welt, dann tue ich das wirklich, indem ich über sie schreibe, indem ich sie in mein Denken hereinnehme" (qtd. in Friedl 121). She adds that she enjoys depicting fairies who have human qualities doing things which women cannot do because they are prevented from achieving them by social mechanisms; they are,

for her, "Wunschfiguren" who also have human components; that is, they are not omnipotent beings and they make mistakes, but they are more sovereign, and they understand and know more (121). It is one manner in which Frischmuth demonstrates the problems women face in a society dominated by men, who create the "social mechanisms" which restrict women. Often, in many of her works, writes Jacqueline Vansant,

> [Frischmuth] strives to make women's experiences visible and to validate them; she points to the destructive aspects of a society that measures the norm by its male citizens. To convey this, she presents her readers with a panoply of women's lives and represents women's struggles for self-actualization, sexual politics in heterosexual relationships, women's friendships, and the relationship between women's position in society and the production of art by women. (145).

The social mechanisms resulting from this one-sided norm are harmful to society, according to Frischmuth, and for this reason, I believe, she likes to show fantastic figures, who, because they are not human, are not subject to the daily demands on their human counterparts.

Die Klosterschule is one novel which shows a strictly ordered environment in which young women are taught to obey rules and respect a hierarchy based on patriarchal authority. It is an environment in which, as Fiddler states, religion is used as a primary discourse to raise young women to be passive objects of male dominance--whether in marriage or in service to the Catholic Church--rather than active, thinking individuals (252). When I read this novel, I was struck by how very

strict life in the convent school was and how much control was exercised over the girls. Yet the events of this novel and the strict school are not unusual, since Austria is a traditional and conservative society, very much influenced by the Catholic Church, and *Die Klosterschule* was written in 1968, a time when women were only beginning to assert their rights (Fiddler 252, 243).

The structure of this novel is not that of a chronological narrative; rather, Frischmuth describes everyday events of life in the boarding school and the method of training and education in fourteen chapters focusing on episodes that are independent of one another and only loosely related. They are excerpts from a typical day, with its rules about what is allowed and what is not and the narrator's thoughts on these events. For example, the chapter "Die Anstandsstunde" is about a lesson in finding the right husband and acting correctly when he is found. The nuns assume that each girl will marry, but if she does not, there is another choice: that of missionary work. This chapter is followed by "Der Traum," which is not at all connected to the previous episode. Instead, it deals with the narrator's fantasy about life after death. In her interview with Josef-Hermann Sauter, Frischmuth discusses this disconnected aspect of the novel, saying that what she wanted to convey most and what was important was the manner of speaking and the control over children by adults through language (Sauter 238). Thus, Frischmuth's use of language is the most prominent feature of this novel, for the tone is satirical, and often replete with clichés and proverbs. In describing the daily routine, the narrator repeats verbatim what she and her classmates hear in school (Fiddler 251). Frischmuth maintains that a narrative structure with a plot would only have interfered with this technique: "Da wäre mir eine Handlung nur

im Wege gewesen, weil sie eine eigene Dramatik entwickelt hätte, an der ich eigentlich nicht interessiert war" (qtd. in Sauter 238). Because language is so integral to the way in which the children are taught in this setting, the effect of Frischmuth's choice of language will be discussed in connection with some of the themes apparent in this novel.

There are several themes commonly found in novels of adolescent development which are present in Frischmuth's novel. The theme of the impact of social mechanisms on female development focuses on the limited options in formal education. In Esther Labovitz's discussion of the *Bildungsroman*, she states that "schooling as formal education may be shown as a frustrating element in the child's life, while new options for learning may present themselves as the adolescent reaches out into the world around him" (3). These options would include, for instance, travel and meeting people from different walks of life, as in the case of Goethe's protagonist Wilhelm Meister. Also apparent in *Die Klosterschule* is the adolescent's discovery of the individual self. This, write Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, presents other conflicts: "Women's developmental tasks and goals, which must be realized in a culture pervaded by male norms, generate distinctive narrative tensions--between autonomy and relationship, separation and community, loyalty to women and attraction to men" (12). The conflict of separation from the community of students at the convent school is apparent when the protagonist decides to leave. Finally, sexual awakening, or, rather, the attempted suppression of sexual urges and sexual curiosity, is also evident. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland and other authors, such as Mary Jean DeMarr and Jane S. Bakerman, identify this stage as a normal part of adolescence (12, 1).

The theme of education and the institution of the convent school are central to the novel and reflect the author's own experiences in a boarding school. She states that these experiences made her aware of the ways in which institutions purposely manipulate children, and that the main dissatisfaction portrayed in *Die Klosterschule* concerns this manipulation: "Ich kann mich erinnern, als ich selbst dort war, sind mir die Zwänge überhaupt nicht bewußt gewesen. . . . ich war sozusagen systemkonform. Erst zehn Jahre später ist mir aufgegangen, was da alles so daringesteckt hat und wie man die Köpfe von Kindern manipulieren kann" (qtd. in Sauter 237). This manipulation of the students to make them conform and the limited freedom given to the students were her main complaints about her school.[8] Frischmuth maintains that she is not specifically targeting the convent school and that it is not the only type of institution which uses these mechanisms: "Es ist mir aber natürlich nicht um die Klosterschule gegangen, sondern um Zwänge überhaupt, das heißt um geschlossene Systeme; die man Kindern in frühen Jahren sozusagen ins Hirn setzt und aus denen sie kaum ausbrechen können, es sei denn mit einer enormen Anstrengung" (qtd. in Sauter 237). Frischmuth also asserts that to write about her personal experience and to be most authentic, she chose the convent school as her focus, rather than another type of institution (Sauter 237). While she points out that she does not want to criticize the convent school and, by implication, its religious dogma, one cannot ignore the fact

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[8] It would be interesting to compare this novel to other novels depicting boarding school life--those with male and female protagonists--in order to see if the authors had the same dissatisfaction with the manipulative pedagogical methods of that institution. Often, I believe, the adult perspective is more forgiving, for he/she has come to realize that there were good reasons for the rigorous and regimented way in which they were taught.

that the Catholic doctrine is the basis of the pedagogical methods of this school. Frischmuth could have chosen another system, where the methods used to manipulate children are similar: a military boarding school or a home for juvenile offenders would have been such options. It is understandable that Frischmuth wanted to be as authentic as possible--many authors seek new experiences so that they can write about them--but in writing about a Catholic institution and the ways in which children are taught, she is taking the risk that her work will be interpreted as a criticism of the Church's hierarchy. Indeed, Dietmar Grieser explores the authenticity of the novel and attempts to discover how close to the author's experiences the described events are. He, too, suspects that she is using the instance of the Catholic boarding school to be most authentic:

> Barbara Frischmuth spricht von diesem Mädchenpensionat, weil es ihr erlaubt, authentisch zu sein. . . . Ja, ja, ich weiß schon, wie ich's zu verstehen habe: Nur nicht die Dinge zu wörtlich nehmen, zu sehr beim Namen! Wie leicht kann sich einer betroffen fühlen und murren. Es ist ja eines der klassischen Werkstattprobleme des Schriftstellers: bei der Umsetzung des persönlich Erlebten ins literarisch Veröffentlichte anzuecken. . . ."Jede Ähnlichkeit mit lebenden Personen wäre rein zufällig", beugt wohlweislich so mancher Filmvorspann vor, sichert sich wohlweislich so manches Impressum ab. (171)

During his visit to the convent school in Orth, Grieser interviewed some of the nuns and lay faculty and found that some of them were offended by Frischmuth's description of the convent school; one of the lay faculty members even wrote the author a rebuttal. A former student also recognized the school immediately upon

reading the book (Grieser 174-75). Moreover, Grieser witnessed one nun's agitation when he asked whether any of the students would attend a reading given by Frischmuth (177). Frischmuth could easily have invented another situation--as many authors do--or researched other institutions if she had wanted to avoid a misinterpretation of the intent of this novel. The fact, however, that the novel reflects so much of her life in the convent school leads me to believe that she is criticizing more than the manipulation through language of a closed school system; indeed, she is criticizing the pedagogical system she experienced in this particular religious school.

Arnold Blumer maintains that this novel severely criticizes religion and makes a strong argument that the mechanisms used to control these students are meant to reinforce patriarchal authority over women.[9] There is a big difference between this novel and works about male adolescents which focus on the same theme, such as Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat,* and Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad.* These authors also describe situations where students were subjected to what Blumer terms a "deformierendes Erziehungssystem" (187). The result is that the young women are then subject to a concept of womanhood determined by men, which corresponds to men's wishes and their desire to dominate women. Blumer concludes: " . . . [Frauen] werden auf ein männlich bestimmtes Weiblichkeitsbild hin erzogen [durch das deformierende

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[9] Allyson Fiddler and Arnold Blumer contend that, because these authoritative methods to manipulate children have their origin in the Catholic religion, Frischmuth is indeed criticizing religion (252, 187). Gerald Chapple, on the other hand, disagrees, maintaining that her "purpose was linguistic, not religious" (19).

Erziehungssystem], das der Frau den Status eines 'Objekts männlicher Wunschvorstellung und Verfügungsgewalt' zuerkennt" (187).

Citing feminist critics, Blumer argues that women are not often appreciated for the active role they play in culture. Because little credit is given to women who help shape culture, there is a need for another version of history. "Wir wollen als Frauen einen neuen Zugang zur Geschichte finden, der allerdings nicht bloß die einfache Wiederholung männlicher Verhaltensmuster oder Privilegien meint, sondern die Frage nach einer neuen, eigenen, anderen Lebensfähigkeit beinhaltet" (Renate Möhrmann, qtd. in Blumer 184). Some women, Blumer maintains, advocate the creation of an individual female language and consciousness; they reject the male-dominated world and construct a counter culture. In the midst of this argument, however, one confronts the question of how to use language differently without the male-oriented definition of language and culture, that is, without the "Herrschaftssprache, die die Wörter, die Diktion, die Syntax,--die alle Felder besetzt hält" (Johanna Wördemann, qtd. in Blumer 185).

Frischmuth claims that her novel is not about religion and what happens in the convent school itself but instead about the domination and regimentation used in these types of institutions. Yet the book conveys a clear sense that religion plays an important role in the successful manifestation of power and thus supports Blumer's contention that the dialogue of the novel reflects the male-oriented hierarchy of the Church:

> Durch die Aneinanderreihung und Häufung kirchlich geprägter Floskeln wird so von Anfang an klar, daß die Erzählerin sich ironisch distanziert von einer

> Erziehung, die das Denken und Handeln der Mädchen auf eine menschliche Ordnung ausrichtet, in der Denken, Handeln und Fühlen mit männlichen Personal- und Possessivpronomen versehen wird, in der Menschsein männlich sein bedeutet. (Blumer 187)

Indeed, the language of this religion does center on men. Blumer cites several examples to support this argument. For instance, in the first chapter of *Die Klosterschule,* "Ora et Labora," the narrator, describing the students' schedule of prayer, begins with the sentence "Wir, Angehörige der katholischen Jungschar, Zöglinge des Klosters, Schülerinnen der Ober- und Unterstufe, beten täglich und gerne . . . " (7). In fact, they are told to pray daily, and it is a rule they must follow. Later in the chapter, it becomes apparent that the intention or the purpose for their joint prayers is to benefit man:

> . . . so ist ihm [der Mann] doch kundgetan, welchen Weg er als den rechten zu betrachten und nach Kraft und Möglichkeit zu verfolgen hat, damit ihm zuteil werde, worauf sein irdisches Hoffen sich ausrichtet und worauf sein menschliches Streben abzielt, nämlich, gerechten Lohn zu empfangen für seinen Kampf im Dienste des Glaubens, der Gerechtigkeit und der Liebe, zum Schutz der Gemeinde, der Armen und Siechen, der Waisen und Witwen, wie es seine Pflicht ist, die zu erfüllen er sich stets angelegen sein lassen soll, nicht nur zum Ruhme der Kirche, sondern auch zugunsten seiner Nächsten, die ihm Brüder und Schwestern sind und die er lieben möge wie sich selbst. . . . (9)

The pronouns used for man, designated by "er" or "ihn" or "sein," and not the collective "wir" or "unser," or "sie" or "ihr," support the idea that the act of prayer is

meant to benefit a male individual and not a female individual or a group of people; they are praying for *his* hope, *his* striving, *his* battle and not *theirs*. The ironic distancing to which Blumer refers is achieved in enumerating this list of goals with a masculine personal pronoun, which suggests that the thoughts, actions, and emotions of the students are expressed not by the pronoun which includes them but by a masculine one, implying that humanity is limited to masculine beings (187).

In examining the masculine hierarchy evident in this novel, Blumer points out that the dominant pedagogical method in the convent school is signified by order, so that the students can better serve a higher will, the will of God. The narrator in *Die Klosterschule* thus states: "Wir sollen, ob wir wollen oder nicht, unseren Willen einem höheren unterordnen, da dieser uns gewollt und wir ihn mit dem unseren stets wollen sollen" (15).[10] The girls are subject to such strict limits on their everyday activities that the convent school seems similar to a military establishment, Blumer concludes, which, by implication, adds a strong masculine aspect to their training (189). For example, in the segment of the novel entitled "Spazierengehen," the narrator describes how they are told to walk: "Auf dem Platz vor dem Schulportal richten wir uns aus, hintereinander, in gleichem Abstand" (11). As in a military drill, they must line up, one behind the other, keep an even distance between the rows, and follow the direction which the accompanying nun, Sister Assunta, assigns:

Wir sollen in Gehordnung bleiben, wir sollen uns an den Händen halten, wir

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[10] Petra M. Bagley correctly notes that the masculine pronouns could refer to either God or man. She writes: "Ambivalence exists regarding to whom 'einem höheren', 'dieser' and 'ihn' refer, whether it is to God or to man in his role as husband" (72).

> sollen englisch sprechen, wir sollen uns nicht absondern. Wir sollen in Reih und Glied bleiben, nicht außer Rand und Band geraten, keine Extratour wollen, nicht aus der Reihe tanzen . . . Wir sollen Disziplin halten, uns in die Ordnung fügen, die Gebote des Anstandes nicht außer acht lassen. (14-15)

In the episode entitled "Wesen der Gemeinschaft," the militaristic regimentation of the school is further depicted by the description of how closets and cabinets are searched weekly but not on the same day, so that the girls will never know when to expect inspection. The students are awakened in the middle of the night and forced to clean their shoes in the cold basement if they had forgotten to do so earlier. When they fail to follow other rules contributing to the conventions of order, they must kneel at night in the dark hallway until the supervising nun allows them to return to bed. In this regimentation, one can see similarities to events described in military school novels such as Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, where order, cleanliness, and neatness are also a priority. But the importance of order in the convent school, says Blumer, is intertwined with religious doctrine (189). He notes that because the sentence about order, quoted above, has strong masculine undertones, this higher will, which requires the girls' obedience, is not only God's will but can be understood as the will of men or the manifestation of patriarchal control. Blumer continues:

> Hier wird Sprache in dem Sinne gebraucht, wie Brigitte Wartmann das gefordert hat, nämlich um "ihren ideologisch verborgenen Gebrauch zu Tage treten" zu lassen, allerdings vorerst noch nicht, um eine Alternative zu den patriarchalischen Kulturmustern zu entwerfen, sondern lediglich, um die

> "unbewußt gebliebenen (männlichen) Deutungsmuster im eigenen Denken, Fühlen und Handeln aufzuspüren." (Blumer 189)

Order is very important for the patriarchal culture, especially the Christian version of this culture, and there is great fear of the dissolution of order and eventually the ensuing chaos (Blumer 189).

It is probable that many similar boarding schools existed in the 1950s, in which strict regimentation and lack of personal freedom were the order of the day. Indeed, many schools may have been extremely strict and even cruel. A case in point would be the convent school depicted in Claire Martin's novel *Dans un gant de fer* (1965). In his article Richard Coe compares various boarding school novels and comments:

> As a picture of intellectual brain-washing, emotional blackmail, inquisitorial espionage, religious domineering and sheer, sadistic delight in causing physical and mental suffering, Claire Martin's reminiscences of the years she spent as a boarder in her Quebec convent leave the English "Public-Schools" at their nineteenth-century worst as havens of sanity and security by comparison. (25)

Certainly boys must have suffered in a similar manner in Quebec's boarding schools and those of other countries besides Canada. One could also argue that boys were also raised to respect and obey the school's leaders and the will of God represented by the Church in a Catholic boarding school. Quite possibly, most young men who experienced a regimented school system will not attain a position of authority, either as a priest or as a lay person. But, in the North American and European context of the 1950s, even a man who performs menial labor will have respect in his home and will

be the head of the household.[11] If he does not marry, he will have certain professional advantages which a woman does not have and the ability to earn more money, which will give him financial independence. Even though laws establishing equality between men and women have been established since that time, men generally still earn higher salaries than women, due primarily to the fact that many women leave the workplace to raise children.

Blumer's argument is echoed in Hanna Schnedl-Bubeniček's book, in which she contends the following: "Die kirchlich institutionalisierte Macht--im konkreten Fall die Erzieher der Klosterschule--legitimiert ihren Absolutheitsanspruch aus ihren religiösen Vorstellungen" (193). In this case, the "kirchlich institutionalisierte Macht" is a male-controlled institution whose laws are made by a strict hierarchy of the pope, cardinals, and bishops, and which excludes women. According to Blumer, it is in the Church's best interests to maintain order but also to remind its followers that the ultimate authority is God, represented by men. For example, the students are told: "Wo immer eine [Gewalt] besteht, ist sie von Gott angeordnet. Wer sich also gegen die Obrigkeit auflehnt, lehnt sich gegen die Anordnung Gottes auf!" (88). Whether transmitted subconsciously or consciously, the hierarchy of the convent school comes from the Catholic Church, which represents patriarchal culture.

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[11] There are several German novels which explicitly depict the father's superior position in the family. For example, in Irmgard Keun's novel *Gilgi, eine von uns* the father is the only member of the family who may eat an egg for breakfast. The subservient, dim-witted mother is portrayed in contrast to the hearty, dominant father in Gisela Elsner's *Die Riesenzwerge*. In this case, Franziska Meyer states, the father's ability to eat large portions of food is depicted as a virtue and Elsner's novel, which parallels West Germany's new economic strength, "depicts an oppressive horror scenario of unrestrained gluttony and egocentric greed whose all-devouring patriarchal force rises to the level of cannibalism" (50).

Schnedl-Bubeniček discusses the importance of order at length, especially in the context of how language is used. In this novel, she claims, the distancing effect of religious language develops as a result of repressed forms of language and lifestyle. She explains that because the ideology of the convent school is characterized by its spatial and temporal isolation, it remains without development. In this closed institution, a mechanized and perpetuated order is found, which is based on obedience to a hierarchically superior authority:

> Gegenüber den Zöglingen befindet sie [die Klosterschule] sich in einem ständigen Legitimationszwang, der durch den Rückzug auf tabuisierte Instanzen der religiösen Vorstellungswelt abgewehrt wird. Die Forderung der Unterordnung unter ihre Gesetzmäßigkeiten wird gleichgesetzt mit dem Akt der Bejahung des göttlichen Willens. (Schnedl-Bubeniček 190)

Because the will of God is sacred, analysis or criticism of these established norms is seen as blasphemous.

Like Blumer, Schnedl-Bubeniček also gives examples of the order and regimentation and of the important role they play in the ideology of the convent school (193). The students' daily activities, such as their walks, are regimented; all of the closets and cabinets are inspected; there is always a nun present, even at night, to see that they are obeying rules; and if they make too much noise in private areas, they are questioned. They are inspected on personal cleanliness, too, and if they are found with dirt on their faces or necks, they must wash themselves immediately. Those who will not awaken at the assigned time and who still do not arise after being splashed with cold water are lifted out of bed and thrown on the floor with the mattress, which not

only ensures they will awaken but also forces them to do more work because they must then remake their beds.

Indeed, the threat of punishment is always present and is used to maintain order. On the eve of December 6th, the feast day of St. Nicholas, punishment and reward are distributed based on behavior during the year leading up to that day. Those who have been obedient throughout the year are rewarded by a man, dressed as a bishop, with baked goods and nuts, while those who were disobedient are told to stand in a group and are chased by a man who, posing as the devil, hits them with a switch. Eventually, the residents come to expect punishment as a regular part of their lives. For example, the narrator and her friend Milla are involved in a kissing contest which ends with Milla, who always goes too far, biting her partner. The two girls are first asked whether they have no shame, to which they have no response and seem indifferent. When they are threatened with punishment, which would be a report of this incident to a higher authority, they barely react: "So geht die Sache eben ihren gewohnten Gang, 'Strafe muß sein' oder so was Ähnliches, was wir ebenfalls erwartet haben" (62).

The episode entitled "Das Glück" illustrates the way in which students compensate for punishment by overeating. In one scene, they eat seated across from the crucifix, a symbol of, among other things, physical suffering. This is significant because their overeating will also result in their physical discomfort. The students only engage in this eating activity to comfort themselves when they are punished: "Nicht immer bereiten wir uns das Vergnügen zu essen. Es muß einen Grund dafür geben. Ein Mißgeschick zum Beispiel, das uns ereilt, veranlaßt uns zum Essen" (50).

In this particular instance, they have all been forbidden to go home for the weekend because of a few students who were not quiet at night. The chapter both reflects the ideology of the convent school and offers indications of childish spite (Schnedl-Bubeniček 193). At mealtime, on the one hand, the students are told to eat in order to grow: "Das Essen, das uns vorgesetzt wird, schmeckt uns nicht. Es ist ein Essen, von dem angenommen wird, daß wir es für unser Wachstum brauchen" (49). Yet their regular meals do not satisfy them. Their pleasure in eating instead stems from the more delicious food which is sent to them from home. The narrator's description of this "Glück" is tinged with the underlying sadness which causes them to eat. How their tongues move to mix the tastes of margarine, bread and marmelade, how they wash them down with different types of herbal tea, how their stomachs swell so that their apron strings become tight, and how they have trouble breathing are all described to convey the idea that eating is their only source of pleasure at a time of discontent and disappointment. Unlike other activities, for which they are likely to be punished, an advantage to this activity, the narrator states, is that it is "ein sicheres Glück," and little effort is required to attain this pleasure (50).

Immediately following the description of all the things the students must do are the things they enjoy doing or would like to do. In this context, the reader notes that the young women do whatever they can to disobey orders and thus attempt to develop according to their will despite the strict rules. As Fiddler states, the way the narrator describes their daily routines reflects the "narrator's disquiet and mental, if not physical resistance" (251). A series of phrases indicating what the students do in the

school is marked with the repetitive phrase "wir sollen"[12] but breaks off with a description of what they decide to do to the contrary: "Wenn niemand schaut, werfen wir Schneebälle an die Dachränder der Häuser oder an die Äste der Bäume und bücken uns nach herabgefallenen Eiszapfen, die wir lutschen, so lange, bis wir ertappt werden" (13).

The rules that the students disobey indicate their attempt to include the outside world in this isolated environment. Real and fantasized stories and secrets contrast with the enclosed, regimented world of the convent, notes Schnedl-Bubeniček (193). Georg Pichler presents an interesting discussion of how the exotic plays a role in this closed environment, for in their restricted setting, fantasy is one means of escape (61). In order not to waste time during their walks, the students are instructed to practice their English, but instead, the girls move their mouths to form words which look as if they are speaking English; they still manage to convey a story or message and "formen mit dem Munde Wörter, die wie englische ausgesprochen werden können . . . [die] keine englischen sind, was aber nicht bemerkt wird, wenn nicht ein Ohr hinter schwarzem Schleier sich uns zuneigt" (Frischmuth 15). In this language which they have invented, then, they tell each other stories, all the while using words which sound like English. If they suspect that someone is listening, they immediately speak English and repeat phrases which they have memorized. On their Sunday walks they

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[12] Examples of what they are told they should do are: "Wir sollen in Gehordnung bleiben, wir sollen uns an den Händen halten, wir sollen englisch sprechen, wir sollen uns nicht absondern. Wir sollen in Reih und Glied bleiben. . . . Wir sollen Disziplin halten . . ." (14-15).

are allowed to speak about whatever they want, and this is when their imagination breaks free from the regimented routine of the convent school.

On Sunday, their day of rest, they talk about what they imagine other places--the more exotic the name, the better--would be like and the kind of lives they would lead in those places. As Pichler points out, "[i]n die enge, provinzielle, streng normierte Welt der Klosterschule dringen auf diese Weise plötzlich Bilder aus der Ferne, die schnell als Bilderbuchvorstellungen und Gemeinplätze zu erkennen sind, dennoch aber die Wünsche der Mädchen erfüllen" (61). The list of things they would like to see or experience reflects a variety of people and places but includes experiences based on stereotypical images and reveals the girls' and the narrator's lack of knowledge. Their childlike naiveté is also apparent, for they mention other things which interest them but in an unrelated manner, listing nouns which have nothing to do with each other. The fantasies of these students are, indeed, the antithesis to the world in which they live, and they form a stark contrast to their lifeless everyday routine (Pichler 62):

> Es ist auch die Rede von Kümmeltürken, Hottentoten, sibirischer Kälte, von der russischen Seele . . . mongolischer Verheerung, skandinavischer Reinheit, von der Faulheit der Neger, der Eitelkeit der Franzosen, dem Freiheitsdrang der Iren, der Falschheit der Italiener (Katzelmacher), dem Temperament der Sizilianer . . . Ansonsten interessieren uns noch die Tiere des Urwalds, etwas Geheimnisvolles und Geschichten aus dem Leben. (Frischmuth 18-19)

As Pichler states, "Allein die Naivität des Schlußsatzes entlarvt die Ahnungslosigkeit der Kinder, die sich hier eine phantastische Gegenwelt zum tristen und leblosen Alltag schaffen" (62).

The young women have been taught to follow rules, but they do not do so faithfully; the only motivation they have to obey is the threat of punishment. They are not motivated to follow rules for ideological reasons, perhaps because they are not convinced that such a course of action will benefit them. No prayers are assigned which specifically ask for guidance in their spiritual path. For example, they are told to write something personal, but the intent is not to seek a close connection to God, but to offer an argument for God's existence and power. The answer to the question "warum wir angehalten werden, zu beten" is answered with a phrase reinforcing the ultimate power of God. He is the creator, He sent his son to suffer, and for these reasons, the students are told to pray to Him. "Daß Gott ist, erkennen wir aus der sichtbaren Welt und aus dem Gewissen, sagt Kreuzschnabel" (65). They are told to believe this and to convince others, but they themselves do not come close to attaining a spiritual awareness, an individual relationship to God, in order to believe in this ideology. For this reason, they continue to exert their willful protest.

The types of exercises used in the religion class to reinforce the student's Catholic faith are categorized under the headings "Frage," "Merksatz," or "Übung":

> Frage. Warum verehren wir das göttliche Herz Jesu? Merksatz: Als Sinnbild der Liebe des Erlösers verehren wir das göttliche Herz Jesu. . . . Die unendliche Liebe des Erlösers mahnt mich, folgsam zu sein. Übung: Erkläre, warum wir angehalten werden, zu beten: Heiligstes Herz Jesu, Du Quellborn

> des Lebens und der Heiligkeit! . . . Denken wir darüber nach! Bedenkt, daß es euch bewiesen werden kann! Denkt euch Sätze aus, mit denen ihr den Satz vom "Gott ist" den Nichtgläubigen beweisen könnt! Ich denke. Ich denke mir einen Ort. An dem Ort sind Berge. Höhere und niedrigere Berge. (64-65)

In the form of these pedantic phrases, without personal comments or interpretation and without the benefit of a classroom discussion, students are told to memorize a formula and repeat the "Merksatz." Students are not encouraged to truly reflect on a response to the question "Warum verehren wir das göttliche Herz Jesu?" Rather, they simply repeat what they should remember: "Als Sinnbild der Liebe des Erlösers verehren wir das göttliche Herz Jesu" (64). The narrator is unable to provide an appropriate response to the exercise "Erkläre, warum wir angehalten werden zu beten: Heiligstes Herz Jesu, Du Quellborn des Lebens und der Heiligkeit!" and cannot explain ways in which she would convert a person with another belief, perhaps because the students had never engaged in this discussion in class. Instead of completing the sentence "Gott ist," she allows her mind to wander to far away places (65). In this religion class, the students are asked to repeat the lines so that they will eventually believe what they say. This is yet another example of the order the school constantly reinforces, for the students are expected to repeat the memorized phrase when they hear the proper cues. It is a pedagogical method which reinforces conformity but does not permit any expression of individuality.

The religious indoctrination of this institution is also emphasized by Frischmuth's use of language. For example, she describes how the students are given a list of ways in which they can demonstrate their piety. Conveniently, the items on

the list also help maintain the desired order in the school. The list of things they do for Jesus not only includes acts of hygiene, such as brushing one's teeth, washing one's neck, and putting on a fresh apron on Fridays, but also includes examples of moral behavior, such as becoming angry when someone tarnishes the image of the Sacred Heart, refraining from excessive behavior, or performing acts of love, instilling humility, and avoiding rage. Activities displaying religious devotion are also listed:

> Das Herz Jesu in sich und sich im Herzen Jesu sein lassen. Zu vielen Zeiten eine Andacht zum Herzen Jesu verrichten. Glauben, daß das Herz Jesu das Herz Jesu ist. Das Herz Jesu in vielerlei Gestalt verehren. . . . Sich für jede gute Note eine Herz-Jesu-Marke kaufen. Die Herz-Jesu-Marke auf eine Herz-Jesu-Karte kleben. Die Herz-Jesu-Karte dem Herzen Jesu weihen und sie zur Freude der Eltern nach Hause schicken. Dem Herzen Jesu jedmögliche Ehre erweisen. Allein oder mit anderen. In Worten und Werken. (63)

The narrator states that these excerpts were learned during the catechism lesson from the textbook which Professor Kreuzschnabel held. Thus, this randomly connected list of things to do for Jesus gives the impression that the children are taught that if one automatically follows these rules and behaves in such a manner, rather than reflecting upon the meaning of these phrases, one is automatically a pious individual. Even behavior unrelated to the religion, such as doing acts of personal hygiene, is not performed for one's own self-esteem or even one's good health but for Jesus.

The ironic use of language is evident when Frischmuth uses religious rhetoric in various contexts throughout the novel. In some instances, the language is ironic because adult activities are depicted from a child's point of view and the narrator's

rendition of the activity sounds ridiculous and absurd.[13] Indeed, Frischmuth is interested in how the imagination of children works and how they express themselves in language. In an interview she explains: "In der 'Amoralischen Kinderklapper' ging es mir in erster Linie darum, nachzukonstruieren, wie Kinder mit Hilfe der Sprache an Welt gewinnen, wie sie diese Sprache nicht bedingungslos übernehmen, sondern daß sie mit ihr auch sofort etwas machen" (qtd. in Sauter 239). A child's interpretation of the language used in the convent school is apparent in several passages of this novel. In one example, two girls are beginning to engage in a kissing contest and look to determine if any adults are in the vicinity. They see Sister Theodora, whom the girls dislike because she is a strict disciplinarian. Their dislike for her becomes obvious in their description of her as black from head to toe, implying that she, in her black dress, is like a dark, evil figure:

> Sie hielt ein schwarzes Brevier in Händen. Schwarz waren auch ihre Kutte, ihre Strümpfe und Schuhe, desgleichen der Beutel, den sie überm Arm trug. Sie sah aus wie die Spinnerin des hl. Franziskus. . . . Und nicht genug, daß sie außen ganz schwarz ist, bis auf die weiße Leinenversteifung um Kopf und Kragen, es stellt sich, als sie den Mund auftut, heraus, daß auch die Plomben ihrer Zähne schwarz geworden sind. (61)

The black imagery is even juxtaposed with Sister Theodora's reprimands: "Du blutest ja, sagt die Theodora dann plötzlich und geht auf Milla zu. . . . Sie aber nimmt den

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[13] Irony in children's language is explained by Christopher Rolfe in the context of several novels from Quebec (71).

einen Arm aus dem Ärmel des anderen und greift Milla--auch die Ränder ihrer Nägel sind schwarz--auf den Mund" (62).

In another example, the narrator describes the movements of Sister Assunta, who is more popular: "Bei den gewissen Geschichten steht Sister Assunta auf, wandelt den Gang entlang, das offene Brevier vor sich hinhaltend, wie eine Suppenterrine, ein Fest des Glaubens, gefestigt im Glauben, fest in dem Glauben, es wurde uns vergeben werden, wie auch sie uns vergab, was uns nicht zukam" (48). This sentence is an example of the narrator's "inverted religious imagery," for she deliberately uses a phrase which appears to be a combination of rhetoric from a pamphlet and the Lord's Prayer, and relates it to a person (Fiddler 251). The students' fondness for Sister Assunta is evident, and they like her because she is loyal to the girls when they break the rules by telling their stories at night. The narrator varies the phrase "fest in dem Glauben" to illustrate the different meanings this phrase could have, but it also describes Sister Assunta, who, although she has willingly and unquestioningly devoted her life to serving the Catholic Church and its ideological teaching, shows some kindness to the girls by letting them indulge in the storytelling. This time it is she, rather than God, who forgives their sins.

These instances serve as examples of how the students use religious rhetoric and apply it to other people and events in their lives. In the two cases of Sister Theodora and Sister Assunta, the use of such rhetoric intermingled with everyday situations results in a ridiculous depiction of the event itself and undermines the sacred quality of the rhetoric. Mererid Puw Davies summarizes this well with the following:

> *Die Klosterschule* renders transparent the rhetorical figures of Catholic 'myth' by means of montage and alienation effects which render its normal invisible internal contradictions evident. This parodic narrative technique also devalues Biblical myth with traditionally legitimized Catholic rules and regulations. By citing Biblical myth incompletely, inaccurately or out of context, and juxtaposing it with less revered types of language, *Die Klosterschule* divests the Christian myth of its traditional aura and thus it ceases to be a sacred and essentially different type of narrative. (95)

The students of the convent school use the rhetoric, or "jargon" (the term Frischmuth uses in the book), of that religious institution as well as their individual language. Both types of language are noticeable and are used alternately by the students, indicating that this speech conflicts. The rhetoric of the convent school functions as the language which the nuns use to address the students directly, but it is also the language internalized by the students. In the passage below, for example, the narrator repeats what she has learned but rearranges the words, especially "Antrieb" and "gut." She then questions the original phrase, and, as her thoughts move farther away to familiar images and fantasy, they eventually return to internalized language:

> Das Gewissen ist die Fähigkeit, Gut und Böse zu unterscheiden, und der innere Antrieb, das Gute zu tun. Gott ist der Antreiber. Ist das Gute in Gott, Gott, oder um Gott? Das Gute ist was? Du bist gut, sagt meine Großmutter, du schmeißt das ganze Zeug einfach in die Ecke. Ach wie gut, daß niemand weiß, was ich weiß. Das Gute tun und das Böse leiden. Zwischen Gut und gut ist ein Unterschied. Gut und Blut verlieren. Wie gut ist Kreuzschnabel? Ist er

gut, wenn er uns fragt, was gut ist? Ich frage mein Gewissen: Das Gewissen ist eine innere Stimme. . . . (67)

In contrast to the first person singular and plural pronouns and "man" used by the students when they internalize the rhetoric of the convent school, situations depicting conflicts are often indirectly described (Schnedl-Bubeniček 200). In one instance, in which Milla and the narrator are asked whether they have no shame, there is direct confrontation between the nun and the students, and the verbal communication is one-dimensional. Sister Theodora asks the rhetorical question "Habt ihr denn keine Scham?" which implicitly suggests guilt (Frischmuth 61). The girls know they cannot answer this question in their own defense and that any contradictory statements are not possible to the rhetorical question about their shame. The narrator comments: "Darauf wissen wir nichts zu sagen, denn was immer wir auch zur Antwort gäben, sie würde kein Wort davon glauben" (61-62). As Schnedl-Bubeniček argues, "Damit wird allerdings die Aufarbeitung widersprüchlicher Interaktionsformen verhindert, der Konflikt verlagert sich ins kindliche Ich" (200-01)

Language also reflects the lack of individuality of the students. Instead of choosing the first person singular pronoun, the girls use the first person plural, even when describing something personal. The pronoun "wir" serves to indicate identification with a group or community--whether it is a group of students or representatives of a religious group--rather than with oneself as an individual (Schnedl-Bubeniček 201). A case in which the narrator uses "wir" to evoke a sense of community occurs in combination with the expression of religious rhetoric which the

students have internalized, for they imitate language they have heard. In the chapter "Ora et Labora," the collective "wir" is bound to common worship:

> Wir, Angehörige der katholischen Jungschar, Zöglinge des Klosters, Schülerinnen der Ober- und Unterstufe, beten täglich und gerne. . . . bei der hl. Messe, der wir mindestens zweimal pro Woche beiwohnen und die uns nicht nur Pflicht, sondern auch Bedürfnis ist, mit den Augen oder mit dem Mund--was soviel wie still, für sich, oder laut, mit den anderen, bedeutet--aber in jedem Fall mit dem Herzen. . . . (7)

The pronoun "wir" also occurs when intimate emotions are expressed. In the passage below, the sense of community which is forced on the students contrasts with the loneliness the narrator describes in the room full of them. The reason for this feeling of isolation is that they may not speak with each other, a prohibition which makes this place less comfortable and makes them more homesick:

> Der Schlafsaal könnte ein angenehmer Ort sein. Daß er es nicht oder nicht immer ist, hat seinen Grund darin, daß wir meist still sein müssen. . . . Der Schlafsaal ist der Ort, in dem wir die Nacht verbringen. Wo wir lachen, wenn es einen Anlaß gibt--mit vorgehaltener Hand, den Umständen entsprechend--,und wo wir weinen, wenn es sein muß--wenn wir glauben, daß alle anderen schlafen. Es ist der Ort, in dem wir Erinnerungsstücke an die Zeit zuvor aufbewahren. . . . Im Schlafsaal denken wir am häufigsten an zu Hause, aber genau so häufig wird uns dabei zu Bewußtsein gebracht, daß wir nicht zu Hause sind. . (54-56)

Sentences which express individual needs alternate with the internalized language of the convent school and its sisters (Schnedl-Bubeniček 201). Thus, the narrator states: "Wir haben Rücksicht zu nehmen, auf den Nächsten, auf die anderen, auf die Gemeinschaft. Wir können froh sein, daß wir in so guten Händen sind. Man wird etwas aus uns machen" (56). In this environment, one cannot establish an identity. Indeed, the pronoun "ich" is used only sparingly: in the two chapters in which the narrator is fantasizing ("Schimäre" and "Der Traum"); in the chapter entitled "Die Art der Betrachtung," where the impersonal pronoun "man" occurs nearly as frequently as the personal pronoun "ich"; and in the final chapter, in which the narrator actually confronts her individual faith.

By emphasizing the language of indoctrination, Frischmuth criticizes a patriarchal society that condones the use of pedagogical methods which teach women to be submissive and obedient.[14] Indeed, the narrator does not blatantly state what she does not like about how the school is run; rather, she describes the events that occur at the boarding school and how they affect the students. In recreating the language used to teach these students, however, the author goes beyond merely disagreeing with this language, whose purpose is indoctrination, and implicitly becomes involved. The way the students revise what they are taught and how they interpret the phrases they learn and repeat what they are told to do indicate that they do not understand what they are saying and repeating. Furthermore, the rules they do understand are not obeyed because they do not wish to follow a doctrine which does not serve them personally.

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[14] The criticism of society through language is more obvious in another of her novels, *Das Verschwinden des Schattens in der Sonne*, where there is more direct socio-cultural involvement (Lorenz 43).

The doctrine's primary importance is to make them conform and turn them into willing servants. They obey the rules simply to avoid punishment, for they see no other reason to follow the rules of this religion. Franz Fühmann, Dietrich Simon, and Joachim Schreck have noted that Frischmuth demonstrates one of the effects of religious indoctrination in *Die Klosterschule*. They argue,

> daß erst einmal von der Autorin versucht wird, das Netz der Dogmen darzustellen, und daß sie dann in der Konfrontation zwischen Dogmen und den Bedürfnissen der Kinder eine Beziehung herstellt. Durch das Buch zieht sich von Anfang an eine immanente Kritik: An ihrer Sprache sollt ihr sie erkennen! (qtd. in Lorenz 43)

The passage about the arrangement of the sleeping quarters is but one example of the validity of this observation. It demonstrates how expressions of individual need alternate with learned phraseology, and how the girls borrow and repeat the language of the nuns instead of stating their own needs and desires.

The episode "Die Art der Betrachtung" depicts how the convent school suppresses self-expression. Even looking at oneself in the mirror is discouraged and must be done secretly, because "Spiegel dienen dazu, die Eitelkeit zu fördern. Auch kosten sie Zeit" (20-21). There is a small mirror in the students' nightstand, but only so that they can see their facial imperfections. The importance of a mirror is emphasized when the narrator describes the various things one can do in front of one. This is one of the rare instances in the narrative where "ich" is used, albeit interchangeably with "man," a less personal and more general expression of the self (Schnedl-Bubeniček 200). The narrator reflects:

> Man kann ruhig stehenbleiben. . . . Man kann sich vor dem Spiegel auch bewegen. . . . Man kann seinem Bild in die Augen sehen und alles andere nicht sehen. . . . Man darf die Augen nicht senken, sonst sieht man seine Augen nicht. . . . Man kann sich mit seinem Bild im Spiegel vor sich selber Furcht einjagen. . . . Man kann seinem Bild im Spiegel einen traurigen Ausdruck verleihen . . . (21)

The description evolves from stating generalities about oneself to expressing deeper emotion, but without a mirror in one's room, one cannot privately discover one's face and body and the different things one can do with them. The narrator cannot see how she changes from year to year either. These matters, however, are not important in this environment where the purpose of the self is only to serve others. This pedagogical system does not permit the students to realize their individual needs or to establish their own identities.

In "Der Lauf der Welt," the chapter in which the pronoun "ich" is most frequent, the narrator describes a change she sees in herself to a girl who has left the convent school. Here, the narrator's confusion and hesitation emerge as a conflict of two values which are not integrated. It is obvious that after she returns from a visit to her home, she can no longer suppress her personal needs; after a period of time during which she experienced considerable personal freedom and was able to exercise her autonomy, she can no longer live in an environment where she is not allowed to be an individual. It is an environment which Schnedl-Bubeniček correctly describes as filled with an ideology containing contradictions and taboos based on sacred rituals and a vague image of individual freedom (200).

The change occurs after her vacation, when she has problems maintaining the school schedule; later, she purposely breaks the rules and passes a note to an altar boy. She is disturbed when she can no longer induce visions, although these visions were only brought on by her kneeling throughout the Mass, starring at an object for a long time, and fasting before communion. She wonders if she should discuss this with her religion teacher, but hesitates, for she is afraid that he and the other teachers will think she is under Satan's influence. She cannot understand why she finds it impossible to do what she has done in the past, such as recite countless prayers and carry out vows: "Und zum erstenmal habe ich auch eine Art Widerwillen gegen die zahllosen Gebete, die er [Professor Kreuzschnabel] mir zur Stärkung wider das Böse aufgeben würde" (86). She does realize that she cannot continue to follow the rules of the school and that she must relinquish her individual freedom if she remains there. She considers what she has been taught and reflects, "nur das mit dem Gelübde will mir nicht mehr so recht eingehen. Es ist, als wäre mir jemand etwas schuldig. Als hätte ich einen zu hohen Preis für eine zu geringe Sache gezahlt" (86). She is at a crossroads, for she is attempting to express her individuality in questioning these rules and rituals, but she does not want to lose her intimacy with God and fears that the loss of the ability to see visions signifies she has fallen from grace. She is also uncertain of her thoughts, and to help explain her doubts, she reverts to what she has learned, such as the belief that doubt is good and necessary in order to be faithful: "Und ich bin überhaupt im Zweifel. Es heißt, daß dies gut sei. Wer viel zweifelt, glaubt viel" (86).

What disturbs and interests her a great deal is that her friend and correspondent has lost her faith. She cannot understand how this is possible given all they have been

taught, and because religion is so much a part of their lives. "Und du hast etwa nie Gewissensbisse?" she asks, for it is a sin not to believe, and she tries to convince herself and her friend that what she is learning is true: "Lourdes ist schließlich bewiesen und Fatima auch, und das Ganze hat ja doch irgendwie Hand und Fuß und ist nicht von ungefähr. Jetzt gibt es sogar ein Buch, das heißt 'Und die Bibel hat doch recht . . .'" (89).

In the school they are repeatedly taught that they will be punished by God if they do not obey; thus, when there is no longer a threat of divine punishment, it is difficult for them to decide how to act. The narrator asks her friend why she does not do whatever she likes--walk around naked or steal from people--if she no longer believes in God. She does not know what would keep an individual from doing something wrong if she wanted to do it. "Aber es muß doch etwas geben, was verboten ist und dir trotzdem Spaß machen würde. Warum tust du es dann nicht oder tust du es?" (89). This final sentence illustrates that the narrator has not come to the realization that she has the free will to do what she chooses. Blumer summarizes Frischmuth's view in a way that suggests that the question of identity is the motivation for her novel. He notes that the question the protagonist asks herself is the following:

> Wie komme ich als Frau zu einem Selbstbewußtsein, das es mir möglich macht, subjektiv kreativ zu werden, wie gelange ich dahin, meine Identität als Frau so selbst zu bestimmen, daß ich das tun kann, was mir Spaß macht, wenn andererseits meine ganze Erziehung systematisch daraufhin ausgerichtet war, mir diese Fragen erst gar nicht zu Bewußtsein kommen zu lassen? (192).

Indeed, the return to school and the beginning of the correspondence with her friend marks her maturation, for she takes the first steps toward her own individuality with the arrival of these forbidden letters. She realizes that she should act on her changed perceptions, for she no longer feels that she is a part of this school: "Es ist ein seltsames Gefühl, hier zu sein und doch nicht hier wie früher" (87). She indicates that she would like to have the courage to express her individuality and would leave the school, but circumstances do not permit it, for she cannot continue her education elsewhere.[15] This step in the direction of autonomy reflects an important turning point in the life of the narrator, one which Frischmuth herself believes must be taken by the individual: "Ich glaube, es gibt gewisse Probleme, von denen einen die Gesellschaft nicht befreien kann. Das ist eine gewisse Art von Identitätssuche und Identitätsfindung. Das ist die Arbeit, die man selber leisten muß" (qtd. in Sauter 245).

Indeed, thoughts about leaving the school indicate that she is rebelling against the patriarchal forces which govern her education. It is the greatest rebellion this student can undertake, for it is a refusal of the authority to which she is subject. The minor rebellious actions, such as speaking in an imaginary language during the walks, purposely overeating to show disappointment, and secretly exploring her sexuality are typical of rebellious actions of adolescents and are not unusual behavior for adolescents who must yield to strict control. Many adolescents, however, who are raised in a military or religious boarding school accept the ideology of the school when they mature and even become a part of this ideology by joining the military or

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[15] There was no other school (*Gymnasium*) of that caliber near Frischmuth's village when she entered the convent school. After four years, she transferred to another school in the vicinity of her home (Friedl 116).

becoming a member of the religious community. In thinking about leaving the school, the protagonist rejects the religious ideology and begins to realistically consider other ways of living without the binding philosophy of the Catholic religion. Previous ways of escaping the restrictive school environment, such as storytelling and fantasizing, are no longer adequate in coping with this situation once the protagonist becomes older. Her consideration of leaving indicates that she is more mature, for the protagonist now realizes she must confront a situation with which she can no longer live.

This change, which marks her coming of age, shows that the inner life of the protagonist becomes more important than her participation in the community: "Women's developmental tasks and goals, which must be realized in a culture pervaded by male norms, generate distinctive narrative tensions--between autonomy and relationship, separation and community, loyalty to women and attractions to men" (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 12). The combination of the freedom the narrator enjoyed at her parental home during her vacation, her growth and maturation, and the letters from her friend prevent her from continuing to be part of this community.

Two important communities exist in the convent school: that of the school, which represents a religious community run according to the ideological teachings of the Church, and the community of the students. As previously discussed, the collectivity of the school is seen in the language used, in which "wir" describes actions and emotions of the students as a whole. In the tight community of the school, there is no room for individuality. This is not only evident in the chapter "Das Wesen der Gemeinschaft," where the sleeping quarters and the expression of individual needs are described, but in the chapter "Der Geist und das Fleisch," where the close quarters and

restrictions depicted in the context of the relationships between students reveal how little tolerance there is for the expression of individual personality traits: "Die Klassen der sogenannten Unterstufe stehen einander mit offenem Mißtrauen gegenüber, die Enge der Beziehung läßt keinen Raum für die Großmut. Hingegen ist Toleranz, ja sogar Zuneigung zwischen Einzelpersonen der Unter- und Oberstufe an der Tagesordnung, da die Spannung--je größer der Abstand--verringert wird" (79).

Forced conformity diminishes the students' individuality but facilitates discipline and order. The result of forced conformity is distrust and tension, but the school accepts these consequences intended to maintain order and control, which are important for its functioning. The younger students must learn to be a part of a group when they enter the school, and in nearly every aspect of their lives in the school, they are treated as a group. This reinforces the sense of community, while emphasizing the lack of individuality of each student. It also eases the burden of discipline, for if the students encourage each other to obey the rules, the school sisters have less work to do. When there is an infraction of the rules, the students are punished as a group. In this context, the narrator points out that the nuns make an exception to the lessons of the Bible: "Im Gegensatz zum 'Einer für alle' der Heilsgeschichte gilt dabei 'Alle für einen'" (54). The friction among students results because of competition among them, but there is particular unrest when a student breaks a rule, especially if she is popular and has the support of several others, for this group creates more unrest, and two or more groups emerge. When there is too much chaos, the issue of who supports whom is no longer important, and solidarity develops among all the students out of fear of punishment: "Die Versöhnung wird unvermeidlich—wie kurz sie auch dauern mag--,

denn die Furcht verbindet" (55). The students celebrate their solidarity and make so much noise that another rule is broken and another punishment ensues. If the infraction is overlooked, the solidarity between students is maintained until another infraction occurs and the cycle repeats itself.

Although the students are members of the larger community of the school, which also includes the lay faculty and nuns, the community of students is important to the girls for surviving the contingencies of everyday life at the school. Students rely on each other to discuss their problems and the changes they undergo as they mature. This is apparent in "Der Schlafsaal," which portrays how they are allowed to speak to each other before the lights go out, but, after that, do so secretly. This time is especially valuable to the students because they express their innermost feelings, including doubts about religion. There are also times when the students tell stories to each other, either to indulge in their fantasies or to escape their restrictive environment. They even predict that Sister Assunta will later, after their departure from the school, compliment them on the wonderful and fantastic stories which she overheard.

The Catholic Church, of course, forms a large community, and the girls are taught to keep this in mind. If a young woman marries in the Catholic Church, she will be expected to raise her children in this faith, thus continuing to serve the Church. But if she does not marry, there is another option. In the chapter "Die Anstandsstunde," the students are reminded that they can always become nuns and work in the missions. Indeed, a magazine in the school entitled "Der Jesuknabe" entices them to a life of adventure in exotic places where they cannot only see and

experience the world but also help their third-world brothers and sisters who are in spiritual need. Instead of marriage, the noble opportunity to serve as a missionary worker, or perhaps as a nun, exists for them, as they are told:

> Es ist der Weg, den der Apostel Paulus den besseren geheißen hat und der auch der wohlgefälligere sein muß. . . . Es wird euch durch ihn die Möglichkeit gegeben, euer Leben in Arbeit und Andacht, als unmittelbare Vorbereitung auf ein höheres und besseres Leben, in dem ihr ewigen Lohn für zeitliche Unbillen erhalten werden, hinzubringen. (42)

Blumer states that the irony of their future lack of autonomy is encapsulated in the phrase the students practice in English class, "to be or not to be available" (Frischmuth 34). They must "be available" and these young women do not have the option to make a conscious decision to withdraw from the domination of men or Church; they can do so only when they fantasize or dream (Blumer 191).

The teaching of the subject of sexuality is also strictly regimented in the convent school. The students are indoctrinated with a sexual morality which deems virginity the most valuable possession a girl can have, for virginity is the one thing a woman has to offer in a marriage, and they are constantly reminded of how valuable their chastity is. They are told that when a girl marries as a virgin, she has waited for this particular man, her future husband, and he should remember this. Furthermore, a man only values a woman who is a virgin: ". . . und ihr müßt es euch immer vergegenwärtigen, daß nur der Mann euch wirklich schätzt, dem ihr unberührt ins Brautbett gefolgt seid. Ein Mißachten dieses Gebotes würde einen langen Schatten über euren fürs Leben geschlossenen Bund werfen"(40). Sexual intercourse before

marriage can result in other consequences for the young woman. There is not only the danger of losing one's virginity, but a girl can also become pregnant, despite the use of contraception, for the nuns teach that the ability to have children is a gift from God and one must remain fearful that He can also take this gift away: "Und im übrigen ist nicht zu vergessen, daß jede fleischliche Beziehung Folgen haben kann. Welches Mittel der Verhütung man euch auch vorschlagen wird, ihr sollt eure Angst nie verlieren, denn die Gabe Gottes wird gegeben wann und wem Er will" (40).

The classroom lessons about dating and marriage reflect the pedagogical philosophy of the convent school, that is, the importance of maintaining control over a woman so that she has few choices in making decisions for herself. Marriage, the girls are taught, is an exchange of goods. This is one of the lessons learned and described in the chapter "Die Anstandsstunde," where instructions are given which include a series of rules for chastity meant to ensure the function of sexuality as an exchange in marriage (Schnedl-Bubeniček 194). When a woman marries, she occupies a designated place and has a specific role, which is determined by a man, and follows the laws of the Church. The students must remember, "[ihr seid] dem Gebot unterworfen, eurem Gatten zu dienen und ihm untertänig zu sein, doch soll dies im Bewußtsein des Wertes geschehen, den er an euch besitzt" (Frischmuth 40). Furthermore, a woman's value is designated by her virginity: ". . . nur der Mann euch wirklich schätzt, dem ihr unberührt ins Brautbett gefolgt seid" (40); this makes her worthy of ownership (Blumer 189). Each young woman must also remember that she has significant efficacy after marriage. Although she may not have brought many material possessions with her, she can overcome this deficit by her ability to make

things, such as knitting and embroidering useful items for the home: "Ihr seid sicher nicht mit leeren Händen in sein Haus gekommen, und sollte es euch an materieller Ausstattung gefehlt haben, so hat ihm [dem Mann] eure vorzügliche Erziehung zu Handfertigkeiten aller Art diesen Mangel mehr als ersetzt" (Frischmuth 40). In this way, the husband sees her as worthy of ownership.

Taught along with the importance of chastity is the list of tactics to be used in the courting process. Gudrun Brokoph-Mauch correctly points out, "die Satire richtet ihre Pfeile auch auf die patriarchalische Erziehung der Mädchen für die Rolle der späteren Ehefrau. Dazu gehört die Unterweisung in der bedingungslosen Keuschheit und den verschiedenen Tricks, wie man einen Mann fängt, fesselt und zum Altar schleppt . . ." (1204). An example of these tricks is body language which the young woman could exhibit if a man shows interest in her. For example, a man will show his intentions in the way he looks at the girl and she, in turn, may reciprocate. Later, he will begin a conversation to measure her intelligence and eventually present gifts which can be accepted, but only if they are in the form of books or other "Bildungsmaterial" (Frischmuth 35). If the man is honorable, the girl must avoid intimacy, yet she should show enough interest in order not to discourage him. This can be problematic and requires a certain talent: "Ihr müßt klug sein wie die Schlangen und einfältig wie die Tauben oder andere Beispiele aus der Heilsgeschichte" (36). When the young woman has finally captured his interest, she must encourage him and convince him that he has made the correct decision: "Sollte sich euch aber ein Mann nähern, der sehr bald zu erkennen gibt, daß er euch mit Leib und Seele in Besitz zu nehmen trachtet, so ist es eure Aufgabe, euch im besten Licht

vor ihm zu zeigen" (38). Indeed, these tactics are similar to those used in economic trade, and they are carried out according to the laws of the Church and even with its blessings (Brokoph-Mauch 1204):

> Solange er euch keinen Antrag macht, müßt ihr euch strenge Zurückhaltung auferlegen. Eure erste Waffe ist die ständige Steigerung des Reizes, den ihr auf ihn ausübt. . . . Ihr sollt ihm aber auch nicht weismachen, eurer Leib sei fühllos, es würde ihn ängstigen, und er müßte es auf eine Probe ankommen lassen. (Frischmuth 38-39)

Two negative aspects of the Church's teaching are conveyed in the goals of these lessons to the students: general denial of one's own sensuality and the specific denial of female sexuality. Stephan Pfürtner's analysis "Kirche und Sexualität" points out the neurotic effects of the official ecclesiastical moral principles on the development of young people. Puberty, as a process of maturation to genital sexuality, is perceived as a negative stage, and the physical and psychological events of a woman's first sexual intercourse are depicted with great significance and categorized as a loss. Furthermore, the relationship between man and woman is still broadly characterized by physical denial and a dualistic attitude:

> Auch andere Arten kirchlicher Aufklärungsliteratur, wie sie noch vor wenigen Jahren üblich war, zeigen in Übereinstimmung mit den genannten Untersuchungen, daß eine Pseudo-Spiritualisierung weitgehend die Zielvorstellungen der Ehe bestimmte. Der alte leibfeindliche Dualismus fand seine Neuauflage in den Gegensatzformulierungen der Kleinschriftentitel wie 'Liebe contra Sex' (Beer 1967), 'Lust oder Liebe' (Lord 1956), 'Nicht Sex,

> sondern Liebe' (J. Fischer 1966) ausgedrückt. Ebenso werden nach wie vor den Mädchen in sehr einseitiger Weise die Mutter-Rolle der Frau, deren Dienst-funktion an Mann und Familie, sowie deren Passivität als Zielvorstellungen vermittelt. Nicht zuletzt war diese Art kirchlicher Aufklärungsliteratur weitgehend dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie es verstand, in einer mystifizierenden Sprache an den konkreten geschlechtlichen Vorgängen oder den sexual-psychologischen und dynamischen Verhältnissen vorbeizureden, die Sexualneugier der Jungen und Mädchen dadurch zu wecken und doch keine sachlich klare Information zu bieten. (Pfürtner, qtd. in Schnedl-Bubeniček 195)

According to the teachers in the convent school, the denial of the erotic can have its rewards. Thus, they teach the young women that a virgin will receive the utmost respect and care from her husband. Furthermore, although wives must remember that they are to be subservient to their husbands, the latter must remember that they acquired something of value: "Doch seid ihr nun einmal in den geheiligten Stand der Ehe getreten, seid ihr zwar dem Gebot unterworfen, eurem Gatten zu dienen und ihm untertänig zu sein, doch soll dies im Bewußtsein des Wertes geschehen, den er an euch besitzt" (40). Teaching the young women that their virginity is of such significance that their husbands will adore and esteem them presents an idealistic view of marriage, notes Schnedl-Bubeniček (194). Rather than teaching girls the facts about marriage and useful techniques to strengthen that marriage, the nuns instill the notion that the women will be honored and respected in their subordinate role as wives.

A discussion of physical sexuality is not a part of the lessons on courtship and marriage at the convent school; in fact, sexuality is considered taboo. Preoccupation with one's body should be limited to physical exercise and it is important to keep the body healthy because, after all, they learn "[u]nser Leib hätten wir von Gott, so wie alles, und wir dürften ihn nicht willkürlich schädigen . . . " (11). Any activity which does not maintain good health and purity is forbidden by the nuns. Indeed, the students are encouraged to remain in groups so that they are not tempted to engage in behavior which is not virtuous (Blumer 190-91).

In the isolated environment of the convent school with its strict upbringing, where every form of sexual exploration is forbidden and sexuality itself is considered taboo, the girls' natural curiosity about sex is purposely ignored. Their own education about sex occurs only in secret, "im Gestrüpp, im Gesträuch . . . verborgen im Versteck" by reading the books which are available to them, that is, forbidden books, when possible, and others such as the Old Testament of the Bible (Frischmuth 72). Puw Davies writes, "Even the Bible is read only for 'die bestimmten Stellen, die interessanten Stellen' which involve sexuality and precipitate extravagant fantasies" (94). This holy book helps clarify some of the things that the students are not taught. The narrator notes that "[w]ir sind katholisch und verpflichtet, das Neue Testament zu kennen. Nur wer unbedingt muß, kann, soll und darf das Alte [Testament] lesen" (Frischmuth 73). This statement implies that one of the main functions of this part of the Bible is to provide information about sex. The narrator and her friend Milla hide in various places on the school grounds, where they read and discuss parts of this book for the purpose of learning things they have not been taught in their school. The two

girls also use the Bible to fantasize about the characters in these stories and make up their own versions, as in the following example, where they revise the biblical text:

> Nach einiger Zeit warf die Frau seines Herrn ihre Augen auf Joseph und sprach: "Leg dich zu mir." Er aber weigerte sich--ein schönes Spiel, das der und die oder der und der oder die und die oder du und ich gern spielen. Wenn nichts dazwischenkommt, sich nichts in den Weg stellt. Wenn weder Krankheit noch Abneigung oder dritte Personen, der ungünstige Ort, dies oder jenes es hindern, wenn nicht Strafe droht noch Pranger. Ja wann ist das schon. (72)

In their revision of the text, they imagine that the people depicted in the Old Testament are also hiding, as they themselves are, because perhaps they, too, were subject to constant supervision.

Also stated in the Old Testament are rules for hygienic behavior which confuse the young readers, who evaluate and rephrase the sentences to promote their understanding of these laws:

> Wird ein Weib fließend und ist es der regelmäßige Blutfluß ihres Leibes, so bleibt sie sieben Tage lang in ihrer Unreinheit. Wer sie berührt, ist unrein bis zum Abend. . . . Du bist unrein. Es steht geschrieben. Auch ich bin unrein. Du hast mich berührt. Was dann? Obwohl ich noch gar nicht unrein bin. Wir waschen uns täglich, besonders an den kritischen Stellen. (76)

Even the narrator's mother does not want her daughter to believe this--perhaps because she does not want her to feel ashamed of this natural function--and tries to clarify what is written by saying "es sei anders. Die Natur hilft sich selbst. . . . Wir wären gar nicht

unrein" (76). Blumer points out that because the narrator has no one with whom to discuss the conflict between what the Bible says and her mother's opinion, this naturally causes more confusion for the narrator (191). It is no wonder she does not know "was ich tun soll, muß, kann, darf, nicht soll, nicht muß, nicht kann, nicht darf, sollte, müßte, könnte und dürfte" (Frischmuth 32-33).

Indeed, the dialogue used by the narrator in "Das Fleisch und das Blut" is written with biblical images which are intermingled with images the students encounter in their own lives and gives the impression that the narrator is confused and shocked. For example, the section in the Old Testament which the narrator and her friend Milla read to each other contains laws which serve as guidelines to the Jews for sexual behavior: "Kein Tier darfst du beschlafen und dich so verunreinigen. Auch ein Weib darf sich nicht vor ein Tier hinstellen, um sich begatten zu lassen. Schwere Schandtat ist es" (75). In reading these rules, the narrator, in her disbelief, cannot help thinking about what it would be like to have sexual relations with an animal and, immediately, her interpretation and her fantasy take over: "Die Schandtat der Schandtaten. Das ist nicht normal. Da steht es. Wir haben zu Hause einen Hund gehabt, wir auch. Das gibt es gar nicht" (75). She thinks about the animals with which she has had contact and then thinks of other, more exotic animals: "Versuch es mit einem Stier, einem Schwan, einem Bären. . . . Denk an das Fell, die Schnurrhaare, die rauhe Zunge, die sachten Tatzen" (75).

From these biblical passages, the girls create fantasies which induce seductive images and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, encourage their stereotyping of exotic places:

> Von ihren Prinzen und Prinzessinnen, ihren Sklaven und Sklavinnen, die halbnackt, glatt und braun von der Sonne, nichts anderes taten als das, und dazwischen aßen, pralle Früchte, Süßes, Nüsse, und dazwischen tranken, Wein und was sonst noch berauschend wirkt, wie sie nach einander faßten, griffen, sich zu Boden zerren ließen, auf die gebreiteten Felle hin, wie sie übereinander herfielen, sich die spärlichen Kleider vom Leib streiften, wie sie sich ineinanderschoben, miteinander rangen, einander bissen, preßten, erstickten, fest, dazu Musik, das Klirren von Schmuckstücken und der Wind. . . . (74)

Rather than encouraging the girls to obey the rules of the Church, the lack of sexual clarification in the school's curriculum causes the students to think about things which the Catholic Church would consider more offensive than premarital sex. In reading certain excerpts from the Old Testament, for instance, the girls start to fantasize about homosexuality and abnormal sexual practices, such as bestiality and incest: "Dann stell dir vor, einen Vater mit seiner Tochter, eine Mutter mit ihrem Sohn, einen Bruder mit seiner Schwester. War alles schon da. Und ich dann mit deinem Bruder und du dann mit meinem Bruder. Ja, doch umgekehrt. Ich habe keinen Bruder" (75)

Milla's and the narrator's curiosity about sex is not only evident when they read sources where sexual reference is made, but they also experiment with each other. Fear of punishment, by God or the nuns, is, of course, a great hindrance to any type of sexual activity not condoned by the Church, but the girls' curiosity is so great that they must express their sexuality in some way and, eventually, they play in a manner which the nuns consider perverse. The narrator and Milla, her best friend, participate in a kissing contest in which a third girl, Christa, counts how many seconds they can

continue kissing; they want to break their record of sixty seconds. Eventually Milla gets bitten because the narrator cannot breathe, and even choking Milla will not make her stop. The description of sexual experiments is juxtaposed with that of the physical fitness activities in which the other girls are participating. Eventually their chosen pastime is discovered by Sister Theodora, who suspects them of engaging in homosexual activity: "Ich habe euch schon öfter beobachtet. . . . Das hätten wir schließlich irgendeinmal merken müssen" (61). Because normal adolescent sexual curiosity is ignored or suppressed and so much prohibition and secrecy is associated with sex, experimentation results. Sister Theodora sees the girls as a menace and states that it is not unusual for these two girls, who otherwise share their most intimate feelings, to participate in sexual experimentation.

The episode "Der Geist und das Fleisch" describes the consequences of intimate sexual behavior between women in the convent school; indeed, in this context, the hierarchy among the classmates is especially important and can determine the success and outcome of a relationship. Among the classmates, one must show respect to the older students: "Es fördert den gesunden Wettbewerb, daß die Schülerinnen der höheren Klassen von denen der niedrigeren eine gewisse Achtung verlangen, während sie selbst mit einer gewissen Verachtung auf dieselben herabsehen" (78).[16] A relationship between an older and a younger student is common because there is less distrust among these students. Because they are not in the same

[16] It seems that, for these older girls, it is important to have someone who is inferior to them in the school: "Aller Anfang ist schwer, und so ist auch der erste Schritt aufwärts der am heißesten ersehnte. Besteht doch erst danach die Möglichkeit, nicht nur etwas über sich, sondern auch etwas unter sich zu haben" (Frischmuth 78).

class, they do not have very much contact with each other, so there is more room for friendship and less likelihood of conflicts. Although the teachers do not promote such friendships between students of different ranks, they tolerate them, as long as they do not become intimate.

On the other hand, when an intimate relationship between two students of the same age and same class develops--a situation which is less common--the lack of discipline that this situation could create is perceived as the biggest problem in the school. Because the students are nearly the same age, one does not clearly have power over the other. Competition between the two girls ensues and eventually leads to public reprimands. This situation, in turn, undermines discipline and results in an undesirable system of favoritism, which is frowned upon by the instructors, especially in the classroom. In contrast, when there is an intimate relationship between two girls of different ages, they do not engage in competitive behavior and are happier together, at least until the relationship is discovered by the school authorities.

Another interesting characteristic of the relationship between students of different ages is that it is similar to that of a couple engaging in courtship, where the hierarchy between man and woman parallels the hierarchy of girls of different ages. The two girls have little contact with each other, but when they do see each other, signals are given, as well as small tokens of affection: "Der gefühlsmäßige äußert sich in Form von Erröten wie gelegentlichen Begegnungen, von offenen und versteckten Liebenswürdigkeiten, kleinen, unaufgefordert geleisteten Diensten und Handreichungen und der Herausforderung von Berührungen beim gemeinsamen Wandel in den Gängen" (79-80). Eventually, this leads to longer conversations, gifts

for birthdays, and other signs of affection, such as goodnight kisses. In some sense, this behavior is quite similar to the deeper friendship and engagement described between man and woman, although in the case of the adolescent girls there are no guidelines for how to behave. Furthermore, the typical outcome, which is that the two young women break off the relationship, is considered a fortunate occurrence from the nuns' point of view; eventually, disagreeable events occur, the effort to please each other decreases, the attraction is no longer there, and their curiosity is satisfied. If this is not the case, one or both of the students must leave the school, albeit under strict secrecy. In this way, the teachers maintain the prohibition of sexual behavior yet unintentionally increase the sexual curiosity of any student who has witnessed or suspected this "courtship" between the two girls.

In *Die Klosterschule*, the narrator depends upon her creative imagination in which she fantasizes a "wish-fulfilling counterworld" is expressed which is clearly separate from reality (Lorenz 39). Dagmar C. G. Lorenz points out, however, that

> glimpses of internal images show the dilemma of psychological and external bondage, communicated through structures of thought and language. Since the character uses her inner world as a refuge from the unfulfilling external environment, imagination has a paralyzing effect. It is imagination which prevents the character from questioning the *status quo*. (39-40)

The existence of a wish-fulfilling counterworld is apparent in the narrator's fantasies when her mind wanders to exotic places or to her home to escape the restrictive environment of the boarding school. There are, however, several other parts of this novel in which fantasy and the imagination are depicted, and they are depictions of

unconscious states; these moments are often expressions of guilt, fear, or doubt. For example, the narrator believes that Satan walks around in disguise--one can even hear his steps--and pours boiling wax in one's ears, the result of which is the narrator's oversleeping the next day. She states: "Wer ihn hört, kann das Fürchten lernen; man schwitzt und hat einen Stein auf der Brust. Von den Träumen ganz zu schweigen" (51). In another instance, in which the narrator is ill on the eve of December 6, the feast day of Saint Nicholas, the figure dressed as the devil rescues the sick girl from an episode of hysterics, during which she kicks and thrashes against Sister Rosa, who is carrying her to the party. In this instance, it is not the devil who is evil in her perception, for he is kind and returns her to bed; rather, the sisters and other teachers who enter the infirmary are seen as evil, mythical characters. Indeed, in this subconscious hallucination, the narrator fears her teachers more than a stranger who poses as a devil: "Die Flügel der Schwestern fangen an zu flattern, zu rauschen, wirbeln Hitze auf, ein Schwarm von aufgerichteten Hirschkäfern mit silbernen Zangen und Tiere mit Hörnern, Ziegen mit messerscharfen Barthaaren und übelriechenden Klauen, das Summen einer abgestellten Klingel, Geräusche wie vom Lauf einer Herde . . ." (28).

The nightmarish depiction in "Der Traum" expresses the narrator's feelings of inferiority and guilt about being less pious and obedient than the other girls. Here natural and animal images are confused with what could be interpreted as her death, for she states: "Da ging ich den Weg allen Fleisches" (44). She arrives at a place where she does not believe she belongs, possibly heaven, and questions this by repeating what resembles the reprimands she might have heard on earth: "Es gibt

soviele wie mich und bessere, warum muß es mich treffen? die weder gut ist, noch klug ist, noch verständig, sondern böswillig und tükkisch und aufwieglerisch, ich würde die anderen bloß verderben" (44). Later in the dream she defends herself, and her own doubts about her religious beliefs become evident: ". . . und muß sich nicht jeder ernsthaft und ernstlich prüfen, bevor er ja sagt, wohin führte das sonst, wenn alle gleich schrien: ach Gottigkeit, ich will!" (45). This expression of doubt is continued to the end of the dream, where the loud noise she hears interferes with her final thought: "Wer nicht glaubt, wird nicht selig, aber wer soll denn glauben, bei dem Lärm da, ohne daß man zu Wort kommt, da könnte ja jeder sagen: komm!" (46).[17]

Also important in Frischmuth's novels is the polarity between men and women, which does not necessarily signify a battle between the sexes but, rather, different means of expression according to gender. Lorenz observes this trend in *Die Klosterschule*, where men and women have very little contact with each other. Although the nuns accept this separation, it is questioned by the next generation of students of the convent school, who are expected to replace them eventually.[18] The

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[17] Schnedl-Bubeniček's interpretation of this event is that the protagonist is called to the religious order and she expresses her personal needs and doubts. The voices of Jesus and God, which were initially interchangeable, are now intermingled with the reality of the convent school and create the unbearable noise (203).

[18] In fact, the strict rules of the convent school which Frischmuth attended seem to have undergone a type of reform. Dietmar Grieser visited the school and spoke with one of the students; he writes about his experience in an article published in 1974. Now, stated one girl, the students can visit their parents every week, rather than every month, and they are no longer required to walk in rows, hand in hand, during their leisure walks. They are even allowed to have a dancing party with wine and "Beat" music, and they can invite whomever they wish. At night they may watch television,

different means of expression characteristic of men and women are also evident if one interprets the Church as representative of men and the Church's rhetoric as the language of men. The religious pamphlets written by the leaders of the Catholic Church are incomprehensible to the young women, who interpret them in ridiculous ways. The recommendations and prayers found in Church pamphlets are juxtaposed with the thoughts and interpretations of adolescents, and even applied to the behavior of the sisters in the school. In this novel, men and women, like representatives of different cultures, cannot communicate with each other because they think so differently. As summarized by Lorenz, "[a]lthough humans of both sexes live in the same country, have access to what appears to be the same sources of information, and speak the same language, communication founders on fundamentally different states of consciousness" (38).

There are several prominent themes, then, in *Die Klosterschule* which are often seen in novels depicting female adolescent protagonists, such as sexual curiosity, close friendships, and the effects of community on the young women's lives. The dominant theme in *Die Klosterschule,* however, is the lack of opportunity for the adolescents to discover and express their individuality as a result of the pedagogical methods of the convent school and the faculty's reliance on religious ideology which forms the basis of these methods. The rules of the school clearly evince reliance on patriarchal authority, which is essential to the Catholic Church and to which the sisters of the convent school and the students themselves are subject. Frischmuth's choice of

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albeit only the programs recommended by the Church, and the nuns even go swimming, dressed in their black one-piece bathing suits (Grieser 179).

language conveys well the mechanisms which are used to maintain this hierarchy. Although the students do not always understand the Church's rhetoric, they repeat the words, change the phrases, and allow their own fantasies to adapt these teachings. Indeed, the students' interpretation of this language is an example of "childish mis-imaginings," which makes the reader think of his or her own childhood and adolescence, for it illustrates the girls' lack of reverence for authority and an absurd view of a world which these young women do not yet understand (Rolfe 69). Through this linguistic feature, as well as the fantastic stories and daydreams which the narrator recounts, *Die Klosterschule* offers a distinctive view of female adolescence.

Chapter 3

Irmgard Keun: *Nach Mitternacht*

A statement made by the writer Kurt Tucholsky in 1932 reflects the conflict many female writers faced in a profession dominated by males. His comment regarding Irmgard Keun is meant to be flattering, but, as Ritta Jo Horsley points out, would never be considered complimentary by male writers ("Witness" 106): "Eine schreibende Frau mit Humor, sieh mal an! . . . Wenn die noch arbeitet, reist, eine grosse Liebe hinter sich und eine mittlere bei sich hat--: aus dieser Frau kann einmal etwas werden" (qtd. in Horsley 67). Indeed, Irmgard Keun was torn between meeting society's expectations as a woman and the need to be recognized as a writer, a task which was difficult at a time when women--despite the movement for equality at the turn of the twentieth century--were urged to be wives and mothers (Horsley, "Witness" 67-69).

While reading about Keun, I found the discrepancy between truth and fiction to be a striking feature of her life. For example, several sources state her birth date as February 6, 1910, but, in fact, she was encouraged by her husband, Johannes Tralow, to cite that year (instead of her real birth year of 1905) in order to promote her success as a young writer in the wake of her debut novels *Gigli, eine von uns* (1931) and *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932) (Horsley, "Witness" 71). Born in Berlin, Keun was the daughter of liberal middle-class parents. When she was eight years old, the family moved to Cologne, where she experienced a difficult period of adjustment because she had a Berlin accent and because she attended a school for more advanced children. This misplacement caused her to feel like an outsider, an experience which is

dominant in the lives of the female protagonists Gigli and Doris in her two early novels. One of her teachers recollects her as "a girl [who] resisted order and discipline and learned only what interested her" (qtd. in Horsley, "Witness" 68). Indeed, Keun often misbehaved and put on a show for others. When she completed her formal education, she attended acting school in Cologne, played several minor roles in Hamburg and Greifswald, and, when her contract was not renewed, she returned to Cologne to work as a secretary in her father's office (Horsley, "Witness" 67-68). In 1932 she married Johannes Tralow, a writer and theater and film director, who was twenty-seven years older than she. In the summer of 1933 she met Arnold Strauss, a Jewish physician, and from 1933 until 1947 remained in contact with him. Despite her marriage to Tralow and her intimate friendship with Joseph Roth while he and Keun were in exile, she also maintained an intimate relationship with Strauss. From his home in Montgomery, Virginia, Strauss would later help support her life in exile and in Germany during the war (Horsley, "Witness" 72).[19]

The need for recognition and attention, Horsley contends, persisted throughout Keun's life and eventually was a source of frustration ("Witness" 67). With the success of Keun's first two novels, she attained a certain degree of celebrity. Unfortunately, these novels fell victim to Nazi *Säuberung* because they did not depict the German woman "als das tradierte Bild der Frau und Mutter, das der Faschismus

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[19] Keun even visited Strauss in 1938 and wanted to return to the United States, but following his advice, she applied for an immigration visa which was never processed. Strauss's parents, who lived in the Netherlands, also took his advice, without success, and eventually committed suicide in September 1940 when the Nazis invaded Holland (Horsley, "Witness" 92-93).

festschrieb" (Krechel 116). They were considered "'asphalt-literature of anti-German tendency' or literature of 'cultural nihilism' and 'free-floating intellectualism'" (Kreis 133). Keun, who wanted to continue writing, attempted to become a member of the *Reichsschrifttumskammer,* but was refused.[20] Gert Oberembt points out that this fact was not revealed in Keun's version of events in an interview with Jürgen Serke, in which she states she was pressured to join this organization, refused, and because of this refusal was arrested by the Gestapo, interrogated and subsequently released (116). Oberembt--who, like Horsley, has uncovered more information about Keun after studying her correspondence with Arnold Strauss--argues that she was arrested for other reasons: "Sie war wegen vorlauter Äußerungen schon 1933 denunziert worden, und Verhör und Gefängnis drohten. Aber die unangenehme Angelegenheit wurde durch einen Anwalt und mit einer Spende beigelegt" (116). After she was refused membership by the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* and her books were removed from bookstores--an act for which Keun sued the government because of lost income--it became clear that her books would not be published in Germany (Horsley, "Witness" 72).

In 1936 Keun emigrated to Ostende on the Belgian coast because of an offer from the publishing company Albert de Lange. There she met several renowned exiled authors, all male, and for the first time in her life was in contact with writers such as Egon Erwin Kisch, Ernst Toller and Stefan Zweig, who provided intellectual

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[20] Anyone who wanted to earn his or her living as a writer, artist, or in any other branch of the arts had to become a member of one of the branches of the *Reichskulturkammer*, according to the Reich Culture Chamber Law passed on September 22, 1933 (Horsley "Witness" 71).

stimulation (Serke 167-68; Horsley, "Witness" 85). This contact had positive and negative effects, for although she enjoyed the comradeship of other authors with whom she could discuss her works and who provided friendship and assurance, she was also viewed in a patronizing way by writers like Kurt Tucholsky and Hermann Kersten. Eventually she became closely associated with Joseph Roth, who encouraged her to divorce Tralow (Horsley, "Witness" 85-86). In the context of Keun's forgotten achievements, Ursula Krechel discusses how Keun was often viewed as being in the shadow of a famous man: "Keun, Keun, höre ich auf meine Suche: War das nicht die Freundin von? Hat die nicht mit dem zu tun?" (104). Indeed, the effect of the two roles she played--as woman and writer--among her male compatriots in Ostende was also reflected in her later writing (Horsley, "Witness" 100); her once bold non-traditional female protagonists became less outspoken and many of the female characters in the works she wrote after 1936 are negatively portrayed (Horsley, "Witness" 84-85).

Keun traveled with Roth throughout Europe between 1936 and 1938 and eventually left him in 1938 because his increasing jealousy and domineering nature became unbearable (Serke 172). He was also a heavy drinker, and Keun often followed his example. Nevertheless, his influence on her productivity was positive, for between 1936 and 1938 she published four books: *Das Mädchen, mit dem die Kinder nicht verkehren durften* (1936), *Nach Mitternacht* (1937), *D-Zug dritter Klasse* (1938), and *Kind aller Länder* (1938) (Horsley, "Witness" 77). Living in Amsterdam, Keun was forced to flee in 1940 when the Nazis entered Holland, for her novel *Nach Mitternacht*, which was highly critical of National Socialism, had already been

published. She obtained a false passport under the name of Charlotte Tralow, returned to Germany, and lived in Cologne with her parents and in various cities with friends (Horsley, "Witness" 98). A rumor stating she had committed suicide in Paris with the German playwright Walter Hasenclever helped make living in Germany less dangerous for her (Serke 172).

In 1947 she wrote about her experience in exile in *Bilder und Gedichte aus der Emigration,* which was expanded and reprinted in 1954 under the title *Wenn wir alle gut wären.* Her 1950 novel, *Ferdinand, der Mann mit dem freundlichen Herzen*, was one of the first novels written after the war which criticized postwar Germany (Horsley, "Witness" 99). It did not meet with much acclaim, and she was eventually forgotten until the late 1970s (Serke 163). Then, for various reasons, including her interest in German women writers which was sparked by the women's movement and her connection with Joseph Roth, many of her works were reprinted. Keun was no longer the witty and prolific writer of the pre-war days and could not earn a living by writing.[21] Her heavy drinking and smoking took its toll, and she died of a lung tumor in 1982 (Horsley, "Witness" 103). She is survived by a daughter, Martina, whom she had after the war with a doctor from Munich.

Irmgard Keun's novel *Nach Mitternacht* is about nineteen-year-old Susanna (Sanna) Moser, who was raised in the town of Lappesheim in the Mosel river valley. After completion of *Mittelschule*, she moves to Cologne to live with her Aunt Adelheid and her cousin Franz because of arguments with her stepmother. Later,

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[21] Horsley's excellent study, "Witness, Critic, Victim: Irmgard Keun and the Years of National Socialism," explores the reasons for Keun's diminished capacity to write in post-war Germany.

because her aunt was jealous of her relationship with Franz and had Sanna arrested, Sanna moves to Frankfurt to live with her half-brother, Algin, and his wife Liska. The seven-chapter novel covers the time span of only two days, but Sanna's family background and the other characters' pasts are depicted as flashbacks throughout the narrative. Although she is the first-person narrator, she describes what she sees and her impression of the events without verbally sharing her opinions. Wolfgang Pasche notes: "Durch keine (Parteien-) Rücksichtsnahme gefilterten Blick des 19 jährigen Mädchens entgeht keine Nuance ihrer Umwelt. Sanna ist tatsächlich, wie Ludwig Marcuse in einer Rezension des Romans hervorhebt, die unbestechliche 'Kamera, in der jene Bilder entstanden sind'" (87).

Keun depicts the public and private lives of other characters associated with Sanna's family. Aunt Adelheid and her female friends are represented in a particularly negative way because of their adoration of Hitler. Through Liska, Algin's wife; Gerti, Sanna's best friend; and Betty Raff, Liska's friend; the relationships between men and women in post-Weimar Germany are represented. Many critics have emphasized how Keun often portrays the *petite bourgeoisie* or the *Kleinbürger,* but this work also examines how the working class, as well as German professionals, thought and acted during the Third Reich. For example, the rich Jewish exporter, Aaron, who calls himself a "Nicht-Arier" (Keun 17) instead of a Jew, is in agreement with the anti-Semitic policies. He attempts to conform to National Socialist policies, as Sanna describes: "Die Nazis haben Ordnung geschaffen in deutschem Sinne und ihn [Aaron] von den Kommunisten gerettet, die hatten ihm alles fortgenommen. . . . Es gebe sehr minderwertiges Gesindel unter den Juden, er könne den Antisemitismus begreifen.

Und unter den Militärs seien prächtige Kerls zur Augenweide" (Keun 17). But voices opposing the politics of Hitler are also heard, especially from Heini, Algin's friend, who often tells people what they do not want to hear.

The two days of the novel take place in Frankfurt and begin when Sanna receives a letter from Franz, who she thought had forgotten her. She and her friend Gerti are shopping in Frankfurt at the time when the citizens are preparing for Hitler's visit. Gerti is in love with a young man of half-Jewish origin, although mixed relationships are forbidden under the racial laws of the Third Reich (Pasche 88). Another young man, whom Gerti's father wants her to marry, is in the *Sturmabteilung*. Sanna describes the events before, during, and after Hitler's procession when she and Gerti go to a local tavern. In this scene the mentality of Frankfurt's middle class is portrayed and there is a tragic event: the death of the young girl Bertchen. Her death is the result of a high fever, a condition which was neglected because her parents insisted she present a bouquet of flowers to the *Führer* as a *Reihendurchbrecherin*. The festive bar room mood changes, and Sanna leaves to discuss the events of the day with Heini, the outspoken journalist.

The next day Sanna helps Liska prepare a party where Liska has the opportunity to seduce Heini. Liska believes she loves Heini because Betty Raff, her friend, has persuaded her to fall in love with him so that Algin would be available for Betty. The novel ends with the chaotic seventh chapter, when Franz arrives in Frankfurt with the news that he has killed a man, Schleimann, because the latter had denounced Franz and his friend Paul. Liska's party begins without Algin, for he is depressed because he is no longer able to sell his books and must compromise his

writing in order to do so. He spends the day drinking in a pub, where he meets an older man, Küppers, who encourages him to leave Germany with him. The house is decorated festively, imitating *Karneval*, but the timing is wrong, for Lent has already begun:

> In seiner [Algins] Wohnung wirkt alles unecht: angefangen vom Zeitpunkt--Liskas Karneval kommt zu spät, er fällt in die Fastenzeit--, bis zum Ort--die Wohnung ist umgestaltet zu einem Lokal, "in dem man sich aber doch nicht so leicht und angenehm fremd fühlen kann wie in einem Restaurant, denn es riecht immer noch nach Wohnung" (S. 99). (Pasche 97)

The events of the evening are tragic. While Gerti is making love with Dieter Aaron in the bedroom, Betty Raff, who discovers them, tells Dieter's mother, who forces Dieter to leave because she is jealous and possessive of him. This is an evil action on Betty's part because, according to Sanna, she knows that Frau Aaron, who loves her son very much, may take revenge. Heini, whose criticism is becoming more and more passionate, shoots and kills himself because he realizes he can no longer earn a living as a writer and cannot live under this regime. Algin has returned, and when Heini is dead, Liska realizes that she has lost both Heini and Algin, for Betty Raff takes Liska's role as Algin's confidante and supporter. Sanna is planning to escape from Germany with Franz, who is waiting in the basement cellar. She takes Liska's jewelry, and she flees with Franz.

The style of Keun's narrative is discussed by several critics. Many categorize her novels as typical of "Neue Sachlichkeit" because of the cynical and frank language which often lacks emotions. This style, termed "l'ordre froid" by the French

Germanist Felix Bertaux, expresses the sentiment of the young generation of the 1930s, according to Krechel, and she describes this style as follows:

> Das ist eine etwas euphemistische Bezeichnung für einen Stil, der aus den unsachlichsten ideologischen Auseinandersetzungen der später Weimarer Republik hervorging. . . . Etwas ist eingefroren in dieser Zeit. Die Angestelltenkultur hatte eine unsentimentale, unpathetische Haltung befördert, einen Wer-wird-denn-weinen-Stil, den auch die Personen in den Romanen von Irmgard Keun glänzend beherrschen. (113)

Krechel cleverly observes, however, that this novel does not fit the style of *Neue Sachlichkeit* because Keun's novels are not at all factual and to the point. Instead, they have biting humor and "sie überborden, haben Fülle, Reichtum, Spannung, Witz" (113).

Keun's novel is full of information and is richly narrated. Jelinek describes her writing as "frei von jener neuen Larmoyanz, die man--leider--zu oft in der neuen feministischen Literatur antreffen kann" (222). In Keun's novel, the narrator does not become emotionally involved in the lives of others; instead, she is preoccupied with her own life. When her life--and her life with Franz--becomes threatened, she shows more emotion. Such an instance occurs when she is arrested in Cologne and knows that she could be sent to a concentration camp. This fear forces her to distance herself from Aunt Adelheid and, inevitably, from Franz. Franz does not think her fear is warranted, however, and wants her to stay. She becomes suspicious that he is still under the control of his mother and leaves, even though this could mean the end of their relationship. This relationship with Franz, however, is depicted only briefly, and

I find it difficult to believe that she even loves him, although she says so often enough. But Sanna is a woman who is dependent on a man, be it Franz or someone else. She convinces herself that she loves him and, thus, in order to keep him, does whatever possible to save his life in the end.

The most grisly scene, when the Cologne trolley car stops in front of the Klingelpütz prison, makes a strong impact on the reader:

> Als die Straßenbahn vorbeifuhr an der Seitenstraße, wo der Klingelpütz, das böse Gefängnis, ist, hörte man schreien. Es schrie, daß die Luft zitterte vor Schmerz. "Es sind die Kommunisten, die jetzt im Klingelpütz hingerichtet werden," sagte ein junger SA-Mann, der beim Wagenführer stand. In seiner Stimme lag Stolz, daß er Bescheid wußte. Daß man sie bis hierher hörte, ich verstehe es nicht. "Einen von ihnen kannte ich, ganz junger Mensch noch, höchstens achtzehn," sagte der Wagenführer und war auch stolz. Er fuhr, die Schreie fuhren mit. Ein Mann nahm den Hut ab voll schwerer und ehrfurchtsvoller Andacht. . . . Ein Kind lachte, und seine Mutter weinte. Eine dicke Frau umklammerte mit beiden Händen ihre linke Brust, sie konnte nicht mehr atmen, ihre Augen blickten verzweifelt. In der Luft zitterte noch Schreien, man hörte es nicht mehr, man sah es nur noch. (Keun 122-23)

This passage illustrates Keun's narrative talent and also helps illustrate Krechel's point, for it is not an example of "Neue Sachlichkeit" or a cold and emotionless narration. Even though Sanna describes the scene factually, the effect of the passage on the reader is that of horror. Indeed, describing this scene with language lacking emotion would undermine the brutality of this event.

Gert Sautermeister argues that Keun allows her protagonist to use language which is similar to that of a young woman, but the difference is that her powers of observation are sharper than one would expect of a nineteen-year-old girl (17). For instance, the sentence structure is sometimes primitive--she often uses too many conjunctions in a sentence--and she makes grammatical errors (17). He writes:

> Von so viel quellfrischer Naivität ist man auf den ersten Blick eingenommen, beim zweiten entdeckt man mit wachsendem Vergnügen, daß es eine sehr kunstbewußte Naivität ist. Aus einem Alois einen Algin zu machen: eine selbstständige Umarbeitung nemt das die Ich-Erzählerin mit einem Anflug von Ironie, die dem Leser das pathetische Selbstverständnis des werdenden Schrifstellers und die leichte, vielleicht überlegene Distanz der jüngeren, scheinbar unbedarften Schwester verrät. Wieviel scharfblickender Sarkasmus kann dieser Unbedarftheit entspringen! (17)

The term "Naivität," however, is inaccurate, and almost patronizing, for Sanna is simply young and not naive. She is mature enough to understand the motives behind adult behavior. Sanna recognizes, for instance, that Frau Aaron's love for her son Dieter is abnormal. She observes, "[s]eine Mutter liebt ihn so wahnsinnig, daß es fast schon unanständig ist" (Keun 17). She understands why Betty is so kind to Liska and Algin and is the only one who realizes that Betty encourages Liska to believe that Heini loves her so that Betty herself can attract Algin. Sanna can also discern the motives behind Aunt Adelheid's visit to the exhibit on sexually transmitted diseases, which emphasizes the results of mixed-race intercourse. Aunt Adelheid and Sanna visit a grotesque display, reminiscent of a freak show, and view deformed fetuses

immersed in alcohol, children whose eyes have been eaten away by infection, women with deformed breasts and buttocks, old people who look like children and children who look like old people. Aunt Adelheid maintains that it is important to view such an exhibit because it is about scientific knowledge, but, by listening closely to her aunt, Sanna learns that her aunt's interest stems from sexual frustration. She concludes: "Wieso brauchte die Tant Adelheid noch eine Warnung? Sie war über fünfzig und hatte gar keine Gelegenheit mehr, eine Geschlechtskrankheit zu kriegen. Höchstens durch Essen ungewaschenen Obstes von den Karren auf der Straße" (Keun 47).

Sautermeister's use of the term "sarcastic" describes Sanna more accurately. Pasche considers her irreverent language to be that of a teenager, saying she uses slang expressions, such as "die Sau" (Keun 8) in describing Aunt Adelheid and "so eine Fuchsige aus Cochem" (Keun 11) to describe her stepmother (Pasche 114). But, in contradiction to Pasche's statement, I believe the tone and irreverent nature of her language reflects the author's perspective. Keun was known to provoke Nazis, especially after having a few drinks (Pasche 123), and her uninhibited, witty, and critical language is also apparent in a 1981 interview with Klaus Antes:

> Und . . . o Gott, o Gott, hab' ich Aufzüge erlebt [in Frankfurt] . . . von diesen Säuen. Das erstemal in Berlin, da dachte ich, ich sterbe . . . und mein Haß war manchmal noch nicht so stark gegen Hitler wie gegen diese widerlichen Männer. Ich dachte nur, wenn ich nur ein bißchen Talent zum Lesbierinnensein hätte, ich hätte nie mehr einen Mann angesehen. So widerlich waren mir die Männer. So, weißt Du, mit diesem starren Blick,

> ja . . . also einen körperlichen Ekel, und es war auch was Schwules drin ja, das kann man nicht als normaler Mann . . . "Mein Führer" . . . das ist doch unmöglich, oder meinst Du . . . ? (146)

Sanna also uses unique phrases to describe how she feels. As Pasche cleverly observes, "[a]ls ob Sanna der Alltagssprache mißtraute, die Intensität ihrer Erfahrungen mitzuteilen, verwendet sie Sprachbilder einer ganz eigentümlichen Konstruktion: 'In meinem Kopf habe ich ein buntes sausendes Wollknäuel von Gedanken, daraus muß ich Worte stricken--einen Strumpf aus Worten muß ich stricken'" (115). One example of visually expressive language is evident in Sanna's description of a restaurant's atmosphere: "Aus dem Radio spielt Geigenmusik, so weich wie ein Bett. Im Wein schimmert buntes Licht. Er ist sauer, aber man trinkt heiße bunte Strahlen" (18). Sanna's feelings and sympathetic nature become apparent in her observation of Frau Breitwehr. In a description that contains childlike overtones, she compares her to a weak, injured bird: "[S]ie hat was an sich, daß sie einem leid tut wie ein aus dem Nest gefallener verregneter Vogel" (32). Yet, some of the things Sanna says also betray her innocence. For instance, she describes the appealing way drunk people look, as in the case of Heini: "Seine Haare sind weich und braun, seine grauen Augen haben einen silbrigen Glanz, wie ihn nur die Augen von Säufern kriegen, ich kenne das von Leuten an der Mosel her. Das kann sehr hübsch aussehen abends, und ich hätte auch gern so einen Glanz in meinen Augen, aber ich kann nicht so viel vertragen" (68).

In another instance, her description of Hitler's visit reveals adolescent tendencies. On this occasion, the *Führer* is in a motorcade, from which he waves to

the people cheering him on. The reactions of the public imply that he is as popular as the prince in a *Karneval* procession, but Sanna's remark hints that, in comparison to the prince, Hitler has less to offer the enthusiastic crowd. She observes: "Und langsam fuhr ein Auto vorbei, darin stand der Führer wie der Prinz Karneval im Karnevalzug. Aber er war nicht so lustig und fröhlich wie der Prinz Karneval und warf auch keine Bonbons und Sträußchen, sondern hob nur eine leere Hand" (24). On this occasion, Hitler's procession is compared with an event in which princes, princesses, and fools dance and revel with the onlookers, who, dressed in silly costumes, are often drunk. The narrator's rendition of Hitler's visit thus reminds the reader that the public is caught up in the excitement and revelry without much thought of what the excitement is all about. Hitler cannot begin to compete with the prince, however, and Sanna is sure that he knows this: "Vielleicht hat der Führer später gedacht, das Volk sei zusammengeströmt aus Liebe zu ihm. Aber als Führer wird er zu klug sein, um das zu glauben. Zum Karnevalszug in Köln kommen noch tausendmal mehr Menschen und sitzen auf Laternen und höchsten Dächern und brechen Arme und Beine und alles--es ist ihnen egal" (20).

The narrator particularly emphasizes the showmanship of the entire event. Again Sanna compares the preparations to a familiar, domestic event, this time Christmas: "Am Opernplatz war ein Getummle von Menschen und Hakenkreuzfahnen und Tannenguirlanden und SS-Leuten. Es herrschte ein Durcheinander von aufgeregten Vorbereitungen wie bei einer Weihnachtsbescherung wohlhabender Eltern mit mehreren Kindern . . . mit Guirlanden und Fahnen" (19). Considering all of the preparations made by Hitler's staff, she wonders about their motives and the work the

leaders have to do in order to appear so important. Her insight reveals that the leaders' image and appearance to the crowd--with their fine clothes and expensive automobiles, which onlookers take great pleasure in seeing, as if they were viewing an automobile show--is as important as ruling over the country. Sanna concludes: "So ein Göring muß sicher dauernd nachdenken, um einem Volk immer Neuigkeiten vorführen zu können. Und dabei müssen diese Männer auch noch immer Zeit zum Regieren finden" (25).

The events of this chapter end in a macabre depiction, which also illustrates Sanna's wit and irreverence. Comparing the entire illusion created by the leaders with a Hollywood film, Sanna recalls cultural films she has seen. In this case, Hitler and the officers are similar to an image which is not in accordance with their intentions for staging this event, for the actions on the stage remind Sanna of native African dancers she has seen in cultural films. She observes: "Die Welt war groß und dunkelblau, die tanzenden Männer waren schwarz und gleichmäßig--ohne Gesichter und stumm, in schwarzer Bewegung. Ich habe in einem Kulturfilm mal Kriegstänze von Negern gesehen, die waren etwas lebhafter, aber der Tanz der Reichswehr hat mir auch sehr gut gefallen" (26). The dark, faceless figures, however, also remind the reader of executioners, which, indeed, they are, for these emotionless SS members dressed in black are notorious for the role their organization played in the extermination camps.

Thus, the metaphors Sanna uses to portray people and events, and her description of the emotions they evoke depict the limitations of her everyday life--a result of her age and inexperience with the outside world. But her insight exposes the horrible events of this time. Indeed, Sanna refuses to believe what others say, and she

therefore interprets the leaders' motives herself. She attempts to understand the events which surround her, but is skeptical because she observes the opposite of what she is told by adults. Thus, Sanna resorts to familiar elements, such as scenes from a film or the *Karneval*, to help her make sense of occurrences which confuse her. The contradictions she draws from these comparisons often result in a humorous rendition of events. Children's and adolescents' points of view are often tinged with humor when describing changes which threaten the survival of friends and family members. Such a depiction is a way of coping with situations which are incomprehensible and profoundly upset an accustomed lifestyle.

In regard to female adolescents in crisis situations, DeMarr and Bakerman conclude that

> [t]he nature of the social evil that she [the female in crisis] confronts is also important. . . . Nevertheless, the general pattern is one of female helplessness, with the young women tending to be victims or, less often, observers. And thus the novels in which they play more active, assertive roles form an important counterbalance to those which tacitly accept or actively support the conventional view of woman as passive accepter of her fate. (69)

Indeed, one cannot say that Sanna plays a passive role because in the end, it is she who takes matters in hand and organizes the escape over the border. Although the most daring, outspoken passages in this novel are given to a male figure, Heini, Sanna's narrative is also critical. She agrees with Heini's opinion, and the conclusions she draws are not without equal validity. Several critics have written that Sanna does not speak about the then current situation; rather, she exposes it. Thus, Ackermann writes,

"[s]ie entlarvt die zeitabgewandte bürgerliche Gefühlskultur und entmythologisiert die kleine bürgerliche Doppelmoral auf unterhaltende, spielerische wie bissig-ironische Art" (27). But in exposing this situation in such a manner, she is also offering the reader her opinion. Whereas Heini states his point of view to others, Sanna, on the other hand, does not verbalize her opinions to other characters. Instead, we read her thoughts as if we were reading a young woman's diary.

Furthermore, Sanna is able to observe women in a way in which Heini cannot. She sees what Liska does on a daily basis to make herself attractive to Heini and other men, and, by observing Liska and listening to her, Sanna knows more about her than Heini or Algin can observe. She is aware that Liska's daily activities are limited to lying in bed, taking long baths, and discussing love and men with her girlfriends, who must sit there and listen to her. Through Liska, Sanna learns what it takes for her to remain beautiful and maintain the illusion of an elegant woman. For instance, in comparing her to Hollywood movie stars, she observes: "Die Liska hungert sich manchmal halb tot, nur um abzunehmen" (Keun 25). Sanna is also privy to Aunt Adelheid's preoccupation with sexual depravity, Betty Raff's manipulative behavior, and these women's motives for their sometimes duplicitous actions. Because Sanna is a woman and has access to places women frequent, she can glean information from other women which someone like Heini may overlook.

Sanna matures as a result of Franz's crisis, but her personality and development are revealed during the course of the seven-chapter narrative, in which certain events in Frankfurt cause her to remember her life in Lappesheim and Cologne. Chapter one reveals her experience as a salesgirl in her aunt's store in Cologne. Sanna is beginning

to discover her likes and dislikes and finds that she is suitable for this job and life in the city. She contends, "Der ganze Ort [Lappesheim] ist mir aber auch auf die Dauer zu klein, ich habe tausendmal lieber eine große Stadt. Man darf so was ja nicht sagen heutzutage wegen der Weltanschauung und der Regierung" (Keun 8). Somewhat intimidated about living in a large city and concerned about being accepted, she tries to fit in wherever possible, and in so doing, she demonstrates the mentality which helped Hitler's rise to power (Walter 446). Without thinking and submitting to peer pressure, she joins her friends and makes fun of and laughs about Franz, even though he is her cousin and she finds him agreeable. In trying to impress her friends, she also unwittingly dates men whose intentions are not honorable. Her poor judgement is apparent in the following comment she writes to her girlfriend: "Ich war stolz und schrieb nach Hause und ans Leyendeckers Finchen, das meine Freundin war, daß ich viel Umgang hätte mit Regierungsräten und anderen hohen Beamten" (Keun 62). It is apparent that she is impressed with status and feels the need to belong, exemplifying traits which caused many people to follow orders in Hitler's regime (Walter 446).

Sanna, then, is very observant and also has a sharp sense of intuition. Her attention to details is evident in her description of her friend Gerti, whose good looks she admires: "Wunderschön sieht die Gerti aus, wenn sie so dasitzt mit ihrem blauen Busen. Natürlich ist der Busen nicht blau, nur das Kleid darüber. . . . Ihre Locken leuchten dick und blond, ihre Augen leuchten knallblau, ihr Gesicht leuchtet wie eine rosa Wolke. Ich leuchte gar nicht. Darum hat die Gerti mich wohl auch so gern" (Keun 5). Her statement indicates that many women find it important to avoid female friends who would compete with them for a man (Krechel 109). Sanna, the first

person narrator, does not describe her life as much as she describes other's lives, but through her description of them, the reader learns about her opinions and her view of the world around her. She not only exposes the mentality of the middle-class citizens and the ways in which this mentality was crucial for the building of National Socialist Germany but also shows the everyday lives of these citizens (Rosenstein 162).

In this context, it is interesting to discern how women interacted with men at that time. Sanna, Gerti and Liska, as well as the more negatively depicted women, paint a portrait of traditional women whose opportunities are limited. Since the older women are not good role models, Sanna observes and imitates her female friends, Gerti and Liska, who are a few years older than she. They are beautiful women who are aware of their beauty and know how to benefit from their attractiveness. Sanna, on the other hand, has difficulty making the most of her appearance despite her friends' encouragement. She laments: "[S]ie [Gerti] sagt, ich könne sehr niedlich aussehen und verstehe nur nicht, was aus mir zu machen. Gerti und Liska schimpfen deswegen mit mir und wollen auch bestimmt, daß ich aus mir was mache. Ich will es auch, aber es gelingt mir nie so richtig" (Keun 5-6). Sanna accepts the fact that she is not as attractive as Liska and Gerti. In this sense, there is no power struggle or tension between them, a problem which, according to DeMarr and Bakerman, often occurs between female adolescent friends (57).

Gerti, Sanna's closest friend, is the most outspoken of the young women. Wolfgang Pasche writes, "[d]ie Ästhetik der Uniformen und Paraden tritt in den Vordergrund, wenn Sanna den Führerbesuch beschreibt. Die Bedeutung der Uniformen für ihre Träger hat sie genau im Blick" (89). Perhaps because Gerti is

angry about her forced relationship with Kurt Pielmann--a member of the *Sturmabteilung*, whom her father wants her to marry--and because of the race laws which prohibit her marriage to Dieter Aaron, she taunts the soldiers in a Frankfurt café. Sanna reflects,

> [d]ie Gerti sollte es lassen, einen SA-Mann zu reizen, indem sie sagt: Die Reichswehrleute haben schönere Uniformen und sehen auch sonst schooner aus--und wenn es schon einer von militärischer Rasse sein müsse, dann habe sie lieber einen von der Reichswehr. Natürlich flattern solche Worte wie rasende Hornissen um einen Kurt Pielmann und stechen ihn bis ins Innerste--und wenn er nicht sofort daran stirbt, wird er eben gemein. (Keun 4)

Sanna observes that Gerti's love for Dieter is intensified because it is forbidden.

In another situation, Sanna demonstrates the power, albeit limited, which women have over men and their ability to use it. During their shopping excursion, Sanna tries to prevent Gerti from expressing her anger as they attempt to cross the street. When the *Schutzstaffel* is preparing for the Führer's visit and will not let the two women pass, Sanna flirts with an SS man to deflect his anger toward Gerti for the latter's rude remarks: "Darum fragte ich den einen SS noch mal so ganz süß wie ein Malzbonbon und voll Demut, als halte ich ihn für einen höchsten Beherrscher Deutschlands--auf solche Weise wollen Männer ja von Mädchen behandelt sein" (Keun 19). Sanna knows how to flatter the young man, and she uses her sexuality as a weapon. As Dorothee Römhild aptly points out: "Von mütterlichen Ambitionen bis hin zu kindlich-lasziven Verführungskünsten setzt sie gezielt die ganze Spannbreite

'weiblicher Waffen' ein und erprobt ihre Wirkung auf das andere Geschlecht in immer neuen Variationen" (112).

Sanna manipulates men in another instance when she is arrested in Cologne. After hours of interrogation, she begins to cry out of fear, and the judge releases her. Pasche contends that she is crying because she remembers Paul's words about freedom, a freedom she will never know (94). She is truly afraid, and the claustrophobic atmosphere of the room reminds her of a prison. She is also beginning to lose her ability to think clearly, for she states: "Ich war müde bis zur Verzweiflung--muß ich mein ganzes Leben nun hier bleiben?" (Keun 62). To be sure, the hectic atmosphere and the fact that people are coming in and denouncing their friends and family members induce more fear than regret that she cannot be in a free land. She projects her feelings as follows:

> Da überkam's mich plötzlich. Hier saß ich und sollte bestraft werden und wußte nicht warum. Ich wußt nicht mehr was gut war--ich wußt nicht mehr, was böse war. Ich dachte an die Länder mit den heiligen Zehn Geboten, in denen gut gut und böse böse ist. Ich dachte an die fernen fremden Länder, von denen Paul erzählte. Ich mußte weinen, wie ich noch nie in meinem Leben geweint hatte. (Keun 62)

This passage also illustrates Sanna's simplistic yearning to live in a country where behavior is clearly judged and limited to good and bad.

To be sure, this is one example in which Sanna demonstrates her youthfulness. She is mature to a certain extent--physically and socially--but has not yet assumed adult responsibilities. Moreover, it is questionable if she ever will, for until she leaves

Germany with Franz, she is always dependent on others. When she must flee Aunt Adelheid's home, she lives with her brother, and in exchange for room and board, she cleans the house and runs errands. Sanna has neither professional ambitions nor any educational goals, for she states that she is not a good candidate for higher education. Initially, she imagines herself running a store somewhere or knitting sweaters for others. In describing why she would not like to remain and raise a family in Lappesheim, she pessimistically views marriage and children as a part of her future: "Auszuhalten [in Lappesheim] ist es nur, wenn man da irgendwas Eigenes an Geschäft hat und überlegt, wie es weiterzubringen ist. Und wenn man dazu Kinder hat und einen Mann, mit dem man sich rumärgert, was immer noch besser ist, als sich totzulangweilen" (Keun 9).

Sanna's personal relationships with others are important to her. DeMarr and Bakerman contend that friendships are important to young women because these assure that they will become accepted by society:

> The presence of friends in one's life signals acceptance beyond family, suggests that one has been chosen (rather than accepted by virtue of birth or adoption), and implies the possibility of equality between partners. . . . For the many female adolescents who tend to value themselves because others value them, friendship often appears to be the obvious most readily available means of acquiring the social acceptance they deem essential. (57)

Content to be thought of as a friendly person and well-liked, Sanna comments: "Ich heiße Susanne. Susanne Moder. Man nennt mich Sanna. Ich bin froh, so verkürzt genannt zu werden, weil es doch ein Zeichen ist, daß Freundlichkeit um mich war"

(Keun 7). For Sanna, Gerti, and Liska, their survival depends on marriage, for they have no other means of earning money to afford a comfortable lifestyle. Liska could support herself to some extent by making stuffed animals, which she eventually does when Algin leaves her. Sanna and Liska's occupations, however, are limited to activities related to the domestic household, where they cannot earn much money. Hence, without the support of another's income, they would not be able to afford a luxurious lifestyle or even to make a living. In this sense, Sanna and her friends accept the National Socialist plan for women, which limits them to a life of domesticity and inevitably dependence (Ackermann 33). This attitude sharply contrasts with Keun's previous protagonists' search for independence and the author's own point of view.

To be sure, there were laws which insured that women's roles were limited to those of wives and mothers--that is, limited to their biological function as women (Jelinek 224). As Ackermann writes,

> [d]ie Frauen wurden in den Jahren 1933 bis 1937 aus Betrieben, Büros und Verwaltungsstellen vertrieben. Das "Gesetz zur Änderung der Vorschriften auf dem Gebiet des allgemeinen Beamten- und Versorgungsrechts" vom 30.6.33 beschloß die Entlassung von verheirateten Frauen, die nicht von ihren eigenen Einkünften abhängig waren, und verbot die Besetzung von Stellen im öffentlichen Dienst mit Frauen unter 35 Jahren. Am 25.4.33 erschien das "Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung der deutschen Hochschulen," welches die Zahl der Studentinnen auf 10% der Studierenden beschränkte. Diese Gesetze

> bewirkten einerseits eine Reduzierung der Arbeitslosenquote, andererseits den Zwang der Frauen, sich zuhause zu "verwirklichen" (33).

The existence of these laws supports a conclusion which Jelinek draws: "Die Keun hat gewußt, daß der häusliche, eheliche Herd nur ein Ort ist für das sich Aufplustern des Mannes in Filzpantoffeln und sein Bedientwerden durch die Frau, und sie hat auch gewußt, daß sich das ändern muß (und sich endlich tatsächlich ändert)" (223).

The men in this novel pursue their careers more ambitiously. Even the meek Franz, who is dominated, even "castrated," by his mother, saves money and, with his friend Paul, begins to renovate a shop where he will sell cigarettes (Römhild 109). Algin, the writer of a successful novel which was later filmed, is the intellectual in the family, to whom Sanna contrasts herself: "Ich mache mir nicht viel aus dem Lernen, mein Kopf ist nicht so geeignet dazu. Algins Kopf war geeignet dazu, und man sieht an ihm, daß jemand es durch Lernen weitergebracht hat als alle" (Keun 8). Moreover, as Jelinek points out,

> [u]nd wie die ökonomische Macht fast ausschließlich bei den Männern liegt, so liegt auch die kulturelle Macht bei ihnen, nur ihnen traut man die großen Kulturschöpfungen zu, das hat auch Irmgard Keun erfahren, wenn man sie als die "Freundin von Joseph Roth" bezeichnet hat. Für die Frauen war stets der häusliche Bereich gedacht in seiner Enge, von dem aus sie zum Mann hochblicken sollte. (224)

Thus, Algin and Heini must decide how to go about writing under the then current regime, which will not allow free speech, while Sanna, Gerti, and Liska consider how to carry out their ambitions, which focus on love and marriage.

The young women--some of whom are a few years older than Sanna--who are Sanna's friends, serve as her role models, and they demonstrate that love is a full-time occupation for them. It is one of the few ways a woman achieves social prominence. As Jelinek writes,

> [d]ie Frauengestalten der Keun wissen, daß Liebe harte Arbeit ist, denn die Männer können sich ihren Aufstieg im Leben selber machen, die Frauen kriegen ihn möglicherweise auch durch Heirat mit einem sozial attraktiven Partner. Ihr Produktionsmittel auf dem Weg nach oben ist der Körper, der natürlich die beste Pflege braucht, Diät, Dauerwellen, Farbe, Investitionsgüter in Gestalt von hübschen Kleidern, Hüten, Schuhen, Pelzen. (224-25)

Liska provides a good example of a woman who is aware of the importance of her appearance. The reader learns this from Sanna's comment, which designates a woman like Liska as an object of status, an object to be owned to indicate the success of the owner: "Und er [Algin] hat sie geheiratet, weil sie ihn bewunderte als einen dichtenden Gott, und weil eine Frau zum Aufbau gehört wie eine Wohnung. Die Wohnung wurde eingerichtet mit teuren Teppichen und Kissen" (Keun 14).

By observing Liska and other beautiful women, Sanna becomes aware that she could never be like them, for she is not as appealing as they are. She knows that a handsome, successful man will not be attracted to her and, therefore, accepts invitations from men who would not appeal to a more beautiful woman, but who might provide her with high status if they marry. For instance, she goes to a restaurant with an older man, an unattractive German official, who uses his occupation to attract

and possibly seduce young women. This man takes Sanna out to dinner, and, from the conversation, his intentions become clear:

> Er lud mich ein, später bei ihm zu Hause noch eine Flasche mit ihm zu leeren. Vorerst trank er einen Wacholder, weil das Eisbein fett gewesen war und um sich anzuregen. Anschließend sprach er mit mir als hoher Beamter und gebildeter Mensch, nämlich ernst und politisch und erotisch. Er sagte, als Katholik müsse er gegen seine Triebe kämpfen, die ungeheuer seien. Es ziehe ihn zu Dirnen und in wilde Abgründe seines Lebens, in denen man sein Geld verliere und seine Gesundheit und sein Seelenheil. (Keun 48)

This money-conscious Catholic official, who admires Hitler, only wants to marry a woman who has a sufficient dowry. Sanna would like to be the wife of an official because such a marriage would taunt Aunt Adelheid and impress Sanna's friends in Lappesheim. She wonders, however, if being the wife of this official would be worth living with his uncontrollable desires.

Sanna learns that if a girl falls in love with the wrong man, she can be in such a helpless situation that emotional pain is almost inevitable (Pasche 112). She sees Gerti in such a situation: "Aber was macht einem Mädchen schon ein Gesetz aus, wenn es Lust hat auf einen Mann? Und wenn ein Mann Lust hat auf ein Mädchen, dann kann der Henker mit dem Beil hinter ihm stehen--dem Mann ist alles egal außer dem einen. Aber wenn das vorbei ist, ist ihm natürlich nicht mehr alles egal" (Keun 16). Sanna is also aware of the importance of pleasing a man when he takes her out and asks her to spend the night with him, for it is one way to attract a man who behaves well and has a promising future. Sanna feels it is essential to discuss this with

a friend like Gerti, and the ladies' room is a good place to decide such things: "Und [man] kämmte sich die Haare und überlegte gemeinsam, ob man sich nach Hause bringen lassen sollte von den Herren, mit denen man saß, und ob sie vielleicht gleich frech werden und zu küssen anfangen, wozu man keine Lust hatte. Und wenn man Lust hatte, war man in aufgeregter Angst, so ein Mann könne einen nicht hübsch genug finden" (Keun 30-31). Indeed, these young women must be clever in order to make the most of their youth. Krechel's summary of the plight of the young women in Keun's novel aptly characterizes them:

> Da der Körper einziges Kapital ist, muß sein Wert multipliziert werden, indem seine Äußerlichkeit noch einmal nach außen gekehrt wird; er wird ein Ding unter schönen Dingen. Dementsprechend wird ein guter Teil der Energien auf Puder, Schuhe, Hütchen, attraktive Hemden verwandt. . . . Sie sind hart im Nehmen, aber weich im Geben, unsentimentale Geschöpfe, heiterere, rheinische Kusinen der Gestalten der Marieluise Fleißer, sachlicher, knapper. Familienähnlich ist die auflehnende Gebärde der Bestimmung Mann gegenüber, der tastende Versuch, in dieser Ordnung einen selbstbestimmten Platz zu finden, möglichst nicht ganz unten, ehe der endgültige Platz der Frau von einem Mann zugewiesen wird. (109, 113).

For the young women in this novel, a lovely appearance and good manners during the daytime are as important as discretion when it comes to love at night. For if a man feels he has not worked hard enough to earn this love, he will not value the woman. It is equally important for a young woman to be subservient, and Sanna proves to be well versed in this aspect, for she allows her male companions to talk

endlessly about themselves, their political feelings, and their emotions. Jelinek shows that Keun satirizes the male behavior: "Die literarische Aufgabe der Satire ist das Entmythologisieren, das Erklären, ist es, den Dingen ihre Geschichte wiederzugeben. Mythologisieren setzt Reichtum voraus, denn die Lüge kommt aus dem Reichtum . . ." (223). One of the riches, as discussed earlier in the context of Algin and Heini's achievements, is the dominance of males in controlling who writes and what is written. Jelinek argues,

> [n]ehmen wir nun die unbestrittene Tatsache als gegeben an, daß unsere kulturellen Normen von den Männern gesetzt worden sind, so können wir folgerichtung daraus schließen, daß diese Männer auch über deren Reichtümer verfügen, und nicht zuletzt über den Reichtum der Sprache. Besser: den Reichtum der schönen Geschwätzigkeit. Diese männliche Geschwätzigkeit hat die Keun entlarvt wie kaum eine andere schreibende Frau. (223)

Sanna acts in a subservient manner with Franz as well. During the date with the German official, Franz comes and convinces Sanna to leave this man, and Sanna, realizing that she and Franz are suitable for one another, has Franz stay overnight in her room. She is aware that Franz has problems in social situations because of his mother's dominance over him. Because he has these flaws and she knows her own social standing, Sanna believes that she can seduce him and convince him to marry her. Moreover, Sanna is clever enough to sustain this love by appearing weaker than she is so that he feels strong. In the final chapter, she says: "Wir fahren durch die Nacht, alle Lichter fahren schwebend mit. Mein Kopf liegt in Franz' Schoß. Ich muß mich schwächer zeigen, als ich bin, damit er sich stark fühlt und mich lieben kann"

(Keun 132). In this situation, Sanna adapts to Franz and what she believes are his wishes. She occupies herself with finding a lover and eventually keeping him happy so that he can feel important and valued. On the one hand, she must show that she has certain talents, such as efficiently helping in the business they want to build together. On the other hand, she must make her future husband feel confident. Jelinek's evaluation of Irmgard Keun's work summarizes such a relationship: "Über diesen Marktwert wissen sie [die Frauen] sehr gut Bescheid, die hübschen Frauen der Irmgard Keun, und daß genau vorgeplant werden muß, um ihn möglichst zu erhöhen, damit ein Anschein von Gleichwertigkeit zwischen Mann und Frau erreicht ist " (qtd. in Römhild 112).

The women in this novel play several roles. Aunt Adelheid, for instance, is one character who replaces Sanna's mother, who has died and is not depicted in the narrative. Sanna views Aunt Adelheid and her friends as mature women who may serve as role models, but, in this novel, they are always negative ones. Sanna's disdain for these women is perhaps a result of their rejection of Sanna, for her stepmother sends her to live with Aunt Adelheid, and Aunt Adelheid eventually has her arrested. The older women's disloyalty convinces Sanna that she cannot rely on her elders; instead, she must rely on her female friends.

Aunt Adelheid and the adult women participate in activities which do not interest Sanna, and the behavior of Liska and Gerti present an alternative. Having her own friends and having been accepted by them allow Sanna to reject these other women. As Demarr and Bakerman point out, "Friendship [serves as] a protection from the rigors of any necessary, unfamiliar social interaction, as a barrier against

intrusive adults" (57). Moreover, Sanna realizes that, although Gerti's and Liska's activities are not constructive, they do not hurt anyone. Aunt Adelheid and her friends, however, use the policies of National Socialism to benefit themselves and cause others to suffer. Sanna regards their actions as a negative means for women to attain social prominence and the power they would not normally have. Clearly, Aunt Adelheid is a perfect prototype of fascist womanhood, as Michael Ackermann argues: "Sie gönnt anderen keine Freude; will Mann und Sohn besitzen, ohne wirkliches Interesse an ihnen zu haben; pflegt verschiedene oberflächliche Beziehungen (z.B. zum Knallbonbonverkäufer); tritt ihres sozialen Aufstiegs neben der NS-Frauenschaft bei, erfährt ihre Obrigkeitshörigkeit als 'Lebenserleichterung'" (34). Aunt Adelheid's appearance symbolizes her cruel and calculating personality. When Sanna meets her for the first time, the girl's first impression is negative: "Lange schwarze Arme umklammerten mich plötzlich, und hartes Stroh zerkratzte mir das Gesicht. Das war die Tante Adelheid. Statt mich mit ihrem Mund zu küssen, zerkratzte sie mir das Gesicht mit ihrem Hut aus hartem Stroh" (Keun 41). Not only does Aunt Adelheid make Franz feel responsible for her negligence in the childhood death of Franz's younger brother, she would blackmail her neighbor in order to become the director of the apartment house, a position which would allow her to carry a gun and give her the responsibility of evacuating the apartment building when necessary. During a practice session for air raids, each resident must wear a gas mask, an old man nearly dies because Aunt Adelheid fails to put the mask on him correctly. Her words to him echo an important theme for all the citizens of the Third Reich, i.e., the necessity to conform: "Pütz, sagte die Tant Adelheid streng, 'Sie haben das neue Deutschland

nicht begriffen, Sie haben den Aufbauwillen des Führers nicht begriffen. Alte Leute wie Sie muß man zu ihrem Heil zwingen oder über sie hinwegschreiten'" (Keun 10-11).

Other women also serve as negative models for Sanna. Frau Breitwehr, whom Sanna knows in Frankfurt, takes advantage of the atmosphere created by the Nazi regime to improve her social status. This woman steals money from the family business in order to buy a fur coat to impress her friends at the women's club meetings. Another acquaintance, Frau Silias, wants to gain some status through her husband's new role and, so that he feels more important, she buys him only the finest foods in an Aryan store, where, she contends, proper German women shop. In describing how these women take advantage of the restrictions of the new order, Sanna also stereotypes these older women whose roles changed once they married and who have lost their good looks. Now their value derives from what they can provide for the husband, so that his investment can continue to demonstrate its value (Pasche 112), as Sanna's snide comment suggests: "Den Lachsschinken und das Flaschenbier muß ihm seine Frau besorgen, denn keine Frau ist umsonst verheiratet" (Keun 33).

Another personality Sanna describes is that of an unmarried, sexually deprived woman, the thirty-year-old Betty Raff (Römhild 111). Betty does not use the same methods to attract men that Sanna and her friends do, for her opinion of men and view of marriage is much different from theirs. Betty, a vegetarian, fits the typical image of an old maid who is frustrated with sexuality and has been unable to find a man who is attracted to her: "Betty Raff selbst sagt, sie habe kein fleischliches Interesse an irgendeinem Mann, was insofern ein Irrtum von ihr ist, daß kein Mann fleischliches

Interesse an ihr hat" (Keun 70). Thus, she views sexual activity and a relationship with a man as something to be cautious about, and she tells Liska and Sanna so. Sanna compares her manipulative behavior to that of Aunt Adelheid, although Betty achieves her goals through flattery: "In edelster Absicht mischt sie sich überall ein und bringt alle Leute auseinander" (Keun 69). Her description evokes the image of an amphibian: "Sie ist lang und dünn mit einem ganz kleinen Kopf. Sie hat eine grünlichbraune Hautfarbe, unerhört neugierige braune Quellaugen in einem spitzmäusigen Gesicht, aalglatt zurückgekämmtes braunes Haar und glibbrig kalte magere kleine Froschhände. Sie ist dreißig Jahre alt, riecht säuerlich und sieht auch so aus" (Keun 69).

Sanna's description of these women demonstrates Keun's prejudices regarding unmarried women and her dislike for women in general, as Keun herself frankly admits in a 1981 interview with Klaus Antes: "Trotz der moralischen Verpflichtung, die der Frauenüberschuß einem jeden (oder jeder?) von uns auferlegt, hab' ich--von wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen--Männer lieber als Frauen. Meine Gründe dafür sind mannigfaltig. Ich selbst möchte kein Mann sein; der Gedanke, dann eine Frau heiraten zu müssen, schreckt mich" (140-41). Römhild contends that Keun's conception of the young women in this novel is constructed in opposition to that of the older women (111). With the exception of Betty Raff, this is true, and Sanna has no positive mother figure who can counsel her as she matures or whom she could emulate. The older women are depicted as manipulative, sexually deprived, and overly ambitious individuals who admire the *Führer* not only as a leader but also as an erotic figure. Aunt Adelheid's friend, Frau Fricke, erects an altar in his honor and, instead of praying

about her problems, now relies on him to solve them. Aunt Adelheid schemes to have Sanna arrested because she is embarrassed and outraged when Sanna mentions to Frau Fricke that Aunt Adelheid admires how Hitler sweats when he delivers his speeches. After hearing Hitler's speech, Sanna's aunt once said, "War es nicht herrlich, hast du so was schonmal erlebt? Hast du gehört, wie er kaum noch sprechen konnte und leichenblaß war und fast zusammenbrach?" (Keun 58). This statement alone does not imply she is sexually excited, but then Sanna notes how impressed her aunt once was when she accompanied Aunt Adelheid to the theater. In the play, the sweating actor was a prisoner in chains, and the aunt bought a picture of this actor to hang over her bed, where the *Führer's* picture also hangs. The association of men sweating and in chains and Aunt Adelheid's action of hanging images of these men over her bed suggests sexual intercourse, even the sexual foreplay of bondage. In fact, in the context of women's adoration of Hitler, Ackermann makes a similar point and cites Maria-A. Macciocchi's study, which states: "Der Führer ersetzt den Ehemann, ist perfekter Herrscher und Liebhaber. . . . Die Nazifrauen (nach den Berichten von Historikern) pißten vor Wonne unwiderstehlich auf die Erde, wenn Hitler zu ihnen sprach. . . . Auch Hitler hielt sich für den Gatten aller Frauen" (qtd. in Ackermann 34). Furthermore, Ackermann contends, "Keun beschreibt einen Faschismus, der sich auch 'unterhalb der Gürtellinie' abspielt als Befriedigung erotischer und emotionaler Bedürfnisse, sei es durch Hinwendung zum Führeridol oder durch kollektiven Rausch" (34).

Even though Sanna, Liska, and Gerti do not admire Hitler as the older women do, they are not opposed to him for political reasons, for the politics of National

Socialism are too confusing for Sanna to understand. Some of Göring's speeches, for example, make sense to Sanna, for he is talking about the success of the German people in overcoming difficulties, a statement which praises and flatters the listener. But often he begins to scold the people and, in an emotional tirade, speaks about those who will not take part in rebuilding Germany. This passionate outburst confuses Sanna, who knows from her own experience that helping Germany comes at the expense of personal freedom. She does not like to listen to such speeches and says, "Mir bleibt immer das Herz stehen bei solchen Reden, denn wie soll ich wissen, ob ich nicht zu denen gehöre, die zerschmettert werden sollen? Das Schlimmste ist, daß ich gar nicht verstehe, was eigentlich los ist, ich hab jetzt nur allmählich raus, wo man sich in acht zu nehmen hat" (Keun 56). Perhaps it is because of her youth and innocence that she is honest enough to admit her confusion and does not blindly accept what she is told.

The restrictions imposed by the new regime only affect Sanna and her female friends on a personal level. Indeed, these young women are, as Horsley writes, characterized by "feminine virtues of sex-appeal, nurturance, political and intellectual naiveté, and deference to male authority" ("Witness" 85). Gerti, for example, refuses to take the Nazis seriously and annoys them with her questions which expose their nonsensical rules and racial intolerance. In a bar she argues that it is impossible for Hitler to know that Jews all smell like garlic if he does not want to get close enough to them to smell their breath. She tells her fiancé Kurt Pielmann that she also likes garlic, making him believe she sympathizes with the Jews. On the way to the ladies' room, Gerti teases a young soldier, telling him she cannot accompany him because she

is Jewish. Her refusal to conform to the new rules, however, does not derive from opposition to the policies of National Socialism but from her love for Dieter Aaron, a Jew (Ackermann 33). It is also likely that she chose Dieter as a lover to spite her father, who wants her to marry Kurt Pielmann for financial reasons.

Sanna is aware of the changes and injustices caused by the new regime, but she is primarily concerned that these could negatively affect her personal ambitions of becoming a wife and mother. She is annoyed that she and her friends no longer have the freedom they once had when it comes to telling each other secrets or when the strictures of the new regime interfere with their personal relationships. Even a trip to the ladies' room in a public place is problematic. She reflects, "Früher war es immer so gemütlich, wenn zwei Mädchen mal gemeinsam auf die Toilette gingen. Man puderte sich und sprach schnell Wichtiges über Männer und Liebe" (Keun 30). Sanna's idea of a free government is one which only imposes the restrictions of the Ten Commandments. Her freedom also comes from being with the ones she loves and those who love her. She becomes increasingly dependent on Franz once she receives his letter. Suddenly, all of her happiness depends on him. She believes that she could not live without him, that he makes her life under National Socialist control possible, and that he is the source of her strength.

Liska, on the other hand, represents the opposite extreme--that is, she refuses to have anything to do with the outside world and only thinks of men and love. In the characters of Algin and Liska, Keun displays attitudes which on the larger social level allowed Hitler to come to power. Thus, Horsley contends, "His [Algin's] marriage was part of the 'magnificent theatrical production' he created through his surroundings.

The theater metaphor indicates that this prototype of a bourgeois marriage is also an aspect of the show and self-delusion that characterized the apolitical middle class" (Horsley, "Witness" 83). Liska is an example of the apathy and denial which also enabled Hitler's rise to power. She is forced to become aware of politics only when the quality of Algin's work suffers and Heini commits suicide.

The negative depiction of certain women in this text, who are also portrayed in connection to their role in National Socialism and whose personalities reflect the National Socialist mentality, would lead one to think that it is Nazism which brings out the worst in these women whom Sanna observes. Horsley writes,

> [i]n figures like the resentful, ambitious Aunt Adelheid or the mother of Bertchen Silias, Keun illustrates the particular vulnerability of relatively powerless, modestly educated, and conventionally narrow-minded women of the German middle class to seduction by Nazi ideology. Moreover, the relative absence of independent New Women of Gigli's or Doris's stripe reflects the changed social reality of the Third Reich and its call for women to return to more traditional roles. At the same time, however, in its apparently unquestioning presentation of such negative feminine stereotypes, the novel comes close to reflecting misogynist perspectives common to National Socialism. ("Witness" 84)

Indeed, it is possible that Keun includes deceitful and overly ambitious women in her text because she has experienced such women and feels that only women can behave in such a manner. The author even depicts Sanna as believing in the superiority of men in certain situations. One such instance occurs when Gerti leaves with Pielmann and a

friend, Kulmbach, to go to an all-night bar. Sanna comments: "Es wunderte mich zuerst, daß Gerti auch mitging, statt bei mir zu bleiben. Aber sie war so traurig und angstvoll verzweifelt. In so einem Zustand ist einer Frau auch ein Mann, den sie nicht mag, immer noch lieber als eine Frau, die sie mag. Mann ist eben Mann" (Keun 40). Keun's view is supported by an argument which Pasche makes. Because Keun's protagonist is not able to see beyond her limited horizon, he claims, the author inserts her own perspective. Pasche explains, "Die Erzählerin kann sich daher nicht ausschließlich auf ihre Zentralfigur beschränken, weil sie [Keun] den Leser zu Einsichten führen, die Sannas beschränkter Sehweise verschlossen bleiben. Immer wieder durchbricht sie den Gang der Handlung und kommentiert aus auktorialer Perspektive das Geschehen" (116). Sanna, who most often plays the role of an observer, does not comment on political events. The author leaves this task to Heini, as Horsley argues ("Witness" 84).[22] Heini, like Keun, also has biting and negative things to say about women. For example, "Heini sagt, Frauen sollen Krankenschwestern sein, nur Krankenschwestern haben Reiz für ihn. . . . eine Frau müsse was Lasterhaftes an sich haben. . . . Heini sagt, Frauen seien minderwertig und keiner Opfer fähig" (Keun 78-79). The fact that the author allowed this man to have the authoritative voice strongly suggests that Keun herself was greatly under the influence of domineering men, like Roth, at the time she wrote this novel.

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[22] Horsley contends that Heini's character is either modeled after Keun herself or after Joseph Roth. In fact, Heini's name is similar to that of the poet Heinrich Heine, who was also politically active and extremely critical ("Witness" 81). Krechel, in the context of explaining how difficult Keun's life was with the domineering Roth, quotes Keun's comparison of Roth to Heine (118).

The details in Sanna's narration are a result of Keun's own experiences in Cologne in the early 1930s, when she was in her mid-twenties. Several critics have discussed the autobiographical nature of this novel. Wolfgang Pasche, for example, writes that several of the characters parallel personalities in Keun's life. The character Algin Moder, with his attempts to join the *Reichsschrifttumskammer,* is modeled on Keun's first husband, Johannes Tralow, who also wrote historical novels. He was not blacklisted, and after the war became a member of the PEN-Zentrum Ost und West and a professor. He moved to East Berlin and died there in 1968. Pasche also sees figures whom he compares with Keun's exiled friend and lover Arnold Strauss. He connects Strauss with Heini's friend Dr. Breslauer, the physician, and also with Dieter Aaron because both Dieter and Arnold had domineering parents (124-25). Keun's letter to Strauss clarifies this comparison, as Pasche notes:

> Auch die antisemitische Einstellung wohlhabender Juden--des Exportkaufmanns Aaron--ist Gesprächsstoff zwischen Arnold Strauss und ihr. Irmgard Keun schreibt am 5.5.1939: "Die Pünktchen (i.e. Juden. W.P) waren allerdings recht hartgesottene Kapitalisten. Ich kenne viele, die freudig Faschisten würden, wenn man sie ließe und ihnen ihr Geld ließe. Na, darüber haben wir schon oft gesprochen." (125)

Gerd Roloff writes that the communists' execution in the Cologne prison may still remain in the memories of many citizens, indicating that this event has historical

significance and Keun was aware of this event (56). The passage depicting Sanna's arrest may stem from Keun's own imprisonment.[23]

After Keun went into exile, she continued to write, but these novels were based on her personal experiences during exile and after the war. Like other writers in exile, she did not attempt to write about themes with which she was no longer familiar. Roloff notes that it was difficult for exiled writers and "innere Emigranten" living in Germany to write about Germany (58). He cites from Keun's 1947 book, *Bilder und Gedichte aus der Emigration*, to clarify his point:

> Deutschland und seine Menschen wurden mir immer ferner und blasser. Noch verband mich mein Buch, an dem ich schrieb, mit dem Leben in Deutschland. Bald würde es fertig sein. Und dann? Was würde ich dann schreiben? . . . Was ich über das nationalsozialistische Deutschland, so wie ich es kannte, zu schreiben hatte, hatte ich geschrieben. Noch einen Roman konnte ich nicht mehr darüber schreiben. Von nun an kannte ich es ja auch nicht mehr aus eigenem Erleben. . . . Die Emigranten hatten kein Land, das ihnen gehörte, und sie lebten eine mehr oder weniger provisorische Existenz. Deutschland kannten sie nicht mehr und konnten auch nicht mehr darüber schreiben, zumindest keinen gesellschaftskritischen Roman, dessen Personen Blut haben und die man mit der Hand anfassen zu können glaubt. (Qtd. in Roloff 57-58)

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[23] Serke writes that she was imprisoned because she refused to become a member of the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (162). Keun was indeed imprisoned, but the reasons for this incarceration is questionable. Horsley points out that Keun gave a false account of the reasons for her seizure and subsequent interrogation ("Witness" 72).

After the war Keun continued to write but was not successful in establishing and maintaining literary connections. Indeed, she published no new works after 1962. Several reasons account for the development, such as the political atmosphere of the late 1940s, when there was more concern in West Germany about the emerging Cold War and not much interest in literature which criticized the Third Reich (Horsley, "Witness" 100-01). Personal reasons also contributed to her lack of success. Horsley recounts that Gabriele Kreis's book reveals the problems which prevented Keun from writing:

> Chief among them was her heavy use of alcohol over decades, although this cannot be separated from other lifelong problems and conflicting characteristics; recurrent anxieties and depressions on the one hand, bravura and flamboyance on the other; the desire for recognition and a sometimes exaggerated sense of her achievement versus self-doubt and insecurity; a need for freedom yet a strong impulse of dependence on others; the inability to manage money or the practical demands of daily life; finally, the thoroughgoing intermingling of truth and invention that had become second nature to her. ("Witness" 101)

Fortunately, Keun regained recognition for her talent before her death; she was awarded the Marieluise Fleißer Prize in 1981, and many of her works were reprinted in the 1970s (Horsley, "Irmgard Keun" 234). Many critics have since written about this author, who accurately represented a period in German history through the eyes of a young, middle-class woman.

Chapter 4

Anne Hébert: *Les Fous de Bassan*

Anne Hébert was born to a notable Quebec family in 1916 in the village of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fossambault. Her father, Maurice Hébert, was a civil servant who later became a writer and literary critic, and her mother, Marguerite Marie Taché, was the granddaughter of a noted architect. Influenced by her father, who read to his children and encouraged their education, Anne came to appreciate literature early in life. She also listened to his radio programs and read extensively as a child (Russell 1). Her older cousin, Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau, whom many considered the first modern poet of Quebec, also influenced her, for he spent his summers at Sainte-Catherine and, together with his friends, produced plays at the parish hall. Hébert began writing stories about her younger siblings at an early age, and seeing this talent, her father and cousin encouraged her to write her first volume of poetry (Cohen 9).

If Hébert's family was influential in her literary development, the provincial atmosphere of Quebec City at the time presented a mundane counterpart to her domestic environment. As Delbert W. Russell writes, "the provincial city was a 'literary desert,' and the sterility of upper-middle-class life was later to be criticized in her stories" (2):[24]

> The Quebec literary establishment had up until the late 1930s scorned the traditional French-European concept of "serious" literature in favor of a

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[24] Saint-Denys Garneau, her cousin, felt increasingly alienated in this closed society, especially after he presented his first volume of poetry to the public in 1937; eventually, he became obsessed with Jansenist puritanism, which was widespread in Quebec society (Russell 1-2).

> didactic literature which would present a flattering image of man. This resulted in "romans à thèse" advocating an agricultural and religious ideal which avoided any true contact with the physical reality of man. (Albert LeGrand, qtd. in Russell 2)

A change from this narrowly-defined type of literature was beginning to occur around the time Hébert began publishing her short stories and poems in the late 1930s. Russell writes, "Miss Hébert's maturity as a poet, however, was recognized after the publication of *Le Tombeau des rois* [The Tomb of the Kings] in 1953, and this led to the award of a grant to write in Paris in 1954" (3). Her literary contributions gained widespread recognition after the 1960s with the publications of *Poèmes* (1960) and *Le Torrent* (1963) (Russell 3). She remained in Paris for much of her life, partly because it was difficult for her to find publishers for her fiction in Quebec (Cohen 9). Although she did not play a role in the cultural and literary changes in Quebec society which ensued after her departure, the subjects of her major novels are rooted in the social realities of Quebec, especially in personal and cultural contexts (Russell 2-3).

Les Fous de Bassan, which was published in 1982, won her the *Prix Fémina*, previously awarded to Gabrielle Roy for her novel *Bonheur d'occasion.* Hébert's novel is about the lives of five people in a community who recount their version of two murders which occurred on the night of August 31, 1936. The two protagonists are adolescent females--Nora and Olivia--whose coming of age and lives in Griffin Creek are the focus of the novel. While Hébert herself contends that this novel is not based on fact, the story portrayed bears resemblance to a similar occurrence involving the murder of two female cousins on August 31, 1933, which was reported on the

Gaspé Peninsula, where the fictional village of Griffin Creek is located. From his reading an account of the actual event in the newspaper *Le Soleil*, Aurélien Boivin points out many similarities between the real and fictional murders: the clothing of the murder victims was similar, and, after the actual murder, only one body, that of the younger victim, was found on the beach (325-26). As in Hébert's novel, a male cousin was involved. According to the newspaper report, Wilson Phillips, the victims' cousin, was charged but eventually acquitted of the crime because the police officer extorted his confession. Although Hébert denies the connection between the novel and the actual crime, Boivin contends that it is possible that the murder in 1933 made a deep impact on Hébert. Perhaps she had forgotten the actual event, he argues, but the impression remained dormant in her memory (325-26). Indeed, Hébert had been thinking about writing the novel in the 1970s and considered different possibilities for this novel even then. During an interview with Jean Royer, a critic for the newspaper *Devoir*, she admits that "Le roman avait longtemps fermenté dans ma tête. Je vivais avec tous les souvenirs du fleuve, du golfe, de la mer et du vent" (qtd. in Boivin 325). When Hébert eventually wrote the novel over forty years after the account of the murders appeared in the newspaper. She wrote the events of the crime "à sa façon par la lunette de son imaginaire" (Boivin 326).

The novel is constructed in six "books" centering on one event, which took place on the night of August 31, 1936. Each of the main characters--Nicolas, Perceval, Stevens, Nora, and Olivia--relates a version. Stevens, who is accused of murdering Nora and Olivia, narrates two books and relives the murders in the second one. The novel's setting, Griffin Creek, a small community at the tip of the Gaspé

Peninsula, was settled by British Loyalists, who, because of their allegiance to George III, fled the United States after the American Revolution and settled parts of eastern Canada and Ontario (Senécal 152). This isolated community was founded by four families, the Joneses, the Browns, the Atkinses, and the Macdonalds, and the main characters are interrelated. The first narrator, Nicolas Jones, the pastor, is married to Irene, who is unable to have children; Nicolas's sister, Beatrice Jones, is married to John Brown. They have four children, Stevens, the twins Pat and Pam, and Perceval, who is mentally handicapped. Nora Atkins is Nicolas Jones's niece, as is Olivia, who lives with her father and two brothers, Patrick and Sidney. Other characters include Maureen, a widow, who is a cousin of Stevens, and Bob Allen, Stevens's friend from a nearby village.

The novel begins when Stevens, the handsome son of John and Beatrice Jones, has just returned to Griffin Creek after a five-year absence. It is the summer of 1936, an eventful summer, because three of the community's women die: Nora and Olivia are murdered, and Irene, the wife of Nicolas, commits suicide. Indeed, it is a turning point for the community and marks its downfall, for after these events Griffin Creek becomes a wasteland.[25] Nicolas's words attest to its demise: "Il suffi d'un seul été pour que se disperse le peuple élu de Griffin Creek. . . . Nos maisons se délabrent sur peid et moi, Nicolas Jones, pasteur sans troupeau, je m'étiole dans ce presbytère aux colonnes grises vermoulues" (13-14). The double murder is investigated by the police of a nearby community. Eventually, Stevens is acquitted of the crime for a technical

[25] Janis Pallister offers an interesting discussion about the significance of the apple which Nora eats and how its seeds, which Nora spits on the ground, symbolizes Griffin Creeks downfall (550-51).

reason. Throughout the interrogation, his parents lie to the police, and their lies are supported by Maureen and Bob Allen, who cannot remember when he left Stevens. Stevens is thereby protected from punishment by the police. He does not, however, lead a carefree existence after the murder. He leaves Griffin Creek, enters the army to fight in World War II and, as the final narrative reveals, escapes from a mental hospital. His madness is confirmed in his narrative, in which he is continually haunted by the events of August 31, 1936, the night of the murder.

Nora begins her narrative on the day after her fifteenth birthday. She enthusiastically welcomes growing older and growing closer to becoming a woman, and her behavior indicates that she likes the attention she receives from young men. As she comes of age, however, the older men become more and more protective of her, for she is beautiful. When her uncle Nicolas sees her kissing a stranger in the grocery store, he slaps her face to prevent her from acting this way in the future. Nora's father also resists her obvious maturing, perhaps because he is aware of the hard lives women have in Griffin Creek and does not want to see his daughter suffer. He especially notices men's strong attraction to her when she delivers some provisions to him and a group of hunters. Her mother warns her not to be mistaken for a deer because of her red hair, and this warning suggests that she is desirable as prey to be stalked and killed by the hunters. When she arrives, the pastor and the other men vie for her attention, and a hunter hands Nora a bottle of liquor, which she drinks. But Nora's father, who senses how the men's behavior changes upon her arrival, becomes worried and sends her away.

Unfortunately, her father is not always with Nora to protect her or guide her behavior, which is sometimes provocative. For instance, Nora casually states that she will kiss every man in Griffin Creek by summer's end, and she evaluates each young man based on his performance. Nora does not hesitate to express her sexuality. Her attraction to the young men in the community, and especially to Stevens, causes her to show her desire quite overtly. Nora's behavior contradicts Abel, Hirsch, and Langland's assessment of female behavior. They note, "Repeatedly, the female protagonist or *Bildungsheld* must chart a treacherous course between the penalties of expressing sexuality and suppressing it," but Nora is not concerned about the consequences of her behavior (12). It appears that her upbringing and guidance is limited to biblical teachings from the pastor, for it is not obvious from the narrative that her parents taught her how to behave toward young men. She is not at all concerned with the moral or social ramifications of having sexual intercourse before marriage, nor does she give any thought to the possibility of becoming pregnant.[26] She allows her emotions to take control and expresses an almost physical need to procreate to continue her existence: "Livrée aux métamorphoses de mon âge j'ai été roulée et pétrie par une eau saumâtre, mes seins sur mes côtes viennent de se poser comme deux colombes, la promesse de dix ou douze enfants, aux yeux d'outremer, se niche dans deux petites poche, au creux de mon ventre" (Hébert 118).

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[26] According to DeMarr and Bakerman, a common conflict in many U.S. novels with adolescent protagonists is whether or not the young woman should have sexual intercourse (3). Interestingly, this is not a dilemma for Nora. The question of whether or not this conflict is a common theme in French-Canadian novels with female adolescents merits further research.

Nora's coming of age and her attraction to Stevens threaten her friendship with Olivia, a phenomenon which is not uncommon in narratives about female development, according to Abel, Hirsch, and Langland. They argue that "[d]escribing how women come of age in fiction naturally has thematic ramifications. Women's developmental tasks and goals, which must be realized in a culture pervaded by male norms, generate distinctive narrative tensions--between autonomy and relationship, separation and community, loyalty to women and attraction to men" (12). While it is not clear that Nora and Olivia were such good friends that they enjoyed spending time together and sharing intimate secrets, it is certain that they were often together, for they sat next to each other in church, spent their days together on the beach with their grandmother Felicity, and shared the same bed when they visited each other for several days. Their relationship abruptly changes, however, when Stevens looks at Nora and Olivia for the first time in church. Suddenly, Nora wants to shed the widely accepted close association between herself and her cousin Olivia:

> Sur ce même banc d'église, côte à côte, son épaule contre mon épaule, Olivia et moi, toutes deux enfantines et sans langage véritable, adhérons de toutes nos forces à la parole de l'écriture. Soeurs siamoises depuis notre enfance, jamais séparées, pleins de secretes non dits et partagés dans l'émerveillement de vivre. Il a suffi d'un seul regard posé sur nous deux ensemble, comme sur une seule personne, du fond de l'église, par un garçon insolent, pour que rien ne soit plus jamais comme avant entre nous. Je veux qu'Olivia ne soit plus avec moi . . . J'exite sans elle, et elle sans moi, il faut qu'elle le sache. . . . (Hébert 121-22)

Olivia also wants to distance herself from Nora and admits: "Ne peux plus supporter le corps de ma cousine Nora, endormie à côté de moi, dans le lit étroit qui est le sien. Envie de la griffer pour la punir d'exister à ce moment précis, où je voudrais être seul au monde, face à celui qui m'attire dans la nuit" (222). The appearance of Stevens and the way he looks at them make the girls acutely aware of each other and their need to be separate. They are anxious that he is comparing them, and, therefore, they want to distinguish themselves from one another. They compete for his affection, but since Nora is more forward, Stevens--although he does not like her frankness--notices her more, albeit in a negative way. This event marks the end of their girlhood friendship and the beginning of their individual development as women.

Nora is infatuated with Stevens. During the barn dance, she comments: "Stevens fait le beau. Lorsque je danse avec lui, je fais semblant de ne pas le reconnaître, alors que je n'ai qu'un nom en tête, Stevens, Stevens, Stevens" (124). Nora expresses all of her emotions with extreme passion, and, when he offends her by ignoring her, she claims to detest him. But, her behavior indicates otherwise. When she is outlining her intention to kiss all the boys in Griffin Creek, she plans to show more affection to Stevens, to single him out as a special recipient. In another scene, she plays the role of a hunter and stalks him in the woods, but when he sees her, the roles are suddenly reversed.[27] He warns Nora not to do something she will regret later,

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[27] This event, like a few others, is related by several of the narrators, emphasizing that each of them sees and analyses events in different ways. Marilyn Randall argues that Stevens is an omniscient narrator, a method which perfectly corresponds with Stevens's egoism and delusions of grandeur. Furthermore, Stephens's perceptions are confirmed by Nora and Olivia, whose passion for him is equally obsessive. As Randall summarizes, "L'homogénéité profonde qui sous-tend certaines des scènes

for he knows she is attracted to him. When he refuses to kiss her in a passionate manner, she is angry and cries,

> Non, non, je ne le supporterai pas. L'affront en pleine face. Je ne lui pardonnerai jamais. Il a refusé de m'embrasser comme un homme embrasse une femme et moi je l'attendais, depuis le matin, m'attachant à ses pas pareille à un chien de chasse qui suit une piste. Le beau visage dur de Stevens, ses longues jambes, son sexe de garçon, caché dans ses habits de garçon, son mépris, ma rage. (Hébert 127)

Indeed, Nora is ready for a sexual experience and is looking for the right man, even if it is not Stevens. Upon her return from the woods, the pastor sees her rage and follows her into the boathouse. He calms her by speaking in a soft voice. But, as she begins to relax, he molests her:

> Le pasteur s'approche tout près de moi. Il se met à genoux dans la poussière, le sable, les brins d'herbe séchée et les bouts de bois. Je me laisse faire par lui, ses mains moites fouillant dans mon corsage, la pointe de mes seins devenant dure sous ses doigts. Mon Dieu est-ce possible que la première fois, ce soit ce gros homme bénit qui. . . . (Hébert 129)

The description of this event reveals Nora's mixed emotions of curiosity and shock. She knows that she wants to experience some type of sexual encounter, but not with Nicolas, who is not only related to her, but unattractive. When Stevens's brother Perceval suddenly arrives, Nicolas stops molesting her.

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récurrentes ne contribue qu'à problématiser le présupposé de sources narratives différentes" (69).

One cannot help but wonder, however, why Nora allows the pastor to begin his sexual advances. Two possibilities come to mind. One is that she respects the pastor as a religious leader and does not know what to do when he touches her. In the beginning of the scene, when she expresses her hatred for Stevens, she expects Nicolas to admonish her that one should not hate anyone. As a leader in the community, he also evokes fear. He is described by Perceval and Nora as an imposing man whose voice has supernatural powers. When he seduces Nora, he uses his voice effectively to calm her. Clearly, he has a great deal of influence in the community, as Nora attests: "Il [Nicolas] parle de Dieu et des hommes et femmes de Griffin Creek qui doivent obéissance à Dieu et à lui, mon oncle Nicolas, représentant de Dieu à Griffin Creek" (Hébert 118). The fact that the entire community has so much reverence for the pastor would make it hard for Nora, at her young age, to reject his words and actions.

Another possibility is that Nora welcomes his advances. She notes that he sees her in a state of intense anger and comments, "Je suis sûre que ça l'excite" (Hébert 128). Her actions point to complicity, for she obeys him when he tells her to enter the boat house--perhaps because she is taught to obey the pastor--even though she suspects he is sexually excited. She does not run away but sits and waits in a state of shock--probably at his behavior as much as her own. She herself indicates that she is seeking revenge for Stevens's rebuke in submitting to the pastor's actions. Previous comments also illustrate that she likes being the center of men's attention and she even taunts and teases them. She eagerly anticipates being sexually active and views this state as something to look forward to "Pour le fun de tout mon corps . . . pour l'amour

de toute mon âme . . . " (Hébert 131). Nora's thoughts also point to her complicity, for in a way reminiscent of adolescent girls discussing a new experience, she remembers the encounter as both disgusting and exciting. Her words are at best contradictory if not unreliable, for even though she states that she detests her uncle, she also says the same of Stevens, whom she ardently pursues.

Nora does not accept Stevens's rejection gracefully because she has a very high opinion of herself. Several passages in the text point to her vanity; in fact, she considers herself different from other men and women: "Faite du limon de la terre, comme Adam et non sortie d'entre les côtes sèches d'Adam, première comme Adam, je suis moi, Nora Atkins, encore humide de ma naissance unique, avide de toute connaissance terrestre et marin" (116). Later in the narrative, when she expresses her desire to be a complete woman, she describes herself as immortal: "Je suis faite pour vivre. Je crois bien que je ne mourrai jamais" (131). Nora views her future as something extraordinary, and she has an equally idealized picture of love. This unrealistic vision of her future reflects the imagination of a girl who considers herself unique:

> Un jour ce sera l'amour fou, une espèce de roi, beau et fort, viendra sur la route de Griffin Creek, je le reconnaîtrai tout de suite, l'éclat de sa peu, son coeur sans défaut, visible à travers sa poitrine nue . . . Il prendra la main et me fera reine devant tous les habitants de Griffin Creek assemblé au bord de la route pour nous saluer. J'entends: Vive le roi et vivre la reine! . . . Nous serons mari et femme, roi et reine, pour l'éternité. Non, non, ce n'est pas Stevens. (Hébert 120)

This passage not only evokes the image of a fantastic king who will sweep her off her feet but also paints images of exotic lands: "Je serai reine du coton, où des oranges, car il viendra des pays lointains, au soleil fixe, allumé jour et nuit. J'ouvrirai les capsules dure du coton (c'est Stevens qui me l'a dit) et je serai inondée de duvet blanc et doux. J'avalerai des kumquats entiers, coeur et peau, doux-amers. Je dormirai sur des balles de coton pareilles à des nuages" (120).

Nora, at age fifteen, is at the threshold between childhood and adulthood; thus, many of her thoughts are similar to those of a child, as expressed, for instance, in her words about being "reine du coton" (120). Her naive images of courtship and marriage also reflect those found in fairy tales, and she intermingles fantasy with familiar objects in her life. A bird she observes, for example, becomes a swan, who becomes a man, then a pirate, and then an American driving a shiny, big car: "Sans doute viendra-t-il par la route de sable jaune, dans un nuage de poussière. Sa voiture brille de tout son nickel au soleil. Un Chevrolet, ou une Buick. L'important c'est que ce soit neuf et brillant, avec ses coussins moelleux et un klaxon nasillard" (Hébert 125). These examples not only illustrate adolescent traits in Nora's character but also her sexual attraction to Stevens, for his name is mentioned in all these dreams and fantasies. Even though Nora claims she will not marry him, the fact that she is even thinking about him indicates that he has made an impression on her. The last passage emphasizes this point, for she states that her prince will come by way of the beach, and, in the next line, she remembers the day of Stevens's arrival: "C'est à pied, cheminant dans le sable, l'air d'un vagabond avec ses bottes poudreuses, son baluchon sur l'épaule, que Stevens est arrivé, un beau matin, parmi nous" (Hébert 125).

Nora's fantasies are typical of thoughts which many children have, even at her age, but it is her image of herself which is rejected by Nicolas and Stevens. After he molests her, Nicolas accuses her of bringing sin to Griffin Creek, and she incites even more rage in Stevens on the night of her murder when she taunts him. Despite her frankness, however, she clearly embraces her attainment of womanhood. As Rosanna Dufault correctly points out, "Nora's behavior is consistent with Christiane Olivier's observation that a girl who welcomes puberty in this way may solicit male attention in order to find 'la réponse à son éternelle question 'suis je bien une femme?' and that 'Ne pas être désirée, c'est ne pas vivre'" ("Coming of Age" 184). Nora's words support this interpretation, for after Stevens's rebuke, she laments: "Je voudrais qu'on me ramasse sur un brancard, qu'on me porte, qu'on me soigne, qu'on dise des prières autour de moi" (Hébert 127).

For both Nora and Olivia, being loved is very important, a desire which DeMarr and Bakerman regard as prevalent in novels about adolescents:

> [Young women] want very much to love and be loved. No matter how openly sensual they are, no matter how comfortable or uncomfortable they may be with their sexuality, most of these girls [in novels about adolescents] keenly desire the love relationship as much as--or even more than--they desire sexual union. Underlying this yearning is another attitude that, in most instances, sharply separates female characters from male fictional adolescents. Loving--and, sometimes even much more importantly, being loved--is, for the majority of these girls, absolutely essential to the development of a positive self-image.

> It is as if they cannot be anyone if an important love-object, peer or elder, does not ratify their sense of self by loving and desiring them. (1-2)

Although Olivia has the need to be loved, she is not as comfortable as Nora about her sexuality and is less enthusiastic about being viewed as a sexually desirable woman. Dufault accurately notes that young women mature differently and suggests that, in contrast to Nora's reactions, the onset of puberty and the resulting biological changes make Olivia feel awkward ("Coming of Age" 183). It is not only Olivia's changing body which makes her self-conscious, but also the conflict she feels between her fear of men and her desire for them. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland point out that in novels depicting the development of female protagonists, "[the protagonists] must chart a treacherous course between the penalties of expressing sexuality and suppressing it, between the costs of inner concentration and of direct confrontation with society . . . " (12-13). This statement precisely reflects the difference between Nora and Olivia, for they both have different ways of expressing their sexuality.

While Nora expresses hers without hesitation within the confines of society's norms, Olivia does not know how to react to her desires, for she is now embarrassed by her body. Stevens notices this when he watches her swim: "Son corps magnifique est géneé dans ses gestes les plus simples, par la peur d'étre soi-même, belle et désirable" (96). She herself states that she would be embarrassed to show Stevens that she is attracted to him, but it is apparent that she, like Nora, is in love with him. In her narrative, as she recalls an event on the beach; she sees herself as a small child and remembers certain days in her youth, playing with her cousins Stevens and Perceval: "Du bout des doigts il [Stevens] effleure la joue de la petite fille [Olivia]. La joue de

la petite fille est fraîche comme l'ombre. Les doigts du petit garçon brûlants comme le soleil. Qui le premier se met à crier de joie dans le vent, parmi la clameur des oiseaux aquatiques?" (Hébert 205-06). It is apparent that, when they are young, the two cousins had a certain affinity for one another, but this attitude changed when Stevens became older, as Olivia observes: "Mes frères sont à l'âge où l'on méprise les filles. Evitent de me parler et de me regarder. . . . Mon cousin Stevens partage sans doute l'opinion de mes frères au sujet des filles. Il ne me reconnaît plus à présent qu'il a grandi. Les garçons sont d'une espèce rare, pensent-ils tous, et n'ont pas à se commetre avec les filles" (Hébert 210).

In general, Olivia is fearful of men because she is dominated by them in her home, having promised her mother to take care of the household, her three brothers and her father after her mother's death. Her brothers are very protective of her, but their motives are to show their dominance over her rather than to keep her from harm. Stevens notes that Patrick probably taught her to swim because he likes to tell her what to do. Olivia comments that her brothers "[e]vitent de me parler et de me regarder. Se content de monter la garde autour de moi, afin que je sois prisonnière dans la maison" (Hébert 210). Olivia has also witnessed her father's negative effect on women, for her own mother's spirit was destroyed through her relationship with him. She remembers how her mother was before her death: "Pourquoi ma mère est-elle si triste? Elle a toujours l'air de regarder droit devant elle des choses invisibles et terribles. Je voudrais la consoler, la guérir de ce mal qui la ronge. Son doux visage trop tôt flétri, par quel chagrin quelle offense secrète, le raviver d'un coup, lui rendre sa jeunesse tuée" (208). Several days before her mother's death, Olivia noticed blood

stains in her mother's bed. Olivia also noticed that she had trouble breathing and saw bruises on her arms and shoulders, indications that her mother had been beaten by her father. Thus, because of fear and her shy nature, she is not expressive about her sexual desire. Although Olivia witnesses her mother's suffering, she nevertheless, according to Dufault, "feels secure in her traditional role . . . She anxiously awaits the advent of a love that will fulfill her destiny as a woman" ("Coming of Age" 184). In performing her daily duties, the young woman is content and feels secure in doing the same things women before her did--after all, this is how she was raised--and these activities seem to connect her to her female ancestors, for they will eventually lead to her place in life:

> La repasseuse est dans la cuisine, penche la tête dans la buée chaude des fers, fait attention de ne pas faire sauter les boutons de la chemise blanche. . . . Et le vent qui tourbillonne tout autour de la maison fait résonner Griffin Creek avec des voix de femmes patientes, repasseuses, laveuses, cuisinières, épouses, grossissantes, enfantantes, mères des vivants et des morts, désirantes et désirées dans le vent amer. . . . (Hébert 214-15)

Olivia not only has a very close connection to her ancestors but to the sea as well. It is where her female ancestors reside and where her body remains after her death. Several critics have observed that Hébert portrays the sea as the symbol of the mother and of all the deceased female ancestors.[28] Indeed, Perceval's observation of

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[28] Karen Gould, Marie-Dominique Boyce, and Kathryn Slott have extensively analyzed the significance of the wind and sea as metaphors for women. Boyce's interesting study argues that "Elles [les mères] sont lasses d'être incessamment accusés du péché originel. Elle s'unissent pour crier cette injustice et incitent leurs filles à la révolte" (299). Because Nora and Olivia do not revolt and continue to be attracted to

the sea suggests the image of a pregnant woman: "La haute mer à l'horizon. Son ventre profond d'eau et de sable. Ses secrets bien gardés" (Hébert 166). Olivia has the same image: ". . . je regarde l'étendue de l'eau, à perte de vue, se gonfler, se detendre comme le ventre d'une femme sous la poussée de son fruit. Toute une masse profonde et épaisse fermente et travaille par en dessous . . . " (Hébert 204).

In fact, Olivia receives advice from the women, her ancestors, who live in the sea and warn her of the danger of falling in love with Stevens. Many of the women have a connection to the ocean. Felicity, the mother of Nicolas and Beatrice, has a morning ritual of swimming in the sea before dawn to escape her cruel husband. Excluding her son Nicolas and Stevens from the routine, she invites her young granddaughters, and Nora, reflecting on the daily swim, suggests that Felicity shares a secret connection with the sea, for as soon as it approaches land, her mood becomes darker and more remote and she becomes a different person. Nora comments: "Lorsque la marée haute se fait plus tardive et recouvre les grèves en plein jour, Felicity refuse obstinément de se baigner, redevient farouche et lointaine" (Hébert 113). Nora also asserts that she too has evolved from the sea and has lived there in a previous life, as her ancestors do now: "Dans une autre vie j'ai pu séjourner longtemps dans la mer, sans avoir besoin de respirer, les poumons pas encore dépliés, semblable à quelqu'un qui bloque sa respiration terrienne et se laisse aller aux délices de l'existence sous-marine" (Hébert 116).

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men, who according to Boyce, are responsible for all the evil in Griffin Creek, they must drown (Boyce 299).

It is not until after her death that Olivia finally expresses her sexual desire and her need to join her female ancestors in becoming a wife and a mother. In her lyrical narrative "Olivia de la Haute Mer," Olivia's voice comes from her watery grave. Despite the warning of her mother and grandmothers, whose spirits inhabit the sea, she returns to the site of her murder every day:

> Non, non ce n'est pas moi qui décide, c'est la marée qui m'emporte, chaque jour sur la grève de Griffin Creek, parmi les bouts de bois, les coquillages, le varech plein d'iode. Non, non ce n'est pas moi, c'est le désir qui me tire et m'amène, chaque jour, sur la grève. J'en demande pardon aux grandes femmes liquides, mes mère et grand-mères. . . . Je hante Griffin Creek afin que renaisse l'été 1936. (Hébert 220-21)

The object of her desire, moreover, is Stevens, even though he is the man who killed her: "Que Stevens se montre une fois encore, une fois seulement. Qu'il me parle une fois encore, qu'il me touche avec ses deux mains d'homme, avant de regagner la Floride. . . . Exister encore une fois, éclairée par lui, nimbée de lumière par lui, devenir à nouveau matière lumineuse et vivante, sous son regard. Vivre!" (Hébert 220). Olivia, despite warnings and fear, is drawn back to the earth so that she can fulfill her desire to know about love from Stevens. She regrets that she missed this opportunity in life:

> Il est comme l'arbre planté au milieu du paradis terrestre. La science du bien et du mal n'a pas de secret pour lui. Si seulement je voulais bien j'apprendrais tout de lui, d'un seul coup, la vie, la mort, tout. Je ne serais plus jamais une innocent simplette qui repasse des chemises en silence. L'amour seul pourrait

> faire que je devienne femme à part entière et communique d'égale à égale avec mes mére et grande-mères, dans l'ombre et le vent, à mots couverts, d'un air entendu, du mystère qui me ravage, corps et âme. (Hébert 216)

It is interesting to compare Nora and Olivia's level of development. Although Olivia is only two years older than Nora, there are not as many examples of adolescent behavior in Olivia's narrative as in Nora's, perhaps because Olivia is speaking after death and has become omniscient as a spirit. Further, Olivia's language is more sophisticated than Nora's, and she does not incorporate fantastic elements reminiscent of childhood thinking, as Nora sometimes does, when she speaks of things she has experienced. For example, Olivia does not expect her future husband to be a king; instead, she expresses her longing to return to Stevens. Her words are those of a mature woman rather than of a child who sees her future in terms of episodes from fairy tales.

Nora's family life is much more pleasant than Olivia's. Nora has a good relationship with her parents, her father protects her, and she has confidence in her mother's words. She also has warm feelings toward her siblings. In Nora's description of her bedroom, for instance, one can see that she still feels closely connected to the innocence she observes in her younger siblings, but the difference between her and them is notable as she describes their peaceful sleep in separate beds. The youngest sister has "[l']odeur de pivoine fraîche" (Hébert 112) which contrasts to her own physical characteristics and odor, indications of the beginning of puberty. Describing herself, she remarks on "mon ventre avec sa petite fourrure rousse, mes aisselles rousses, mon odeur rousse" (111). The description of their differences creates the

impression that she is leaving the childhood which had provided an intimate connection to her siblings.

At the same time, Nora's descriptions of certain situations reveal her youth and innocence. Nora and Olivia continue to participate in childhood activities, such as swimming in the sea with their grandmother Felicity and their cousin Perceval, but the relationship with their male cousin changes when he unwittingly expresses his sexual desire and tries to molest Nora. Her attempt to understand this event also reflects a childlike perception, for she compares Perceval to storybook characters--for instance, to "un géant" who is able to crush her as one crushes a fly and "un gros chien" with his "mains pataudes" (Hébert 116-17). She goes on to remark that he is developing a mustache, indicating that he is also entering puberty. Nora often notices physical traits of the young men around her. In fact, this tendency is a sign of her immaturity, for she speaks about men's physical flaws in describing them, and it is evident that she is more impressed by physical attractiveness than by character.

Olivia's family background, in turn, might explain the absence of adolescent expressions and behavior in her commentary. A Cinderella figure, she must cook and clean for her abusive father and jealous brothers, who are protective only because they view their sister as someone who belongs to them. None of these men provides guidance, offers advice, or shows affection toward Olivia. Clearly, she is treated as a servant rather than a sister. Olivia is aware of the adult responsibilities her mother had and the brutal treatment she endured. Thus, she does not experience the carefree adolescence enjoyed by Nora. As Stevens observes,

> [j]'apprends que trois hommes jaloux gardent Olivia dans une grande maison avec une galerie de bois ouvragé tout le tour. Depuis la mort de sa mère elle n'a jamais été moins libre, malgré ses dix-sept ans, un père et deux frères à nourrir, blanchir, repasser et repriser, sa mère mourante lui ayant fait promettre de les bien soigner, tous les trois, et d'être parfaitement obéissante. (Hébert 75)

Olivia remains submissive to her father and brothers, of whom she is afraid, while Nora is not afraid to approach men and is very outspoken. Nora's comments suggest that she notices that Stevens avoids women, and, on the night of the murder, she even foolishly reproaches him with being a flawed man, a comment which makes him angry. She is also aware of the defined boundaries of sexual activity, admitting, "Moi aussi j'ai été cochonne avec le pasteur, dans la cabane à bateaux. Pour me venger de Stevens. . . . Mon Dieu quel péché est-ce là!" (Hébert 130-31). Despite their differences, Nora at age fifteen and Olivia at age seventeen both know their childhood will soon be in the past, a fact to which Nora alludes on the last day of summer vacation: "Demain 1er septembre. Ouverture des classes. C'est ma dernière année d'école. Olivia est déjà maîtresse de maison. Trois hommes dépendent d'elle pour le manger et le boire, le ménage et le blanchissage" (Hébert 135).

In expressing her sexual desire, Nora acts as a threat to the male narrators, with whom she is in contact, and neither Nicolas nor Stevens has had a good relationship with women. Karen Gould comments that the pastor, Nicolas, treats women as either saints who must be denied, as in the case of Irene, his wife, or someone who must be punished, as in the case of Nora (925). At the end of his Sunday sermon, he observes Perceval with added interest and notes: "Depuis le début de l'office Perceval a les

yeux fixés sur ses deux cousines Nora et Olivia. Un seul animal fabuleux, pense-t-il, à deux têtes, deux corps, quatre jambes et quatre bras, fait pour l'adoration ou le massacre. Perceval essuie ses yeux larmoyants, sa bouche baveuse. Se plonge dans la contemplation de ses mains énormes" (Hébert 31). In fact, Nicolas agrees with him about the cousins. Gould argues,

> [i]n a curious, voyeuristic way, as the pastor watches Perceval watch his cousins during the religious service, the male perception and moral condemnation of female sexuality, presented in the guise of this fabulous creature, are doubly legitimized, a process that adds to the prophetic nature of this manmade myth since the mythic female creature must be either tamed or destroyed in order to preserve the patriarchal order. (925)

Nicolas's attitude toward women is again revealed in the scene which occurs after he molests Nora in the bath house. He wants her to feel guilty and thus he condemns her for bringing sin to Griffin Creek. Stevens also agrees that their cousins have become "traitors to the purity and natural innocence of childhood" (Gould 925). He laments: "Olivia pourtant, si belle et gardée. A grandi trop vite. Est devenue femme comme les autres. L'espace d'un été. Je l'aimais peut-être lorsqu'elle était enfant, assise sur le sable" (Hébert 239).

One reason, perhaps, that Nicolas and Stevens cannot establish healthy relationships with women is that their relationships with their mothers have led them to distrust women. In the eyes of Nicolas, Perceval, and Stevens, mothers are to be loved, but their mothers do not show them affection and are cold and distant, making a close relationship difficult. The pastor is jealous of Nora and Olivia because of the

attention that his mother, Felicity, gives them. He wants to please Felicity by having a son, but his wife, Irene, is sterile, a situation which causes him much pain. Boyce (296) and Pallister (551) have referred to Felicity as a "phallic mother," one who has rendered him a weak man. This image is repeated with Stevens and his mother, and Stevens's brother Perceval, whose mother appears to him as "glacée . . . d'habitude" (Hébert 159). Boyce explains that Stevens, Perceval, and Nicolas all view the separation from their respective mothers and the maternal coldness toward them as castration (296-97), but another explanation is that sexuality frightens these men because they have been emotionally betrayed by the women to whom they were most attached. The lack of love experienced by Nicolas and Beatrice's cold, even cruel, behavior toward Stevens and Perceval has taught these men to be cautious, and they avoid intimate relationships with women to escape future emotional pain.

Stevens's behavior around women is perhaps the most interesting. He is quite possibly a latent homosexual, for he chooses to live with Maureen, a woman who has certain masculine characteristics. Upon his return to Griffin Creek, he thinks about the last time he lived in the village and compares himself to a pregnant woman: "J'étais comme une femme enceinte, au bord d'un chemin, qui reprend souffle, après avoir beaucoup marché et qui est lourde de son fruit" (Hébert 61). He also has only one close and long-time friend, a male, and even young Nora does not think he is like other men, referring to him as a "garçon manqué" (Ewing 104). As Pallister notes, Stevens wants to dominate women and does not like to be in their company (543). He lives with Maureen, not because he is sexually attracted to her, but because he does not want to live with his abusive parents. Stevens purposely kills fish for a living to

keep women at a distance, stating "Le soir venu je puais tellement que les femmes étaient bien obligées de me laisser tranquille. Le poisson, c'est comme si on entrait en religion, ça protège" (Hébert 58). He wants little to do with women and laments the fact that he lives in "le monde feutré des femmes" (88). When he does have contact with them, he prefers taunting the women who desire him, like Nora and Maureen, and hunting those who fear him, like Olivia, whom he evaluates as "la plus coriace, résistant dans sa peur de moi, sa peur de ce qui peut lui venir de moi, de mon corps sauvage, de mon coeur mauvais" (80).[29]

Stevens is, then, the most disturbing character in this novel. His relationship with his parents forces him to leave home at an early age, and when he returns, it is apparent that he is irrational and beginning to lose his sanity. Stevens himself realizes that he is a danger to the community, but he does not know exactly why:

> Il n'est peut-être pas trop tard pour changer de peau définitivement. . . . Ne pas laisser la suite de mon histoire à Griffin Creek se dérouler jusqu'au bout. Fuir avant que . . . Une telle excitation dans tout mon corps, une rage inexplicable. Il y a trop de femmes dans ce village, trop de femmes en chaleur et d'enfants perverses qui s'attachent à mes pas. (Hébert 79-80)

In fact, his comment indicates how much he differentiates himself from the other members of the community, for he compares himself to Christ: "Rien à faire pour éviter la comparaison, trop de lectures bibliques, dans mon enfance sans doute, si

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[29] Kathryn Slott argues that Stevens is one of the most sexually repressed males of the community, and this repression is most evident in his frequent use of suspended sentence endings (298). For example, in one instance he comments about Olivia and realizes that he mentioned something which he fears, that is, his raping Olivia: "Cette fille est trop belle, il faudrait lui tordre le cou avant que . . . Je balbutie." (Hébert 79).

quelqu'un resemble au Christ dans ce village, c'est bien moi, Stevens Brown" (Hébert 89).

Stevens's, Perceval's, and Nicolas's problems relating to women are evident in the way they refuse to acknowledge the unique names and personalities of individual women. Stevens usually refers to his sisters only as "les jumelles," seldom mentioning their names. He, Perceval, and Nicolas refer to Nora and Olivia as "les deux petites Atkins" or "les deux Atkins." In doing so, Slott correctly notes, they identify women collectively and, at the same time, depersonalize them (303). In this novel, however, all the women are different, especially in the manner in which they react to men, and they are all somehow troubled. Felicity Brown, the mother of Nicolas and Beatrice Brown, wants nothing to do with men, and even distrusts them because of her husband's infidelities and his urge to procreate (Senécal 155). She wants nothing to do with her son Nicolas either, and anxiously awaits the birth of her granddaughters. As Nicolas laments: "Je crois qu'elle a toujours préféré les filles" (37).

Pallister observes that "most of the characters, especially the women, are associated with death, i.e., are under the same Jansenistic fatality" (548). Certainly, several of the narrators' observations refer to death and the transient nature of life. For instance, both Stevens and Nora depict Irene as a woman who is only half-alive; Stevens views her as "[un] poisson mort," and Nora describes her as always sleeping (Hébert 98). The downfall of some of Griffin Creek's inhabitants is echoed by Irene, who regards the participants at the barn dance as "des éphémères autour d'une lampe," implying that they will live but a day (98). She herself chooses death over life, arguably because of her husband's seduction of Nora. Few of the women of Griffin

Creek have relationships with men which result in harmonious marriages and happy families. Maureen is left childless when her husband dies and she has made a bad choice in allowing Stevens to live with her, for he reawakens her sexuality and then abruptly leaves her (Senécal 156), and neither Pam nor Pat, the twin sisters of Stevens and Perceval, marries. To spite Nicolas, they memorialize Irene and the dead girls by hanging their portraits in the pastor's gallery. Senécal notes that their sterility attests to the "disorders of incest" for which Felicity's husband--who has committed adultery--is, in part, to blame (159). It is clear that, with the exception of Nora and Olivia, few of the female characters in this novel have the ability or the desire to procreate. Other women are described as accomplices to the men's brutality. Beatrice, for instance, the mother of Stevens, Perceval, and the twins, is described as icy and cold by her sons, like a witch with "a polar womb" (Pallister 548). She is the only woman who is content with her cruel husband. In fact, Nora compares John Brown to a warlock. Beatrice agrees to her husband's inhumane beatings of her sons, Stevens and Perceval, which evoke Stevens's feelings of tenderness toward his brother. Beatrice and her husband soon rid themselves of their children, giving the twins to the pastor and putting Perceval in an institution, so that they can be by themselves.

The women in this novel, however, are not innocent victims of patriarchal authority. Annabelle Rea points out, "[i]n many ways, Hébert is talking about the violence done to children by parents, the violence done to women by men, the violence done to humanity by war. She is making a plea for the beauty of the natural, the trusting and the innocent, and warning of the apocalypse to come if the madness of our ways does not change" (180). Nora and Olivia are killed in a society where

hunting and fishing, which involve killing, are practiced not only for survival but for pleasure. The brutality and death associated with hunting are reflected in the lives of the characters, particularly in the relationships between men and women. For instance, the pastor comments that the men of the village continue the hunt when they return home: "De retour de chasse ils prennent leur femme dans le noir, sans enlever leurs bottes" (Hébert 40). The pastor describes the men of the village as men who enjoy killing: "[I]ls ont toujours l'air de vouloir tuer quelque créature vivante" (Hébert 40). He attests that even he has watched fish struggle on his line for two hours to the point of exhaustion, and the stuffed heads of dead animals, kept as trophies, stare stupefied from the walls in the living rooms in Griffin Creek. The men who are cruel to animals extend this violence to their women, and nearly every female character is affected. The murders of Olivia and Nora are not the only violent deaths of the summer of 1936, for the sterile Irene commits suicide after hearing that her husband, the pastor, has molested his fifteen-year-old niece in the bathhouse. In another example, Olivia remembers how she discovered bruises on the shoulders and arms of her mother, who died young. The twins Pam and Pat, who have been subdued and well-disciplined by their parents, are given up to the pastor, and subsequently live a life of semi-enslavement. He in turn psychologically tortures them by waking them in the middle of the night for minor reasons and dominating them with a "trique de fer" (Hébert 18). Senécal notes that Maureen is also psychologically tortured by Stevens, who seduces her (156).

In this harsh environment, there are several elements which symbolize violence and brutality. The landscape of this northern region is something often incorporated

into Hébert's novels, for Hébert believes the landscape is important for the people of Quebec: "La terre que nous habitons depuis trois cents ans est terre du Nord et terre d'Amérique; nous lui appartenons biologiquement comme la flore et la faune. Le climat et le paysage nous ont façonnés aussi bien que toutes les contingences historiques, culturelles, religieuses et linguistiques" (Hébert, qtd. in Rea 170). One sees evidence of a harsh environment in the entire book, and the harshness is often symbolized in names. For example, *le fou*, the griffin, the bird which constantly torments some of the figures with its shrieks and cries, is a fierce carnivore which leads an isolated way of life (Rea 172). Discussing the significance of these birds in the novel, Rea contends that "the griffin tears apart men and horses with its beak and recalls the eagle of the Apocalypse bearing the message 'woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth' (Revelations 13)" (172). These birds, which live between land and sea, fear no one because they are accustomed to an isolated life on an island, nest in the cliffs, and go to sea. They are similar to Stevens with his boat, Olivia who finds her ancestral heritage in the sea and has webbed feet, and Nora who claims to have originated from the sea. Rea goes on to note that griffins, which also have a history of victimization because of their trusting nature, are the victims in the novel--as are Stevens, who was beaten as a child; Nora and Olivia, who trust Stevens; and Nicolas, who suffers from his mother's lack of love for him. Named *fou,* or booby, because they were beaten by sailors and thrown down the booby hatch, they are metaphors for the novel's characters and their ancestors (Rea 180, 172).

Pallister agrees that birds are metaphors for the inhabitants of the area and compares a griffin with Perceval, characterized as a Dostoyevskian idiot savant,

because he is often present but goes unnoticed and silently eavesdrops on the other inhabitants (547). The pastor, in turn, compares Stevens to the griffin because they are both ravenous and rapacious: "Son regard perçant scrute la mer et le rivage comme l'oeil noir du fou de Bassan, braqué sur la surface de l'eau et dans l'épaisseur de l'eau, épiant à travers les vagues tout frémissement de vie, toute promesse de festin" (42). Indeed, Rea contends that the birds are connected to Stevens in another sense, for in his later condition of insanity, it is the incessant and wild shrieking of the griffins which he continues to hear (Rea 172), and Olivia remembers the noise of the birds in the background when she played with Stevens on the beach. The deafening shrieks and tearing claws and beaks of the sea birds evoke images of the tearing of living flesh, evident later in this novel, when Olivia's nails tear into Stevens as he rapes her (Pallister 548).

Not only are the birds metaphors for violence in this novel, but the landscape is also described as savagely beautiful. Griffin Creek, situated between Cap Sec and Cap Sauvagine--a name related to the word "sauvage" and which also suggests brutality--is near the sea, where there are violent weather patterns and strong winds (Rea 172). It is, in fact, during a three-day storm that Stevens's sexual energy and brutality become apparent:

> Je me suis mis cela dans la tête, de vivre la tempête jusqu'au bout, le plus profondément possible, au coeur de son épicentre, semblable à un fou que je suis, jouissant de la fureur de la mer et m'y projetant, délivré de toute pesanteur, comme un bouchon de liège. Transi sur mon rocher, dans mes vêtements mouillés, je m'égosille à crier, dans un fracas d'enfer. Personne ne

> peut m'entendre et le cri rauque qui s'échappe de ma gorge me fait du bien et me délivre d'une excitation difficile à supporter. . . . Maureen me crie que je suis fou et que je vais attraper mon coup de mort. Rien à faire, il faut que je pleure et que je hurle, dans la tempête, que je sois transpercé jusqu'aux os par la pluie et l'embrun. J'y trouve l'expression de ma vie, de ma violence la plus secrète. (Hébert 102)

Stevens has the idea of finding his cousins Nora and Olivia "pour les entraîner avec moi dans la tempête" (103). Rea notes that the playing of the wild sea is connected to Stevens's sexual excitement, for the verb "jouir" is also used when he describes the murder of Nora. Later, he remembers the evening of the rape as a stormy night, contrary to accounts which state that the weather was calm (Rea 172).

Scholars debate whether or not Olivia and Nora are innocent victims of men's violence or whether Hébert is portraying a violent society which victimizes everyone. The feminist point of view maintains that, like other women in the community, the two cousins come under the dominance of men more and more as they grow older because the men in this community know that their subjugation is part of a woman's role (Boyce 295-96). Often, the influence of patriarchal authority ends in violence, the only way a woman can escape a "violent and confining social world" (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 9), such as the community of Griffin Creek. Marie-Dominique Boyce explains how a violent society comes about in this novel. Her analysis illustrates Paul Raymond Côté and Constantina Mitchell's premise that desire and violence are inseparable given the way in which the men in the novel develop, and this inseparability of the two is evident in men's treatment of women (79). Boyce argues:

> Toutefois, les exigences du corps des hommes ne faisant que s'accroître, une séparation du corps maternel s'avère inévitable. La mère ne peut plus subvenir aux besoins des hommes et se voit tyrannisée par leurs désirs démesurés, leurs rêves de pêche miraculeuse. Ils ne la respectent plus, la trompent en recherchant l'amour d'autres femmes; ils la battent et la surchargent d'enfants, et d'obligations familiales. (295)

The men in this novel, however, are also subject to violence--some of them, notably Stevens and Perceval, with the approval of their mothers. I would posit, as does Senécal, that the violence inherent to this community leads to its demise, and there are several interpretations of this outcome. Senécal compares the fate of Griffin Creek to a curse, or the Augustinian version of the Fall, where "the original malediction is passed from generation to generation through the natural process of procreation" (155). Like their ancestors who were loyal to the king, the residents of Griffin Creek continue the British tradition in this part of Canada where the people founded a "dominion" rather than a country. Often this term is associated with the biblical reference to the peaceable kingdom, which underlines the piousness,"self-righteousness and the messianic faith of the United Empire Loyalists' claim to the New World" (Senécal 152). Yet this novel implies that there is something else inherent in the community. The inhabitants of Griffin Creek, like the mad king whom their ancestors obeyed, also show traces of mental illness, perhaps as a result of their isolated and, by implication, inbred society (152). Pallister agrees that there is insanity in the community and points out that these people are isolated by their language, religion and mentality, "which verges on the kind of madness sometimes

found among the isolated and the inbred" (541). Indeed, the people of Griffin Creek "are a lost tribe marked with the curse of incest" (Senécal 152). Since everyone is somehow related--they are all descendants of the Joneses, the Browns, the Atkinses and the Macdonalds--it is possible that incest is a reality in Griffin Creek and a result of a curse from God (152).

Pallister, arguing against a feminist interpretation that focuses on female victimization in the novel, correctly points out that Nora and Olivia, as well as the other women in this novel, are not the only victims; rather, everyone in the village succumbs to disaster, which is part of the community's legacy. Indeed, Stevens and the pastor are guilty of their sins, but they should not be singled out, for all these descendants of the Loyalists are strange and troubled. Even though they live close together in an isolated environment, they do not relate well to each other (Pallister 543). Furthermore, Pallister notes,

> to insist too greatly on a strictly "feminist" (here, an intransigently and indiscriminately pro-woman) view of the female characters and the events is to betray the strain of eminent [sic] catastrophe surrounding the lives of all these "elect" as traced by Hébert herself, and also to indulge in a bit of (feminist) sentimentality regarding the supposed causes of sexual antagonism and rape. (543)

It is true, Pallister continues, that there is a psychological basis for Stevens's crime, for he wants the power to dominate the entire village, and both Nicolas and Olivia attest to Stevens's troubled personality. He is also a doomed character, a victim who victimizes others (Pallister 543). To be sure, Stevens sees himself as a Christ-like

figure and thinks he has extraordinary powers. Nicolas is certain that Stevens is to blame for the evil in Griffin Creek, and Olivia is convinced of his omniscience, believing "[i]l est comme l'arbre planté au milieu du paradis terrestre" (Hébert 216). Yet, as Pallister argues, this novel is not only about the effects of Stevens's misogyny because all the characters are victims of a "dark inner world" (Pallister 544).[30]

Another interpretation of Stevens's crime supports Pallister's observation of an intertextual basis for this work, based on Hébert's heavy incorporation of the book of Genesis from the Bible.[31] In his article "Bible, Mythes et *Fous de Bassan*," Antoine Sirois compares the murders of Olivia and Nora with the biblical Fall of man:

> L'histoire remonte "au commencement," selon les termes même de la Genèse, et décrit un espace et un temps primordiaux de façon analogue au récit biblique. . . . Cette terre promise à laquelle ont accédé les loyalistes après leur pérégrination, ce jardin d'abondance, a brite deux pommiers, comme au chapitre deux de la Genèse, mais qui donnent ici des pommes acides que les cousins jumelles ont croquées avant leur mort violent" ("Bible, Mythes" 179).

Nora and Olivia reside in the garden of Griffin Creek, and even Nora's statement that she sees herself as "Eve nouvelle" (118) and that she is not created from Adam

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[30] Pallister also argues that this novel is "a *deconstruction* of the myth of Demeter-Persephone" (548). She continue: "That is not the only Greek connection, however. The novel functions like virtually all of Hébert's works, from a rather fatalistic point of departure; the thrust is that of a Greek tragedy, reinforced by that of a Jansenistic, or Racinian, aura of doom" (Pallister 544).

[31] In his article "Anne Hébert et la Bible," Sirois discusses an interview with Hébert where she herself states "[. . .] la Bible est un livre extraordinaire [. . .]. C'est peut-être l'oeuvre qui m'a marquée le plus" (qtd. in Sirois, "Anne Hébert" 459).

harkens back to the Creation in the book of Genesis and is similar to a biblical reference made by Olivia, when she compares Stevens to the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

Everything is in place for the Fall, Sirois writes: the apple to bite or the sin, in this case, is the sexual experience of Nora, who regards her interaction with Stevens as the "jeu de la tentation" ("Bible, Mythes" 180). When Nora follows him in the woods and he stops her, she is caught, captured, "prise dans le regard de Stevens comme dans un filet" (Hébert 216). In contrast, Olivia is warned by her female ancestors not to look Stevens in the eyes when she dances with him. When the two girls meet him on the beach the night of their murder, they are pulled into sex, violence, and death. Stevens first kills Nora, who is frustrated by his indifference to her and questions his virility, and then after raping Olivia, he kills her to hide his crime:

> Tout est parallèle mais aussi analogie entre les actions de Griffin Creek et celles du jardin d'Eden. Le mal, comme signalé ci-haut, ne fait pas son apparition pour une première fois dans cette communauté. Comme le dit le pasteur je "cherche la faute originelle de Griffin Creek. Non, ce n'est pas Stevens qui a manqué le premier, quoi qu'il soit le pire de nous tous, le dépositaire de toute la malfaisance secrete de Griffin Creek, amassée au coeur des hommes et des femmes depuis deux siècles." (Sirois, "Bible, Mythes" 180)

Stevens, Sirois argues, was only the initiator of evil, the one who went beyond the limit of tolerability. Griffin Creek's punishment after the sin also parallels events of the book of Genesis, particularly in relation to the Garden of Eden: Maureen's garden, once beautiful, is now abandoned and filled with weeds. Eden has lost its appeal and

the abundant period is over; the inhabitants of Griffin Creek leave, all in the course of one summer (Sirois, "Bible" 180). Pallister also argues that the "chosen people" of Griffin Creek have fallen from grace. In her intertextual analysis, she notes, "In the end, Gaiea-Demeter-Felicity takes her revenge" (553). Now the houses and church are deserted, and the griffins, the "fous," have left and no longer nest on the cliffs, symbolizing the barren atmosphere of this village. The sterility of Irene, the pastor's wife, has prefigured the demise of the village, and its fate was assured by the death of the girls, the "maidens," who now remain in the sea with their female ancestors (Pallister 553).

Many critics have written about the unique narrative structure in this novel and its significance. Karen Gould quotes from an interview with Anne Hébert, in which she attests that she has always interconnected poetry and prose in her works: "[J]'ai été attirée très tôt par les deux, par la prose et par la poésie, quoique je n'aie jamais établi de différences entre ces deux types d'écriture. La prose, c'est une autre forme poétique" (qtd. in Gould 921). Gould notes that the poetry in Hébert's work does more than signal the repressive elements of Western society; it makes a traditional reading of the female discourse, which includes sexuality, desire, and identity, impossible (922).

The poetic elements, such as the metaphoric image of the sea as mother, and the wind as a feminine force, add a fantastic dimension to the novel, as do the fairy tales and legends.[32] The author also includes sources from the Bible, but these

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[32] Poetic elements are apparent in much of the narrative. For example, Olivia's voice from beyond her watery grave expresses her desire to return to Griffin Creek and to

excerpts from scripture raise the question of who is actually speaking. For example, following an excerpt from the Bible, Nora admits that she is mute: "Et le Verbe s'est fait chair et Il a habité parmi nous. Et moi aussi, Nora Atkins, je me suis fait chair et j'habite parmi eux, mes frères et mes cousins de Griffin Creek. Le Verbe en moi est sans parole prononcée, ou écrite, réduit à un murmure secret dans mes veines," and Olivia echoes this sentiment (118). Marilyn Randall argues that this admission of muteness raises a question about the narration, a question which arises in the presence of an organized narrative voice connected to an implicit scripture. Furthermore, she asserts, "[e]n effet, il est évident qu'avant d'être en présence d'une parole, on est en présence d'une écriture" (Randall 74). Further, every book narrated by the various characters has a biblical allusion, and the following question is posed: who is truly writing? (Randall 73-74).

In his article about tradition and modernity in this novel, Frédérique Chevillot answers this question. He explains that the people who originally settled Griffin Creek previously knew no other word than the word of God; now, the inhabitants no longer identify with the divine word (Chevillot 123). The loss of substance in what the pastor says to his congregation is marked by the return of Stevens, that is, his return from the United States, the land of democracy, which symbolizes modernity and thus contrasts with the traditions of Griffin Creek, where those loyal to King George sought refuge. Now the chosen people realize that this is not the promised

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the man who killed her: "Ma senteur forte de fruit de mer pénètre partout. Je hante à loisir le village, quasi désert, aux fenêtres fermés. Transparent et fluide comme un souffle d'eau, sans chair ni âme, réduite au seul désir, je visite Griffin Creek, jour après jour, nuit après nuit" (199). In another chapter, alliteration in Stevens's final narrative evokes fear, torment, and madness (Gould 923).

land and that they were suffocated by Puritanism; upon the return of Stevens, they see the need to liberate themselves from the traditional word (Chevillot 124).

It is apparent that this novel is more than a story of two girls' coming of age and the difficulty they have expressing their desire in a community dominated by men. For this reason, the book lends itself to much more than a feminist interpretation. Indeed, the outsider is permitted to see this village only from the exterior, dominated by the male customs of hunting and fishing, but gradually, the reader learns more about the violence to which nearly every character is subjected (Rea 172-73). Felicity and Beatrice, the cold matriarchal figures, negate a feminist interpretation that relies strictly on a positive view of women. Instead, they exemplify the lack of nurturing which the most troubled narrators--Nicolas, Stevens, and Perceval--endured (174). But one cannot deny that the women are also subject to extreme violence: Nora is murdered and Olivia's murder is preceded by rape, Felicity and Olivia's mothers are beaten by their husbands, Pam and Pat are psychologically tormented by Nicolas, and Maureen is sexually taunted by Stevens. Stevens, for his part, escapes from a Montreal Hospital to which he was admitted after World War II. It is a place where society confines those whose minds and bodies are reduced to shreds and who are now "endormi de force," "réveillé de force" (Hébert 231) and no longer of use, asserts Rea (179). Indeed, the latter's observation that this novel is about "the violence done to children by parents, the violence done to women by men, the violence done to humanity by war" accurately characterizes the work (180).

In a 1982 interview Hébert contends that violence is necessary in order to change a society and eliminate the past, but Rea ponders whether or not the author

gives us any suggestions on how to change the world (180-81). Rea concludes that Hébert provides us no indications about how she would remake the world (181), and perhaps this is true, but because Hébert includes poetic elements in her novel, she is also speaking about the power of poetry and a new poetic voice, thus proclaiming a more optimistic message. As Julia Kristeva asserts, the poetic style challenges repressive elements in Western society, and, indeed, by using poetic elements rather than a traditional novel form, Hébert breaks the cycle of domination in this text (cited in Gould 922). In Hébert's rewriting of traditional sources, such as biblical scripture and fairy tales and legends, a new voice is given to the narrators, two of whom are the young women (Chevillot 128). This intertextuality, as well as the circular structure of the novel, the incorporation of fantastic elements--songs and fairy tales, and Olivia's narrative after death--the problematic representation of the subject, the emergence of the forbidden, i.e. incest, and the way in which Stevens's psychotic discourse is validated, not only lend a feminine spirit but a liberating spirit for all of the characters who are troubled and, having fallen victim in this isolated and cursed society, are in need of liberation (Gould 922).

The fact that most of the inhabitants leave Griffin Creek paradoxically provides a positive ending to the novel, for these people have rejected the old and accepted the new. The narrative technique used is evidence of this, for the five narrators, who no longer have a tradition to transmit, speak to no one in particular, but in speaking, they become conscious of the need to change and to create a new oral tradition, and, along with this, a new voice and their own liberation. Thus, Nora and

Olivia's coming of age, their emerging individuality and the repression of their voices by their violent murders mark a turning point in this community.

Chapter 5

Gabrielle Roy: *Rue Deschambault*

Gabrielle Roy was born on March 22, 1909, in Saint-Boniface, not far from Winnipeg, Manitoba, as the youngest in a French-speaking family. Hers was a traditional *québécois* family, which was typically large and Catholic. Her mother Mélina Landry Roy, at age forty-two, had borne ten children before her but only seven survived past the age of adolescence. Roy's father, Léon Roy, was seventeen years older than her mother, and had had a frustrating experience working for the government.[33] After her studies, Roy received a teaching post in Cardinal, Manitoba, in 1929, and in 1930 at the Académie Provencher, a school for boys in Saint-Boniface (Clemente and Clemente 195). In her novel *La détresse et l'enchantement* (1984), she reports her own experiences with writing and tells of how a 1916 law which restricted the teaching of most subjects in French was applied in this rural school:

> Quand la provocation n'était pas trop visible, le Department of Education fermait les yeux. Pourvu que les élèves fussent capables de montrer des connaissances de l'anglais, à la visite de l'inspecteur, tout allait plus ou moins. Nous étions toujours, évidemment, exposés à un regain d'hostilité de la part de petits groupes de fanatiques qui tenaient pour la stricte application de la loi. (Qtd. in Baril 412)

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[33] Léon Roy lost his job and pension because of his unyielding support of Wilfred Laurier (Rolfe 68). Rolfe writes: "A loyal supporter of Wilfred Laurier even when the latter, as Prime Minister of Canada, refused to be drawn into the language disputes that split Manitoba at the turn of the century, Roy was to incur the disapproval of the francophone community and of the clergy which pressed that community's linguistic demands" (68).

In 1937, Roy left her teaching job and went to France and England to study drama (Clemente and Clemente 196). In England she published several articles in the Parisian journal *Je suis partout*, *La Liberté et Le Patriote* of Winnipeg and the Montreal newspaper *Le Devoir* (Clemente and Clemente 196, Lewis 11-12). Her previous ambition to become an actress was thwarted by poor health. She returned to Canada in 1939, made her home in Montreal, and began her career writing newspaper articles (Clemente and Clemente 196). Paula Gilbert Lewis states that Roy's articles between 1940 and 1945 "can be seen as the most important journalistic precursors to her later fiction" because they deeply influenced her maturing talents as a writer (12).

Indeed, the diversity found in Roy's works is a reflection of her extensive travel in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada as a journalist and to her exposure to different people and their struggles, especially immigrant groups. She later used the subjects of many of the articles she wrote as the basis for novels and short stories. Lewis cites three themes depicted by Roy in her writing: the struggles of Canadian immigrant groups, through which experience Roy conveys her humanitarian concerns; the lives of the poor in Montreal, which she describes in four articles published in *Le Bulletin des Agriculteurs*; and the experiences and dedication of educators in rural Canada, whose problems and hardships she knows first-hand (12). Roy also wrote short stories, many of which prefigure her major works. For example, two of her short stories, "Le Jolie Miracle" and "La Sonate à l'Aurore," have themes and plots similar to her first novel *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945), which was immediately successful and

for which she won several awards (Lewis 13, Clemente and Clemente 196).[34] In her lifetime, Roy published four novels, six collections of short stories, another six short stories, and two children's tales (Lewis 7).

Roy was not always accepted as a *Québécoise*, notes Lewis, for many writers of Quebec considered her to be a Manitoban who also spoke French, or a French-Canadian from Manitoba (8-9). Despite the facts that her mother was from Quebec and that she herself chose to live in the province of Quebec for over thirty years, she was never considered a native. Indeed, the themes of her literature are not limited to those most often found among the authors of Quebec, such as the "myth of the large family, of maternity as duty, of Christian charity, goodness, and sacrifice, of a love for the land, of a call to the North" (Lewis 9), nor do they express political attitudes or the problems the *Québécois* face with their language. Her themes are more diverse, and speak of the human condition of all Canadians, not just those of Quebec, her goal being to reach a broad audience (Lewis 9). For this reason, all her works were translated and published in English within the first year of their original publication dates, making them accessible to a larger audience, including English-speaking Canadians. This has caused some resentment among French-speaking Canadians, who did not want to share this talented author with English speakers (Lewis 10), but, as Roy indicated in a 1980 interview, her major goal was to become a figure in world literature, and in order to achieve this, she had to reach a large audience (Lewis 9-10).

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[34] Roy was awarded the *Médaille Richelieu* by the *Académie française*, the *Médaille "feu qui dure"* by the *Académie canadienne-française*, the Governor General's Award, and the Lorne Pierre Medal, which made her the first female member of the Royal Society of Canada (Lewis 13, Clemente and Clemente 196).

Rue Deschambault, published in 1955, takes place between the time of settlement on the Canadian prairie and World War II, around the 1920s, and vividly recreates this historical period and a small town in Manitoba (Stéphan 69). The novel treats the narrator, Christine, and her life on Rue Deschambault, her street in a French-Canadian suburb outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Christine as narrator describes different events in her life from childhood until she begins working as a teacher. The narrative is in the form of eighteen loosely connected short stories or episodes that appear in chronological order.

Christine, who is the youngest child in a large family of eight children, describes the elements of small-town prairie life on the street where the family lives. She mentions only five of her siblings in the story: Georgianna, Odette, Gervais, Alicia, and Agnès. Although Christine's childhood and adolescent experiences are very similar to those of the author, Roy insists that the work is not autobiographical. She asserts: "Certain events in this narrative took place in real life; but the characters and almost everything that happens to them are products of the imagination" (Conron vii). Christopher Rolfe, on the other hand, contends that Roy has created the narrator Christine as a sort of "alter ego," or as a projection of herself (64). In fact, one need only begin by comparing the number of individuals in both families and the ages of Roy and Christine's fathers to find similarities. Rolfe continues:

> This strategy is . . . a significant one because it is in itself a paradigm of what we all do as adults with regard to our own childhood and childhood in general: that is to say fictionalize them, either because of the selective nature of memory or because of personal, psychological impulses. Equally, of course,

> the strategy is a paradigm of the tussle between "telling the truth" and creating readable literature which all writers of autobiographical or semi-autobiographical accounts of childhood must confront and resolve. (Rolfe 64)

Although the novel is constructed of loosely connected narratives, Rosmarin Heidenreich refers to it as a *Bildungsroman*. Indeed, if one compares the events in Christine's life to those in the life of a *Bildungsheld*, there are several similarities. In a typical *Bildungsroman*, the hero leaves home, experiences adventures, and makes new discoveries in places far away (Fraiman 6-7). Although Christine does not travel alone to become exposed to new things, she indirectly experiences what she believes are exotic people and foreign places through contact with her Italian neighbor, who, because of his affectionate descriptions of his wife, represents the romance of a Mediterranean country. While Christine does not directly experience adventure, the tragic disaster her uncle recounts about the ship accident in the chapter "Le Titanic" enables her understanding of a perilous situation (Heidenreich 480-81). Love and sexual adventures often play an important role in novels of this genre, in which "at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting" are typically part of the plot (Jerome Buckley, qtd. in Fraiman 7). Even one love affair would likely be inappropriate for a young Canadian woman in the 1920s, but Christine falls in love with and experiences deep emotions for her cousin Philippe. The differences between this novel and a classic *Bildungsroman*, Heidenreich argues, are that there are no voyages undertaken by the protagonist, there are no events during which the protagonist makes acquaintances who play a key role in her development, nor do these acquaintances propel the action of the novel in illustrating the evolution of the hero or

in problematizing the social norms of the time. But these elements should not be looked upon as faults, she points out, because they reflect the reality of experiences and especially the constraints that Gabrielle Roy, the female subject, experienced in the first part of the twentieth century (478-79).

The adapted form of the traditional *Bildungsroman* in this novel reflects the life of French-Canadian girls and young women in the 1920s, and, as Christopher Rolfe points out, the author depicts this life as she herself experienced it (64). Indeed, the semi-autobiographical form allows Roy to depict a way of life with which she is most familiar. It is a form, asserts Patricia Smart, which is best suited for women:

> Si les femmes en écrivant ont eu tendance à fragmenter la forme romanesque par l'emploi de la form épistolaire, des journaux intimes ou de l'autobiographie, il se peut que ce ne soit pas (comme on l'a longtemps prétendu) parce qu'il leur manque la confiance, l'expérience ou l'autorité pour écrire comme les hommes, mais plutôt parce que leur écriture présente une façon *autre* de représenter, d'écouter, et de toucher la texture du réel. Entre le "réalisme" consacré par la culture patriarcale et le "réel" tel qu'il se présente dans l'écriture des femmes il y a un monde. . . . (Qtd. in Heidenreich 479)

Smart's assertion is similar to what Susan Fraiman and Abel, Hirsch, and Langland have said about how women's experiences problematize the writing of a *Bildungsroman*. Especially before the twentieth century, it was difficult for a woman to choose her occupation, find a gifted mentor to help her make this decision, leave home to travel and meet interesting people, engage in a pre-marital sexual experience with impunity, and join the theater--all events which a typical *Bildungheld* experiences

(Fraiman 5-8). Rolfe also notes that a semi-autobiographical form of writing is an alternative to the "archetypal male genre of the *Bildungsroman*" and offers as proof two English Canadian authors who also used this narrative structure in their novels: Margaret Laurence, *A Bird in the House* (1970), and Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) (64-65).

Aside from being semi-autobiographical in form, Roy's novel depicts events which are specific to Canada. The theme of immigration, which is centered on settlement by non-English nationalities in the western provinces of Canada and on the immigrants' hardships, is seen throughout this novel, especially because Christine's father has a government job helping these immigrants in their transition to a new home. Those who had already settled in Manitoba were still seeking a better life, like Christine's aunt Thérésina, who longs to continue her search for the terrestrial paradise in California (Stéphan 70).

Clearly, several literary tendencies seen in Canadian fiction are evident in this novel; among them is the sub-genre of prairie fiction, which is exemplified by Roy's work. In her article, Muriel Whitaker comments that Canadian prairie fiction reflects what Northrop Frye terms a "garrison mentality," in which the characters portrayed "erected social, moral, and religious barriers as a defense against the unfamiliar and unregenerate" (Frye, qtd. in Whitaker 285). Guidelines for behavior "imposed by adults through family, church, and school included strict religious observances, social awareness . . . and the cultivation of such traits as diligence, frugality, obedience, and piety," all traits which were essential to the survival of the pioneers on the prairie (Whitaker 285-86). This rigidity, which is often exaggerated, and the choice of

whether or not to adhere to it, are often sources of conflict in prairie families. The natural beauty and the freedom associated with the expanse of the prairie serve as a contrast to the social rigidity in the towns and villages, but at the same time, the desire to travel presents a great conflict in *Rue Deschambault* (Whitaker 285-86). Roy describes people who find pleasure in the small incidents of ordinary life. One can imagine oneself seated on the front porch or in the family living room listening to the neighbors or relatives tell stories to pass the time. Christine relates, for instance, the arrival of the African-American boarders and the stories they tell about their lives as Pullman porters. Above all, nature and the cold and snowy, windy night serve as a backdrop, and it is easy to visualize winter as a time when families retreated to the warm kitchen to share stories (Jones and Howlett 59). In "Le Titanic," for instance, Roy depicts the importance of story telling. On the evening recounted in this episode, the uncle, coming in from the cold with a red face, and the neighbor M. Elie join the family. The winter storm on the prairie is compared to conditions on the Atlantic Ocean in winter. M. Elie comments, "Ce doit être par une nuit comme celle-ci que le Titanic a péri" (Roy 80).

The novel at first glance might appear to be a nostalgic remembrance of a time gone by, but the manner in which Christine describes the relationship with her family and relates it to her coming of age makes this relationship more important. Like many children approaching adolescence, Christine experiences intense feelings evoked by the events in her family which lead her to understand better her parents and siblings and the different moments in life, i.e., those which are happy, sad, humorous and exhilarating (Whitaker 290). According to DeMarr and Bakerman, "as young folk

make new lives for themselves as adults or establish new families of their own, then the original family situation can be seen as a laboratory where youngsters evaluate the behavior of other family members (especially, perhaps, older relatives), deciding which habits and attitudes to emulate, which to spurn" (27). In these situations, children not only learn how to interact with other family members and how to conduct interpersonal relationships, they also learn about external forces, such as death, financial disaster, and relocation, which are beyond their control and threaten a family's existence (DeMarr and Bakerman 27).

Christine is both narrator and protagonist. As Rosmarin Heidenreich explains, in this semi-autobiographical novel there is a tension between the "I" which has these experiences and the "I" which recounts them, and furthermore,

> il y a médiatisation des événements et du "je" du récit à travers la distance temporelle et psychologique du "je" qui raconte le roman. Ce qui nous intéresse dans ce genre littéraire, ce ne sont pas tellement les événements mêmes, mais les effets qu'ils produisent sur le "je" du récit. Ce qui est thématisé est donc la subjectivité et la réalité de celle-ci en tant que prise de conscience du "je." Autrement dit, c'est la combinaison indissociable du monde extérieur et du monde intérieur et subjectif. (Heidenreich 478)

In other words, the narrator remembers her past, evaluates her memory, and transmits her impressions of these events during a later period in time.

In this novel the adolescent observes the adult world and we the readers receive her understanding of what she sees. In the confrontation of the adult world and the world of the child--or a child near adolescence--we see different

interpretations of the adult world and different ways in which the adolescent functions in that world. Christine functions as a confidante, to whom both her father and mother turn (Clarke 366). Her rôle as confidante to her father is evident, for instance, in the episode "Le jour et la nuit" when he begs her to remain awake with him as he drinks coffee, for he only feels at ease and relaxed at this time of the day. Christine's father wants company, since his wife has already retired, and he tells Christine and Agnès about the immigrants he helped and his plans to open a store, even though he is already seventy-two years old. As Jacques Brault points out, "Le père de 'Le jour et la nuit' nous est présenté au moment de sa défaite. C'est un errant de la nuit, perclus de peines indicibles, coincé dans sa propre fermeture" (392).[35]

Although there are times when the child plays an essential role in a parent's life, Christine often feels a stranger in the world of adults and, furthermore, develops a negative view of adulthood. Her depressive father is, in part, responsible for this because he claims that he regrets having had children. His personality, coupled with restrictions placed on adults and the behavior forbidden to adults, causes her to have a vision of an equally heavy and depressive adult world. Christine sees the adult world as one that is filled with suffering and the exhaustion of daily work, essentially culminating in boredom. In fact, she observes that all the adults she knows seem bored (Clarke 366-67).

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[35] Jacques Brault discusses the character of the father in the context of the intimacy of Roy's writing. He states: "Ici, le partage intimiste s'annule dans une demande pourtant elle-même intime, mais qui s'acharne à l'échec, car la souffrance de l'arrachement à soi reste plus forte que la dilection de l'être-ensemble" (392).

Christine's father's depressive personality and the events which occur in his work with immigrants cause him to be the unhappy man that he is.[36] DeMarr and Bakerman state that in growing up in the family and learning how to judge the behavior of different family members, adolescents learn how to relate to other family members as well as how to face threats from outside of the family (27). One "threat" to the family is the father's depression, which is exacerbated by the sadness and hardships he witnesses in his contact with these newly-arrived immigrants. In the episode "Le Puits de Dunrea" a fire in Dunrea causes great destruction, threatens the life of Christine's father, and leaves the colony in ruins. More poignant than the material loss, however, are the father's helplessness and feelings of guilt about failing to save the religious zealot Jan Sibulesky and about the loss of his own faithful horse Dolly, who perished because she refused to abandon him (Jones and Howlett 60).

The father's depression affects the entire family, and when he is at home the family members feel more tension and are less jovial. This tension is due, in part, to the parents' arguments and their behavior toward one another. Christine remarks, "Car, si papa s'était comporté parmi nous comme parmi les étrangers, et maman avec lui comme en son absence, est-ce qu'ils n'auraient pas été parfaitement heureux ensemble?" (Roy 96). To be sure, his melancholy nature is the only side of his personality which Christine experiences, for at the time of her birth, he is already near the age of retirement and quite depressed (Whitaker 290). He is a man who is driven by a strong work ethic and by his sense of duty to his family, both essential qualities

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[36] Richard Coe's article discusses the myth of unhappiness or "malaise" present in many novels of childhood in Quebec.

for maintaining the traditional large French-Canadian family (Rolfe 64). This sense of duty, however, is coupled with his morose personality, which shows no indications of joy in living or pleasure from his family (Jones and Howlett 60).

Christine tries to understand her father and the reason for his depression, but his attitude also offends her. She feels alienated and abandoned and believes that she causes hardship for the family, for her father says that he regrets having had any children and calls her "petite misère." Because Christine is sensitive, she makes too much of this situation; she becomes melodramatic and plays the role of a martyr. She recalls: "[F]ace par terre, je grattai le pancher rugueux de mes ongles, je cherchai à y entrer pour mourir. Le visage collé au plancher, j'ai essayé de m'empêcher de respirer" (Roy 33-34). She refuses to come to dinner, go fishing with her brother, or play with her friends, for her father's remark causes her great anxiety. Christine seeks to understand herself through the interactions she has with her father and other family members. Thus, when an important member of the family offends her, her self-concept is put into question and she is understandably upset.

The kind of relationship Christine has with her father is more apparent in the chapter "Le jour et la nuit," in which she and her sister Agnès try to stay up with him at night to keep him company. He is an "errant de la nuit" (Brault 392), that is, he becomes less morose at night and he seems more human to his children. The daytime is too harshly real for him, and he has reached a time of his life when he surrenders his aspirations and realizes his defeat. As Jacques Brault observes, "Il ne demande presque rien, et quand il demande, sur le tard, c'est avec la certitude qu'il est trop tard:

'Ne pouvais-tu veiller encore une heure avec moi?'" (392). Gradually, Christine becomes aware that there are parts of his personality which she has never seen:

> Je n'avais jamais entendu papa s'exprimer sur ce ton presque taquin, plaisant. . . . Quand il revint vers moi, à une lueur plus vive du feu je saisis l'éclat de ses yeux; je les vis comme débordants de confiance. Mais aussi, j'aperçus son dos voûté, les lignes terribles que la vie avait creusées dans son visage. Sans doute est-ce à ce moment que j'ai pensé: "Mais papa est un homme fini!" (Roy 241-42)

Christine plays the role of confidante primarily because she is willing to stay awake with him for a while. Because he desires company and because his age prevents him from relating to his young children, he nearly forgets that she must get up early for school the next day. She regrets having to go to bed because she knows that turning night into day, as he does, would enable her to get to know him better. Sadly she realizes that her goals for the future prevent her from doing this.

Christine's relationship with her mother Eveline is quite different from the one with her father. She plays the role of confidante with her, too, but the mother understands her daughter better than the father does, perhaps because, as Andrée Stéphan points out, the mother is always at their children's disposal (72).[37] Because she is constantly with them and totally dedicated to them, she knows her children

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[37] In Roy's fiction, says Lewis, mothers' lives often center around several of their children or on the youngest child, as is the case with Christine (36). Lewis points out that Roy believes that the relationship between mother and child is sacred because the child justifies the existence of the couple (36). Further, Roy contends, "[l]e plus grand mystère du monde . . . c'est le rapport humain entre la mère et l'enfant" (Roy, cited by Lewis 36).

better than the father does. Indeed, when Eveline must go by train to Saskatchewan to visit her daughter Georgianna, she decides to take Christine because they have not been apart for even one day and such a trip would be difficult for her without her youngest daughter. When Eveline prepares to go to Quebec to visit friends and relatives, she sadly parts with some of her children, sending Gervais, her son, off to boarding school and Agnès and Alicia to live in a convent for several weeks.

Stéphan's point is well taken because since the mother does not work outside the home, she is always there for her children and husband. Lori Saint-Martin goes one step further and explains that, in *Rue Deschambault*, because the mother is with the children more often than the father, the Oedipal triangle of father-mother-child slackens and the presence of the father retreats into the shadows (122). Saint-Martin supports her viewpoint by considering Roy's life and cites the correspondence between Gabrielle Roy and her sister Bernadette, in which they refer almost exclusively to their mother. She notes:

> Dans la correspondance entretenue avec sa soeur Bernadette entre 1943 et 1970, il ne sera guère question du père, mais toujours de "nous les enfants de Mina," "nous les enfants de notre petite mère Mélina" (Roy, 188; 72, 97), à nous faire croire à une sorte d'Immaculée Conception, à une filiation purement matrilinéaire. (Saint-Martin 122)[38]

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[38] In each part of Roy's series of semi-autobiographical novels, the unity of the mother and the children is stronger than the bond between father and children. In *Rue Deschambault*, the nuclear family is present, as well as the extended family. In the sequel, *La Route d'Altamont*, the father has disappeared and there is only the mother, her brother, and Christine's grandmother. The mother is the only one left in the last novel of the series, *De quoi t'ennuies-tu Eveline?* In the final novel, Christine

Clearly, as Saint-Martin argues, in this work the mother is closer to the children than the father, for he is often away for an entire month, and that, in part, explains the lack of intimacy he has with his children. According to Stéphan, the mother is the most important person for the children because she is often the only parent in the household and is there to tend to the children's physical and emotional needs. Thus, they have not only a more intimate connection with the mother, but she is, in fact, also their inspiration (Stéphan 72). Saint-Martin, on the other hand, points out the mother's need for intimacy with the child, noting that Christine is like a lover in her mother's life:

> Eveline lui confie des pensées intimes et des intentions qu'elle dérobe avec soin àson mari, qui ne veut voir que la silhouette convenue de la mère-épouse dévouée. . . . Au fond, c'est Christine la vraie amoureuse de sa mère, celle à qui elle dit tout, celle qui se plaît à la voir détendue et rajeunie, celle avec qui elle part en voyage à la dérobée en laissant un mot au mari comme le ferait une femme qui part avec son amant. (122-23)

The father feels like an outsider not only because the children are like strangers to him but also because his youngest daughter, in his eyes, is taking away his wife. For him, they both in a sense abandon him and he refers to Christine and Eveline as "mes déserteuses" (Roy 136).

Because of the father's frequent absences, it is difficult to dispute Saint-Martin's analysis. She maintains that the mother feels more at ease confiding in her children, especially Christine, than in her husband, because the children cannot

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disappears as narrator--that is, the mother is a more central figure than Christine (Saint-Martin 122).

object to her ideas, nor can they curtail or forbid any of her actions, such as taking a trip. Even if they disagree with her, they are powerless against her. Christine may enjoy seeing her mother appear younger when they leave Manitoba, but she has doubts about her mother's new-found desire for freedom; she even prays to Saint Anne to allow her mother a few more trips, but not too many. Yet Saint-Martin's assertion that Christine is like Eveline's lover ignores the fact that Eveline rediscovers a deep admiration for her husband after visiting his siblings and realizes that he is an honest man with many good qualities and even begins to miss him. This reaction is not just an expression of guilt, an emotion she experiences throughout her trip; it drives from a renewed sense of the qualities which attract her to him, qualities which Christine does not see herself. In fact, Eveline's sense of rediscovery is diametrically opposed to the emotions of Christine. Because of what her mother says to her about him and perhaps because of extended absence from her father, Christine feels as if she knows him even less than before. She is embarrassed to include something personal in the postcard she writes to him, for she feels: "[I]l me semblait ne plus très bien le connaître, et j'étais gênée de lui écrire... presque autant qu'à un étranger . . ." (Roy 110).

Christine learns several important things in her role as confidante. The first is the importance of liberty, for her mother states on several occasions that she would like to be free and that the will to be free is connected to the will to live. This is a significant message for Christine, and it is a different message than that given by other mothers in childhood novels of Quebec.[39] Perhaps Eveline values freedom so dearly

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[39] Richard Coe discusses this theme and cites several novels, such as Claire Martin's *Dans un gant de fer* (1965-66) and Paul Chamberland's *L'Inavouable* (1967), in

because, although she was probably also influenced by the provincial atmosphere of Quebec, she moved to an area where this atmosphere of limitation did not prevail. Although it is possible that the inhabitants of Manitoba at that time would also agree that women should not travel alone, there is, at least, a visual atmosphere of freedom because this province is located in the middle of an expansive prairie. Certainly, the desire for freedom is a part of Eveline's individual personality, which seeks to follow her dreams. Nevertheless, Christine internalizes her message and later also seeks the freedom to fulfill her ambitions.

Despite what her mother says about the importance of freedom and the joy of travel, Christine learns there is a price to pay for liberty. Eveline looks forward to the trip and is excited, but there are conflicts to be confronted. For example, she must make plans for the children who are still living at home. Agnès and Alicia are allowed to stay as boarders in a local convent, but the nuns will not care for the girls' long hair and insist that it be cut, a demand which is emotionally difficult for the mother to accept. Because of all the work it takes for the girls to look well groomed every day, Christine remarks: "Pour une femme qui tenait à la liberté, que de chaînes elle s'était faites (Roy 97). Eveline must also write a letter to her absent husband stating her destination. She explains that she would have discussed her trip with him, but she was afraid he would have denied her permission to go. This task makes it especially

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which the mother passes on to the child a "slave mentality," which she has learned in an overly strict and closed-minded Catholic boarding school (27). In these novels, the mother teaches the child to stay out of the father's way and be quiet, thereby passing on her survival techniques for living with a tyrant. Thus, she contributes to the continued cycle of tyranny because she makes it easier for the oppressor to succeed (Coe 27).

difficult to depart, as Christine's comment reflects: "C'est la première fois de ma vie, je pense, où je n'ai plus souhaité être une grande personne; être une grande personne, c'est avoir trop d'explications à donner . . . " (111).

In Quebec, during a visit to her mother's cousins, the Naults, Christine learns another interesting fact about married women. A conversation between Eveline and Madame Nault is dominated by an interchange of the women's bragging about their family names and the occupations of their husbands. During this conversation Christine's mother, as if coincidentally, mentions that her husband is a government functionary and Christine realizes that, in essence, the status of a married woman is much more respected than that of a single woman, for the women use their husbands' status as a form of competition. In fact, Christine notes the injustice inherent in doing so, for she has never observed a man to assume an air of importance in speaking of his wife.

Christine also learns more about her mother's personality, life's dream, and her love of traveling. Christine reflects; "Elle me confia qu'au fond, si les circonstances le lui avaient permis, elle aurait pu passer sa vie à voir des gens, des villes; qu'elle aurait fini en vraie nomade, et que cela aurait été son malheur" (Roy 101). The limited freedom of her mother contrasts sharply with her father's liberty to leave whenever he wants to, although he often misses his domestic comfort. Eveline remarks, ". . . il serait bon de quitter la maison. . . . Il y a des fois, Edouard, où je changerais de vie avec toi: voyager voir du neuf, parcourir le pays . . ." (94). Her desire to travel upsets her husband, who views it as a sign of instability, not a characteristic he wants in his

wife, but Eveline's thinking is also traditional, for she too believes a nomadic life would cause her unhappiness.

A visit to Eveline's childhood friend Odile, who became a nun, suggests to Christine an image of her mother as a young girl. When Eveline states they must leave on the Transcontinental Railway the next day, the old nun is impressed: "Et tu dis ça comme je dirais moi-même: je vais prendre le tramway . . . Chère, chère Line, va! Ce n'est pas l'aventure qui te fera jamais peur . . . Te rappelles-tu ce que je te disais déjà, il y a trente-huit ans: toi, ma petite Line, tu es née pour connaître de grandes émotions . . ." (Roy 115). From the words spoken by the nun, Christine learns that her mother is meant to do special things: "Quand Dieu nous donne un coeur aventureux, c'est pour que l'on connaisse mieux que d'autres tous ces beaux pays qu'il a faits. Il y a bien des façons d'obéir à Dieu, Eveline . . . et la liberté est un des chemins pour aller vers lui" (Roy 115). Indeed, Christine discovers that transgressing expected norms takes courage, and, while Eveline says she and her daughter have attained the real goal of their voyage in seeing the father's sisters and praying to Saint Anne for the father's colonies and his health, the notable achievement, I believe, is the mother's realization that one discovers oneself in travel. The mother comes to this conclusion when she worries about her husband out loud to a woman who is sitting close by. The stranger's retort is severe: "Si vous aviez peur de ça, c'était de ne pas laisser votre mari . . . Pourquoi l'avez-vous laissé? . . . Peut-être pour devenir meilleure" (118). Even though one leaves the family for a short time, Christine learns that one still wishes its members well; nevertheless, one must not neglect to improve oneself.

Although Christine is closer to her mother, she has inherited traits from both parents. As Paula Gilbert Lewis explains, Christine inherits from her mother a sense of adventure and love of freedom, and she likes the daytime and is articulate (34). From her father she has the desire to study maps and to enjoy the nighttime as well, for it is a peaceful time for contemplation. Parents have a strong influence over the children in Roy's work, notes Lewis, and the children of the family listen to what is said not only to them but to those around them (34). Spending more time with parents and listening to their conversations are also, I believe, aspects of the novel which evoke a time before the predominance of other activities in the household, when conversation among adults still had a notable impact on younger members of the family.

DeMarr and Bakerman note that children and adolescents, after having observed their parents, tend either to imitate them or to reject their behavior (27). Thus, Christine sees how her mother yearns for more adventure than running a household can provide her, and Christine, in turn, decides to leave home and travel when she is older. She also rejects the melancholy she sees in herself in order to avoid the misery and depression to which her father falls victim (Lewis 34). In observing the adult world, Christine tries to understand it, but it is difficult to do so when she encounters adult behavior which is not clear to her. In these instances, the adult world is like "the other," a place filled with contradictions partially because she is not always told the truth. This is especially apparent when her sister Alicia must be sent to a mental hospital because she has become too ill to be cared for at home (Lewis 35).

Christine has already realized that the world of adults is full of wearisome obligations and insignificant tasks; now she sees it as cruel and deceitful (Clarke 368):

> Ils (je veux dire les adultes) me protégeaient de la vérité. Ils me disaient qu'Alicia n'avait rien. Est-ce cela l'enfance: à force de mensonges, être tenue dans un monde à l'écart? Mais *ils* ne pouvaient pas m'empêcher de chercher; et de chercher seule, sans appui, me ramenait quand même dans leur monde à eux. (Roy 166)

Alicia, too, has found the world to be painful and cannot bring herself to participate in it. In fact, Alicia promised to shield her younger sister Christine from this sorrow, a memory which makes Christine's confusion and helplessness about Alicia's illness even more painful. Nevertheless, Alicia has a pessimistic view of the world, as noted in Christine's reflections: "Un jour, lui ayant déclaré que lorsque je serais grande je ferais des belles, belles choses, Alicia me dit tristement: On dit ça, et puis on ne fait jamais que des petites choses vilaines" (148).

On the other hand, the description of Christine's relationship with her sister Odette does not indicate a deceitful quality in adults but is a reminder that adults must obey their sense of duty. Christine learns this lesson in the chapter entitled "Un bout de ruban jaune," in which her sister Odette prepares to leave home to follow her calling as a nun. While Odette is packing her things, Christine sees a yellow ribbon and obsessively begs for it. After all, Odette will not need any personal items at the convent. Indeed, the yellow ribbon serves as a symbol of the world Odette will leave behind; she will follow the rules of the convent and will have no use for this ribbon, as Christine points out. Christine, however, fails to perceive the real reason for Odette's

refusal, that is, that a younger sister must continue to accept her subordinate place in a hierarchy despite her curiosity and desire to break some of the rules (Clarke 368-69).

While Odette has decided to renounce the external world, in many ways she does not seem to be suited for her vocation, for she is pampered, idle, frivolous, coquettish, and she often seeks attention from men (Stéphan 71). Yet she voluntarily chooses to become a nun and gives up a relatively carefree life in exchange for one of discipline and obedience. Perhaps there was an occurrence which inspires Odette to dedicate her life to the Catholic Church, but it is also possible that she decides to become a nun because she cannot achieve the same sense of direction and discipline on her own. Another possibility is that she wishes to follow a tradition common in French-Canadian households. As Stéphan notes, "On sait que toute famille canadienne française jugeait comme un devoir, et un honneur, d'offrir au service de Dieu l'un au moins de ses enfants" (71). If, in fact, these are the reasons for Odette's decision, it is clear that she is making a mistake.

Several other aspects of the novel indicate Roy's views about the Catholic Church. While Roy does not overtly criticize the religious vocation, she describes incidents connected with priests and nuns in an objective yet unflattering manner (Stéphan 71). When Eveline, who feels guilty about traveling without her husband's permission, asks the popular priest Frère André if her act is a sin, his answer does not address the question. Instead, the priest's advice to Eveline does not make any sense to her, and it appears as though he does not hear her or is not listening. He advises, "Priez bien saint Joseph, ne buvez pas trop de café et ayez confidence; ayez toujours confidence" (Roy 106). Perhaps to avoid being too critical of Catholicism, Roy

describes the religious life as positive, as in the experience of Eveline's childhood friend Odile, who is kind and sensitive. But, as Stéphan argues, Odile's life is also a renunciation of the world from which she is alienated (71). Odette's decision to enter the convent is also an example of a common element in childhood novels of Quebec, for the "intrusion of the Church" is often represented in the daily routines of the characters in such novels, indicating that Catholic practices are an integral part of their lives (Coe 19).

An important landmark in adolescent development is sexual awakening (DeMarr and Bakerman 1). There are two instances of Christine's attraction to the opposite sex in this novel, and these encounters are presented without graphic descriptions of sexual activities or evidence of sexual experimentation. As Rolfe observes, there is little evidence of the typical fascination with excretion and sexuality in Roy's children and adolescents (69). Indeed, Roy describes childhood "with insight and delicacy, from the gently ironic standpoint of an adult narrator" (Rolfe 69). One example of Christine's attraction to a young man is described in "La Tempete," in which she and several cousins are lost in a snow storm together. Christine finds herself with Philippe, whom she likes, and they are alone for a moment:

> Soudain, je fus saisie par des bras, je fus attirée par une forme humaine aussi vague que la mienne; des lèvres se collèrent aux miennes, humides de neige. A la jeune moustache, je sus que c'était Philippe dont le coeur battait contre le mien. Longtemps, dans le vent qui cherchait furieusement à nous arracher l'un à l'autre, il me garda ainsi contre son coeur. (Roy 228)

Embarrassed to be found like this, Philippe releases her when the others arrive. Christine briefly experiences sexual attraction during this physical encounter with Philippe. In this case, it occurs with a young adult and serves as another example of confrontation with adult society, for she feels uncomfortable during this intimate incident. Nevertheless, it is a short-lived moment occurring without the pain usually associated with adolescent love. To be sure, detailed descriptions of intimacy are not common in Roy's texts, as Lewis asserts. In all the situations in which love is represented in her other novels, Roy describes the sexual act only twice (Lewis 57).[40]

The second intimate encounter, one which could be considered a case of infatuation rather than love, occurs with the young Dutch immigrant Wilhelm (Lewis 46). Christine is sixteen and Wilhelm probably in his early twenties, for he is already working and living in a boarding house without his family. His age is perhaps the reason that Christine's mother forbids her from walking home from school with him. But every time

her mother forbids one means of encounter, Christine finds another way of contacting Wilhelm, such as by mail. Eventually, all letters are prohibited, but Christine gives Wilhelm her telephone number, and soon he calls her and serenades her on his violin. Christine allows her brother Gervais to listen, but he finds this incident humorous and has the entire family laughing at his imitation of Wilhelm's playing the violin.

Not surprisingly, Christine yields to her family's negative comments and breaks off the incipient relationship. For her, it is difficult to maintain her friendship

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[40] The theme of ill-fated sexual encounters is a major element in some of Roy's novels which were not published, such as *Baldur* and *La Saga d'Eveline*, in which injustices to women are denounced (Saint-Martin 144).

with Wilhelm not only because her friends and family members ridicule him but also because her parents and sister Odette counsel her against dating him. Despite his sympathy for the hardships immigrants must endure, her father, like her mother, does not want Christine to associate with Wilhelm. Odette, who has already renounced the world and lives in a convent, also becomes involved and advises Christine. Her advice is that Christine end the friendship not because she is too young but because he is a foreigner. She reminds Christine, " . . . qu'un étranger est un étranger. . . " (204). Christine's perception that the entire situation, which amounted to little more than an infatuation, ended "bien grave" (199) could be interpreted as ironic, but it is clear that she had some deep affection for Wilhelm.

This incident is related to her family's negative views about male-female relationships, for after family members attempt to prevent the marriage of Georgianna, Christine's sister, the family is mistrustful of love. In "Pour empêcher un mariage," young Christine accompanies her mother on a trip, the purpose of which is to stop Georgianna's marriage, but Georgianna marries purely out of physical attraction to her mate, even though her parents feel he is less than ideal. Christine laments the fact that "[p]ersonne chez nous, il est vrai, depuis le mariage de Georgianna, ne regardait l'amour d'un bon oeil" (202). She knows that the family has suffered in matters of love, but she also wants to experience love herself. Lewis contends that Christine learns to mistrust men because of the words of her mother (34), who tells her on several occasions that she should keep her distance from men. Sometimes this advice is justified, for when she and Christine are traveling alone, a man makes a rude remark to them on a dark street in Montreal. In fact, Eveline is warned about the possibility of

such advances by a relative, and she, in turn, advises Christine; "Tu vois . . . comme il faut avec eux garder sa distance . . ." (Roy 107). Eveline is also upset when the friendly Italian neighbor kisses Christine simply because he likes the child. Her parents discuss this incident, and the mother warns; "On se hâte toujours trop aussi de faire amitié avec les étrangers! Alors maman m'a parlé un peu des hommes; elle m'a dit que les petites filles ne devaient pas se laisser embrasser par eux, à moins que ce ne fût dans des occasions très spéciales: une joie rare, l'émotion!" (187). The most revealing remark her mother makes about the relationship between a man and a woman and the disappointment which can result from it occurs after she speaks with her son, who teases Christine about her love for cheap costume jewelry. It is the only occasion, says Lewis, when Eveline shows her anger and frustration towards men (88). Clearly, she does not want her son to be the type of man who ridicules the woman he loves. Upbraiding her son, she declares;

> Toute femme . . . a dans le fond d'elle même une pauvre petite âme païenne, et il me semble que vous autres, les hommes, c'est bien souvent cette païenne que vous adorez. . . . Au fond, il n'y a pas d'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes. Les belles vertus: la loyauté, la franchise, la droiture, l'admirable simplicité, vous les revendiquez pour vous, alors que vous prisez les femmes pour leurs détours, leurs caprices. C'est très mal, d'abord pour vous-mêmes qui êtes les premiers à en souffrir, et pour les femmes que vous vous plaisez, on dirait, à maintenir dans un état d'enface rusée. Oh! quand donc, fit maman, les mêmes qualités seront-elles bonnes pour tous! (Roy 212)

The mother's embarrassment about displays of sexual attraction is apparent in "Pour empêcher un mariage." During an unexpected pause on the train ride from Saskatchewan, where Georgianna lives, Christine and her mother watch several couples dancing to jazz and swing music. The mother feels she must protect Christine from this sight because she believes their dancing is too seductive. It is clear, Saint-Martin observes, that the daughter sees the world as it is transmitted by the mother: On ne saurait mieux dire que la fille voit le monde tel que le lui transmet la mère, que sa vision du monde est déterminé--pour le meilleur et pour le pire--par la proximité avec celle-ci" (143). The mother believes that seeing the wild movements of the passionate dancers would embarrass Christine, and she therefore covers her daughter's eyes, but Christine still sees the moving bodies of the dancers and the shadows they make on the wall from between her mother's fingers. Saint-Martin comments that the result is that "[Christine] intériorise toutefois en partie. Sans doute est-ce à cause de l'empreinte de la mère que la sexualité sera très peu présente dans les écrits publiés de Gabrielle Roy, teintés d'une pudeur presque douloureuse" (143-44).

As Saint-Martin points out, there are few instances in this novel in which Christine's or any sibling's sexuality is presented, even though there are several adolescents living in the household. Indeed, it seems as though the expression of sexuality, or even sexual curiosity, an important detail in a girl's coming of age, has been overlooked by Roy or perhaps avoided. At the end of the novel, Christine, at age nineteen, has not expressed much interest in sex. Although she has had several encounters with men in which they showed their affection toward her, there is little indication of her sexual attraction to a man. It is true that women in the 1920s did not

overtly express their sexuality, but it is unlikely that they did not think about sex. Women of this generation were also expected to marry, as Stéphan observes, yet Christine neither imagines having a husband or children, nor does she include them in her plans for her future career (Stéphan 71).

Clearly, Saint-Martin's statement that Roy depicts sexuality "teintés d'une pudeur presque douloureuse" well describes Roy's treatment of the mother's fears about her daughter Georgianna and her marriage to an attractive man. In "Pour empêcher un mariage," Georgianna maintains her love for her fiancé, but her mother believes that love is not enough for a marriage and tries to convince Georgianna of this view, arguing, "tu parles de l'amour comme s'il devait durer . . . Mais lorsqu'il finit . . . s'il n'y a pas autre chose pour prendre sa place . . . c'est affreux!" (Roy 54). Eveline's argument with Georgianna is overheard by Christine, to whom it makes no sense. When the latter asks her mother for an explanation, Eveline's own doubts about love become apparent: "Est-ce qu'on ne le sait pas pour sûr, quand on aime? Des fois, non, dit maman. Toi, tu le savais? Je pensais que je le savis. Puis ma mère s'irrita. Elle eut l'air très fâchée contre moi. Elle dit: T'es trop raisonneuse! C'est pas ton affaire . . . tout ça . . . Oublie . . . Dors . . . " (Roy 57). Eveline becomes angry at Christine's questions, because her expectations of love have probably been shattered during her long marriage. Eveline states, "[l]a plus belle couronne d'une femme c'est d'être aimée. Il n'y a rien, ni topaze, ni diamant, ni améthyste, ni émeraude, ni rubis, pour mieux embellir une femme!" (190). From this statement it is clear that she envies women who are loved and feels that this state is rarely achieved.

Toward the end of the novel, Christine, now in her last year of high school, decides to become a teacher. She also, however, expresses the desire to become a writer, in part because she observes her mother relating stories to the neighbors and she sees what her mother accomplishes in recounting the events of their journey. When Christine and Eveline return from the trip to Quebec, Christine witnesses the subduing effect her mother's words have on her angry husband, and so Eveline demonstrates what the art of storytelling can achieve (Stéphan 73). While her mother talks, Christine notices that "[p]eu à peu nous nous approchions tous de maman pour mieux voir ses yeux qui, avant que ses lèvres les disent, annonçaient les paysages. Car avant de les tirer de son souvenir, son regard les caressait, elle leur souriait, tout en jouant un peu avec le petit collier de perles fausses à son cou" (Roy 121). In convincing her husband of the importance of one's past, the mother succeeds in calming his anger about her absence. She recreates the image of his hometown village, and she tells of his siblings and their disappointment at not having heard from him since he left at age sixteen. He is moved to tears and timidly asks her to tell him more. Indeed, as Stéphan observes, the mother's success is ephemeral, but this early exposure to the art of storytelling leaves a lasting impression on Christine (73).

Christine chooses to become a teacher to satisfy her mother, but her true ambition is to become a writer. The love of stories is something Christine inherits from her mother, as Saint-Martin correctly points out. Eveline's love of storytelling is evident in several instances in the novel in which she seldom encounters neighbors or

friends without leaving them with a story (Saint-Martin 128).[41] Yet Eveline wants Christine to become a teacher, not only because this vocation was her wish for herself but also because it is a profession well-suited for a woman. It, in fact, corresponds to her feminine ideal (Saint-Martin 127). According to the mother, "[i]l n'y a pas d'occupation plus belle, plus digne, il me semble, pour une femme" (Roy 249). In French-Canadian society, the career choices for women in the 1920s were limited, according to Stéphan, for there were only two other vocations available to them: a nun or a mother (71). No matter which profession the woman chooses, obedience is implied. If a woman marries and becomes a mother, three elements are common and uncontested: duties as a housewife, the dominance of the husband, and maternal obligation. Primarily, motherhood calls for the woman's life to be tied to the home, and she is the spouse who performs the housework, with the exception of activities which are too physically demanding. Secondly, with respect to the duties of a housewife, the female role is subordinate and the husband is the dominant partner, as Stéphan observes: "[L]a condition féminine se définit par la sujétion conjugale. C'est l'époux qui donne à sa femme sa raison sociale, c'est lui qui prend les décisions et elle se doit de les exécuter" (71). This type of inequality in a marriage can take extreme forms depending on the customs of certain countries. The father in *Rue Deschambault* witnesses this fact firsthand while visiting one of his colonies. In this ethnic group, he witnesses the subjugation of women to a degree bordering on slavery, for the women must serve the men and may not even speak. Being served by such submissive

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[41] This characteristic is also evident in the novel *De quoi t'ennuis-tu, Eveline*, which follows Roy's *La Route d'Altamont*.

women during his visit embarrasses him, even though he admits they seem to be happy performing their duties. Although he allows his own wife more freedom, his decisions are nonetheless absolute, and he views any deviation from the expected behavior of wife and mother as desertion (Stéphan 72).

The third of the elements Stéphan discusses is the importance of maternal obligation. Not only do the children and the father expect the mother to be available for them at all times, the mother is to regard the children as at the core of her existence. This is apparent in the passage in which, during a shopping trip, Christine's mother first decides to go to Quebec. It is the first time that Eveline has gone shopping and only bought things for herself. Christine, although disappointed to have received nothing, notices a positive change in her mother and comments, "Je n'aimais pas beaucoup la voir changer de la sorte, penser à ses goûts, s'accorder un caprice; et, cependant, je ne peux pas dire qu'il me déplaisait de la voir marcher sans fatigue, la tête en l'air, se souriant à elle-même" (Roy 91). It is important to note, however, that the mother is happy to be at the center of the children's lives, the positive side of this feminine condition (Stéphan 72). Because she is always available for the children and with them, according to Stéphan, she is their inspiration, and the father necessarily feels jealous and left out. Because of this intimacy, the children are loyal to her, and when there is a conflict, they side with her (72). The father laments, "Elle vous a tous à elle . . . la maman!" (Roy 243).

The different status of women of Christine's generation is most apparent in the conversation between Eveline and her daughter in the chapter "Gagner ma vie." Christine's mother asks her if she has ever thought about the future and about earning

a living for herself. This question implies that the family does not intend that Christine follow the pattern of marriage and children which her mother and most of her sisters had chosen, nor that she enter a religious vocation as Odette has done. The mother's intention that Christine earn a living for herself is most likely reinforced by whom she sees around her. Another motivation to address this issue with her daughter is that she wants Christine's career to be the one she had always wanted for herself, that of teaching.[42]

Although Christine chooses to become a teacher, she does not abandon her goal of becoming a writer, for this aspiration has long been a part of her and she often pretended to be an artist when she was younger. Christine remembers, "[j]e jouais à l'artiste, ignorant encore que l'écrivain est l'être le plus indépendant--ou le plus solitaire!" (Roy 247). Her mother is dissatisfied with what she calls Christine's "abracadabra" and begins discussing her future (Roy 247). It becomes obvious that she wants Christine to be independent; she does not completely reject her daughter's desire to write, but tells her to wait, to experience life first. Christine, in yielding to her mother's wishes, leaves the reader with the following perspective on her decision: "Quand on se connaît mal encore soi-même, pourquoi ne tâcherait-on pas de réaliser le rêve que ceux qui nous aiment font à notre usage!" (249).

More is revealed about Christine's passion for writing in "La voix des étangs." One early spring evening when the sounds of frogs and other emerging life lure

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[42] The wish that a daughter can fulfill a life-long dream of the mother is discussed in detail in Lori Saint-Martin's book *Le Nom de la mère*, in which she explains how Gabrielle Roy's writing, rather than teaching, is an act of reparation, vengeance and honor for the mother (127-33).

Christine, age sixteen, from her studies; she notices "[l]es petites chanteuses, des centaines de grenouilles, étaient invisibles. Sortant de l'hiver, de leur engourdissement, de la vase, retrouvaient-elles cette mince voix éclatante pour se parler, se saluer d'un marais à l'autre?" (Roy 217). Contemplating the scene, she deliberates on her intention to become a writer: "Il me sembleait que j'étais à la fois dans le grenier et, tout au loin, dans la solitude de l'avenir. . . . Ainsi, j'ai eu l'idée d'écrire. Quoi et pourquoi, je n'en savais rien. . . . M'y suis-je essayée sur le champ? A cet ordre baroque, ai-je tout de suite obéi?" (218). She hesitates and debates, although for her writing seems a natural choice, as natural as the emerging life in spring, for she alternates between describing nature and her own emotions and muses, "Un doux vent de printemps remuait mes cheveux, les mille voix des grenouilles emplissaient la nuit, et je voulais écrire comme on sent le besoin d'aimer, d'être aimé" (218).

In making a decision about her career, Christine also feels sad because she must leave behind her childhood. She laments, "Tout autour de moi étaient les livres de mon enfance, que j'avais ici même lus et relus dans un rayon dansant de poussière, tombé de la haute lacarne comme un trait du soleil" (218). This sadness is echoed by her mother, who wants Christine to be aware of the difficulties which await her. She points out the loneliness of a writer but also the duty of satisfying oneself and others in writing, and the need to have the gift of writing, in fact, to be superhuman. She tells Christine, "Car on dit le don, mais peut-être faudrait-il dire: le commandement. Et c'est un don bien étrange, continua maman, pas tout à fait humain" (219). Another drawback, says her mother, is that this gift is not easily accepted by others and it is a

talent which separates a writer from others. Her mother reminds her, "Je pense que les autres ne le pardonnent jamais. Ce don, c'est un peu comme une malchance qui éloigne les autres, qui nous sépare de presque tous" (219). To be sure, the life of a writer can often be solitary, and a writer who has a special talent often withdraws from others, thereby creating a lonelier life. Certainly, the mother's words on leaving the room echo the sadness of this moment, which is an important stage of Christine's development. Thus, she says to her daughter, "L'avenir est une chose terrible. C'est toujours un peu une défaite" (220).

In choosing a career, it is also important for Christine to separate from her mother and exercise her own autonomy, as well as to reciprocate and give something back to the mother. When Christine tells her mother that she wants to write, her mother answers, "Ecrire, me dit-elle, est-ce que ce n'est pas en définitive être loin des autres . . . être toute seule, pauvre enfant!" (Roy 220). Implied in the phrase "être loin des autres" is also the threat of separation from the mother. With the desire to write and the expression of that desire comes culpability or the suggestion of guilt because writing also means a separation from the mother. Christine reflects, "C'était pourtant sa faute si j'aimais mieux la fiction que les jours quotidiens" (Roy 219). Strangely, writing as described in this novel not only implies guilt but also suggests the need for atonement. The reciprocity which Saint-Martin argues is inherent in Roy's works includes the return to the mother and the repairing of hurt feelings, and it comes about in the form of the written word. In telling stories to her mother and later writing about her life, Christine is showing her gratitude for the talent she has inherited from her mother, but at the same time, in order to continue writing, she must distance herself

from her mother and travel, which may also mean that she is absent during her mother's old age and possibly at her death (Saint-Martin 131-32).

As stated earlier, the narratives in this novel span the period from Christine's early memories until her young adulthood, and much of the narrative covers her adolescence, that is, the time when the protagonist is between ages twelve and nineteen. In many critical texts the term "child" is used even if the protagonist is clearly near or past the age of twelve and is technically an adolescent. In Roy's novel the reader can observe the difference in the language of the protagonist as Christine becomes older. In her study of the narrative perspective, Monique Crochet analyses the protagonist's language and asserts that it is "un indicateur du niveau de développement de l'intelligence, l'idiolecte d'un personnage [qui] contribue à l'authenticité de la présence de celui-ci dans le récit" (97). If one compares two passages, one from the fifth chapter when Christine is perhaps seven or eight, with the chapter where, as a sixteen-year-old, she tells her mother she wants to become a writer, one can observe the differences in her maturity level through the language of the narrative. In the earlier chapter, speaking to Odette, Christine says, "Ma bonne, ma gentille, ma douce Dédette! Qu'est-ce que tu veux encore? fit-elle, me coupant tous mes effets. Ton beau petit ruban jaune, s'il vous plaît, Odette . . . ai-je continué . . ." (Roy 63). In this excerpt, Christine uses diminutives such as "Dédette," short phases, elementary sentence structures, and she interchanges the first and second person plural "tu" and "vous." In contrast, the language of the later passage when she discusses her future is similar to that of a young woman who very likely has the talent to become a writer: "Les mots parfois arrivent aussi à être vrais, ai-je dit à maman. Et

sans les mots, y aurait-il une seule vérité dont on puisse dire: c'est ainsi, c'est vrai!" (Roy 220). Christine incorporates abstract vocabulary and complex sentences which employ the subjunctive mood. The later texts, in other words, are indications of a young woman, says Crochet, who is acquiring more mature language and who is an adolescent "qui songe à écrire" (97).

Furthermore, the narrator uses different personal pronouns as she grows older. Crochet correctly notes that in the first eight chapters, which pertain to a young Christine, the possessive adjectives and personal pronouns correspond to a sense of collectivity with the family. For instance, the first chapter contains possessive adjectives referring to the first person plural. Describing the history of their home, Christine says: "Lorsqu'il fit construire la nôtre [la maison]" (Roy 9). Chapter seven depicts one winter night when Uncle Majorique comes to visit and describes the sinking of the Titanic. Because she uses the pronoun "nous," Christine's rendition of his arrival gives the reader the impression that she views the entire family as one distinct unit: "Le bruit de pas, dès que nous l'avons entendu à travers le vent, était donc tout près de nous. Maman a sursaute. Elle a dit, comme si cette nuit il ne pouvait nous arriver que du danger" (Roy 79). In the last six chapters, which, as Crochet notes, correspond to Christine's adolescence (97), the narrator incorporates personal or possessive adjectives which refer to the individual. For example, in the chapter about Wilhelm, she describes the young man with affection: "Mon premier cavalier venait de Hollande. . . . Je croyais aimer Wilhelm. C'était le premier homme qui par moi pouvait être heureux ou malheureux" (199). Christine also expresses more individuality when she describes moments alone in her room, where she makes

decisions about her future: "J'avais seize ans, peut-être, le soir où j'y montai comme pour me chercher moi-même. Que serais-je plus tard? . . . Que ferais-je de ma vie" (217). Crochet concludes:

> Cette analyse suggère que dans les premières nouvelles, alors que son individualité n'est pas encore tout à fait développée, Christine vit essentiellement en tant que member de la cellule familiale. Dans les nouvelles ultérieures, son individualité s'affirme et ce phénomène est transcrit par l'emploi dominant de la première personne du singulier. Ici aussi, le langage sert la focalisation sur l'héroïne. (97)

Clearly, Christine's language shows evidence of a growing sophistication as she becomes older, and these narrative techniques are good indicators of Christine's development and maturity.

Several other narrative strategies generally found in novels with children and adolescents appear in *Rue Deschambault*. Rolfe's discussion of narrative strategies centers on the novel of childhood. He states that, as in other novels with young characters, Christine finds many things that adults say to be incomprehensible. She, like many children, is forced to sit with relatives and listen to conversations which she does not understand. One memorable incident about the trip to Quebec involves having to hear her mother speak about generations of deceased relatives. She recalls, ". . . mais le plus clair de notre temps se passa, il me semble, à parler des morts, de cousins inconnus et de troisième et quatrième générations" (Roy 121). Not only does this passage ridicule the subject matter of this adult conversation, but use of the present tense also gives the reader a distinct impression of the narrator's opinion,

according to Rolfe's analysis: "The fact that 'il me semble' is in the present rather than the imperfect tense, subtly reinforces the impression of a memory that lingers, rather than one which can be dismissed as childish fancy" (66).

Rolfe also finds that some phrases suggest an ironic tone because Christine, as an adult, is narrating her childhood (66). For example, in describing Wilhelm, one of the first things she says is that he has "les dents trop régulières" because they are dentures (Roy 199). Another example of deliberate irony involves the incident in which the Italian neighbor decides to build a house next door. At first Christine's family fears that the house will block the sun, but when it does not, the family decides to become friends with the man. Christine wonders, "[e]st-ce à ce moment, ou un peu plus tard, et parce qu'il ne nous faisait aucun tort que nous nous sommes mis tous ensemble à aimer l'Italien?" (184). It is important to remember, however, as Crochet has suggested, that childish naiveté in language is part of the narrative, especially in the first few chapters of this novel (97). Moreover, Rolfe argues that deliberate irony is not to be confused with the purposeful expression of the narrator who is still a young girl (67). As he contends, "The effect of this [childish naiveté] is not so much to make for irony but rather to fuse together, so to speak, the child that the narrator had once been and the adult that she had now become" (67).

In Roy's novels, many of the children's personality traits and types of behavior are also present during adolescence, and this is especially apparent in *Rue Deschambault* (Lewis 45). Christine demonstrates an obsessive nature in late childhood. Lewis mentions this as one characteristic of her personality which becomes more pronounced in adolescence and cites the chapter in which she is

obsessed with jewelry and cosmetics (45). Perhaps the author's desire to portray these childhood qualities in adolescence has to do with the innocent nature of Roy's child characters. Rolfe accurately points out that although Roy does not depict childhood to be a blissful paradise free of conflicts, childhood in this novel is nostalgic and idealized (65). Already discussed is the anxiety Christine experiences about growing up, and this negative viewpoint is perhaps an attitude Roy herself had. In her study of Roy's works, Lewis points out that the author has a pessimistic view of what children can become as adolescents and young adults (33).[43] If Lewis's speculation is correct, the adults in this novel certainly support Roy's contention that adolescents and adults have more negative qualities than children. Adults like Christine's parents can be deceitful and pretentious; her sister Alicia has become depressed and pessimistic like their father; Gervais is mean spirited; and Odette interferes in matters which do not concern her.

In contrast to the happiness experienced in childhood, Roy's adolescents feel a sadness at leaving childhood and experience a profound sense of solitude when they enter adolescence (Lewis 50). In *Rue Deschambault* Christine has the same sense of solitude when she becomes a teacher in the small town of Cardinal in Manitoba. In

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[43] In reference to Roy's short story "La Grande Berthe," Lewis contends: "At first glance, it seems unusual that Roy, who so deeply loved children and who would create such endearing creatures in her subsequent works, would have peopled her earlier works with these wicked youth. It must be noted, however, that, although treated as children at home or in relation to their parents, these characters are, in effect, quite mature, old enough to begin their own independent lives. Gabrielle Roy is, perhaps, telling us more about adolescents and young adults, or pessimistically, the types of individuals that children can become" (33).

this barren town, she is viewed as a young, inexperienced teacher. On Christine's first day there, the boarding house owner exclaims: "Hein! C'est pas vous la maîtresse d'école! Oh non, ce n'est pas possible! . . . Mais ils ne vont faire qu'une bouchée de vous!" (Roy 250). Describing her loneliness and disappointment, Christine projects human qualities onto the natural forces, saying "[les] petits arbres tristes, le vent m'a parlé cruellement," and she finds the village to be "atrocement rouge" and "un village de haine" (250). She thinks that the villagers all hate someone or something and that they are all spying on her when she walks through their streets.

Nevertheless, an optimistic view of childhood appears even in this last chapter, in which Christine is an adult teaching two children who have come to school despite a fierce snowstorm. When the children come to her door, she experiences a great joy, and the description of their day together is one of warmth and solitude. She ends the chapter describing the storm as follows: " . . . nos joies mettent du temps parfois à nous rattraper--mais j'éprouvais un des bonheurs les plus rares de ma vie. Est-ce que le monde n'était pas un enfant? Est-ce que nous n'étions pas au matin?" (Roy 257). The comparison of the natural forces of the earth with a child, "la tempête comme un enfant incompris pleurait et trépignait à la porte" (257), and the thought that we are all at the beginning of our lives give the reader the impression that, despite a less than ideal beginning in this new town, Christine has hope of better things to come. Rolfe also contends that the two children represent a sense of renewal (67). The reader may note, however, that the natural forces, like the snow, also add to this sense, for after a snowstorm the ground is white and clean and one has the feeling that one can begin again (Rolfe 67).

Rolfe concludes that the idealized childhood presented in *Rue Deschambault* is unlike that found in other novels about childhood, in which there is more curiosity about adult matters, such as sex, and interest in "the scatological" and the absurd (69, 71). Also absent, says Rolfe, are examples of mischief, disorder, childhood irreverence, and fantasy (69). While these statements are accurate, it seems to me that traits such as mischievousness and irreverence would be inconsistent with Christine's character, for she is, although at times stubborn and obsessive, an obedient child. She may treat a misunderstood image of adulthood with irony, but she does not cultivate this image nor perpetuate it with fantasy. And although there are some dark moments in this novel, depictions of heartlessness and childhood cruelty, prevalent in many books of this type, are also absent (Rolfe 71).

What is predominant in this novel, however, is the pervasive anxiety about becoming an adult. Richard Coe states that this--as well as the idea of growing up as a "calamity"--is a tendency in novels of Quebec and cites several examples (21-23).[44] Although I believe it is a mistake to equate *québécois* novels with novels from elsewhere in French Canada, Rolfe also agrees with Coe, and even states that worrying about growing up is a leitmotif in the novel (Rolfe 65). He cites a good example in his reference to the scene in which Christine's mother writes to her husband, wherein Christine comments, "C'est la première fois de ma vie, je pense, où je n'ai plus souhaité être une grande personne; être une grande personne, c'est avoir trop d'explications à donner . . ." (Roy 99). The suspension points in this passage, which

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[44] The novels discussed in this context include Antonine Maillet's *On a mangé la dune* and Félix Leclerc's *Pieds nus dans l'aube* (Coe 21).

suggest an incomplete thought, indicate that this interpretation is open-ended, argues Rolfe, and subject to the reader's reflection. It also indicates an important lesson Christine has learned, i.e., that being an adult does not signify unlimited freedom (Rolfe 65). Rolfe gives as another example of worrying about growing up the fact that Christine, at her young age, is aware of visible signs of aging in adults. Her mother looks younger when she plans her trip to Quebec but her fatigue and wrinkles again become apparent on the way home. Christine's depressed and aging father especially gives a negative impression of what adulthood holds in store (Rolfe 68).

Two characteristics of this novel are particularly clear. One is that the author "wants to evoke the very essence of childhood" (Rolfe 65). The childlike qualities of Christine remain, even when she enters adolescence. As a young adult, one still thinks of childhood as a special period; in fact, qualities characteristic of childhood are those which adults should strive to maintain. In Christine's questions "Est-ce que le monde n'était pas un enfant? Est-ce que nous n'étions pas au matin . . . " there is the feeling that one can always begin again (Roy 257). Many of Christine's childhood and adolescent memories are also happy, nostalgic memories. Compared to her view of adults and her opinion of adulthood, they are remembrances of good, even comforting, times when the family was close.

The second characteristic of this novel is that, of all the themes presented in this novel and Christine's various encounters, more is said about her relationship with her family than about her relationships outside the home. Perhaps because she has such a large family, or because she spends so much time with family members, her life at school, with friends, and with other children is rarely mentioned. Although her

father affects her a great deal, an intimate relationship with the mother is more obvious, a factor which is not unusual in Roy's novels, according to Lewis (35). This intimacy derives not solely from their traveling experiences but from everyday events. It is clear that the mother is the center of the household and always available when Christine, or any of her children, needs her. In this sense, she is a traditional mother, despite her desire for freedom. She exercises this freedom, but upon her return from the adventure, she is content again in her home. The value of freedom is an important lesson Christine learns from her mother, more important than the example her mother sets of being a traditional woman, and it is the lesson of personal liberty which Christine takes with her as she finds her true vocation in writing.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Although *Rue Deschambault* takes place in the 1920s--before the action of any of the other novels in this study--the protagonist of Roy's novel is the most independent of the young women depicted. One would expect, perhaps, that female adolescent protagonists follow less strictly defined traditional roles in novels written later in the twentieth century and that authors would depict these progressive changes. The fact that the novels come from different countries, which hold different sets of cultural values, makes it difficult to test such an assumption. Furthermore, it would be necessary to study many more novels from French Canada and German-speaking countries to outline a progression of independent female adolescent protagonists throughout the twentieth century in these two cultural areas.

From the works chosen in this study, however, it is possible to conclude that the independent nature of the young female protagonist is a reflection of the authors' motives for writing the novels, rather than the times during which the novels were written. Frischmuth contends that her motive for writing her novel was to depict the way in which language can manipulate young minds and denies the autobiographical nature of her work (Sauter 238). She presents this type of manipulation well, but she also depicts one result of this particular indoctrination, that is, the rejection of the Catholic Church's teachings. Thus, Frischmuth exceeds her intentions for writing this novel and depicts more than a type of manipulation. She presents an alternative to a religious ideology which relegates women to a life of subservience and obedience to a patriarchal authority.

Keun wrote *Nach Mitternacht* to depict the difficulty of going into exile. In contrast to her previous novels, here she negatively portrays women who take advantage of and adapt to the repressive attitudes of the time. Although Sanna is depicted in a positive light, she does not reflect the movement for female emancipation which existed in Weimar Germany. To be sure, there could be several reasons for this. Perhaps Keun was influenced by Third Reich policies, which relegated the woman to the home and discouraged any professional endeavors (Ackermann 33). Another possibility is that Joseph Roth's influence on Keun had an effect on her writing, for he had a low opinion of women. Moreover, because Keun was almost exclusively in the company of male writers during her exile, their company and attitudes may have led her to agree with them, and she clearly reflected Roth's perspective on women in her novel (Horsley, "Witness" 85-86). Thus, Sanna is portrayed as a teenager who relies on others and has no ambitions of her own. She only demonstrates an independent spirit when she is forced to flee with her fiancé Franz.

Boivin suggests that the impulse for Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan* was a newspaper article about two murdered cousins (325-26). In this novel, Hébert well depicts an environment which breeds violence. The young women both have traditional aspirations, which is not remarkable considering the isolated, rural community in which they were raised. What is clearly expressed are the different ways in which these girls come of age and the way in which they yearn to become mature women, for they see this maturation as a means of maintaining the traditions of their ancestors. Part of this heritage, however, are traditions in which violence is

integral to the lifestyle, which Hébert depicts not only through the coming of age of the girls and their fate, but also through the fates of the other narrators.

Like her previous novel *Bonheur d'occasion,* Roy's *Rue Deschambault* began as a collection of short stories. As Lewis correctly points out, "[t]he work is presented almost as a journal, a series of recollections that document the spiritual biography of the narrator, on the road toward self-discovery and self-acceptance" (17). The theme of self-discovery is continued in Roy's subsequent novel, *La Montagne secrète* (1961), as well as in the four stories which constitute *La Route d'Altmont* (1966) (Lewis 17). As Lewis states, "[u]nified, once again, by the sole consciousness of the narrator-character, Christine, this collection [*Rue Deschambault*] recounts a journey not only toward self-understanding but also toward a fuller and more poignant comprehension of the links in time, especially of the links among generations" (17). Thus, according to Lewis, it appears that *Rue Deschambault* is one of several novels which focuses on self-discovery and self-acceptance. Indeed, Roy wrote many short stories with diverse themes, many of which were gleaned from her personal experience as a journalist (Lewis 11). It is clear that Roy's purpose for writing this semi-autobiographical novel is to demonstrate the path this young girl takes toward self-understanding and to depict her realization of the importance of heritage. The seriousness of the introspective theme of this novel is intentional, as Roy herself states in an interview. The author purposely omitted the episode "Ma Vache Bossie," which would have added a less melancholy tone to the novel (Lewis 24)

DeMarr and Bakerman chose seven categories to discuss novels about female adolescents written since 1960: the adolescent's relationship with her family, her

relationship with friends, her first experience with love and her emerging sexuality, her reaction to a crisis situation, the influence of a specific setting, the influence of social institutions on her life, and the role of fate in her life. One or more of these categories can be used to evaluate the novels of this study. For instance, Christine, the protagonist of Gabrielle Roy's novel *Rue Deschambault* is closely connected to her family and the setting of the novel plays an important role. Love and sexuality are dominant themes in *Les Fous de Bassan*, for the young protagonists are beginning to think about their roles as wives and mothers. In contrast, the protagonist of *Die Klosterschule* does not think about marriage, for she is trying to contend with another type of social institution, the convent school. For this young woman, friendship is essential in overcoming the rigidity of this strict environment. The theme of friendship is also significant in *Nach Mitternacht,* for Sanna's relationships define her place in the world. Most dominant in this novel, however, is the crisis situation which helps Sanna become a mature woman.

All of the novels depict the protagonists' coming of age. In two instances--*Die Klosterschule* and *Nach Mitternacht*--the development to maturity is not obvious until the last chapter of the novel. In contrast, the coming of age of Nora and Olivia in Hébert's novel is depicted throughout the work. This is also the case in *Rue Deschambault*, which is similar to a *Bildungsroman*, for Christine increasingly accepts responsibility as she matures and eventually makes decisions about her future. Her development is depicted through her actions and language throughout the narrative. Clearly, she resembles a child in the earlier chapters and an adult in the later chapters. As discussed in Chapter 1, adolescence is defined as a period of development between

childhood and adulthood and many of the protagonists' actions and use of language fit one or the other extreme. For instance, the increasing sophistication of Christine's language reflects her own development (Crochet 97). Rolfe's article outlines how *Rue Deschambault* evokes childhood experiences, but shows that it is an idealized picture of childhood, written from an adult perspective, and it is a fictionalized account of Roy's childhood.[45] Several tendencies of childhood are present, such as the distortion of place and time, for example, so that childhood places seem larger than they were in reality (Rolfe 65-66). Roy's novel also includes the unhappy side of childhood--especially in the portrayal of Christine's sister Alicia and their dissatisfied father--and anxiousness over becoming an adult. What is lacking, however, is the "mischievousness, the disorder, the fantasy, the irreverence of childhood" (Rolfe 69). Christine is a very obedient, in fact, "good" child and does not create many problems for her parents. She is not mean-spirited, like the teenagers in *Die Klosterschule,* nor is she very interested in sex or sexual behavior. Moreover, Christine's childhood and adolescence are expressed, as Rolfe points out, "with insight and delicacy, from the gently ironic standpoint of an adult narrator" (71-72).[46]

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[45] Rolfe cites several reasons for the fictionalization of childhood memories. Most adults, he states, have selective memories which exclude certain events, or they fictionalize their childhood because of "personal, psychological impulses" (64). Another reason for fictionalizing childhood in autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novels is the need to render these memories in a fashion interesting to the reader, which may interfere with "telling the truth" (Rolfe 64).

[46] The novel does not depict a cultivation of childish fantasy and irreverence, as seen in other novels by Quebec writers, such as Jean-Marie Poupart's *Bourru mouillé. Pour ceux qui savent parler aux enfants* (1975), Albert Laberge's *La Scouine* (1918), or Marie-Claire Blais's *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* (1956) (Rolfe 69-71).

In Keun's novel *Nach Mitternacht*, however, the author is not portraying her childhood memories as much as she is depicting, through the adolescent protagonist Sanna, the events and causes which lead to Keun's own exile as an adult and the difficulty of leaving her country. Even though Sanna is near the end of her adolescent years--much younger than the author was when she left Germany--one can imagine that Keun projects the fear and anxiety she experienced onto her protagonist.

Several other characteristics of childhood novels, as Rolfe explains, are present in *Nach Mitternacht*. Sanna uses irony in a way which is not "deliberate and delightful," (Rolfe 7) and does not poke fun at herself and her naive interpretation of events, as Roy's protagonist Christine does. The type of irony in Christine's narrative expresses her youth and innocence, but Sanna is not as young as Christine, nor is she as naive. Sanna's use of irony is sarcastic and irreverent, especially when she refers to figures of authority and when she depicts events in which these adults participate. She does not ridicule adult behavior as much as she ridicules adults who are self-delusional about their freedom. Sanna also mocks the "conventions and restrictions of adult life" (Rolfe 70), especially when such behavior applies to adults who demonstrate their self importance and their newly-won authority attained through National Socialist policies.

Christine and Sanna entertain a negative and apprehensive view of adulthood. Christine observes the unpleasant side of adulthood when she witnesses her mother's difficulty in writing a letter of departure to her father before they leave on a trip to Quebec. Her mother's turmoil, of course, is evoked when she willfully disobeys his wishes. Christine also witnesses the depression her father experiences and hears stories about the immigrants' hardships when they settle in Canada. Her parents'

deception about the fate of her mentally ill sister, Alicia, causes her to distrust adults. In *Nach Mitternacht,* Sanna, too, comes in contact with some dishonest and hypocritical adults, many of whom are women, and she ridicules them, especially those who are overweight and work for the government. Eventually, she herself experiences the harsh responsibilities of adulthood when she goes into exile with Franz. The exile, which marks the beginning of adulthood for Sanna, is a stressful event, for it is she who must find money and a passport for Franz, and she must think about where they can live while in exile. This experience does not mark a happy coming of age; rather, it is one which is filled with danger for herself and her lover.

In *Die Klosterschule*, the protagonist's coming of age, which marks the beginning of her adulthood, is also filled with anxiety, for she experiences the conflict of deciding whether to remain in the community of the school or to separate from the community. It is a conflict which Abel, Hirsch, and Langland argue is common in narratives about women's development, especially if they live "in a culture pervaded by male norms" (12). The conflict presented in this text is also complicated by the question of whether she should become autonomous or remain in a relationship. In this case, the relationship is not with an individual, but with the institution of the Catholic Church. Living autonomously is problematic for the protagonist, for she has been a part of the community of the school for so long, that she does not know how to behave without the guidance of its teachings.

Throughout the narrative of *Die Klosterschule*, the young woman resembles a child more than she does an adult. At night, telling stories and expressing fantastic desires are important activities for the girls in order to escape the repressive

environment of the school. The subject matter of the dreams and states of delirium the protagonist experiences also resemble those of a child, for in them she expresses fears of the devil, who partakes in monstrous activities to make her more afraid. These dreams and fantasies are reminiscent of nightmares children often experience. Ironically, however, in the episode "Shimäre," when she is in a state of delirium, the devil helps her ward off a group of nuns who are tugging at her. The unconscious recruiting of the devil's help indicates her true fears about the power the nuns hold over her.

The adaptation of biblical verses and excerpts from prayers to fit their understanding also depicts the childish nature of the protagonist and her friends. It is obvious that the protagonist does not understand what she and the other girls are being taught and, for this reason, the young women retell the texts according to their understanding. The result is an ironic interpretation of serious texts and events depicting religious life. Similarly, Nora in *Les Fous de Bassan* expresses her childish nature by rewriting biblical texts to apply her interpretation of these stories. In this instance, it is not because she does not understand these texts; rather, she renders her own interpretation of biblical verses to express her origins. She calls herself "Eve nouvelle" (Hébert 118) and asserts that she is "Faite du limon de la terre, comme Adam et non sortie d'entre les côtes sèches d'Adam, première comme Adam, je suis moi, Nora Atkins, encore humide de ma naissance unique, avide de toute connaissance terrestre et marin" (116).

The coming of age of Nora and Olivia contrasts sharply with the development of the protagonist of *Die Klosterschule*, for Nora and Olivia are expected to mature

more quickly so they can begin their duties as women. During the summer of 1936, Nora turns fifteen and Olivia is seventeen. Much more mature than Nora, Olivia has a life similar to the life of an adult because she runs the household; Olivia has witnessed the hard life of her mother, who was beaten by her father, and this has made her more sensitive to and fearful of men. Nora's thoughts, on the other hand, mark the beginning of a departure from childhood and childhood activities.

The threshold between childhood and adolescence is marked by Nora and Olivia's participation in childhood activities, such as swimming in the sea with their grandmother, Felicity, and their cousin Perceval. But their relationships with their male cousins Stevens and Perceval change when the young men begin to see them as women. Nora's expressions of sexuality mark the beginning of her adulthood, although her words and actions are similar to those of an adolescent. For instance, she does not obey established social codes and randomly kisses boys in public or private places. For Nora, physical appearance is also important and she makes remarks about the boys' minor physical inadequacies. Her inflated self-confidence is evident when she adapts fairy tale images to fantasize about being a queen taken away by an exotic, handsome king with whom she will share her bed. She also fantasizes about the man with whom she will lose her virginity. Other adults are aware of the change in Nora and Olivia. Clearly, the descriptions of how men react to Nora and Olivia's coming of age give the reader an accurate impression of their development as women.

The most striking common feature in these novels is the limitation placed on individual expression for each of the protagonists. Sanna, Olivia, Nora, and Frischmuth's protagonist are prevented from exercising their free will by an instrument

of patriarchal authority. *Nach Mitternacht* takes place under conditions which are most extreme and repressive for both men and women, as well as individuals belonging to other races and religions. But National Socialism was nevertheless a male-run ideology whose policies relegated women to work in the home, a setback for the evolving women's movement established in the late nineteenth century. During the Weimar Period, women were beginning to enjoy some independence after having joined the work force (Falk 165). It would be years before women would regain the status they had lost, especially, as Franziska Meyer writes, since the policies of the post-war Adenauer government also advocated that women remain in the home to work as housewives (45). Furthermore, Keun depicts women who are not at all independent and self-sufficient in a negative light. This tendency strongly contrasts with the positive portrayal of women in her earlier novels (Horsley, "Witness" 108).

In Frischmuth's novel the protagonist is prevented from expressing her individuality by the nuns who control the convent school. These sisters are acting on behalf of the Catholic Church, which is governed by a male-dominated hierarchy. The school is an environment where religion is used, as Fiddler says, as a primary discourse to raise young women to be passive objects of male dominance--whether in marriage or in service to the Catholic Church--rather than active, thinking individuals (252). The protagonist's only escape from this repression is in retreating to a private life of storytelling, dreams, and delirium. When she has trouble following the rules and fantasy no longer helps her escape the restrictions placed on her, she realizes she must leave.

The thoughts about leaving the school, however, represent a turning point in the young girl's life, for it is an indication that she can no longer accept the school's ideological position. Her reflections indicate more than a rebellion; they mark the refusal to live a life of subservience. To be sure, the aspirations of Frischmuth's protagonist are higher than those of Keun's protagonist, Sanna, and reflect those of the women's movement of the late 1960s. Frischmuth's protagonist has progressed from committing minor rebellious acts to showing her disrespect for the strict rules of the school. At the novel's conclusion she envisions a different future for herself and, rather than seeking the advice of the nuns who are there to counsel her, she seeks the guidance of a friend who is attending a secular school. The protagonist's words at the conclusion of the novel are a rejection of the dominant patriarchal forces and an expression of the desire for independence and the equality women were beginning to seek at the time this novel was written.

Hébert's novel illustrates the most violent repression of individualism. The protagonists of this novel are at the threshold of womanhood and are only beginning to discover their sexuality. The freedom Nora and Olivia had as children is limited when they become older, for Nicolas and Stevens, who are very similar to the other men in the community, cannot accept their liberty. Nora's overt sexuality, the pleasure she is beginning to experience as a woman, and her frank statements are an affront to the men in Griffin Creek, who are not accustomed to independent-minded women. In contrast, Olivia silently looks forward to enjoying the love of a man and becoming a mother. She expresses this desire to her female ancestors, before and after her death. Nevertheless, Olivia's innocent action of swimming in the sea--an expression of

freedom and of her intimate connection to water--is enough to threaten Stevens. Olivia dies before she can express her true individuality. Because these young women are not allowed to reveal their wishes and desires, the traditional values for women are maintained.

Gabrielle Roy's novel *Rue Deschambault* does not overtly depict patriarchal authority as the guiding force for Christine, and the young protagonist is free to develop her individuality. Of all the protagonists in the four novels discussed, she experiences the most freedom to make decisions and carry them out when she decides to leave home to begin a career. Nevertheless, patriarchal authority is present in Christine's family structure. As Stéphan notes, Christine's mother and the children must show obedience to the father (71). Furthermore, Canadian women in the 1920s were limited to having only certain professions. Most often, women married and became mothers, but it was also common for women in this Catholic society to enter a religious vocation. In such vocations, obedience to a higher masculine authority is also required.

As seen in the text, a woman could also become a teacher, a profession which Christine's mother Eveline had wished for herself. Christine's choice to become an educator, however, also corresponds to a feminine ideal (Saint-Martin 127). Eveline wants this profession for her daughter not only because it would have been her own choice, but also because it would not separate Christine from her. Christine's true desire to be a writer implies separation from the mother, insecurity, and loneliness, for, as Eveline believes, writing is an occupation which is performed in solitude. Moreover, she contends a writer has a special talent, which separates him or her from

other people. Eveline does not want her daughter to leave her, nor does she want her to live a life in isolation, for women of this time were seldom alone. In this sense, Eveline's advice reflects society's expectations for women and, in fact, she is preparing her daughter to live in a society which does not hold many choices for women.[47]

Abel, Hirsch, and Langland argue that novels which portray female development often have plots which "may engender other formal revisions of the *Bildungsroman*. Novels that depict female apprenticeship and awakening not only alter the developmental process, but also frequently change its position in the text" (12). All of the novels discussed in this study have a plot structure which is non-linear. Two of the narratives--*Rue Deschambault* and *Die Klosterschule*--are written in loosely connected chapters. The plot structure of *Nach Mitternacht* follows a linear pattern, but many of the chapters contain flashbacks which provide the reader with background knowledge of the protagonist. The most interesting narrative structure is found in *Les Fous de Bassan*, where there are five narrators. In this novel the reader hears other (sometimes conflicting) versions of an event from various narrators. In addition, there are several protagonists in this novel, for each of the narrators tells a story of his or her own. This particular structure with several protagonists is common in novels depicting female development, argue Abel, Hirsch, and Langland. They note, "[f]ictions of female development may revise the conception of protagonist as well. Women characters, more psychologically embedded in relationship, sometimes

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[47] Although Roy's novel portrays a loving relationship between mother and daughter, the way in which the mother prepares the daughter for a patriarchal society echoes themes of Elfriede Jelinek's and Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch's novels--written in an Austrian context--which depict destructive mother-daughter relationships (Vansant 15).

share the formative voyage with friends, sisters, or mothers who assume equal status as protagonists" (12). This is the case for all of the novels studied, for each of the young women has sisters, a cousin, or close female friends who were part of their development.

The narrative voice is an important feature in these works, for it expresses the individuality of the protagonist. *Nach Mitternacht, Rue Deschambault* and *Les Fous de Bassan* are written in the first person, which allows the author to express her thoughts without the distancing effect of a third person narrator. The manner in which the first person narration is used, however, varies. *Rue Deschambault,* where the expression of individuality is most apparent, is written entirely in the first person. In this novel, the author is expressing her point of view solely through the protagonist, which is not the case with the protagonists of the other novels in this study. For example, Sanna in *Nach Mitternacht* is not as bold as the character Heini, whose dialogue most overtly expresses dissatisfaction with society and the fascist government, opinions which Sanna also has. The absence of outspokenness on Sanna's part could very well result because Keun did not find Sanna, at her age and level of development, capable of having the sophisticated outlook which Heini expresses (Pasche 119).

Die Klosterschule is written almost entirely in the third person or the first person plural, a fact which emphasizes the protagonist's lack of individuality. The protagonist expresses her feelings in the first person singular, but only in rare instances, such as in dreams and delirious states during illness, and in the final chapter when she experiences doubts about her religion. Because the name of the protagonist

is never used, the novel is reminiscent of a diary. The reader is only aware of the names of those who are closest to the narrator, such as the narrator's best friend Milla and the nuns with whom the narrator has the most contact. The narrative structure of the novel is also similar to a diary because there is no plot; rather, there are chapters which are only loosely connected.

Nora of *Les Fous de Bassan* narrates in the first person and communicates clearly and without hesitation, but her bold opinions and the overt expression of her sexuality lead to her murder. Olivia, who is more timid, also narrates in the first person, but as a spirit from her watery grave. Thus, although the first person narration is predominant in these novels, it does not necessarily follow that the protagonists are able to reveal their will and desires. Nora conveys her individuality without hesitation, whereas Olivia can only state her needs beyond death. Similarly, the protagonist of *Die Klosterschule* reveals her desires in dreams and delirium, but seldom during a conscious state. Finally, Sanna is limited to expressing opinions and thoughts which the author deem appropriate for the adolescent and Keun allows an adult male to convey the most radical opinions. Thus, Christine's first person narrative represents the most uncensored expression of personality.

An important element in *Les Fous de Bassan* is the intertextuality which comes into play. Phrases from the Bible are used and rewritten to emphasize the girls' silence. Nora's words, "Le Verbe en moi est sans parole prononcée, ou écrite, réduit à un murmure secret dans mes veines," indicate this lack of expression, and Olivia echoes this sentiment (Hébert 118). Similarly, the protagonist of *Die Klosterschule* is also without a voice of her own, for her self-expression often includes phrases from

the Bible, her prayer book, and stories from her childhood. Furthermore, when asked to show her understanding of the existence of God, she must resort to comparing God to figures from German legends and to scientific rules she has learned, such as Bohr's atomic model. She makes this comparison in an attempt to explain God's existence scientifically, but her confusion is apparent:

> Gott ist aller Orten. Ich kann ihn nicht sehen. Auch den Nöck sehe ich nicht. Ich weiss, wie der Nöck aussieht, aber man weiss nicht, wie Gott aussieht. Er sieht aus wie alles, doch sieht nichts aus wie Er. Wenn man will, bemerkt man Ihn gar nicht. Man muß glauben, daß Er da ist. Wenn Er nicht da ist, glaubt man nicht. Glauben ist ein intransitives Verbum. Die Naturgesetze: . . . In der stofflichen Welt wirken Naturgesetze, die Gott gegeben hat (Siehe Bohrisches Atommodell). (Frischmuth 67)

The narrator's lack of self-knowledge is a reason she finds it difficult to express her understanding of God's existence (Schnedl-Bubeniček 197).

There are many more novels with female adolescent protagonists written before 1970. Many of these, notably those from German-speaking countries, are no longer in print and there are few articles written about them by scholars and critics. Fortunately, this is not the case for novels with female adolescent protagonists from French-speaking Canada. It is, however, important to recognize that similar novels of German-speaking countries written in the 1980s and 1990s have received much attention by critics and scholars, a fact which is a promising development for authors and readers alike. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is my hope that these works, as well as those which are no longer in print, will continue to gain recognition.

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Vita

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