MOVING INTO AWAKE:
DAPHNE MARLATT'S RE-VISION OF WOMEN IN ANA HISTORIC, DOUBLE NEGATIVE, AND SALVAGE

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IN *ANA HISTORIC*, *DOUBLE NEGATIVE*, AND *SALVAGE*

by

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Abstract

In her books *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, written with Betsy Warland, and *Salvage*, Daphne Marlatt penetrates the silence surrounding women's experiences in history, poetry, and fiction. This thesis analyzes how, in her recent writing, Marlatt negates depictions of women as passive objects of desire. At the same time it explores how Marlatt creates a new relationship between women and words while she opens up her writing to others, beckoning them to join her in naming themselves, their realities, and their desires from their infinitely varied perspectives. Drawing the reader's attention to the power of language to include or exclude, Marlatt poses questions and invites responses from her reader whom she envisions as an active co-creator of meaning. Based on her own experience of desire, the rhythmic flow of Marlatt's writing abandons subject - verb - object sentence structure for a fluid form. The dialogue between her characters in *Ana Historic* and the reciprocal writing exchanges between Marlatt and other writers in *Double Negative* and *Salvage* provide examples of ways in which women, marked by their absence or misrepresented in writing, can represent themselves.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

> . . . i am going, beyond the mountains, past the Great Divide where the rivers run in opposite direction i am carrying you with me.
> Daphne Marlatt, *Touch to My Tongue*

In her most recent books, *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, written with Betsy Warland, and *Salvage*, Daphne Marlatt initiates a process of writing with her reader in order to change "woman's life script [as] a nonstory, a silent space, a gap in patriarchal culture" (Smith *Poetics* 50). As I examine these three books, I hope to show how Marlatt creates a dialogic reader/co-writer partnership, a bond strong enough, perhaps, to break the cultural silence on women that denies them the authority to name themselves and their desires (48-49). In an interview with George Bowering, Marlatt declares that "the business of poetry is to make people see" ("Given This Body" 80). In this thesis, I propose that she finds a way for women to present recognizable images of themselves in writing, thus revising false depictions of them as reflections of men.

I will examine how Marlatt establishes a new relationship between women and words as she devises an active form of fluid writing to dispel their invisibility. As in all of Marlatt's books, many facets of her own person, as a mother, an immigrant, a writer, a wife, and later, as a lover of another woman emerge into *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage* as her life writing, a blended genre which allows for a partnership of fiction and non-fiction (Kadar ix). As she searches for a

way to inscribe women's diverse views of themselves she assumes what Adrienne Rich claims is an ambitious undertaking ("When We Dead Awaken" 35). Indeed, as Marlatt transforms women's invisibility in a book (Brossard 125), she engages her reader in a dialogue where they voice the *unspeakable*: desire in and between women. Marlatt acknowledges the magnitude of her project in an interview with Janice Williamson: "To speak of what has been excluded from the world of literature, which is woman's desire, and to make that present in a language of presence is a big challenge" ("Sounding a Difference" 52).

Marlatt collaborates with a variety of people throughout her career, including photographers Cheryl Sourkes in *Touch to My Tongue* and *Double Negative*, and Robert Minden in *Steveston*. She translates Nicole Brossard's poem "Mauve" who, in turn, translates her "Character" as "Jeu de lettres." However, it is after Longspoon Press solicits and publishes the love poems that she and Betsy Warland write to each other in 1984 that Marlatt and Warland are inspired to write collaboratively on the subject of desiring women in *Double Negative* (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 126,131). In this book, they invite their reader to enter into reciprocal writing with them: "you my co-writer and co-reader, the one up close i address as you and you others i cannot foresee but imagine 'you' reading in for. and then there's the you in me, writing too. not the same so much as reciprocal, moving back and forth between our sameness and differences" ("Reading and Writing" 133).

As in *Double Negative*, Marlatt draws the reader into a participatory role in *Ana Historic* and *Salvage*, turning her examining I/eye on language itself. She becomes aware of "difference" and the power of language for inclusion or exclusion and isolation as a young child living in Penang, Malaysia, where five languages are spoken in her home (Marlatt "Entering In" 220). This is further apparent to Marlatt when, in a subsequent move from England to North Vancouver, she experiences contempt from her Canadian classmates for wearing a "woolly" instead of a "sweater" (220-221). Indeed, Marlatt later becomes known for her "different" kind of writing because her poetry is unlike the trend of nationalist writing commonplace in the 1960s (Ricou "Poetry" 29).

She is a prolific writer with twenty published books of poetry and/or prose to her credit.[1] Numerous articles, reviews, and six dissertations which examine her books in varying degrees, provide an in-depth analysis of her writing up to the mid-nineteen eighties, before the three books that are the focus of this thesis.[2] To my

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[1] *ghost works* is a collection of Marlatt's previously published books entitled *Zocalo*, *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts*, and *How Hug a Stone*. *Two Women in a Birth* is Marlatt and Betsy Warland's most recent book which reprints Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue*, Warland's *Open Is Broken*, and their collaboratively written long poem sequence, *Double Negative*. It also includes Marlatt and Warland's "Reading and Writing Between the Lines," their exchanges on their collaborative writing experiences, and "Subject to Change," their journal entries on experimental reciprocal writing. Marlatt is also the co-editor of the publications from two seminal feminist conferences, *In the Feminine* and *Telling it: Women and Language Across Cultures*.

[2] Brenda Carr's doctoral dissertation, "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts • Swimming / Jumping the Margins / Barriers" focuses on Marlatt's writing before *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage*, although Carr does mention these books.

knowledge there are no comprehensive studies of *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage* and the collaboration which these books invite the reader to engage in.

While *Ana Historic* has received attention in a number of mixed reviews and predominantly favourable essays, there has been little response to *Double Negative*. Warland voices her thoughts on the reception of the poetic collaboration:

> Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about *Double Negative* thus far is that it has received practically no reviews. Collaborative writing seems to be a radical and unnerving approach for the North American critical mind which champions individualism (*Proper Deafinitions* 132).

Julia Creet reviews it favourably, however, as does Brenda Carr who, in her essay, responds positively to Marlatt and Warland's writing "[a]cross the difference of sexual orientation, honouring that difference, enspirited by that difference . . ." ("Collaboration" 111).

While response to Marlatt's *Salvage* is somewhat slow in coming, it is favourable, nonetheless. Melinda McCracken gives it a positive review, describing it as "bold and original, [. . .] a unique and beautifully wrought creation from one of Canada's most accomplished poets" (45-46). In her essay on the titular section of the collection, Susan Holbrook claims that Marlatt makes "powerful trans-gressions" that are "striking" and suggest "beauty and revolt [as she] pushes the limits of how we can speak and imagine our striking selves" (17). Discussing the fifth

section, "**Booking Passage**," Pauline Butling declares that *Salvage*, like all of Marlatt's texts, "loosen[s] the boundaries of meaning and thus allow[s] for interventions - by both the writer and the reader - in the symbolic order [. . . so that Marlatt] changes how we see and value women" (167).

Yet, women's experiences are not a focus of the writing circle to which Marlatt belongs in Vancouver in the 1970s, although from the start of her career, her writing is rooted in her personal life.[3] Up to 1981, her exposure to women writers occurs primarily in her involvement with the Blew Ointment-Intermedia group in Vancouver (Marlatt "Correspondences" 23). She acknowledges no female mentors (Williamson "It gives" 171). Her writing mentors and models are men, among them Duncan, Creeley, Snyder, Ginsberg, Williams, and Pound (Marlatt "Between Continuity," by Carr 99). In the early 1960s she learns "creative writing" from Earle Birney and etymological techniques from Charles Olson, the founder of the "Black Mountain School" (Barbour "Daphne Marlatt" *ECW's Biographical* 267-268; Wah Intro. *Net Work* 9). She later discovers the "semantic thickness" of words as she translates Francis Ponge's *Le Parti Pris Des Choses* for her master's thesis (9). Her experimentation in poetry is initiated by the male writers of "Black Mountain School"

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[3] See Marlatt "Difference (em)bracing" 188 - 192; Williamson, "It gives" 171 - 173; Wah Intro. *Net Work* 8 -14.

and the original members of the *TISH* group, such as Frank Davey, George Bowering, and Lionel Kearns.[4]

Marlatt begins to discover her own voice as she writes her first book, *Frames* (Marlatt "Given This Body," by Bowering 37), which marks the beginning of her struggle to express who she is (40).[5] Over the years, her attempts to establish her identity and presence in the world become a direct focus of her writing. Marlatt notes that her writing becomes influenced by the work of a number of feminist theorists, notably Nicole Brossard, at the "Dialogue" conference at York University in 1981 ("Correspondences" 23; "Sounding a Difference," by Williamson 47):

> I became very interested in the kind of theory that Nicole Brossard was writing. . . . I began to get very interested in the possibility of writing carrying the feminine, so that led me to French feminist theory, and I started reading Cixous and Irigaray and Kristeva - Duras before that, but not so much for theory. The thing that drew me to what Nicole was doing was her writing always as a woman *writing*. . . .

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[4] Marlatt credits Olson, Creeley, and Duncan with being important writing influences (Arnason, Cooley, and Enright 29). Up to 1980, the three Canadian writers most important to her are Robert Kroetsch, Michael Ondaatje, and George Bowering (9). Although Marlatt is among the "second-wave" of writers who contribute to *Tish* after 1963 (8), she claims that she never felt part of this group ("Given This Body," by Bowering 34). Fred Wah writes that of the twelve people most involved with *Tish* at this time, only Marlatt and Gladys Hindmarch were women ("Intro." *Net Work* 8), although Marlatt points out that other women were involved ("Between Continuity," by Carr 102). Of the women writers whose work interested her she notes: "Well, there was H.D., there was Denise Levertov, Diane di Prima, Joanne Kyger - somehow their writing was regarded as secondary because it was too personal" (99).

[5] For a discussion of the development of Marlatt's early writing up to *Steveston*, see "Given This Body: an interview with Daphne Marlatt," by George Bowering in *Open Letter* 4.3, Spring, 1979, pp. 32-88. Also, see "Between Continuity and Difference: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt," by Brenda Carr in *Beyond Tish*, edited by Douglas Barbour.

> [Nicole] was talking about an approach to writing as a woman ("Sounding a Difference," by Williamson 47 - 48).

This conference enables her to connect her search for her identity and voice with her body and the active quality of her desire. A decade after the "Dialogue" conference, she reflects:

> It has been a long journey for me to come into my body, to be centred in, the *subject* of, my desire and not the object of someone else's. To develop my own sense of the line or even of how i might move thru syntax to speak my own being, i had to give up trying to imitate men. . . . So the question was, how did my being a woman make a difference to my writing? A difference not peripheral but central. And if we were going to start with the body, well, my body was certainly different from Charles Olson's ("Between Continuity," by Carr 99).

In an epigraph to her *What Matters: Writing 1968-70*, Marlatt quotes George Bowering: "If you don't understand the story you'd better tell it" (N. pag.). In *Ana Historic*, she does just that. Marlatt tells the story of a woman barely remembered in the historical documents of British Columbia that preserve almost exclusively the exploits of men. In Chapter One of this thesis, I will examine how she establishes the presence of women by coming to terms with how they are missing from written records. Seeking to undo the collective absence of "those anonymous ladies" (*Ana Historic* 83) past and present, she sets out to revise culturally instilled perceptions of women's desire as monstrous. In the birth of the loving relationships between her characters, Annie and Zoe, and Ana and Birdie, Marlatt establishes the presence

of women who desire women and sets up a dialogue with her reader for further expressions of women's realities.

In Chapter Two, I will explore the intent behind Marlatt and Warland's exposé of words that are "freighted with patriarchal value" in *Double Negative* (Marlatt "Between Continuity," by Carr 104). Protesting against language that denies them presence, they engage in "sub-versive" wordplay as they investigate how they are sentenced to the margins outside the "real" in language, placed "behind, after, without a version" (*Double Negative* 20). Through careful attention to words, Marlatt and Warland create a vivid representation of themselves that is difficult to deny[6]. In the third section of *Double Negative*, they revise their independently written poetry of the titular first section by alternately taking "a phrase from one another's poetic entries [, . . .] running away with it - going off track into our own idiosyncratic associative prose reflections" (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 131-132). I will examine how, instead of forcing their words to fit the standard subject - verb - object sentence order of the English language, they write poetry attuned to the rhythms of their bodies. With their reciprocal writing based on the flow of their desire and lovemaking, Marlatt and Warland create re-visions of themselves as "Real 2" rather than "Double Negative." As they do so, they offer their readers opportunities to present themselves through their approach to writing as collaboration: "we question

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[6] See Betsy Warland's *Proper Deafinitions: Collected Theorograms*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1990.

the delineation between the collectivity of conversation and the individual's ownership of the written here we affirm our spiralling dominoing wandering she-speech in the talking we do between the sheets between the lines between the writing that intertwines . . ." (Marlatt and Warland "Reading and Writing" 141). I hope to show how Marlatt and Warland do not speak for all women in *Double Negative*, but create opportunities for women to speak in their own stead: " . . . what is 'self' writing here? when you leave space for your readers who may not read you in the same way, the autobiographical becomes the communal even communographic in its contextual and narrative [Carol Gilligan] women's way of thinking - and collaborating" ("Reading and Writing" 142). As they reach out to include their readers in all their diversity, the poetry of *Double Negative* moves into infinite territory for the imagination. In the dialogue that their writing generates they, along with their readers, gain different views of women in the world.

In Chapter Three I will approach *Salvage* as another of Marlatt's acts of "re-vision." She begins this collection of poetry, fiction, translation, and life writing with a reference to Steveston, a place where "your women are invisible" (*Salvage* 15). The poems in the title section of *Salvage* are re-visions of "failed" poems that Marlatt wrote almost twenty years ago when she worked on her documentary of the Japanese-Canadian community of Steveston (Marlatt. Foreword). To begin my analysis of *Salvage*, I will follow her lead and examine some of the poetry in

Steveston to view how she situates women. I claim that Marlatt employs a process of re-vision in *Salvage* similar to that of *Ana Historic*, made possible by her ability to open language up: "to make it, take it, break it" (*Salvage* 54). I will examine how she finds "a way to write her in" (25), her being anyone, possibly "you" (106) whom she invites to join her "in her element in other words" (23) in a partnership of "us" (113).

In the fourth section of *Salvage* entitled "**Acts of Passage**," Marlatt takes Québécoise feminist theorist and writer, Nicole Brossard, as a partner, all the while inviting her readers to join them, as she and Warland did in *Double Negative*. Together, Marlatt and Brossard transform each other's words with one intent, to present themselves "and from there make our presence known in the order of the real and the symbolic" (*Aerial Letter* 134). I will discuss how Marlatt and Brossard break words open, releasing etymological meanings as they translate each other's writing in their exchange. Here, as in *Double Negative*, Marlatt applies what she learns in translating Ponge's writing, "his insistence on the *presence* of things, thus objects as subject" (*What Matters* 44). She clarifies the purpose of her wordplay in *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative* and *Salvage*:

> People seem to misunderstand my use of etymology and accuse it of being a validation of 'the true literal meaning' of the word. That's very far from what I'm doing which is much more playful than that. It's a way of calling up an absolutely departed from or an ignored and forgotten meaning and recycling it as a variant slant on, a new fracture of, the current meaning, which after all still stands, though it's

> now no longer dominant. It's a form of polysemy ("Between Continuity," by Carr 104).

Hélène Cixous insists that women will write themselves into the world when they find a way to represent the movements of their passionate bodies ("Laugh" 875). In *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative* and *Salvage*, the "coming and going" (*Salvage* 115, 118, 119) rhythm of Marlatt's body as she makes love with her life partner becomes the basis of the reciprocal exchange of words she envisions in her relationship with her reader. Not abiding by rules of syntax and punctuation, the meaning she constructs jointly with her reader moves towards recognition rather than a climax and a resolution in these three books. While *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative* offer the reader a role as a co-writer, Marlatt is possibly at her most expectant in willing her reader to move to the rhythm of her writing in *Salvage*: "it's us who *move into awake*, finding our calling" (113, emphasis mine). As I examine the final section of *Salvage*, I will focus on how Marlatt explores ways of passage into writing specifically oriented towards achieving a "coming out" (118) in words for women who desire women. In this thesis, I will consider how Marlatt's dialogic writing opens a door where women, in all their diversity, can take their places in the world by voicing their realities.

Chapter One

Ana Historic: "Entering In," Women On (the) Edge

I seem to myself to be without power.
To have the power of waiting merely.
Waiting to be told what to say.
But who will tell me?
. . . . . .
My arm lies across this oak desk
in the fading sunlight of four o'clock,
the skin warming, alive still,
the hand unspoken.
. . . . . .
Power of a door unopened.
Margaret Atwood, "Doorway"

Nightbound in this sleeping house
somebody cries;
. . . . . .
There is an etiquette of dreams,
you don't just walk into another person's head
without knocking.
Janice Kulyk Keefer, "Late Show"

In her novel, *Ana Historic*, Daphne Marlatt raises questions. She begins with an important one: "Who's There? she was whispering. knock knock. in the dark" (9). Voiced initially in a fearful whisper by the protagonist, Annie, this question reverberates throughout the novel. As Annie constructs her own answer through her life writing, she discovers that her identity is intertwined with those of other women who have shaped her personality but are obscure figures. As Marlatt initiates her reader into an exploration similar to Annie's, I hope to show how she

attempts to make a place for a wide variety of women's experiences, those "hidden" stories (*Ana Historic* 79) that lurk in the shadows of literature, poetry, and history. In this chapter on *Ana Historic*, my analysis centres on Marlatt's exploration of ways out of the silence that surrounds women's sexuality, which includes desire between women. At the same time, I consider how this novel reaches toward a broad vision of women who speak for themselves, exchanging their differences as well as their similarities, writing in all that has been left unsaid about them, "like bleeding and hysterectomies, like intuition and dizzy spells - all the ways we don't fit into a man's world" (79). In an interview, Marlatt tells George Bowering:

> What I was interested in doing in *Ana Historic* was to do a woman's version of history, that being a difficult area for women because they don't inhabit history in the same way men do. Their history is usually the unwritten history, it's the history that tends to get recorded more in oral-histories. Women are not seen as world-makers ("On *Ana Historic*" 98).

Ana Historic convincingly depicts the isolation between women, including mothers and daughters. Indeed, Annie, Ana, and Ina are all prototypes of the missing persons that Marlatt envisions reaching in this novel, this story in progress that is "yours. ours" (*Ana Historic* 79). Annie's personality is shaped by generations of people from past to present through stories handed down like jewellery from "grandmother to mother to daughter, the female line of inheritance" (57). Betsy Warland suggests that the absence of women in written accounts is passed down from generation to generation: "i do not know my great-grandmother's text or her

mother's or hers. . ." (*Proper Deafinitions* 100). Annie works to rectify this loss so that near the end of her search for the answer to the "Who's There?" question, she states that her mother is not absent but present: "you go on living in me . . ." (*Ana Historic* 141).

A strong autobiographical element underlies Marlatt's *Ana Historic*, as it does in all of her earlier books, such as *Rings*, *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts*, and *How Hug a Stone* (Barbour "Daphne Marlatt" *Canadian* 207; Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 3, 79-80, 228-229, 237-242). As Linda Hutcheon points out, because Marlatt incorporates autobiographical material, readers of her books find themselves in familiar territory in *Ana Historic* ("telling accounts" 17). In her doctoral dissertation on the works of Marlatt that precede *Ana Historic*, Brenda Carr notes how Marlatt reaches toward a greater understanding of her mother in *Zocalo*, *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts*, and her poetic travel journal, *How Hug a Stone* ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 3, 229, 237-238). In *How Hug a Stone*, Daphne Marlatt describes how neither relatives, her mother's friends, nor the historical environment of England can assuage the feelings of alienation from her mother that she travels to her ancestral home to dispel. She finds there a predominantly male record of accomplishments that displace her mother and other women to the sidelines. Frank Davey dismisses this as an "overdetermination of the male-female dichotomy" in her book ("Words and Stones" 46), yet, as Marlatt reflects on the

fragments of the stories and stones in *How Hug a Stone*, she realizes that history overlooks women's experiences: "that it is the limit of the old story, that is not how it ended or we have forgotten parts, we have lost sense of the whole" (73). Five years later, in *Ana Historic*, Marlatt demonstrates how the world has been traditionally depicted: "once history's onstage, histrionic as usual (all those wars, all those historic judgements), the a-historic hasn't a speaking part. what's imagination next to the weight of the (f)actual?" (139). This novel shows history to be a record of the public achievements of men and a "Never-Never Land" full of generations of "Lost Girls" (11).

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt sets out to alter this mass-scale erasure of women "without history" (19, 20). Starting with a skeleton of facts that she finds on the women settlers of British Columbia, she reclaims an ahistoric woman from oblivion by inventing a past for her. In doing so, she creates in *Ana Historic* "the story that women's historians have been telling us about the absenting of women from our written historical accounts" (Hutcheon "telling accounts" 17). In this chapter I examine Marlatt's re-vision of Mrs. Richards, a woman whose first name is not recorded in history but whom she names Ana, Ana Historic.

VV

"Your Women Are Invisible"[1]

Set in British Columbia, *Ana Historic* is a blend of fiction and facts that Marlatt draws from narrative documentaries, history books, nineteenth-century newspapers,

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[1] Throughout the three chapters of this thesis I employ three combinations of symbols: VV, VΛ, and ΛΛ. When these symbols first appear in each chapter they are accompanied by a subheading, as in VV: "Your Women Are Invisible," VΛ: (Ex)changing the V-U Point, and ΛΛ: "Real 2": Women's Re-visions of Themselves in the World.

My idea for these symbols originates with *Double Negative* which is itself divided into three sections. In this book, Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland draw attention to how women's views on their desire are missing from literature and poetry. Indeed, in her book, *Salvage*, Marlatt writes: "your women are invisible" (15). I begin each chapter of this thesis on *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage* by examining the invisibility of women. In the imagery of the first section of *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland connect the letter V to the vagina (18) while, at the same time, they disturb its stationary existence by presenting it differently as v. Occurring twice, with one above and to the left of the other, these symbols suggest flight of women, particularly since the words "a cloud, rose-breasted" (18) follow the symbols. Thus, in the first section of each chapter of this thesis I explore women's invisibility in writing and indicate how Marlatt, or Marlatt and Warland, prepare for change.

In the second section of each chapter I employ one v alongside its inverted double to illustrate that a turning point occurs with regard to how the writer(s) present, and how the reader perceives, women, thus, the subheading: (Ex)changing the V-U Point. Marlatt and Warland play with the letters V and U to maintain reader attention to point of view or "V-U" (49) in the third section of *Double Negative*, entitled "Real 2." Throughout my discussion of this book in Chapter Two, I point out how Marlatt and Warland's writing takes on the fluid quality of a cinematic reel of words in interaction. Marlatt and Warland produce a view of the world from down under in Australia as they turn "the lens around" (11), inverting "point of view" (11, 54) so that their writing forms a "giant caret" (54). The double carets I employ serve to focus on the visibility of desiring women that emerges in *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage*. The presence of double rather than single carets reflect the active, reciprocal input that Marlatt and Warland invite in their writing.

Wherever there is a natural break or shift in focus within each of the chapters, the symbols reappear without subheadings until a different section occurs.

and other sources which she lists at the end of her novel. Her selected "factual" excerpts indicate that "a sense of fraternal community runs through the records" (*Ana Historic* 55) of British Columbia, preserving for posterity the public world dominated by men, leaving women's lives virtually unwritten. In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt includes a description of a man named Carter from M. Allerdale Grainger's book of fiction entitled *Woodsmen of the West*[2]:

> *'Watch Carter when the "donk" (his donkey!) has got up steam - its first steam; and when the rigging men (his rigging men!) drag out the wire rope to make a great circle through the woods. . . . Think what this mastery over huge, heavy logs means to a man who has been used to coax them to tiny movements by patience and a puny jack-screw. . .' (25).*

In her novel, other passages like this one from *Woodsmen of the West* suggest that Carter is a villain: "[b]eing partners with him means obeying him and being his

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[2] In his introduction to the 1964 edition of *Woodsmen of the West*, Rupert Schieder points out that this book, written in 1908, is classified as "fiction" (vii). Schieder notes that "British Columbia recalls him [Grainger] as a public figure who laid the foundations of the forestry policy of the province" (vii) and therefore, "[i]t is not surprising that *Woodsmen of the West* should reflect Grainger's detailed knowledge of the west coast and his own logging experience (viii). . . . All the facets of the business of small-scale logging are accurately reproduced: the struggle with the donkey-engine, the riggin' slinging, bucking, swamping, the boats, the booms, the bunkhouses. . . . As a result, *Woodsmen* has come to be accepted as one of the standard source books for information about the [logging] industry" (ix). Schieder goes on to say that "Grainger was something more than an observer and recorder of a region and the history of an industry. . . . Grainger worked as a creative artist . . . [and] produced a personal narrative suited to his own particular needs" (ix). According to Schieder, since Grainger "was no more confined by the limitations of formal autobiography than by those of local history, he was free to adjust or create materials to serve his particular literary purposes" (xii).

slave" (49), "[f]or to exert power over men is whiskey to Carter's soul: it is the craving for crude power that drives him at his life's work" (58).

Relying on Grainger's description of Carter for his book, *Glory Days of Logging*, Ralph Andrews transforms the power-hungry Carter into a hero when he removes the aforementioned excerpt from *Woodsmen of the West* and quotes it out of context in his book. With photographs that complement this passage about Carter, Andrews invents a verisimilitude that Marlatt disputes as authentic and complete in *Ana Historic*. Shaking the reader's faith in the reliability of narrators whose stories become accepted as historical "truths," Marlatt invites the reader to determine what is "real." She raises questions about "Who's There?" in history and who is left out of the picture of reality it presents. Marlatt suggests that: "there were holes in the story you had inherited. holes in the image" (*Ana Historic* 26). In *Ana Historic*, Annie questions how history accords value to the public world while it dismisses the private:

> what is a 'world event'? getting a piano was a world event in that 'obscure settlement' because years later somebody still remembered it, even remembered where it came from and who bought it. Mrs. Schwappe. Mrs. Richards. a ship's piano suddenly landed in an out-of-the-way spot, this little three-room cottage. these are not facts but skeletal bones of a suppressed body the story is. there *is* a story here, Ina, i keep trying to get to. it begins. . . (29).

Her story differs from "history the story, Carter's and all the others', of dominance. mastery. the bold line of it" (25).

Marlatt discovers Mrs. Richards "in the city records as the second school teacher at Hastings Mill School in 1873" (Marlatt "On *Ana Historic*," by Bowering 97). In comparison to the comprehensive accounts of numerous men, she finds only traces of women such as Mrs. Richards in the records[3]:

> She married Ben Springer from Moodyville, across the inlet, and then she disappeared from history. But she's mentioned as having purchased a piano, and I could read two slightly different interpretations into that purchase of the piano because Alan Morley writes about her in his book about Vancouver, his historical text, and he calls her a young and pretty widow. So right away you have an imagination of who Mrs. Richards is. One of the sources said that she gave music lessons in her rooms in Gastown. Another source said she lived in this small, three-room or two-room, cottage behind the schoolhouse. . . . I decided that I wanted to know more about her, and the only way I could was by inventing her. I invented a diary for her, I invented a past for her, which is very sketchily suggested in the novel, as to why she would be there. I made her an immigrant from Britain, and I wanted to give her a different destiny from the one that history actually records (97).

In *Ana Historic*, as Annie assists her writer-historian husband, Richard, with his work, she discovers that her story is part of a collective one of women past and

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[3] Similarly, Virginia Woolf, in her study of Elizabethan women, found only fragmentary hints of their existence:

> . . . one is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her. . . . Nor shall we find her in any collection of anecdotes. Aubrey hardly mentions her. She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her. . . . Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. . . . [I]t is fairly evident that even in the nineteenth-century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist (44-53).

present, missing from the history shelves. She reflects upon how women are written out of the world, this one-sided view of men's actions presented as history that Richard teaches at a university:

> i learned that history is the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world. a tale of their exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees, of wooden masses. so many claims to fame. so many ordinary men turned into heroes. (where are the city mothers?) the city fathers busy building a town out of so many shacks labelled the Western Terminus of the Transcontinental, Gateway to the East - all of these capital letters to convince themselves of its, of their, significance. . . .
>
> all the figures, facts to testify to their being present at it:
>
> *'I had 400 men working in a tented camp one third mile west of the hotel. I built the two and one half miles of the* CPR *from Hastings to Hastings Sawmill . . .'* John ('Chinese')[4] McDougall (*Ana Historic* 28).

Because "there is no image of Mrs. Richards" (31), Marlatt introduces her to the reader of *Ana Historic* through Annie's imagination:

> i imagine her standing slim in whalebone at the ship's rail as it turns with the wind, giving her her first view of what would become home as she imagined it, imagining herself free of history. (black poplin. useless baggage.) there is a story here (15).

Because of the lack of historical detail about Mrs. Richards, Annie fills in the missing information with plausible invention:

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[4] Throughout *Ana Historic*, Marlatt uses parentheses to draw attention to what is left out of history. While she focuses most often on women, in this case the parentheses that enclose John McDougall's Chinese origins signify that Chinese-Canadians, like the city mothers, are virtually absent from history.

> no, we don't know how she came. we know only that she was appointed teacher for the second term of the mill school's first year. a widow, they said (safe bet), she would have been educated, she would have spoken a proper English, the Queen's they said. after all this was *British* Columbia, 1873 (14).

Annie realizes she does not want "history's voice" to write herself and her mother into oblivion the way it did with Mrs. Richards who "buys a piano and afterwards marries Ben Springer . . . that was her summed up" (48).

Marlatt questions the difference between "historic," that which is "famous or important in history" remembered through "a continuous methodical record of important or public events" and "ahistoric," people "unrelated to history" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). With these two definitions and the non-standard spelling of "Ana," she steers the reader towards an investigative role. In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt points to the gaps in the history of British Columbia and rejects women's "ahistoric" place in it. She frequently leaves her own gaps in between the print on the pages of her novel, thereby encouraging her reader to respond to her questions and share in the telling of history's missing women. Marlatt cautions her reader that while history is a necessarily selective construction, it is, at times, inaccurate. By blending fact and fiction, she works against her absence in history through invention which may be a viable way to construct the presence of women (Weedon 140). Indeed, Marlatt suggests that it is possible to change what is recorded as history:

> If history is a construction and language is also a construction, as we know - in fact, it actually constructs the reality we live in and act in -

> then we can change it. We're not stuck in some authoritative version of the real, and for women that's extremely important, because we always were - the patriarchal version was always *the* version, and now we know that's not true. We can throw out that powerful little article. When we change language we change the building blocks by which we construct our reality or even our past "reality," history" ("Sounding a Difference," by Williamson 52).

In a review that draws on sarcasm rather than examples to support his position, Patrick Imbert seeks to discredit Marlatt's attempt to create an awareness of women's absence in history. He writes: "The narrative rests on a constant counterpoint between the unwritten story of a 'cute' woman, Ana Richards, who (we sometimes would almost be led to write *which*, because she appears in archives as a mere commodity) was mentioned in the archives of the city of Vancouver" (199). I will consider how Marlatt changes "the building blocks by which we construct our reality" (Marlatt "Sounding a Difference," by Williamson 52) in order to create Ana's presence where there is absence.

V V

> -the trouble with you, Annie, is that you want to tell a story, no matter how much history you keep throwing at me.
>
> -and i know what that means, you who used to accuse me of 'telling stories' when you thought i'd lied (*Ana Historic* 27).

French feminist theorist Catherine Clément writes:

> If women begin to want their turn at telling this history, if they take the relay from men by putting myths into words (since that is how historical and cultural evolution will take place), . . . it will necessarily be from other points of view. It will be a history read differently, at once the same in the Real and an other in the Imaginary. These narratives, these myths, these fantasies, these fragments of evidence, these tail ends of history do not compose a *true* history. . . . Instead, it is a history, taken from what is lost within us of oral tradition, of legends and myths - a history arranged the way tale-telling women tell it. And from the standpoint of conveying the mythic models that powerfully structure the Imaginary (masculine and feminine, complex and varied), this history will be true (*Newly Born* 6).

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's re-vision of the untold story of Mrs. Richards is told by Annie in her novel. The reader witnesses Annie's struggle to flesh out the historical remains of Mrs. Richards, an absent foremother. Annie creates a composite sketch of her, adding invention to fact: "what if they balance each other . . . and we live in history *and* imagination" (*Ana Historic* 139). In doing so, she moves into a new realm of writing that may nonetheless speak of reality for, as Marlatt suggests, history and fiction are not clearly separated:

> remembering is a fiction in any case, and we know that from hearing eyewitness accounts of an accident, the same accident that everybody viewed, and they all have different versions of what actually happened. So, we have this funny thing when we say remembering is real, and inventing is not - inventing is purely imaginary or fictional. What interests me is where those two cross. I think one can still be autobiographical and in fact be quite imaginative. In some cases I don't even know where the seam between those two worlds is . . . ("On *Ana Historic*," by Bowering 96).

Marlatt openly acknowledges the liberties she takes with historical facts: "[a]s a novelist I'm allowed to do anything" (98). With the words, "A Novel," situated below

"Historic" in the title of *Ana Historic*, she calls attention to the difference from history that this book embraces in its treatment of women. Word placement is a thought-provoking feature of *Ana Historic*, as Dennis Cooley suggests: "[t]o be so prepositioned is a proposition Marlatt deconstructs" (75). In her re-vision of women's lives in *Ana Historic*, she makes ahistoric women accessible.[5] Indeed, Linda Hutcheon insists that "[m]etafiction teaches its reader to see all referents as fictive, as imagined" ("History" 178). In the manner of a postmodern novel, *Ana Historic*'s historiographic metafiction subverts "the referential accuracy of historical detail" on which Mary McCarthy claims the genre of the novel is founded (172).

In *Ana Historic*, Annie writes not only for Ana but for herself, her mother, and many others who are absent in history. Marlatt speaks directly to her reader whom she includes in this project:

> you who cannot find the words to explain yourself, your sense of the real. you who literally cannot speak. though they speak about you, the men do, those others (*Ana Historic* 105).

While she writes against all their absences, Marlatt encourages her readers to share their realities through their own voices. She poses a question that encourages active reader response: "what is her first name? she must have one - so far she has only the name of a dead man, someone somewhere else" (37). With questions

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[5] From the cover of *Ana Historic*, Marlatt signals to her reader that she is a presence. She surrounds her first name, Daphne, with small circles to indicate her refusal to be an absence. In the title, dots also surround "ANA," a composite name that Marlatt constructs in place of Mrs. Richard's missing first name.

like this one that foster introspection, Marlatt invites her reader to engage in a dialogue with her. I will explore the potential collaboration between Marlatt and her readers in greater depth later in this chapter.

V V

He had the world to invent <<in-, on +
ven˙ire, to come>>

Mother stayed home
in a house without door
Betsy Warland, *Proper Deafinitions*

As *Ana Historic* begins, Annie is in the house, beyond the action of the outside world: "i learned to stay in the house as a good girl should" (16). Her desire to explore the world is impeded by a culturally instilled fear of it and the monsters that supposedly lurk there. When she opens the door to "wardrobes. wordrobes" (9) to search for what is hidden from her, she embarks upon a journey of discovery, a journey which Marlatt invites the reader to actively engage in. Annie discovers that *wordrobes*, like *wardrobes*, cover up women's sexuality. Her own voice, and not that of her husband sleeping next to her, is the agent of her awakening:

it was the sound of her own voice had woken her, heard like an echo
asking,
who's there? (9).

Annie employs Richard's words while she assists him with his history book but now, upon hearing her question, she realizes that her well-being depends on her own "life writing." Marlatt considers "life writing" as "autobiography in its largest sense of self writing life, not the life of the self but the life the self writes its way to, the whole cloth, . . . to reach for what is almost unwriteable, a hole in that other sense" ("Self-Representation" 16). Responding to a desire that she does not yet recognize, Annie moves beyond her role of helpmate to Richard: "now she would have to move, shift, legs aware of themselves and wanting out" (*Ana Historic* 9). While initially she directs the "Who's There?" question at a hidden being, a man, a bear, or a monster such as Frankenstein (10), her search leads towards her own self-examination. Marlatt follows this question with many others in order to probe women's perceptions of reality :

> who did my Lost Girl think might be there in that house on the side of a mountain on the edge of a suburb surrounded by private laurels? what did she think would come staggering out of the woods? those woods men worked in, building powerlines and clearing land for subdivision. those woods the boys on the rest of the block had claimed as theirs (12).

Virginia Woolf suggests that women's fear of the unknown spans centuries and continents and is perpetuated through stories: "It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards. . . . But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact" (43).

In *Ana Historic*, women who enter the world on their own terms meet with cultural disapproval. Marlatt suggests that Ana may have invented the name Mrs. Richards and posed as a widow in order to travel from Britain to British Columbia on her own. She demonstrates how cultural conditioning has a lingering hold on even an adventurous woman in a new world. Marlatt focuses directly on how language erects our realities, which for women often means constructing walls around them to keep them from entering the "real" world. In her discussion of *Ana Historic* as an act of translation "between language and the body, between the speakable and the unspeakable, between women's unrecorded speech and unwritten writing," Pamela Banting asserts that "both speech and writing are coded as masculine" ("Translation A to Z" 126,124). Indeed, in *Ana Historic*, Marlatt demonstrates how language instils both a fear of the unknown and passivity in girls while it promotes an idea that men are created for action. Banting notes that in the oral tradition where the record of spoken words between women is scant, remembered conversations between mothers and daughters are full of proscriptions, warnings, taboos (124). As Marlatt's novel demonstrates, the oral and written language of rhymes, songs, and stories contain powerful cultural messages that condition people from childhood: "*if you go down in the woods today you'd better go in disguise*" (*Ana Historic* 19). In Ana's meeting with the Siwash men in the woods, Marlatt illustrates how stories play an important role in constructing the

schoolteacher's concept of reality. She describes Ana's encounter with the Siwash men in the woods: ". . . she froze on the path as they approached, sick with stories she had heard: Stackeye axing Perry in his sleep, Mrs. Sullivan menaced with a knife. It was the sickness of fear and they knew it as they crowded past her as if she were a bush, a fern shaking in their way" (41-42). Unharmed after this meeting, her fears unfounded, Ana realizes the extent to which language isolates people from each other on the basis of difference. Mistaking Marlatt's purpose in this incident, Marian Quednau writes: "It is interesting to note that Annie imagines her schoolteacher persona in a rare moment of freedom in the forest and immediately undermines her power by believing that two Siwash men (even one fairly weak and consumptive-looking) will harm her" (34).

Annie remembers her mother safely enclosed within four walls[6]:

> all the housewives absent, . . . bathrobe sleeping beauties gone in a trice, a trance, embalmed, waiting for a kiss to wake them when their kids, their men would finally come home. . . . a woman's place. safe. suspended out of the swift race of the world.

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[6] In her book, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich discusses the isolation and lack of power that women experience in their confinement to the home. She writes: "The home . . . was a creation of the Industrial Revolution, an ideal invested with the power of something God-given, and its power *as an idea* remains unexpunged today" (49). In *Ana Historic*, the isolation that Ina experiences in the family home leads to her demise. For further discussion on the effects on women from the privatization of the home, see Rich, pp. 49-53. The notion that a woman's place is in the home is shaken at critical historical moments, as in the suffrage movement of the nineteen-twenties and again in the nineteen-sixties when groups of women, once more, begin to resist.

> the monstrous lie of it: the lure of absence. self-effacing (*Ana Historic* 24).

Finding herself in "the cultural labyrinth of our inheritance, mother to daughter to mother" (24), Annie tries to piece together her mother's story in an attempt to avoid a fate similar to Ina's. She imagines her mother asking, "i suppose you see me as the monster hidden at the heart of it?" (24). Reflecting upon Ina's life, Annie concludes: "there *is* a monster, there is something monstrous here, but it's not you" (24).

At the beginning of *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's repeated references to "my Lost Girl" (11) reflect women's desire to enter the world:

> do, do. she my Lost girl, my heroine, wanted something to do not something that might be done to them. the refrain of a rainy afternoon: there's nothing to do! do something useful, her mother said, clean up you room. but she wanted out, in the fresh wet smell of cedar and rain (12-13).

She suggests that a girl who desires to take part in the world is breaking a cultural taboo:

> tomboy, her mother said. tom, the male of the species plus boy. double masculine, as if girl were completely erased. a girl, especially a young girl, who behaves like a spirited boy - as if only boys could be spirited. who read Robin Hood, wore scarlet, identified with Lancelot and the boy who wanted to join the knights of St. John (all trespassers, law-breakers in the guise of saviours. . . .) (13).

In my analysis of *Ana Historic*, I now shift my attention from the estrangement of women from the public world to language and its power to estrange women from themselves.

V Λ

(Ex)changing the V-U Point

> she keeps insisting herself on the telling
> because she was telling me right from the
> beginning stories out of a life are stories,
> true, true stories and real at once - this is
> not a roman / ce, it doesn't deal with heroes (*Ana Historic* 67).

In her highly favourable review, Linda Hutcheon claims that *Ana Historic* is important for its exploration of "those exciting liminal spaces that exist between genres, the spaces where fiction meets biography, autobiography, and history - [and] . . . also women's travel books and the personal journal" ("telling accounts" 17). She notes that from her early works to *Ana Historic* Marlatt crosses the borders between "autobiography and fiction . . . as elegantly as . . . those between poetry and prose, lyric and documentary" (17). Indeed, in *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's own mother resembles Annie's mother, Ina, both in her isolation in her new country and in the importance she accords "Proper English," her "mother's mother tongue: English English with its many intensifiers, its emphatic sentence pitches, its ringing tones of boarding-school elocution lessons" (Marlatt "Difference (em)bracing" 190). Marlatt recalls how her mother was "driven wild" when she "brought the colloquial home" (*How Hug a Stone* 19), that "whole new level of vocabulary" she acquired

from her Canadian schoolfriends who taught her to say "sweaters" instead of "woollies" ("Difference (em)bracing" 190, "Entering In" 220-221). Marlatt claims that words were a source of division between her mother and herself:

> And so i engaged in long battles with my mother, each of us trying to correct the other, she correcting for purity of origin, while i corrected for common usage - each of us with different versions of 'the real thing.' The struggle over reality is a deadly one that cuts to the root of being. Words were always taken seriously in my house because they were the weapons of struggle. But a woman's sense of herself in the language she speaks can only be denied so long before it transforms into a darker (side of the moon), a more insistent ir-reality, not *un*real because its effects are felt so devastatingly in its subject and those around her ("Difference (em)bracing" 190).

Marlatt's conflicts with her mother over language surface in Annie's exchanges with Ina in *Ana Historic*: "woollies and sweeties . . . sweater's such a common word, darling, can't you say woolly, say cardigan?" (23). Like Marlatt's own mother, Ina withdraws from the world into a depression ("Difference (em)bracing" 190-191). Annie concludes that electric shock therapy does not transform her mother's memory, imagination, and the will to create (*Ana Historic* 149). It silences and then effectively eradicates her until:

> . . . no one [i]s there at all. Mum: mum. wandering around in some lost place, incapable of saying what it was they'd done to you. under the role or robe was no one (148).

Annie refuses to step into such "a role, a robe" (141), to be "mum," or to continue "whispering" (9). She does not accept an inheritance of absence from her mother.

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt writes against the sense of women's absence that she identifies in *How Hug a Stone*:

> i feel lost. layer on layer of place, person. dramatis personae. the nameless creature i am at the heart of this many-chambered shell is getting overlaid, buried under (*How Hug a Stone* 65).

Yet, as Marlatt suggests in her character, Ina, writing yourself into being is not easily done on your own. Ina's stories emphasize her sense of isolation, as Annie realizes when she reads them in the "grade-school scribbler you hid under your bed and which you showed me once, family stories for *The Reader's Digest*, 'Laughter is the Best Medicine,' stories that lost their humour in description, faded away in proper sentences" (*Ana Historic* 20). Annie imagines Mrs. Richards in her cabin in the cedar woods, "writing her desire to be, in the present tense, retrieved from silence. . . . writing against her absence" (47). The absences of both of these women require Annie to take a different approach to writing: "if i'm telling a story i'm untelling it. untelling the real. trying to get back the child who went too far, got lost in the woods, walked into the arms of Frankenstein" (141). In her review of *Ana Historic*, Quednau misinterprets Annie's need to understand her mother as an attempt "to pay back what she owes to her mother's sacrifice" (34) rather than a determined effort to escape from the destructive plot-line of her mother's story.

As Annie writes, she learns that "the truth is our stories are hidden from us by fear. your fear i inherited, mother dear" (*Ana Historic* 79). Daughters learn to repress their desire from:

> -the mothers, the inheritance of the mothers. you taught me a lot. you taught me the uneasy hole in myself and how to cover it up - cover girl, the great cover-story women inherit in fashion and make-up. you taught me how i was *supposed* to look, the feminine act (60-61).

Ina taught her daughter that "a decent lady kept herself well-covered, her sexuality hidden" (33). Marlatt suggests that the subject of women's sexuality is a cultural taboo, a huge cover-up. It turns women into "mummies" hidden by "wardrobes" and "wordrobes" (61), two words which function in much the same way: they hide. Marlatt identifies how a heritage of silence covers up women's sexuality when Ina gives Annie her first bra, a hand-me-down meant to conceal emerging femininity:

> (these things that smelled of mother flesh, the used body, sagged on my spare frame like empty hammocks with a nipple fold embarrassing under sweaters.) 'i'll take in the seam,' you said.
>
> take in the seam, make it seemly. make up the seeming okay. it wasn't. they flattened me like bandages (61).

Marlatt suggests that women have been "taken in" in the cover-up of their bodies, learning to regard them with "pride on the outside, and on the inside - shame" (61). As a result of the conflicting notions that women feel about themselves, they hide their bodily functions, their scent found in the "sweaty socks in the laundry cupboard (ladies don't sweat)" (61), and "blood. the modess i was the first to use, in its blue

box they'd wrap in plain paper at the drugstore" (61). Consequently, Marlatt claims, women begin to believe that their bodies are unseemly, their desires monstrous. Language tells them so:

> . . . the words for our bodies betrayed us in the very language we learned at school: 'cunt,' 'slit,' 'boob' ('you boob, you dumb broad'). words betraying what the boys thought of us. wounded or sick - 'you'll catch girl germs!' - with a wound that bleeds over and over - 'on the rag again,' 'got the curse,' 'falling off the roof.' catastrophic phrases we used that equally betrayed us. handed down from friend to friend, sister to sister, mother to daughter. hand-me-downs, too small for what i really felt (62).

Thus, Marlatt argues, "centuries of hidden knowledge" (16) have created a silence surrounding women's experiences that inhibits self-expression

In *Ana Historic*, Annie asks: "what does a woman do with her unexpressed preferences, her own desires? (damned up, a torrent to let loose.) and this is what you were trying to live up to. the neuter" (35). Marlatt suggests that the words, "history" and "hystery," and their offshoots, "historic, hysteric, and hysterectomy," all work to suppress women's sexuality. She presents the reader with a brief history of "hysteria":

> *'Mechanical devices were invented for compressing ovaries for packing them in ice. In Germany, Heger (1830-1914) and Friedrich (1825-82) were using even more radical methods, including ovarectomy and cauterization of the clitoris. The source of hysteria was still, as in Plato's time, sought in the matrix of the female body, upon which surgical attacks were unleashed'* (89).

As Annie seeks to understand her mother's condition that results in her death,

Marlatt illustrates that both hystery and history erase women:

> hystery. the excision of women (who do not act but are acted upon). hysterectomy, the excision of wombs and ovaries by repression, by mechanical compression, by ice, by the knife. because we were 'wrong' from the start, our physiology faulty, preoccupied as we are with the things of the flesh. spiritless - except for our rages - 'going off the deep end' where the divers went. it was nothing so controlled as a dive, more like smashing into black waters where there were no limits to what could be said, no up nor down, no boundaries to respect, no real. . . . knock, knock. who's there (88)?

Ina undergoes both shock treatment and a hysterectomy as a result of her hysteria, the "torrent you dammed up all those later years - after they had fixed you, patched you up. the torrent you used to release in rushes of fury on our heads" (49). In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's aim and Annie's are identical, to "name the unspoken, the denied, the unwritten, the unacknowledged" (Cooley 75). Through her wordplay, Marlatt suggests that women's absence is a collective story:

> Ana/ Ina
> whose story is this?
>
> (the difference of a single letter)
> (the sharing of a not) (*Ana Historic* 67).

Marlatt weaves the well-known case history of "Anna O.," a patient whom Joseph Breuer treats for hysteria, into the stories of Annie, Ana, and Ina in her novel. Educated and well-read, Anna O. exhibits both a desire and a need to write (4), as did her mother who kept a secret diary (Breuer v, 4, 22). In their diagnosis

of Anna O.'s hysteria, Breuer and Sigmund Freud conclude that her condition is caused by her exceedingly underdeveloped consciousness of her sexuality (v, 14).[7] In *Ana Historic*, Ana is startled by the sight of Jeannie Alexander's pregnant body in labour: "Ana caught a glimpse of dark almost purple flesh and stood up, shocked. How dark it looked, an angry powerful o, stretched, stretched, hair springing black above" (125). She ponders how to put what she sees into words:

> ' . . . This secret space between our limbs we keep so hidden - is yet so, what? What words are there? If *it* could speak! - As indeed it did: it spoke the babe, and then the afterbirth, a bleeding mass of meat. I was watching it begin to close when Susan covered her up' (126).

A prostitute named Birdie connects Ana's fear of the unknown to her body and her desire: " 'you've wanted to make your own way in the world, to come and go as you please. but you're afraid, my dear, afraid of your own twat' " (135). The notion that women should not desire is historically rooted in male ideas about female sexuality (Gilbert and Gubar 6). French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous expresses her wish that women would write of their desire so that other women might identify with them:

> Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst. . . . And I, too, said nothing . . . I didn't repaint my half of the world. I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite

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[7] Ellen Moers notes that Freud, in his study of Gothic horror, refers to "the perception of the female genitals as monstrous," an idea derived from male fantasy rather than from a woman's knowledge of her sexuality (109).

> woman who, immersed as she was in her naïveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism, hasn't been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives . . . hasn't accused herself of being a monster ("Laugh" 876)?

In *Ana Historic*, Annie's awareness of her physical desire develops along with her voice. She deduces that while there is something monstrous in their lives, it is neither her mother (*Ana Historic* 24) nor Frankenstein, but a fiction that estranges women from themselves. Cixous suggests that women are alienated not only from their bodies but from writing as well ("Laugh" 875). In *Ana Historic*, Annie, Ana, and Ina write in secret like so many other women who are conditioned to believe that words are reserved exclusively for men (876). Cixous questions the gap between women and writing:

> Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn't thought she was sick? . . . And why don't you write? . . . I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great - that is for 'great men'; and it's 'silly.' Besides, you've written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing . . . (876-877).

In confronting her own fear, Annie becomes sympathetic to the magnitude of her mother's:

> no wonder you were afraid. sick with the fear of fate, you walked in a world of disasters. the house would burn down while you were out shopping, your child would be abducted, raped . . . you wanted it to end, the world i mean, at least the world as it was then constituted. because for you there was no way out (*Ana Historic* 142-3).

Annie argues with her mother's claim that "you can't re-write what's been written" (142). By expressing the desire of her body, she perceives a chance to rewrite "the writing on the wall" (142), and find a way out of a "fate" (142) that Ina could not escape.

I have shown how Marlatt exposes women's estrangement from the world and from themselves in *Ana Historic*. I will now conclude this chapter by examining Marlatt's re-vision of women in the world as she brings "female experience, hidden but emerging into full articulation" (Cooley 75) through the way she writes, "always, in a way that attends upon language in all its recursions and inversions. The versions, perversions, inversions she tries, alerts us to, aversions she feels" (79).

Λ Λ

"Real 2": Women's Re-visions of Themselves in the World

Trembling she rose
and in her nakedness and terror
tried to open that closed door
but it was locked
and when she somehow found the strength
to find the key where it had lain a lifetime
in her secret pocket and the strength to put
the key where it belonged
the door swung wide
and hanging staring at her
from within the closet
nothing

And JUBILATE sang the sun through all her windows
And JUBILATE sang the bird outside her door
And JUBILATE sang the wound between her thighs
Kay Smith, "The Skeleton in the Closet"

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt "works to subvert many of the given ideals of novelistic discourse" in order to "challenge our ways of seeing and being seen" [8] (Lowry 85). She considers the relationship between the absence of women's accounts of their bodies and the standard sentence structure of the English language. Marlatt contends that the ordered subject, verb, object form of the linear

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[8] For further discussion on the ways in which Marlatt subverts novelistic discourse in *Ana Historic*, see "On *Ana Historic*: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt," by George Bowering, page 96.

sentence inhibits women's expression of their bodies, the waves of contractions that build on one another during menstruation, orgasm, and childbirth. Annie experiences frustrations her mother must have felt in conforming to a code of writing which stifles a flow of thought, and she questions the purposes of conventions such as capitalization (*Ana Historic* 46). Marlatt explains that:

> The trouble with initial punctuation [at the beginning of a sentence] is that it forces you to a full stop where the period is. Without an initial capitalized letter, you can see what comes after the period - especially if it's a fragment - as a second thought, an addition to what precedes it, and I like that ambivalence ("On *Ana Historic*," by Bowering 100).

As Annie writes Ana's story in her stead, she imagines the caution this nineteenth-century schoolteacher feels she must take with words. Annie asks:

> what is she editing out and for whom? besides herself? it is herself there though she writes 'the' eye and not 'my.' . . . she is thinking about those possible others leaning over her shoulder as she writes (*Ana Historic* 46).

In *Ana Historic*, Annie ponders how to express what she feels:

> my secret pleasure, feeling the flow, a sudden rush of blood slide out between my lips and onto the pad. . . . writing the period that arrives at no full stop. not the hand manipulating the pen. not the language of definition, of epoch and document, language explaining and justifying, but the words that flow out from within, running too quick to catch sometimes, at other times just an agonizingly slow trickle. the words of an interior history doesn't include . . .
>
> that erupts like a spring, like a wellspring of being, well-being inside . . . (90).

Initially, the writing of Annie's novel differs so radically in form, style, and language with the journal entries she produces on Ana's behalf that Marlatt does not need to identify the writers when she switches between the two forms (Davey *Post-National Arguments* 198). However, as Annie reconstructs Ana's story, it merges with her own. Intent on exploring "Who's There?" she does not capitalize the beginnings of her sentences or abide by standard rules of syntax and punctuation. Protesting that Marlatt pays "little attention to punctuation, narrative line, and characterization," Quednau misconstrues Annie's movement into unrestricted writing as a reflection of her sense of dislocation (34). In *Ana Historic*, Annie anticipates people's reaction to her writing. She imagines the faults Richard would find with her manuscript if she allowed him access to it; she knows he would reject its non-linear form and experimental use of punctuation:

> but what are you **doing**? i can imagine Richard saying . . . this doesn't go anywhere, you're just circling around the same idea . . . that's not how to use quotations (*Ana Historic* 81).

Writing to the rhythmic flow her body experiences requires Annie to abandon a style that is "true to form":

> true: exactly conforming to a rule, standard, or pattern; trying to sing true. by whose standard or rule? and what do you do when the true you feel inside sounds different from the standard (18).

Marlatt suggests that a fluid form of writing might be a "way out" (143) of the impasse between women and words, a means of revising "what's been written"

(142), "like fate" (142), for them but not by them. In her essay entitled "Musing with Mothertongue," she claims that women may find it impossible to convey their presence unless they find such a form of self-expression:

> so many terms for dominance in English are tied up with male experiencing, masculine hierarchies and differences (exclusion), patriarchal holdings with their legalities. where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood is as it leaves her body? how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows? or the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies, children, friends, animals, all those she customarily holds and is held by? how can the separate nouns mother and child convey the fusion, bleeding womb-infant mouth, she experiences in those first days of feeding? what syntax can carry the turning herself inside out in love when she is both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover's tongue (47-48) ?

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt suggests that through self-expression written to the rhythms of their bodies, women have the opportunity to put themselves into history and into the world. Annie relaxes in her writing, learning to "read" the rhythms of her body and respond to its movement in her writing. As she learns to express Ana's "unspoken urge of a body insisting itself into words" (*Ana Historic* 46), the schoolteacher's story becomes intertwined with her own. Writing in the company of a reader she imagines, Annie overcomes her fear of the unknown. She moves out of her isolation when she discovers the answer to her own question, "Who's There? . . . knock knock" (9):

> she was knocking on paper, not wood, tapping like someone blind along the wall of her solitude. under the white light of concentration, the paper yielded nothing but white noise . . .
>
> but there was the page, her tapping there, looking for a way out of the blank that faced her - blankety-blank - and not that tug either, the elliptical tug of memory which erased this other. she was looking for the company of another who was also reading - out through the words, through the wall that separated her, an arm, a hand -
>
> and so she began, 'a woman sitting at her kitchen table writing,' as if her hand holding the pen could embody the very feel of a life. as if she could reach out and touch her, those lashes cast down over blue (brown?) eyes, the long line of nose, the lips doubting or pleased, that curve of a shoulder, upper arm, wrist at another table in a different kind of light . . . (45).

Ken Adachi, in his predominantly favourable review, shows a limited understanding of how the separate threads of the women's stories merge into one. Interested primarily in Ana's story, he regards "Annie's decoding of Mrs. Richards' mystery . . . [to be] so compulsive that Annie's story . . . is often an unwelcome interruption" (41). However, Glen Lowry observes that Marlatt is creating a relationship between writer and reader within a female economy of language, all the while working within the discourse itself (91).

Ana Historic's interstiched prose disregards time-honoured notions that a novel must be the creation of a single author who proceeds in a linear manner toward closure. In her novel, Marlatt seeks out the company of others by bridging the distance between writer and reader, whom she draws into the process of

naming "Who's There." In an interview with Janice Williamson, she discusses this innovative feature of her writing:

> . . . as a reader, when I feel that pull, when I feel that I'm being directly spoken to and drawn into what I'm reading, that I'm answerable in some way, that I create some kind of response to this writing that speaks to my own experience as a woman, when that happens, as a reader I am so compelled, I underline these books, I make notes in them. They make me think of my own writing, they give me ideas. I want to open similar spaces for this kind of conversation with readers of my own writing. It makes for a different sense of writing. I first began to feel it maybe in *How Hug a Stone*, because I knew I was working in the mother area, the mother's so strong, and we all had this in common, we all have these ambivalent relationships to our mothers ("Sounding a Difference" 53).

Williamson attests to Marlatt's success in drawing the reader in, in making *Ana Historic* a collective story: "[a]s a woman reader I can feel the threads of my being pulled through the narrative" (52).

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt writes: "a book of interruptions is not a novel" (37). Her interrogative, dialogic writing style draws the reader toward a different form of writing open to possibilities for accessing unspoken views of the world[9]. As Dennis Cooley perceives, "[i]n *Ana Historic*, then, the task is to remove the bar between women and themselves, their world. They have been debarred far too long" (79).

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[9] Marlatt is not the first woman writer to refuse to be bound to traditional literary frameworks although she is one of the few to do it. In 1929 Virginia Woolf claimed that only Jane Austen and Emily Brontë had done so to that point. An outstanding literary innovator herself, Woolf observed that perhaps the greatest accomplishments of Austen and Brontë were that: "[t]hey wrote as women write. Of all the thousand women who wrote novels then, they alone entirely ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue - write this, think that " (71).

In *Ana Historic*, Annie leaves her house and encounters Zoe "in the archives, thumbing her way through the photographs" (59).[10] Zoe is interested in her efforts to write a re-vision of history that includes women. A "visual artist," Zoe is adept at seeing what lies beneath the surface of culture's "made-up" women (59), all those girls aspiring to be "Teen Angels, Dolls. . . waiting to be Made (passive voice)" (82). When she says, "you tell good stories" (59), Annie ponders the words she puts on paper: "i wonder if she means i tell good lies, i cover up the way most women smile?" (59). Later on, when Annie sees her own reflection in the window, "playing at writing," she begins "thinking about being attractive" (59). Beginning to understand her sexual desire, Annie realizes that her life and her marriage constitute a false face of reality, a: ". . . lie. the defensive lie our lying together is. the small space desire gets backed into. boxed. off" (59). Ina's voice enters into a heated exchange of words with her daughter:

> -so you've made your bed, now lie in it
>
> -as you did, i suppose? and shall i try springs or foam or futon? move Richard out because he 'snores'? take hot milk, sleeping pills? your cures for all that frustrated energy you had no outlet for. confined to bed, to coffin, slowly mummifying (60).

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt conflates the abandon Annie experiences in her erotic embrace with Zoe with her abandonment of her prescribed fate (142), that linear

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[10] Marlatt dedicates *Ana Historic* to Cheryl Sourkes, a visual artist with whom she collaborates in two books which celebrate women loving women, *Touch to My Tongue* and *Double Negative*.

"writing on the wall" (142) proceeding towards a climax and a resolution that she does not desire. Through Annie, Marlatt invites her readers to take a leap beyond writing that suppresses them by presenting themselves. She envisions a reciprocal reader/writer partnership, an exchange of words between women that *Ana Historic* initiates. Zoe reaches for Annie's hand:

> she asks me to present myself, to take the leap, as the blood rushes to my face and i can speak: you. i want you. *and* me. together.
>
> she isn't surprised. it isn't even Frankenstein but a nameless part i know. terror has to do with the trembling that takes you out of yourself. we go up the stairs . . . (152).

Marlatt explores the reciprocity Annie and Zoe share in their lovemaking, of being simultaneously "both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover's tongue" (Marlatt "Musing" 48). Annie's re-vision of herself in the world and in history begins with re-naming herself:

> . . . Annie Richards. the sound of a door closing.
>
> i want to knock: can you hear? i want to answer her who's there? not Ana or Ina, those transparent covers. Ana Richards Richard's Anna. fooling myself on the other side of history as if it were a line dividing the real from the unreal. Annie / Ana - arose by any other name, whole wardrobes of names guarding the limitations - we rise above them. Annie isn't Richard's or even Springer's (*Ana Historic* 152).

She chooses a new surname, a word that she associates with the unconstrained flow of her desire and her mother's outbursts: "Annie Torrent, i said" (152).

In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt invites all women to collaboratively write themselves into the world based on their experiences of it. She envisions that reciprocal writing may be the means of including women who engage in same sex love and are debarred from literature and history by a double wall of silence. As Ana and Zoe enter into a loving relationship, Marlatt anticipates her reader joining her in writing the *unspeakable*: "we enter a room that is alive with the smell of her. bleeding and soft. her on my tongue. she trembles violently on my lips" (152). She envisions her reader playing an active role in her novel:

> In the past the reader was a minor character in the triangle of author-text-reader. More and more the reader is becoming as important if not more important than the author. Making meaning is a collaborative affair. Similar class, ethnic and sexual identity is a strong component of the bond between writer and reader. . . . This interaction comes with the realization that writing is a collaborative, communal activity not done in a room of one's own. It is an act informed and supported by the books the author reads, the people s/he interacts with and the centuries of cultural history that seethe under her skin. The idea of shared writing is not yet part of the consensual reality of most writers (Anzaldúa 255).

In the fluid poetic form of the final passage of *Ana Historic*, Marlatt awaits her unknown reader in the unwritten spaces ahead:

> we give place, giving words, giving birth, to each other-she and me. you. hot skin writing skin. . . . it isn't the dark but the luxury of being has woken you, the reach of your desire, reading us into the page ahead (N. pag.).

Thus, the last page of *Ana Historic* is unpaginated, an embarkation rather than an ending.

Marlatt has a double intent in *Ana Historic*: to bring women to their desiring bodies and to writing so that they may make their own marks in a history told on new terms. In this thesis, I examine how Marlatt, in her explorations in partnered, fluid writing, creates a doorway through which women who engage in same sex love can inscribe the realities of their desire. Moreover, as Brenda Carr attests, the type of reciprocal writing that Marlatt presents in *Ana Historic* is inclusive rather than exclusive: "Because lesbian women writers like Daphne Marlatt write me toward possibility, without having myself experienced woman-to-woman eroticism, the wounds, the holes in my own imaginary are transformed" ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 327). Through the gaps in her novel, Marlatt presents a conception of writing as a partnered affair between the writer and reader/co-writer rather than an isolated activity. With each reader, *Ana Historic* takes on an ever-widening dimension of reality. Lowry perceptively relates the ending of *Ana Historic* to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that "with the reader and writer in community, the text is never closed/finished. The *I* of the text can never be spent, because it is always already part of language; it can be picked up and expanded upon in infinitely imagined readings" (Lowry 95).

Marlatt publishes *Ana Historic* in 1988, the year that she and Betsy Warland release their collaboratively written long poem, *Double Negative*. In Chapters Two and Three of this thesis, I hope to show how from this point on in her writing, Marlatt

works in partnership with others, both known and imagined, opening up an infinite variety of dialogues that speak of women's diverse realities. In Chapter Two on *Double Negative*, I will examine how Marlatt and Warland re-work language to undo their cultural absence. . hope to show how, as they present themselves in their desire for each other, Marlatt and Warland include their reader as their reciprocal co-writer.

Chapter Two

Double Negative: "Real 2" in Never-Never Land

she is writing against her absence. for nothing that surrounds her is absent. far from it.
Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic*

she should be writing a poem in which she situates herself in terms of a desire that passes on through writing . . .
Lola Lemire Tostevin, *'Sophie*

The book has somehow to be adapted to the body . . .
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

the body says "write this"
Betsy Warland, *Proper Deafinitions*

Double Negative is Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's poetic account of their three-day train trip across Australia (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 131). As Marlatt and Warland collaborate to inscribe their desire for each other, they create poetry that defies standard genre classification. Brenda Carr, whose research on Marlatt's writing is extensive, suggests that *Double Negative* "might be described as a long poem sequence in two parts with a mediating intratextual dialogue between the two writers" ("Collaboration" 112). I will examine how Marlatt and Warland, in their interwriting, resist being objectified as the reflection of a male gaze that rests upon them. In *Double Negative*, they write from their points of view as active, desiring women who take words into their own hands, speaking for themselves instead of being spoken for. As I have discussed in my analysis of *Ana*

Historic in Chapter One, Marlatt insists that women's self-expression is necessary if they are not to be left out of the "real" picture. In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland make a daring approach from the margins of autobiography and poetry to tell "their" story rather than "the" story of woman that patriarchal culture has written "for her, thereby fictionalizing and effectively silencing her" (Smith *Poetics* 49, 46, 45).

As I have shown in Chapter One, while both literature and history narrate numerous accounts of male conquest and achievement, more often than not, women's experiences are left "behind, after, without a version" (*Double Negative* 20). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland present women's desire for women, a subject that is located outside dominant symbolic signification. From their double perspectives, they endeavour to free women, in general, from their placement in writing that produces subjects "in terms of a masculine 'selfhood' resting upon feminine 'otherness' " (Godard "Subject" 7). As Marlatt and Warland describe their desire and their lovemaking, they "turns the lens around" (*Double Negative* 11) on a camera held to culture's viewing eye. Zooming "into the realm of the disappeared" (14), Marlatt and Warland direct the reader's focus on this question as it pertains to women in general, and women who desire women, in particular: "(can we see what we do not value)" (24)?[1] "[T]racking/ across the untracked" of Australia they operate

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[1] Marlatt and Warland use parentheses to emphasize what has been left out, the unsaid, the unseen.

as subjects of their own life writing as they seek to inscribe their desire, the unwritten, "intractably here" (15).

Chapter One of this thesis explores how *Ana Historic* initiates a search among women for self-knowledge with a "Who's There?" (9) question. In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland broaden this focus into a deeper consideration of women and language. They establish their presence in an experimental writing form that is, as yet, in the nascent stage: "two women in a birth" (21). Marlatt and Warland invite the reader to explore with them the central question of *Double Negative*, "where are we" (32)? More than a consideration of the lack of women's perspectives in literature, this collaboration seeks to affirm women's sexuality which includes women's desire for women, as Marlatt and Warland demonstrate. Marlatt points out that *Double Negative* marks a radical departure from the subject matter of canonical literature:

> The trouble with the classical tradition as we have inherited it in English (and in French, for that matter) is that the erotic is heterosexually-based. It is the realm of a trouble-making sprite we remember today in our images of Cupid with his bow and oh so phallic arrow. Arrow and the object of desire. The object's pain at the unlooked-for arrow, the mist of deception, the being at the mercy of the comings and goings of Eros: all these associations derive from the patriarchal Greeks. Where does that leave women's desire and especially women's desire for women? What images do we have for a woman-based erotic ("Lesbera" 124)?

In this chapter I contend that Marlatt and Warland's reciprocal writing produces a fast-speed frame of images that depicts "women's desire and especially women's desire for women" as "Real 2."[2]

In my study of *Ana Historic* in Chapter One, I address how Marlatt calls attention to the limited representation of women in history, an absence that she begins to rectify through fictionalysis, "a fiction that uncovers analytically that territory where fact and fiction coincide" (Marlatt "Self-Representation" 15). Marlatt's own life writing filters into *Ana Historic* as Annie connects women's estrangement from their bodies with their absence in history and reconstructs Mrs. Richards' identity through invention. As Viviane Forrester suggests, "women are the secret to be discovered, they are the fissures. They are the source where no one has been" (35).

In *Ana Historic*, because Marlatt elicits reader response to her questions, the possibility of a fluid form of reciprocal writing capable of embodying women's experiences emerges. More than half a century before the writing of *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*, Virginia Woolf contended that a new form of writing might be required for women's voices to be heard:

> Yet who shall say that even now 'the novel' (I give it inverted commas to mark my sense of the words' inadequacy), who shall say that even

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[2] Here I refer to the third section of *Double Negative* entitled,"Real 2," which I discuss in the third section of this chapter, entitled **"Real 2": Women's Re-visions of Themselves in the World."**

> this most pliable of all forms is rightly shaped for her use? No doubt we shall find her knocking that into shape for herself when she has the free use of her limbs; and providing some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her. For it is the poetry that is still denied outlet (Woolf 74).

In her review, Julia Creet writes that *Double Negative* "is, as all exciting poetry must be, as much about form as it is about content" (208). Marlatt and Warland abandon a linear track of writing for a current of words that flow in the wake of their lovemaking. I explore this radical experiment with form in the analysis that follows.

V V

"Your Women Are Invisible"

. . . we are not
sleep walking
through history
evident here as ornate
balconies, mine head, old
disaster clippings

'the real Kalgoorlie'

merely remains

we are waiting to enter, re-enter
the rhythm again . . . (*Double Negative* 31).

At the beginning of *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland write from double negative positions on the margins of a heterosexual Caucasian society. I hope to show how, together, their voices carve out a space open to other "voices from so many fringes, not just that fringe, women (translated as white, middle-class, heterosexual, Anglo-Canadian / American) that has been gradually getting so legitimated it would seem to be moving into the centre" (Marlatt "Difference (em)bracing"192). With their names together on the cover of *Double Negative*[3],

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[3] Throughout this thesis, I refer to the first edition of *Double Negative*, published in 1988 by gynergy books.

Marlatt and Warland displace reader expectations of the voice of literature, often regarded as a unitary male voice of authority. Jane Rule notes, "[f]or women writers gender has been an issue not only inside our texts but on their covers. Even today in genres like the murder mystery women write under male pseudonyms in order to reach a male audience" ("Deception" 225). From the cover of *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland make no attempt to disguise who they are. The strategically important position their names occupy at the top of the cover indicates that while Marlatt and Warland, as life partners, do not speak from a central position, they refuse to be silenced "down under" someone's else's depiction of them. Their positions on the margins of society and in their profession are reflected in the placement of their names near the edge of the cover. From this acknowledged location on the periphery, Marlatt and Warland achieve something doubly positive in *Double Negative*.

The cover of *Double Negative* focuses attention on some of culture's "negative" perceptions as words and images appear to be on a negative of film. Emphasis is on the word, "negative," since this word recurs within the quotation from "Double Negative" that appears on the cover. A synonym for "negative," the word "nothing" is presented twice, intertextually linking the negation of women in *Double Negative* with *Ana Historic* as "not, not . . . all these negatives knotted into the text" (*Ana Historic* 87). As Creet points out in her review of *Double Negative*,

this collaboration "exposes the negation of 'woman' by the universals of language" (208).

Writer and feminist theorist Aritha van Herk suggests that, for marginalized women writers, movement into new territory in writing is necessary if there is ever to be "a righting of balance, an equalizing of the scales" ("Of Viscera" 276). As *Double Negative* unfolds Marlatt and Warland establish an interactive reader/writer approach that moves toward a twofold discovery: "what is woman (in her own symbolic)?" (*Double Negative* 52) and "what is woman (in her ecstasy)?" (55).

V V

In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland displace assumptions made in language about women's place in the world by inverting the expected viewpoint of the reader. Marlatt's birthplace, Australia, described on the cover of *Double Negative* as "down under," is regarded as the southern hemisphere's mirror image of Canada, home to both writers. On the cover, the map of Australia is tilted on a different angle than usual. In this position, the shape of this *country* resembles its metonymous double in *Double Negative*, the vagina, a subject Marlatt and Warland consider in its frequent negative depiction in language as "CONS: 'French, cunt' "

(*Double Negative* 21). From their writing context in the Australian desert, they explore how the "down under" is constructed in language as "lack."

As *Double Negative* develops, mirror reflections and inversions take on significance as the writers situate themselves as subjects of their writing. From the location of Australia's double negative landscape, the outback or "Never-Never," Marlatt and Warland establish a place in words for women, the "Lost Girls in Never-Never Land" (*Ana Historic* 11) who are frequently cast in either a negative light, in minor roles, or as absence in literature. The following phrases, pulled from the body of the text to a position of prominence on the cover, attest to the "Gulf" that exists in "the physics of language" (*Double Negative* 20). Marlatt and Warland call into question a literary canon that values the works of authors such as Edmund Spenser but relegates the writing of women's experiences to a place on the sidelines, to "rim Spencer Gulf" (20). In doing so, they raise reader awareness of the "negative feminine space" (20) which women occupy in writing.

Post-structuralist theorist Chris Weedon posits that "language is no longer seen as a transparent medium for the expression of meaning ready-constituted in the world beyond language" (148). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland reveal how Anglo-Saxon culture negates women's experiences through language. Marlatt expresses her belief:

> You can change consciousness, & language is intimately tied up with consciousness. That's our true field of action, is language, as poets.

> And all you can do is to insist on the seeing as it's evidenced & manifested in the language. In an accurate use of language (Wah. Intro. *Net Work* 13).

Inside *Double Negative*, the title occurs twice as sole occupant of the first page. The slight offset of the title "down under" the one above it negates the assumption that language completely and accurately reflects the "real." Since language affirms that two negatives make a positive, Marlatt and Warland give the reader something to ponder at the entrance to this work. Indeed, the first and titular part of *Double Negative* begins with a passage from Lola Lemire Tostevin's *Double Standards*:

> rereading reverses to resist resists to reverse the
> movement along the curve of return as the well-turned
> phrase turns on herself to retrace her steps reorient
> and continue in a different voice (*Double Negative* N. pag.).

Throughout this chapter, I will return to key phrases in Tostevin's quotation to guide us through *Double Negative*'s three-part structure.

In the first of the three sections entitled "Double Negative," Marlatt and Warland construct twelve travel journal entries as lyric poems to recount independently their experiences on a train trip through Australia's Nullarbor Desert. Although they do not identify who writes the specific entries, they employ many conventions of writing as they *retrace [their] steps* to a place of rebirth in language. For instance, they lay a linear narrative track from Sydney to their destination with painstakingly accurate time, date, and place headings.

Marlatt's and Warland's responses to the aural and written language they encounter on their journey emphasize the power of words to establish men's place in the world while displacing women's activities to the unsaid. In the entry entitled "**past Sydney**" (8-9), the recurring words, "stud" and "studding," evoke erotic, masculine connotations. Their poetry self-reflexively calls into question the ability of these words to convey the flow of desire between Marlatt and Warland:

> not studding no
> it does not **stand**
> our desire
> moves continuous around (8).

They find these words unsuited for the expression of the desire they experience. In multiple references, they switch their "point of view" (11) from observer to participant, writing instead their "V-U" (20) of desire: "your Mound of V" (28). In doing so, they infiltrate what Carr points out is one of the mastertexts of Western literature: the love lyric ("Collaboration" 114). Throughout the love lyric poems of "Double Negative," Marlatt and Warland prepare to change the focus of their writing to tell their experiences from their viewpoints: "our pupils dilate" (*Double Negative* 20). *Double Negative*'s self-reflexive, examining "I" becomes an examining "eye": "(i rail, eye rail)" (30). Marlatt and Warland stress the importance of "having an eye for an I" (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 76) as they view themselves in their poetry:

> A seeing ourselves, breaking of the Other's gaze, stepping 3rd, 2nd, 1st person into viewing with our own I/s. Seeing ourselves as primary

> sources. Speaking subjects who VIEW: 'weid-, wisdom, history, story' our own hystery, stories; speak from our own point of view (76).

Virginia Woolf points out how in literature, rather than being seen on their own terms, "[w]omen have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (35). Marlatt and Warland resist this manner of depiction. *Double Negative*'s moving eye acts as a camera lens that filters words to build images of women in "3-D" (33) through "this translation of colour into/ black on white/ reading left to right" (22). On page after page, in "frame after frame" (24), as "far as the eye can see" (23), Marlatt and Warland set up a "moving picture" wherein women both act and present themselves. The writers call attention to the negative of film that appears on the cover to suggest that *Double Negative*, like film, "has pictorial possibilities the novel [i.e., the written word] doesn't have" (Monaco 27). In "Double Negative," the reader and the writers, from an altogether different angle, examine the still shots of women as occupants of "negative feminine space" (*Double Negative* 20), and the power of language to relegate them there. Taking control of the camera, Warland asserts:

> Now behind the camera we look at each other, feminine figures of speech, gaze from our own I/s, make ourselves present in this *species* ['specere, to look at'] *of literature.* Seeing as never before - we write new things. Fiction and theory coming together while physics even admits there is no such thing as an objective observer. When we look we change both the seer and the seen. Returning the gaze we are so often afraid. We have so seldom looked in each

> other's I/s, so often eavesdropped on our own li(v)es (*Proper Deafinitions* 76).

Marlatt and Warland examine the situations of people who are present but erased by language. In "**17:00 / coming into Port Pirie**," they consider the displacement of the aboriginal people that results from white culture's claim of the land in Australia. Language marks ownership: "settlements with English names/ Cook, Denman, Hughes" (*Double Negative* 22),

> Peterborough, Jamestown, Gladstone, Port Pirie
> anglo overlays in the name of
> see-vill(ain)-I-say-tion
> stiff upper lip a thin line noosing the coast of
> (ab) original country (19).

Signs around them at Woomera, such as "prohibited area . . . weapons testing range" (19), verify how the English language registe.s domination. Marlatt and Warland choose not to be bound to a system of writing that asserts power over people on the basis of difference. In my analysis of the third section of *Double Negative*, I will consider how they write from a place that does not position them between the lines: ". . . cord leads us forward/ now turned around we head for outback" (19).

Marlatt and Warland examine the conquests of Anglo-Saxon culture in terms of women and language in "***17:00 / coming into Port Pirie***." They lead the reader to question whether the mutuality of their desire for each other can be expressed by lyric love poetry or, indeed, within the sentence of the English language where

a subject dominates the action, leaving its object a passive recipient. They indicate their intention to refocus the camera lens that displaces them as reflections of someone else's action rather than as participants of their own:

> PROhibit (whose CONscience)
> PRO inhabit (whose CONtrol)
> whose weapons
> whose land
> let's face it
> the PROS (he's a real . . .) are the CONS (what a . . .)
> and if language could
> it would flash TILT TILT GAME OVER
> co(i)ns CONS
> PROS & CONS
>
> PRO: 'before, in front of, according to'
> (Adam before . . . the Gospel according to. . .)
> &
> CONS:'conjunx,
> wife'
>
> women as CONS: 'contra, against, opposite'
> to
> PROS (19).

This passage calls attention to the positions of prominence and power that men occupy in language in comparison to women who are situated below or behind them, unwritten, "[w]ithout a version" (20). As women who engage in same sex love, Marlatt and Warland are doubly absent. Like *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative* moves toward telling women's untold stories from a different angle. *Double Negative*'s epigraph points the reader toward *rereading* in order to *reverse* women's

place in writing. Similarly, in *Ana Historic*, Annie asserts: "if i'm telling a story i'm untelling it. untelling the real" (141).

Marlatt and Warland take issue with the lack of positive presence for women who are "without a version" (*Double Negative* 20), seen only when they accompany men:

> walking into the diner
> 'are you ladies alone'
> 'no'
> 'we're together' (20).

As "ladies" (20) who affirm their existence by their response, Marlatt and Warland encourage the reader to examine "nothing looking at nothing" (20) closely in "***17:00 / coming into Port Pirie***." "[N]othing looking at nothing" (20) rather than "no one" or "nobody" emphasizes women's situation as objects rather than subjects in language. Resisting their "unseen" position, Marlatt and Warland claim their visibility:

> i look out the window
> déjà vu:
> nothing looking at nothing
>
> two women outback
> down under
> add it up-two negatives make a positive
>
> i wonder about the physics of language
> as we rim Spencer Gulf
> tide out (20).

As Barbara Godard points out, the representation of women's subjectivity is an important theoretical issue in feminist and other post-structuralist discourses ("Subject" 7).

Marlatt and Warland present the words, "déjà vu," initially on the cover of *Double Negative.* Repeated twice for emphasis, this phrase self-reflexively questions visual perceptions as the words in French undermine the reader of certainty of meaning. Furthermore, as Warland sees it, the white spaces between the print, such as the one that follows "déjà vu," compel the reader "to enter the text and play an active role in its interpretation" (*Proper Deafinitions* 131). Doubly emphasized in this passage and on the cover, "nothing looking at nothing," constitutes *Double Negative*'s key concern with the representation of women in words. That women are almost exclusively located in stories written "by men who serve themselves, constructing woman symbolically as the mirror before which they can see themselves reflected" (Smith *Poetics* 48) is an important issue among contemporary feminist writers and theorists, just as it was a source of frustration for Virginia Woolf. In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland, as women who desire each other, find a way out of this distorted mirror image that does not accurately represent them. Smith notes that, in autobiography and other genres, "woman has remained culturally silenced, denied authority, most critically the authority to name herself and her own desires. Woman has remained unrepresented and

unrepresentable" (*Poetics* 49). *Double Negative* responds to a question Barbara Godard poses: "How can she speak for herself when she is spoken for?" ("Subject" 7). Marlatt and Warland claim that one method of achieving the representation of women lies in writing stories of their desire from their experience of it. In *Double Negative*, they feature a view of the world from their perceptions as women in love with each other. Looking through the glass of the window, they perceive a world that "stares back unseen" (*Double Negative* 16, 20). It is through the eyes of this couple that the reader views another so-called non-entity, the desert.

In "***31/5 8:45 Deakin***," Marlatt and Warland refute notions that "nothing" exists in the "Nullarbor (nul arbor)" (22) Desert. They call attention to the power of language to convince people that they are "watching nothing going by": "there's nothing there, they said" (22). Writing proprioceptively, "as the eye passes through" (29) the desert, Marlatt and Warland present the reader with a fast-moving, vibrantly-coloured frame of images to deconstruct phenomenologically these notions of "nothing." They produce evidence of that which is tangibly present in the landscape: red earth, red-dust stained brush, grey salt bush, black railroad ties, blue (eye-blue) sky (22). The writers and readers now actively and accurately *reread* the desert as "full," rather than "empty." In doing so, Marlatt and Warland establish an analogy between the desert and women who desire women. They sharpen our focus on women, their desires, and their location in language.

In "***10:33 Forrest,***" Marlatt and Warland caution the reader that perceptions can be deceiving:

> 'sometimes, you know,
> when you see a scrub tree on the horizon,
> it looks like a camel coming across the desert' (24).

Through analogy, in this entry, the door to women's experience of the world in writing remains closed no longer:

> when not/hing becomes unhinged
>
> far as the eye can see
>
> there are birds, insects, mammals, reptiles, scrub trees,
> bushes, grasses
> thriving outside The Gaze
> (can we see what we do not value) (24).

Double Negative succeeds in "opening up the Subject" (21) of women's desire. Marlatt and Warland focus on their desire for each other, ignoring signs warning: "PROHIBITED AREA," and proceeding with abandon to inscribe their experiences from their perspectives. Seeking presence in language, they lift its veil:

> CONS: 'French, cunt'
> the imaginary
>
> two women in a birth (21).

Their method of uncovering the subject is unquestionably active and erotic:

> hands a manual alphabet
> i sign your v (21).

Engaging the reader, with "your i in the camera" (25), Marlatt and Warland focus on inscribing women's desire from their moving viewpoints:

rock bottom sea bed we lie in
you pulled me under last night
sucking me out through my womb inside out
re-versed writing across bed into sky
touching holding everything
words my only boundary
the desert on either side of my mind (25).

In the poetic entries that remain in the "Double Negative" section, Marlatt and Warland confirm their desire for each other in positive depictions of female orgasm. Because they write with their gaze directed on their lovemaking, they cannot be accused of assuming a male voice as other women autobiographers often have done (Smith *Poetics* 51). Unmistakably, this is not a situation of "women writing a man's story" of which Smith (51), Felman (36), and other theorists write. No longer captured in words as still life negatives of someone else's gaze, Marlatt and Warland inscribe their desire as movement: "o contractions/ from a small room/ the shutter opening and closing" (*Double Negative* 29). Having established their presence as lovers, Marlatt and Warland proceed towards a style of writing that is less restrictive, patterned on the flow of women's passion rather than on a misconceived passivity. The writers stress the exploratory quality of their writing in this passage:

i had wanted to be less descriptive
be as Nullarbor 'not any tree'
no syntax only syllables
no train of thought
yet the urge is to gather as a wave to the sea
handwriting waving as eye passes through

like all those children on backyard fences
sentences as waves (29).

The proprioceptive writing of this passage evokes, once again, the cinematic element that will transform the writing of "Double Negative" in the "Real 2" section. Viviane Forrester claims, however, that women's view of the world is frequently missing in the highly visual field of cinema:

> How can male directors today not beg women to pick up the camera, to open up unknown areas to them, to liberate them from their redundant vision which is deeply deformed by this lack? Women's vision is what is lacking and this lack not only creates a vacuum but it perverts, alters, annuls every statement. Women's vision is what you don't see; it is withdrawn, concealed. The images, the pictures, the frames, the movements, the rhythms, the abrupt new shots of which we have been deprived, these are the prisoners of women's vision, of a confined vision (35).

In *Double Negative*, rhythmic waves of writing become integral to Marlatt and Warland's depiction of their experiences. This contrasts to the stasis in which female characters have been captured in much canonized literature. We read:

we are waiting to enter, re-enter
the rhythm again
of instant
(by instant

being
about to be, this

imperceptible shift
we will slip away (like)
ground rolling out from under (31).

Marlatt and Warland allude here to their impending exploration of an active form of writing to express their views of the world. They acknowledge that it will take time and practice to develop a form of writing attuned to women's experiences: "we will do/ the walk the emus do" (31). As they enter a different dimension of words somewhat unsteadily, their focus is clearly as we would expect it to be, on language:

> heads out the door
> i/s squint
> the frame enlarged to sun and 360 degrees
> language as billboards
> feet unsteady
> where to focus
> life in 3-D
> everything an inter/ruption (33).

As the first section of *Double Negative* ends, Marlatt and Warland further confirm their intention to take a more fluid approach to inscribing their desire:

> then a gradual sensation
> of the Great Wheel rolling under us
> of the Great Womb we call earth
> not solid not still
> but an ever turning threshold
> its movement carrying us into
> THIS:
> 'what is about to be said'
> here (33).

Their sensitivity to their body rhythms and the circular movement of the world itself, which they allude to as the Great Womb, indicates an ensuing shift in the writing of *Double Negative*.

V Λ

(Ex)changing the V-U Point

> D. . . . We talked about coming but made it female coming and the cyclical nature of female orgasm is really different from the on-track crescendo of male orgasm . . .
>
> Daphne Marlatt, *Double Negative*

Except for the title, "Crossing Loop," the first page of section two of *Double Negative* is blank. As the words "time exposure" from Cheryl Sourkes' negative collage on the page opposite suggest, the white page provides the reader with an opportunity to consider the new direction Marlatt and Warland take in their writing. Indeed, they focus on themselves in their exchange in "Crossing Loop" where Warland notes that crossing loops are places where trains wait (37).

A passage that begins with "rock bottom sea bed we lie in" (25), recurs on Sourkes' collage. Sourkes places a photograph of a train that is off-centre on the edge of the page. In its tilted position, another photo, this time of a desert landscape, appears to be moving toward the central focal point of the onlooker. The photo on the page and the butte or mound in it are both off-centre, giving no indication that *Double Negative* aspires towards a central position in canonical literature. These photographs, in addition to *Double Negative*'s epigraph, *reorient*

the reader to a different "point of v-u" (54) at this juncture. Indeed, Marlatt and Warland's subject of intimacy between women demands *reversed* writing (35).

In their discussion in "Crossing Loop," Marlatt focuses attention on their writing enterprise: "what we were passing through was the real subject of our writing, not the train" (37). She and Warland discuss their experiences as they set out to transform their separate entries into a collaboration contoured to their body rhythms. They prepare to revise their writing so that it conveys them as "*active* in our desire and part of what we desire was to be out in the desert as an image for a certain way of being" (37). Marlatt acknowledges that to do so requires an abandonment of a "passive voice" (37) "that's carrying you so all you can do is let yourself be carried" (37).

The initial section, "Double Negative," prepares the reader for the way Marlatt and Warland *reorient* themselves towards writing that portrays the presence and energy of this loving female couple, two of culture's "double negatives." In "Crossing Loop" they express their objection to being double-crossed and negated by language any longer. On the fulcrum of "Real 2," Warland claims that their writing belongs to "this female movement into the desert saying 'this is mine too and i relate to it in a different way' " (38). In response, Marlatt invites active reader participation as they embark on re-vising the negative picture of themselves in the

world: "So we want to get off the train, get off the narrative track, and move out into the desert in a different way" (38)?

In my examination of the next section of *Double Negative*, I hope to show that Marlatt and Warland's writing in "Real 2" does not exchange the presentation of woman's identity that dominates literature for another enclosed rendition. Rather, as Godard observes of the love poems Marlatt dedicates to Warland in *Touch to My Tongue*, Marlatt and Warland reach toward "the creation of a different kind of text, mobile and multivalent" ("Epi(pro)logue" 330, *qtd. in* Barbour "Daphne Marlatt" *Canadian* 205). Warland comments on the doubled writer/reader roles they embrace and extend to the reader as co-creator of their unclosed poetic:

> We-the-writers also become we-the-readers of our own text: we discuss (and document in 'Crossing Loop') our reactions (as writers and readers) to the first section, and then, we integrate what has resonated with us as readers into a new contexture ('Real 2'). The reader is not isolate but partnered. But - there's the rub! Because love poetry (particularly erotic love poetry) has been essentially the tradition of male poets, the reader's familiar 'entrance' to the poem has been 'through the eye of the beholder:' the subject; the viewer. With the presence of both lovers, who are speaking, seeing/writing and receiving, the reader's former position is rendered obsolete. The gaze is up for grabs! It is no longer a fixed position of author/ity and control. Because our writers'/lovers' roles are in a continual state of flux and redefinition, the reader's role is also unhinged. No longer standing at the door of voyeurism, the reader must now dive into the unpredictable currents of the text and assume all the varied writers'/lovers' roles. The reader must pass through the initial fear of intrusiveness into the pleasure of inclusiveness. No safe text here (*Proper Deafinitions* 134-135).

Since Marlatt and Warland move into writing with a difference in "Real 2," I consider a question that energizes the writing of *Double Negative*. From their position of "terrifying difference," Marlatt and Warland ask, "what is woman (in her ecstasy)" (55)?

"Real 2": Women's Re-visions of Themselves in the World

> 'In Pitjantjara and, I suspect, all other Aboriginal languages, there is no word for 'exist,' everything is in interaction with everything else. You cannot say, this is a rock. You can only say, there sits, leans, stands, falls over, lies down, a rock.'
>
> Robyn Davidson, (qtd. in) *Double Negative*

In the first section of *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland present themselves as a loving couple in the vibrant fullness of the Nullarbor Desert. In doing so, they create positive images of themselves as "double negative." The blank page that follows "Crossing Loop" allows the reader to *reorient* herself to the writing of "Real 2" where Marlatt and Warland undo language that conveys them as "nothing looking at nothing" (20). In the third section of *Double Negative*, they *continue in a different voice*, inviting others to join them and be heard. Yet, they do not abandon language itself which many feminist theorists agree would be counterproductive (Jacobus 217). Not claiming to create the complete version of their or any other woman's story, Marlatt's and Warland's written expression of their

desire reaches out to others to build multi-dimensional, ever-widening spirals of knowledge of women.[4]

As "Real 2" opens, Robyn Davidson's words evoke Marlatt and Warland's encounter in Australia with "ab/original" (*Double Negative* 14) words that "are different in our mouths" (14). Noting that there is no passive voice in the language of Pitjantjara, Davidson shakes conceptions that language must place people as subjects or objects of action. In "Real 2," Marlatt and Warland explore the possibilities offered by the structure of an aboriginal language where meaning is transmitted through interaction. They experiment to produce an active form of

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[4] In her concept of "Aerial Vision," Nicole Brossard conjectures that women occupy a position of negative space or non-sense that makes them invisible. They are beyond the enclosed circle of sense. Within this circle, ground-breaking feminist works, particularly *The Second Sex* and *Three Guineas*, give birth to a new sense within sense which Brossard constructs in her diagram as a small circle within a larger one. She represents the increased feminist activity from the nineteen-sixties to the nineteen-eighties as the small circle's rupture of its own closure. She now renders the feminist movement as a spiral that extends outward with "[w]ork done on the imaginary, language, thought, and knowledge" (117) and consideration of "madness, delirium, or genius" (117). At the same time, in its push to consider women, radical and technological feminisms move the spiral off-centre within the circle of sense towards the unexplored region of non-sense. Thus, an exploration of the unknown emerges. Brossard claims that as further gains are made in the spirals and, therefore, what we know of women increases, sense is renewed. She posits that "new configurations of woman-as-being-in-the-world of what's real, of reality, and of fiction" (117) are reached by a radiating spiral that grows with new perspectives. The diagrams within *The Aerial Letter*, on pages 116-117, are helpful in providing an explanation of Brossard's vision of a female culture. She notes that she does not think "female culture will be either viable over the long term in a linear/binary thought system (by that I mean it engenders other spires), or able to overcome the atrocities of a dialectic founded on patriarchal reason" (114). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland do not develop an essentialist vision of a writing practice for a female culture. Rather, I apply Brossard's model of "Aerial Vision" to explicate how *Double Negative* establishes sense and helps make sense of women's lives and desires that continue to be represented, in most writing, as non-sense, the unseen and the unsaid.

poetry in English that operates in accordance with Davidson's description of Pitjantjara. In her book, *open is broken*, Warland claims that "[t]hrough the use of explicit erotic imagery, the act of lesbian self-naming begins the process of deconstruction of woman as object" (*Proper Deafinitions* 127-128)[5].

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[5] Warland names herself a "lesbian" in *Proper Deafinitions*. Marlatt also refers to herself as a "lesbian" in her essay, "Changing the Focus," published in *Inversions: Writing By Dykes, Queers, & Lesbians*, edited by Betsy Warland. Marlatt writes:

> It's when you look away from men to women that you see the incredible variety of women, even of the so-called 'masculine' attribute in some women, who aren't 'failed' women as heterosexism decrees, but an attractive and diverse range of marvellously capable women. And in all these differences there is still something we recognize when *we* say 'lesbian' (130).

Acknowledging that identity politics "is considered essentialist in theoretical circles" (130), Marlatt argues that "a sense of identity is very important to us because it's so often objected to, erased or denied in the feminist movement as a whole, and maligned or oppressed in the mainstream" (130). She asks, "How can we work for change if we can't name ourselves collectively?" In her view, the word, "lesbian," does not imply "a unified collectivity but only a loose coalition of women with very different cultural, racial, and class backgrounds, and very different bodies" (130). She contends that the context she is speaking or writing in informs how she designates herself which is not always as a "lesbian right away" (130):

> I could say, looking back, that my writing has always been from a woman's perspective, but a change occurred in its focus, which used to be largely on what men thought and how i stood in relation to that. Then when i began to be aroused by women - aroused on all levels, the intellectual, the erotic, the imaginative, the spiritual, the domestic, all at once - the focus shifted entirely. . . . To be a lesbian is to become aware of your difference, no matter how you come to it or whether you've felt you've always been one (131-132).

Marlatt perceives collaboration with her reader as a means to work against assimilation and open up different views of reality ("Difference (em)bracing" 193). In her essay, "Difference (em)bracing," she refers the reader to Gloria Anzaldúa's critique of the word "lesbian." While Anzaldúa shares Marlatt's vision of writing as a collaborative affair, she does not share her regard of the word "lesbian" as inclusive. Anzaldúa claims that " 'lesbian' is a cerebral word, white and middle class, representing an English-only dominant

In my analysis of the third section of *Double Negative*, I contend that they respond to their own "where are we" (32) question by claiming agency to re-present themselves in language. Their writing renders them as mobile as

> desert dune-wave currents
> but we are not
> apart from it
>
> 's incessant stream (46).

The expression of their eroticism as a means to attain their inclusion in language builds upon Warland's works prior to *Double Negative*, particularly in *open is broken* (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 128).[6] Because Marlatt's and Warland's references in *Double Negative* draw the reader to the work of Nicole Brossard (dedication, 38,

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culture, derived from the Greek word *lesbos*" (249). She contends that the word "lesbian" subsumes her, erasing her colour and class (249-250). Stating her desire to name herself, Anzaldúa writes: "But if I have to pick an identity label in the English language I pick 'dyke' or 'queer' . . ." (250).

In my thesis, I allow Marlatt and Warland to name themselves "lesbian," respecting their right to do so, without trespassing into the debate on self-naming by assigning terms of "lesbian," "dyke," or "queer" to my analysis of women's desire for each other. Whenever possible, I endeavour to let Marlatt and Warland speak for themselves on this subject. Nevertheless, as I have pointed out in my discussion of *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's writing invites the participation of a diverse group of readers and I, therefore, claim agency to bring my own context and interpretation to her writing, including *Double Negative*, her collaboration with Betsy Warland. For further discussion of self-naming among women who engage in loving women, please see *Inversions: Writing by Dykes, Queers, & Lesbians*, a collection of essays edited by Betsy Warland.

[6] Warland provides an enlightening discussion of her four books, *A Gathering Instinct*, *open is broken*, *serpent (w)rite*, and *Double Negative*, all written from 1981 - 1988, in the section entitled "moving parts" in her *Proper Deafinitions: collected theorograms*. While this thesis does not examine Warland's writing in depth, I do not mean to suggest that there is not much to be gained in doing so. Her work merits considerable analysis which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

54), it is helpful to consider *Double Negative* in the light of Brossard's concept of "Aerial Vision." From the collaboration of the writers and the readers of *Double Negative* the spiral created in Warland's previous works pushes further outward. As it does so, it establishes "[n]ew perspectives: new configurations of woman-as-being-in-the-world of what's real, of reality, and of fiction" (Brossard 117). Brossard writes: "It is from the volume of our thought that *integral women* rises up" (114). *Double Negative* marks a further gain in Brossard's spiral model for Marlatt who has endeavoured to adapt the long line of her prose poems to the rhythms of her body:

> So there's the notion of body and body rhythms which, i think, have been strong in my work ever since *Rings*. But there's also how you position yourself in the world. To enter the world, I mean to really take it on conceptually and feel you have as valid an analysis of what you see going on around you as any man does, is a difficult thing for a woman, perhaps the most difficult leap to make as a woman writer ("Between Continuity," by Carr 99-100).

Hélène Cixous confirms the potential of the direction Marlatt's and Warland's writing with her belief that the expression of women's desire may be the key to attaining self-representation:

> I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement ("Laugh" 875).

Aritha van Herk shares this belief in the possibilities for writing based on "[f]eminism defined by personal - yes, visceral - experience" ("Of Viscera" 277).

Declaring that words are "problematic, inappropriate if not downright dangerous, innately forbidden to me as a woman (272)," van Herk describes her personal experience of language as absence: "my female body had no text" (272). Marlatt and Warland offer women a way out of this void as they rewrite their own similar depictions from "Double Negative" into the visceral poetry of "Real 2." They devise a proprioceptive, mobile poetic attuned to the rhythms of women's desire to replace their culturally assigned absence with presence. Warland notes the transformation in their poetry from "Double Negative" to "Real 2":

> 'But we're writing a **new** kind of theory - fiction/theory.' No mind and body split, the text **em**bodying the viewing. Form being the frown line above your left brow, the dimple on your right cheek, the word made flesh, the tissue text (*Proper Deafinitions* 76).

She describes how they revise "Double Negative" by "alternately taking a phrase from one another's poetic entries and running away with it - going off track into our own idiosyncratic associative prose reflections" (131-132). By reworking "Double Negative" into "Real 2," Marlatt and Warland develop a corporeal corpus where they are perceived as "real, too."

In "Real 2," Marlatt and Warland transform the poetic journal entry, "***29/5/86 16:13 / past Sydney***," as their ***"travelling backwards through Australia."*** The other subtitles in "Real 2" correspond in succession with their counterparts in "Double Negative": "***17:00 / Katoomba***" becomes ***"we entered this"*** and so forth. The first prose poem of "Real 2" entitled ***"travelling backward through Australia,"***

connects the process of giving birth to one of giving birth to words attuned to women's experiences:

> . . . back spine / book spine no title pages blank we wait for/words travelling backwards through the factual annotated 'Strip Map' of natural (Mother) & His/torical references distances and their lineal names we move through not along not across not over like so many millions of women who passed through then 'passed away' their f.(actual life stories succinct in chiselled head/stones (at best) . . . (42).

Patterning their poetry on the waves of sexual pleasure they experience in their lovemaking, Marlatt and Warland refuse the noose of silence, the (k)not that linear writing winds into. Committed to the creation of a moving reel in "Real 2," they abandon literary constructs that lose their stories between the lines of "(f)act. the f stop of act. a still act in the ongoing cinerama" (*Ana Historic* 31). Not an authoritative script, "Real 2" is their active undertaking to relate the world from their perspectives as two women making love. Just as they are readers and writers of their own texts (Warland *Proper Deafinitions* 134), the writing they produce is open to active reader response. In this way, with each new reader, *Double Negative* becomes an ever-forming interactive work of poetry. Six of the prose poems attest to this by the questions they pose: "what is woman (on a train)?" (*Double Negative* 42), "what is woman (in the desert)?" (44), "what is woman (in her own fiction)?" (47), "what is woman (in her emptiness)?" (49), "what is woman (in her ecstasy)"

(55)? Marlatt and Warland open up their experiences to others who wish to enter into a dialogue with them.

"Real 2" *reverses* the standard use of parentheses to give importance to that which is frequently deemed insignificant, bracketed off, and/or omitted from written accounts. Marlatt and Warland break the hold of the double negative lines of parentheses, and open up the subject of women's experiences by providing the reader with new perspectives. They dispel notions of The Story of Woman as "illusion the eye momentarily believing in unity" (54) just as the parallel lines of the train track appear to meet without really doing so. Marlatt and Warland call

> u of the not here steel yourselves rail at His One Essential Story telling and retailing of male quest escape from the metaphorical womb and the conquering of it *this* is where the v inverts reveals how u and me and he are all held fast by the wombworld we are ever dependent on Robyn in the Gibson Desert finally *present* (threshold to dreaming, creation, spiritual vision) 'I too became lost in the net and the boundaries of myself stretched out for ever' where all points of view converge where the eyes close signalling bodies to trust the turning as we float off the page held tender & fierce in our terrifying difference what is woman (in her ecstasy) (54-55)?

Striving for a fluid form of writing, Marlatt and Warland omit the documentary features of precise time and place found in the "Double Negative" entries from their prose poems in "Real 2." They do this in a manner reminiscent of that of Annie in *Ana Historic*, who also dispenses with standard writing conventions to allow her life writing to emerge without restriction. In "Real 2" in *Double Negative*, the lines of the prose poems are not bound by metre length. Furthermore, there are no periods

to curtail the flow of this entry. Instead, Marlatt and Warland employ end stops at places where they do not interfere with their active expression. Other entries in this section have from two to fourteen periods, as in ***"we entered this."*** Yet, far from aimless rambling, the words contained within "Real 2" evoke a myriad of positive images of two negatives doubled into a positive - a female couple present in their desire in a desert full of life.

In "Real 2," language is firmly rooted in the physical presence of women's body rhythms. Words with connotations that do not speak for the writers' intimate experiences, such as "stud" (9), disappear from the revised version. Marlatt and Warland refuse language that positions them as objects, behind and inferior to men. With their intimate explorations of each other's bodies as their site, they bring their sensuality into the foreground of the reader. They transform this section of *Double Negative* into "[t]he erotic female writing body . . . searching for a language that is not forged by the heterosexual, male experience" (Warland *Proper Deafinitions*125). The autobiographical prose poems in "Real 2" embrace what Marlatt describes as "writing in your own *stead*, i mean listening to and writing the movements of your story, their strange patterns, their forward-and-back that form the *place* you recognize yourself in - you/i - a place occupied not by one but by many selves . . ." (*ghost works* viii). Marlatt and Warland create "Real 2" along the waves of their desire. Their poetry is unmediated by the perspective of a male gaze from whose

viewpoint they, as women, have been reflected as Other. Through their own erotic experiences with each other, they affirm that every woman is an active subject as she

> . . . boards the train of the sentence empty handed and
> makes off with it de-riding the end point of the Final
> Product (she is not for termination after all) she is well
> on her way to de-railing the "long straight" which can
> only see its own track while she is out on either side
> (surrounded she knows does not mean surrender) she
> is also she is desert come in waves the waves she rides
> she rises up and overflows the words a round around
> the word *surround* (*Double Negative* 50).

As *Double Negative* opens up the question of "what is woman (in her own symbolic)?" (52) to include the reader as participant, Marlatt and Warland present an inverted V-shaped formation of writing, "a giant caret" (54) that moves forward like

> . . . Canada geese honk in flying V
> your mound of V its exquisite V-U ('V ancestral to the
> letter U') i imagine U (her hand pulled to 'the U-rune
> . . . the mother of manifestation') and this V of geese,
> the fog thick and me alone V indicating 'velocity, verb,
> verse, version, verso, victory, volt, vowel' o
> blowholes o lightning o coming full speed/time . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . rejection of one
> authoritative version verso turning over a new leaf . . . (49).

With the poetry of *Double Negative* as a point of departure, they initiate the reader into this open-ended form of writing that begins with: "my mound invert(ed) ^" (54). From their vantage point on the train as they look at the track ahead, they see

another inverted V. Marlatt and Warland point out that the meeting point of the parallel lines of the track is "where eyesight fails . . . illusion the eye momentarily believing in unity" (54). Indeed, they experience "desire always moving ahead of us" (54). As a result of the input of each co-writing reader, the V-U point opens further outward and is never enclosed. Marlatt and Warland's vision of writing is similar to Brossard's concept of a spiral breaking out of an enclosed circle of "sense" which positions women on the outside as "non-sense" (*Aerial Letter* 116-117). Like the outward bound spiral that ruptures the enclosed circle of "sense," Marlatt and Warland's "giant caret" (*Double Negative* 54) opens out to create "new configurations of woman-as-being-in-the-world of what's real, of reality, and of fiction" (Brossard *Aerial Letter* 117).[7]

Marlatt and Warland describe their vision of women inscribing themselves in "untrained" writing:

> . . . the wedge-tailed eagle circles above and the
> train begins to roll as her hand moves across the page
> spiral movement (imagin-a-nation) here she can rest
> here she can play encounter her anima(l) self pre-sign
> pre-time touching you i touch the kangaroo words forming
> then shifting desert dunes her desire to untrain herself
> undermine every proper deafinition she throws the
> switch on train as phallus ('bound for glory') train as
> salvation leaves it behind at the crossing loop feels

---

[7] Pauline Butling describes Marlatt's writing as a communication model of intersecting circles. She suggests that where they overlap, gender, race, class, time, and place foster an infinite number of multi-direction meanings (" 'From Radical to Integral' " 167).

> words falling from her like the 50 million skin scales we
> shed each day breathing stars, moon saltbush scrub
> your hand moves across my body (imagin-a-nation) and
> we settle into this endless motion once again settle into
> the beginninglessness the endlessness of this page
> this desert . . . (*Double Negative* 51-52).

Unlike "the sentence (s)training / toward completion finale" (53), the final entry of "Real 2" is a fluid form of writing. It abandons a one-way sentence track that adheres to a subject, verb, and object order. By **"we had not wanted it to end,"** Marlatt and Warland are experimenting with an interactive mode of writing in the manner of the aboriginal language of the Pitjantjara. This language does not relegate people to subject or object positions. In this poem's earlier form as **"1/6 5:45 / Number 2 Cut/ 'Is 29 m deep... Known as/ Explosion Hill,'** " "i haven't even finished" (32) exemplifies Marlatt and Warland's frustration with writing that demands an endpoint. **"Number 2 Cut"** indicates how this works: "soon at the end of the line he wants to go home / period" (32). Marlatt and Warland express the insufficiency of this type of format for the expression of their desire. They write:

> and suddenly we feel cramped
> in someone else's house
>
> where are we (32).

This passage reminds the reader that Marlatt and Warland's self-expression is neither linear nor static but is based on a "body of movement" (33). They proceed, along with the reader, to a place of re-vision in **"we had not wanted it to end"** (56),

circumventing the resolution usually found in traditional forms of literature. Neither their desire nor their book has an ending. Instead, ". . . pleasure goes around in circles evades the end point heads backward / into the unknown (o birth) . . ." (56).

Marked by a "lingual tongue" (56), the double voices of the writers surrender to their bodies' sense of rhythm: ". . . this everturning threshold no/ line is nothing to cross or resist your mouth mine/ mouths us in suspense the evercoming trembles on . . ." (56). Marlatt describes this experience of writing the erotic as "a current surging through my body surging beyond the limits of self-containment, beyond the limits of syntax and logic" ("Lesbera" 123). In *Double Negative*, she and Warland do not endeavour to capture this movement in a delineated form of writing for, as Marlatt points out, "Erotic energy in free play doesn't have much to do with a careful, even parsimonious, parcelling out. It doesn't have much to do with measure or even measuring up, to any standard set by some authority over there" (123). Creet notes approvingly that "[m]uch of the richness of this book derives from the linguistic fragmentations which continuously defy and displace boundaries, not the least being the boundary between two women: 'your hand moves across my body (imagin-a-tion)' " (208). Thus, in the movement of their desire, Marlatt and Warland find a way to open up dominant discourse.

This collaboration marks the beginning of a writing enterprise that seeks interaction with readers, especially women who have been objectified in literature.

In particular, Marlatt and Warland invite women who engage in same sex love, who are surrounded by a double wall of silence, to inscribe their presences. In taking the camera in their own hands, Marlatt and Warland shift its focus and write themselves out of absence. Together, in *Double Negative*, they show others who desire to write in their own stead a way to answer the "where are we" (32) question. They successfully shift the reader's gaze, exposing the "REFLECTION" (20) in the looking glass as an imposter, while demonstrating how to take on presence in writing from the margins. No longer objectified in their own writing, Marlatt and Warland end *Double Negative* with words that recall the structure of the Pitjantjara language. At the beginning of this section, they quote Robyn Davidson who states that in the language of the Pitjantjara, "You cannot say, this is a rock. You can only say, there sits, leans, stands, falls over, lies down, a rock" (N. pag.). This aboriginal language does not place people in an object position, and neither do Marlatt and Warland in "Real 2." They write: "we bilingual reading rock reading sand word reading us in" (56).

Douglas Barbour writes that "Marlatt has always been able to create works which outstrip the capacity of any critic to encapsulate her continually expanding vision . . ." ("Daphne Marlatt" *Canadian* 249-250). In *Double Negative*, Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's shared vision becomes their "energetic imagining of all that we are that we can enact for ourselves" (Marlatt "Self-Representation" 17).

Marlatt writes: "Every woman we have read who has written about women's lives lives on in us, in what we know of our own capacity for life, and becomes part of the context for our own writing, our own imagining" (17). *Double Negative*'s "Real 2" initiates a centripetal collaborative and ever-forming text of presence with the possibility for answering the "where are we" (32) question for all those surrounded by silence in literature. Daphne Marlatt explains:

> When text becomes context, when it leaves behind the single-minded project of following a singular life-line, when it drops out of narrative as climax and opts for narrative as interaction with what surrounds us, then we are in the presence of a writing for life, a writing that ditches dualistic polarities (the good guys vs. the bad guys, gays, bitches, blacks - you see how many of us there are), dodges the hierarchies (the achieved, the significant vs. the inessential, the failed, which goes to the root of our fear about life: was it all for nothing?) - it's all there in the so-called 'nothing' ("Self-Representation" 17).

Like *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative* "evades the end point" (*Double Negative* 56) as it prepares the reader for active journeys towards a re-vision of women's stories that men have written for them. As I have shown in Chapter One, on the last page of *Ana Historic*, Marlatt shifts from the form of the novel, which was unravelling as it developed (Char. 70), to prose poetry that calls up *Double Negative.* In the poetry of *Salvage*, which I will examine in Chapter Three, Marlatt abandons subject, verb, object sentence structure for a more fluid form suited to the expression of

women's desire, as she does in *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*. All of these books make an initiation into interactive reading/writing partnerships where women can proclaim their presence: "we give place, giving words, giving birth, to each other - she and me. you. hot skin writing skin. fluid edge, wick, wick. she draws me out. you she breathes is where we meet. . ." (*Ana Historic* N. pag.).

Marlatt alerts the reader of *Ana Historic* to the possibilities for Annie's life and writing in her contact with Zoe, Eunice, and Norah. Similarly, but with greater emphasis, in *Double Negative* Marlatt and Warland find their poetry enhanced by the writing of other contemporary feminist writers, such as Nicole Brossard, who share their commitment to achieving a view of the world from women's infinitely varied perspectives. In Chapter Three, I will consider how "coming out" "elsewhere" in the company of a feminist writing community assists Marlatt "to combat this slipping away, of me, of you" (*Salvage* 118).

To begin my analysis of *Salvage*, I continue on in the active, investigative role that *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative* demand. I will examine how the writing of *Salvage* necessitates another journey "backwards back/words" (*Double Negative* 42) for Marlatt for, in *Salvage*, she reclaims poetry she abandoned twenty years earlier. I contend that Marlatt deliberately draws her reader into an active role as she leads the way back to her book, *Steveston*, through the first passage of *Salvage*. Attempting to salvage women from the silence that surrounds the

majority of them in *Steveston*, she engages her reader in a process of imaginative reconstruction similar to her re-vision of Ana in *Ana Historic*. Following a brief examination of *Steveston*, I will return to *Salvage* where I endeavour to demonstrate that Marlatt's act of salvage is a reciprocal act of re-vision in which she engages her reader. Gwendolyn MacEwen's poem, "The Discovery," "read[s] us into the page ahead" (*Ana Historic* N. pag.), which in this case, is where Chapter Three begins:

> do not imagine that the exploration
> ends, that she has yielded all her mystery
> or that the map you hold
> cancels further discovery
>
> I tell you her uncovering takes years
> takes centuries, and when you find her naked
> look again,
> admit there is something else you cannot name,
> a veil, a coating just above the flesh
> which you cannot remove by your mere wish
>
> when you see the land naked, look again
> (burn your maps, that is not what I mean),
> I mean the moment when it seems most plain
> is the moment when you must begin again

Chapter Three

Salvage: "Diving Into the Wreck"

I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.
I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.
I stroke the beam of my lamp
slowly along the flank
of something more permanent than fish or weed

the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth
the drowned face always staring
toward the sun
the evidence of damage
worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty
the ribs of disaster
curving their assertion
among the tentative haunters

. . . . . .

We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear.
Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck"

Daphne Marlatt writes, "i want to imagine being in my element, she said" (*Salvage* 17). In this chapter, I will examine how Marlatt's act of re-vision through

the old, new, and revised poetry of her most recent book, *Salvage*, enables her to be in her element. *Salvage* comprises five sections: "**Salvage**," "**Passage Ways**," "**Territory & co.**," "**Acts of Passage**," and "**Booking Passage**." This collection represents Marlatt's "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Rich "When We Dead" 35), a necessary journey "backwards/backwords" (*Double Negative* 42) that prepares her to move forwards toward the poetic writing of "**Booking Passage**" in *Salvage* and "**Real 2**" in *Double Negative*. Re-viewing her earlier writing enables Marlatt to "bit[e] through the traces left" (*Salvage* 106) in order "to combat this slipping away, of me, of you" (118) for, as Adrienne Rich asserts:

> Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name - and therefore live - afresh. A change in the concept of sexual identity is essential if we are not going to see the old political order reassert itself in every new revolution. We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us ("When We Dead" 35).

I will examine selected poems from *Salvage* in order to trace Marlatt's movement towards a fluid form of writing conducive to women's self-expression.

In her review of *Salvage*, Melinda McCracken claims the poems of the final section, "**Booking Passage**," to be the best writing of Marlatt's career. She notes that, as a collection, however, the poems of *Salvage* "do not have the burning intensity of those written in the heat of discovery" perhaps because Marlatt "looks back to her past in *Salvage*, at experience filtered through time" (46). Yet, McCracken also points out that "the rewriting of these poems [in the first section of the book] is a way of integrating those past selves into her present self" (45). As I have attempted to show in Chapters One and Two, writing her "self" is integral to Marlatt's writing. In this chapter, I explore how in *Salvage*, she transports women into the symbolic from which they have long been omitted. In "Litter. wreckage. salvage," the first poem of "**Salvage**," Marlatt draws her reader to her long poem, *Steveston*, to re-view the shadowy presences of some of its women. Two decades later, she reflects that the lives of the women intrigued her the most when she worked on *Steveston* and the aural history project, *Steveston Recollected* (Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 103). Yet, in her account of the town and its people, the women's stories are "lost, over & over" (*Steveston* 85). Nicole Brossard suggests that culture's objectifying gaze on women exists in all areas of representation (128). In "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt works against depictions of women as currency of a sexual exchange that serves the desire of men. As in *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*, her wordplay requires active reader

participation in order to release women from their positions in literature as the objects of someone else's action.

In "**Acts of Passage**," Marlatt and Brossard transform each other's poetry through their translations. My examination of "Character/Jeu de lettres" from this section considers how Marlatt's and Brossard's translations of each other's poetry works against the conception of poetry as a one-way transmission of truth from the author to the reader. They break words open, releasing multiple meanings, suggesting that meaning is not fixed but created within a partnership between the writer and the reader. Marlatt continues to explore the openness of language in "**Booking Passage**," which I examine in its entirety. Through her wordplay, she engages her reader in an intimate, interactive relationship instrumental in opening up poetic discourse to others located outside it. As in *Double Negative*, in this section of *Salvage*, Marlatt opts for a fluid form of writing attuned to the body rhythms of women's desire to give women agency. In particular, she works to undo the silence that surrounds women who desire women as she develops a partnership with her reader as co-writer. I hope to show how "**Booking Passage**" confirms Marlatt's response to the "Who's There?" and "where are we?" questions that she begins to answer in *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*.

V V

"Your Women Are Invisible"

> Slippages, repeat performance, soundings profounder as down we go
> for the third time through green waters, pearl-diving, operatic . . .
> Phyllis Webb, "The Mind of the Poet"

Daphne Marlatt's return to her "failed" poetry of the past becomes a project of salvage. In *Salvage*, she reassembles sections of her poems of twenty years ago with new passages that reflect her feminist consciousness. In doing so, the "litter" and "wreckage" of her older work is "subverted and re-shaped, as Virginia Woolf said of the sentence, for a woman's use" (Foreword *Salvage* N. pag.). Just as Marlatt retrieves Mrs. Richards from invisibility in *Ana Historic*, her act of salvage transforms her failed poems into littoral poetry that releases women from the shadows of her own earlier writing on Steveston. At the beginning of *Salvage*, Marlatt describes Steveston as she finds it now:

> below water level, behind - the
> dyke a road now, back of the wharves, boats, empty sun-
> day / spring, left with the nets and houses left to dry rot,
> must, the slow accretion of months as horsetail heads rear
> out of asexual earth of abandoned gardens brambled (15).

As Marlatt reenters Steveston through the poems of *Salvage*, she prepares the reader for change. Some differences are immediately perceptible: the dyke is now

a road, and the nets, houses, and gardens are abandoned. Yet, Marlatt desires, most of all, to shift the reader's attention to a less visible subject:

Steveston:

your women are invisible, your men all gone (15).

Marlatt locates the women differently from the men here. The men are gone but the women are unseen. Making women visible is the subject of *Salvage* as it is in *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*. In the two stanza-graphs that follow, Marlatt contrasts the situations of the men and women of Steveston:

> Except for a few boats: hey, his spring salmon net's wet.
> how much you got, Ned? a bucket. thin smile his pride will
> scarcely allow. WE - got how much you say, Chuck? (pups
> at the old sea dog.) you stay away with your bucket (15)!

Marlatt refers to Ned and Chuck by their names, and thus establishes their identity. Moreover, these salmon fishermen have ownership ("his spring salmon net") and pride ("his pride"). They interact in a heritage of work, handed down from father to son ("pups at the old sea dog"). Like "Peterborough, Jamestown, Gladstone, and Port Pirie" (*Double Negative* 19), the name of the town, Steveston, suggests it is a man's town: Steve's town. In a single stanza-graph, Marlatt provides a sense of "who's there?" and "where are we" with regard to the men of Steveston.

Information about the women of Steveston, however, is as scant in the first section of this poem as the facts about the female settlers of British Columbia in *Ana Historic*. Marlatt situates the women of Steveston below a division of white

space on the page, following a description of the men, in a manner that she and Warland employ in *Double Negative* to call attention to women's place in androcentric writing:

> PROS & CONS
>
> PRO: 'before, in front of, according to'
> (Adam before . . . the Gospel according to . . .)
> &
> CONS: 'conjunx,
> wife' (*Double Negative* 19).

Initially, in the first poem of *Salvage*, Marlatt makes no mention of the women's names or their heritage and gives no reason to infer pride. She presents an image of them that is as fragmented as the glimpses between the slats of the blinds on the cover of *Salvage*[1]. In our first exposure to the women of Steveston in *Salvage*, we find them isolated within houses, away from the outside world:

> Staying, straying in their individual houses women swim
> in long slow gleams between blinds, day incessant with its
> little hooks, its schemes inconsequential finally. . . (15).

Like *Ana Historic*, this poem provides only a fragmentary view of the lives of the women. As Nicole Brossard insists, "Invisibility is a woman in a book" (125):

> *Invisible:* Where there is Man, there are *no women*. The moment a woman transcends what is thought to be her nature, that is to say, when she is at her best, she, it is said, becomes like a man. Woman at her best is invisible as a woman. Man, as 'symbol of

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[1] Throughout this thesis, I refer to the first edition of *Salvage*, published by Red Deer Press in 1991.

> universal wholeness, as centre of the world of symbols,' produces an effect of presence and precedence in each man, effects a plenitude which constitutes simultaneously his humanity and his superiority. Where there is humanity, woman is invisible (140-141).

Marlatt frames the name, "Steveston" (*Salvage* 15), with white space above and below it, enticing the reader toward her earlier poetry of the same name. In my analysis of "**Salvage**," I take Marlatt's lead back to *Steveston* in order to re-view the women there.[2]

V V

> Her ghost wheels her barrow
> thro' streets broad and narrow,
> Crying, 'Cockles and mussels,
> alive, alive-o. . . .'
> Irish song

In the fall of 1972, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia commissions Marlatt to assist in the documentation of the history of the Japanese-Canadians of Steveston. Her collaboration with Maya Koizumi, who conducts most of the interviews in Japanese, and photographers Robert Minden and Rex Wyler, results, in 1975, in *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canadian History*. *Steveston*

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[2] My examination of *Steveston* is necessarily selective. For an in-depth examination of *Steveston*, see Brenda Carr's doctoral dissertation, "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts - swimming / jumping the margins / barriers." She establishes presences of the women of *Steveston* that are submerged in the long poem.

Recollected represents a man's world, as the dedication indicates: "This book is dedicated to the Japanese-Canadian fishermen of Steveston." Among the many photos of men and their ships, only five of the pictures feature women. One photograph frames Moto Suzuki in a doorway. In this book, Moto's husband speaks for her. The remaining photographs of women in *Steveston Recollected* feature them cleaning salmon in the factory (22, 33) and in motherhood roles (42, 82). Only two of the ten interviews focus on women (Carr "Re-casting" 85).

Despite the improved representation of women from *Steveston Recollected* to *Steveston*, particularly in the 1984 edition of the latter,[3] the women in these books remain underlying, fragmentary presences rather than the direct subject of Marlatt's poetry.[4] Marlatt points out that, at that time, men and their work were the focus of her writing on Steveston (Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 104).

The cover photo of a man only, Hideo (Henry) Kokubo, reappears opposite the opening words of Marlatt's long poem. In "Imagine: a town," the first poem of *Steveston*, a male voice gives an account of a fire, an important event in the history of Steveston. "He said" is repeated three times within one stanza-graph:

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[3] Throughout this chapter, I refer to the 1984 edition of *Steveston* rather than the first edition in 1974.

[4] Brenda Carr writes that "[w]hile Steveston does treat the lives of all the members of the Steveston community, only two poems feature specific men; seven poems focus on specific women" ("Re-casting" 85). While this is so, with the exception of Inez Huovinen, Marlatt conveys only fragmentary glimpses of the women of Steveston.

> *He said* they were playing cards in the
> Chinese mess hall, *he said* it was dark (a hall? a shack.
> they were all, crowded together on top of each other.
> *He said* somebody accidentally knocked the oil lamp over, off
> the edge (*Steveston* 13, emphasis mine).

Not figuring into this poem at all, the women of the community make their first appearance in the second poem of *Steveston*, entitled "Imperial Cannery, 1913." My analysis of *Steveston* considers three women who lead very different lives: the unnamed woman in "Imperial Cannery, 1913," Lulu Sweet, whose real name is unknown, and Inez Huovinen.

In "Imperial Cannery, 1913," Marlatt contrasts the men who work with the women who are "waiting for work . . . waiting, waiting all morning for the fish to come" (15). An aura of passivity surrounds the women "[w]hose hands are standing still" (15). "Nothing moves but occasional strands of long hair the subtle wind is lifting" (15) from the head of one young woman. Through her passivity and her namelessness, this woman represents the other women.

While the young woman dreams of her future, she appears to be unaware of any desires of her own. Indeed, Marlatt suggests that she is undisturbed by passion: ". . . she is feeling her body in its light dress wind blows thru, as past the faces of her friends, likewise silent, impassive" (15). Presented as impassive rather than impassioned, this silent, unnamed woman will be "spoken for" in marriage to her father's "friend's son" (16). Despite her statuesque pose, from Marlatt's

description she appears to be inclined to motion, "leaning into her threshold" (16), her "long hair the subtle wind is lifting" (15). Her potential movement remains unrealized, however, like the "wooden houses jammed on pilings close together, leaning" (16) and the "stutters" made by the "dry marsh grass" (16). She neither speaks nor enters the world of her own accord. The word, "threshold," marks her passivity, as she will likely be carried by her future husband across the traditional threshold. Luce Irigaray contends that the woman who is not active in her desire, but serves as the object of her male lover's desire as a "*beloved woman*," "is no longer she who also opens partway onto a human landscape" (*An Ethics* 194, 205-206). As an object of desire, belonging to her husband or lover's world, the young woman occupies a position on the "threshold," "[l]eaving him, apparently, the whole of sensual pleasure" (206). Through the young woman in "Imperial Cannery, 1913," Marlatt presents a community of women without voice, desire, or agency who, for generations, have existed as commodities in the home and the factory:

> Now she is old enough to be her
> mother inside, working, with the smallest one standing by her skirt in grubby dress, & the blood streams down the wooden cutting board as the 'iron chink' (that's what they call it) beheads each fish . . .
>
> Now she is old enough for the wheel's turn . . . the wheel that keeps turning, out of its wooden sleeve, the blade with teeth marked: for marriage, for birth, for death (*Steveston* 15-16).

In another poem, "Moon," a prostitute named Lulu Sweet serves the desires of men. As with *Ana Historic*'s Mrs. Richards, in the history books of British

Columbia Marlatt finds only a brief reference to Lulu whose real name is missing, replaced with one that suggests her ability to satisfy men: she is "sweet" enough to eat (Carr "Re-casting" 86). While Lulu represents "eroticism of place" (86), she has no agency; Lulu is the object of an exchange like the woman on the "time turned calendar of kimona'd beauty, kneeling . . ." in "Steveston as you find it" (*Steveston* 24). Her desires are as unknown as her name: "White as the moon, who was she? apart from the different dreams they had, in smoke & whiskey, & then the Indians, Chinese, Japanese unknown in numbered houses" (21).

In "Moon," Marlatt focuses primarily on the impact of the cannery on the male workers: "A few people drink in the Steveston, a few young men: stopt up, burning, slow, nowhere to go, no crowds to light, no strange women, no gambling games, no risk" (22). Like Lulu, the other women in this poem are unseen and without agency. Marlatt reminds the reader that like gambling games, they serve as the objects of men's actions, their bodies a form of entertainment. The image of the men occupies the focal point of this passage as "[b]eer to lips," corporate growth "sucks them dry, these men soaking in their beer" (22). In comparison, "these women in white, tired or wearily hopeful, drained by the ditches of their unsatisfied lives" (22) surface only at the end of the last sentence of a page of description, "that is / behind, after, without a version / negative feminine space" (*Double Negative* 20).

Yet, in *Steveston*, Marlatt and Minden do provide a comprehensive image of a woman as voice and agency, in her element: Inez Huovinen, "fisherwoman" (60). Inez is as comfortable and productive in the fishing grounds outside as she is in the house where she cooks and sews. In three poems, "Finn Road," "A by-channel; a small backwater" and "Response," Marlatt transcribes Inez's own words on the page (Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 119). Marlatt's poetry flows smoothly beside the words of Inez who speaks in her own stead. As Marlatt notes, with their voices together, without Marlatt mediating or translating Inez's words, these poems differ from the unitary discourse that is characteristic of poetry:

> where before poetry was *always* the poet (his speech) *present* as he interpreted the world (his subject) . . . now what I'm trying to do is include *others'* speech, the actual presence of those others in the world - so that my poem about Inez for instance also is *by* her, uses her words - it is a collaboration . . . (Steveston Journal qtd. in Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 119).

Speaking in her own voice, Inez emerges more clearly than any of the other women in *Steveston*.

In "Finn Road," Marlatt describes Inez "making cabbage rolls" (*Steveston* 61). As she "walks, from counter to stove, with a roll" (61), Marlatt demands that her reader interpret Inez as active or not. While Inez may be carrying a cabbage roll, it is also likely that the "roll" with which she walks is a gait synchronized to the rhythms of the sea. After all, she's "been out fishing for twenty years now" (61).

In "A by-channel; a small backwater," Marlatt confirms that Inez moves with the coming and going of the waves,

> . . . the river's push against her, play of
> elements her life comes rolling on. Hair flying, in gumboots,
> on deck with rubber apron ('it's no dance dress'), she'll take
> all that the river gives, willing only to stand her ground (rolling,
> *with it*, right under her feet, her life, rolling, out from under,
> right on out to sea. . . (65).

Through the words "hair" and "element," Marlatt evokes a previous image of the unnamed woman in "Imperial Cannery, 1913." Yet, Marlatt's depiction of Inez differs dramatically from that of the young woman "in her element, dreaming of sails, her father's, or a friend's son" (16) whose "hair the subtle wind is lifting" (15). Unlike this woman, Inez operates in her own right on land and on the water: "it's her boat, her feet on" (65). Inez is a speaking subject who "runs in the throat of time, voicing the very swifts and shallows of that river . . ." (65). She is "willing only to stand her ground" (65). In comparison, the young woman in "Imperial Cannery, 1913," "[s]tanding inside the door" (15), has no ground of her own and no foothold in the outside world. Therefore, the words, "But she is in her element" (16), are ironic.

Neither the unnamed woman nor Lulu Sweet speak for themselves. Unlike Inez Huovinen, they are without agency and represent the majority of the women of *Steveston* whose stories are "lost, over & over" (85). In this instance, they are lost in the shadows of Marlatt's writing. Thus, years later, in her attempt to break

Steveston's hold over the women within it, Marlatt returns to "Litter. wreckage. salvage" in the company of her reciprocal reader:

> trying to salvage
> a line here, an image there,
> perhaps even a whole poem
> with only a few changes.
> Elizabeth Brewster, "Reading Old Poetry Notebooks"

V V

> To dispel the invisibility of Woman, whose meaning and presence we intuit in ourselves like a motif of identity, is one task of writing which necessitates that we make sense slip and move in ways hitherto unheard of in language's imaginary.
> Nicole Brossard, *The Aerial Letter*

In *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage*, Marlatt makes "sense slip and move in ways hitherto unheard of." In "Litter. wreckage. salvage," the first poem of *Salvage*, she deliberately places the words, "Staying, straying" (15) next to each other. As a result, "Staying" takes on some of the characteristics of the word it resembles, "straying." Marlatt discusses the importance of this element in her writing in her essay entitled "Musing with Mothertongue":

> in poetry, which has evolved out of chant and song, in riming and tone-leading, whether they occur in prose or poetry, sound will initiate thought by a process of association. words call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterance (45).

In "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt initially presents the women of Steveston as isolated and invisible within "their individual houses" (*Salvage* 15), thus "calling up" the women of *Steveston*. With the letter "r" which wanders transgressively between the words "Staying" and "straying," she indicates her intent to transform women's confinement into their movement. Marlatt evokes the activity of the men and the passivity of the women in *Steveston*'s "Imperial Cannery, 1913." Hélène Cixous notes that in philosophy women are associated with passivity (*Newly Born* 64). Aritha van Herk points out that according to Robert Kroetsch, the depiction of women as passive pervades literature, perhaps most obviously in the fiction of the west where "men on horseback" are the highly visible agents of change and achievement ("Women Writers" 123). Cixous confronts this situation, asking: "Where is she, where is woman in all the spaces he surveys, in all the scenes he stages within the literary enclosure?" (*Newly Born* 67). Her own response is: "[S]he is in the shadow. In the shadow he throws on her; the shadow she is" (67).

Through wordplay in *Salvage*, Marlatt exposes the notion that a woman's place is in the home is a cultural construction rather than a natural, unalterable condition. First of all, she dispels the reader's perceptions of "home" as an immovable structure. Marlatt describes some of Steveston's houses as "broken open" (*Salvage* 15), their "doors torn off their hinges" (15), "transparent walls" (15). As Margaret Atwood points out, for the nomads of the African desert who collapse

the walls of their houses in order to transport them, "[g]oing home . . . is motion" ("Nomads" 294). Indeed, the "clam" (*Salvage* 16) is one of a number of creatures in the marine world and on land that carries its house as it moves, along with salmon which employ "homing" as a location device that is constantly moving (16). In the concluding passage of the first section of "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt envisions a mobile form of writing to provide an entrance for women as subjects in poetry:

> If *the woman is within,* if that's her place as they have always said, can she expect her walls not to be broken open suddenly: Flood, Lightning, Nuclear Light - what attaches her to the world? dug-up clam, dehoused, who can no longer bury her head in the sand. . . (16).

Ten years after the first edition of *Steveston*, Marlatt identifies the means of "breaking open walls," in writing itself:

> Writing, in its root meaning, suggests a violent drawing to the attention: a tearing, a scratching, an effort to bring to notice some part of the continuous body of the world we otherwise swallow whole, without question ("On Distance" 92).

V V

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye
Margaret Atwood, "You fit into me"

For women to enter the world, to enter the word, involves more than moving off the threshold, "of leaving home" (*Salvage* 17). It requires an act of imagination. In the second section of the poem, "Litter. wreckage. salvage," a counsellor attempts to construct a woman's entry into the outside world for her: "imagine opening your front door and standing on the step. . . . walking down the path to your gate. . . . opening the gate. . ." (17). Cixous points out: "But she cannot appropriate this 'outside' (it is rare that she even wants it); it is his outside: outside on the condition that it not be entirely outside . . ." (*Newly Born* 68). The woman in Marlatt's poem does not desire to make her entrance into the world on grounds where she is a trespasser. She responds to the counsellor with one of the key statements in *Salvage*: "i want to imagine being in my element, she said" (17). In this section of "Litter, wreckage. salvage," Marlatt acknowledges that recognition of women's invisibility in literature does not guarantee their entry into it as a subject. In "River run," another poem in the title section of *Salvage*, she insists that women's presence in literature requires more than publishing women's writing. In this poem, Marlatt's words flow alongside those of Kim Chernin who states: "*what's at issue here is whether women can enter the culture AS women*" (25).

In "River run" and "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt suggests that in order for women to enter culture in their own right, they must sidestep prescriptive linear

writing where they are lost and move into passageways of their own imagining. For a woman to exchange the environment of *his* house for *his* streets is still to be invisible in terms of her being and her desires. Spoken for and spoken of, she remains the unsaid, still the "unspoken claim" (18) of men. Thus, in "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt writes:

> . . . I want to walk down the street as if I had the right to be there, as if it were not their construction site and stoop, slipping the net of their casting eyes, slipping the net of their market price. The street belongs to the men who live outside, whose small acts accrete (concrete) unspoken claim, a territory that cannot be tres-passed except you hurry through, for loitering indicates a desire to be caught . . . (18).

For the woman in section two of "Litter. wreckage. salvage," the fear of leaving home translates in section four as "the fear of being caught, caught out, caught without" (20). In section three, Marlatt presents "prostitute, destitute, alcoholic," (18) as some of the consequences for women who are caught. Sometimes this arises from being "caught" unawares: "two young men sprawled in the heat and the young woman with them, flaunting her being there free, she thinks, for free" (19). The woman who loiters on the street risks being reduced to an object, as "litter," defined by patriarchal language that displaces her, "she doesn't have the words to alter his definition of her" (20). Marlatt suggests that on "the street its emblems of desire" (32), there are two choices for women, being a hooker or being

hooked, both of which fulfil the desires of men. She explores how language is the means of the enactment of this cultural occurrence:

> the baiting you do talking to me in the street, my back against the car and you playing the line, hiding behind the tease i rise to, as to the clover of your smile -
>
> 'Fish are there to be caught you know' (21).

In this poem, the street is a highly visible site of exchange.[5]

In the fifth section of "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt identifies the school yard as one of the first sites where girls learn to suppress their sexuality as they teach each other how to solicit the male gaze[6]:

> swimming through sexual currents looking for eyes . . . eyes the lure. allure. not looking (out) but looking for the look for certain eyes, floating around the places he swam by . . . (21).

The girl in this passage becomes a passive, impassive object of male action and desire. Like the young woman in *Steveston*'s "Imperial Cannery, 1913," she is both without agency and a stranger to her own sexuality, "[a]ll action his, mine merely to

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[5] Marlatt explores this situation in *Ana Historic*:

> boy-crazy you said, shaking your head as we drove, walked, rode obsessed past street corners, sauntered past certain spots on the beach, our heads full of advertising images, converting all action into the passive: to be seen (*Ana Historic* 52).

[6] In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt suggests that at an early age, girls equate their value with their ability to elicit and satisfy male desire. They train each other to become alluring: "'don't look at them,' Donna advised, 'just let them look,' as The Hunks paraded by, eyeing the choice" (82). She illustrates how women learn to suppress their sexuality and regard desire for other women as something monstrous which must be hidden in silence. Thus, "i looked at her instead, the soft rise of her breasts under her suit . . ." (82) becomes what she has "left unsaid" (83).

be seen"[7] (21). Luce Irigaray contends that the so-called *femininity* for which a woman is valued on this "market of sexual exchange" is an image constructed for her by male systems of representation (*Irigaray Reader* 130). A woman who loses herself is, therefore, reduced to the status of an object and becomes a commodity (130-131). Culture has a term for this girl's passing over of self:

> . . . i 'lost' myself as they say and i did. fall into invisibility, silvered, dead. i floated up and down the school yard with the others, eyes reflecting all they saw, blind to myself, more: hoping to feel that hook when his would connect: 'he looked at me!' (*Salvage* 21).

In section two of this poem, the woman fears this marketplace that culture prepares for her. Irigaray poses a question central to this analysis of *Salvage*:

> How can such objects of use and transaction claim the right to speak and to participate in exchange in general? Commodities, as we all know, do not take themselves to market on their own; and if they could talk . . . So women have to remain an 'infrastructure' unrecognized as such by our society and our culture. The use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualized bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as 'subjects' (*Irigaray Reader* 131).

In section five, the woman refuses to be caught by the bait of the man's words, the "fishy vocabularies we speak our words through" (*Salvage* 22). He protests her unwillingness to satisfy his needs by feeding her a line: " 'the fish never says no,' you say, the lure speaking" (22) to which she responds: "i contend with

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[7] In *Ana Historic*, Marlatt also explores how girls, in 'waiting to be Made (passive voice, . . . to be certified Teen angels, Dolls' (*Ana Historic* 82), submit themselves to being made over in the image of male desire.

desire elicited from me, the lure, the bait: i'm worth fishing for" (21). And, indeed, she swims "right on by. . . . after something too. something else" (22).

With these concluding words of the fifth section of "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt steers the reader towards an act of imagination: "imagine her in her element" (23). These opening words of the sixth and final section of this poem call up the first two poems of *Steveston*, the first of which is, "Imagine: a town." The words, "in her element" evoke an image of the unnamed young woman, dreaming "in her element," (*Steveston* 16) in "Imperial Cannery, 1913." In *Salvage*, Marlatt merges these words from the two poems in *Steveston* with a new purpose: to "imagine her in her element: not to be taken in its restrictive sense as home (is her, closed in)" (*Salvage* 23). As with Ana in *Ana Historic*, "to imagine her in her element" requires an act of imagination from both Marlatt and her reader. Furthermore, it demands a new relationship between women and words, a different form of writing for the future, as the next stanza-graph indicates: "in her element in other words" (23). The woman who expresses her desire to be in her element, in section two of "Litter. wreckage. salvage," veers from the known path. In fact, she is "already past the gate she's past his point of view as central (hook/lure) to a real she eludes" (23).

By calling up the nameless woman in *Steveston*, her writing of the past, Marlatt affords her reader the opportunity to witness how she is able "to break its

hold over us" (Rich "When We Dead" 35). As the unnamed woman of *Steveston* represents "any woman," (*Salvage* 23) Marlatt is able to release her from the threshold through the action of the unidentified woman of *Salvage*. Now "free, she multiples herself in any woman . . . she who with every step . . . desires in the infinitive to utter (outer) her way through: litter. wreckage. salvage of pure intent" (23). She emerges as an active speaking subject who voices her control of her life: "i contend with desire elicited from me" (21). Her words foreshadow Marlatt's movement towards the subject of women's desire. We will become reacquainted with this woman as she embraces a new relationship with words in the company of others. We find her again in **"Acts of Passage"** and **"Booking Passage,"** the fourth and fifth sections of *Salvage*.

V Λ

(Ex)changing the V-U Point

Our whole life a translation
the permissable fibs

and now a knot of lies
eating at itself to get undone

Words bitten thru words

meanings burnt-off like paint
under the blowtorch

All those dead letters
rendered into the oppressor's language
Adrienne Rich, "Our Whole Life"

In *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative*, collaboration and a supportive network of women artists and writers are important to Marlatt's writing. Marlatt acknowledges that "**Acts of Passage**," her exchange with Nicole Brossard, and the "**Booking Passage**" sections of *Salvage*, were "generated out of a growing sense of community with women writers/readers, drawn by the currents of our desire in language for contact through time, over space and across cultures" (Foreword. *Salvage* N. pag.). This differs from the isolation from other women writers Marlatt experiences at the "Dialogue" conference in 1981 (Marlatt, "Correspondences" 23). In the "**Acts of Passage**" section of *Salvage*, Marlatt includes Brossard's poem,

"Mauve," and her translation of it. From this section of *Salvage*, I will examine Marlatt's prose poem, "Character" which Brossard translates as "Jeu de lettres."[8]

As Brenda Carr suggests, in "Character/Jeu de lettres," Marlatt intensifies the contradictions in the word meanings of "character" and "carves out a space for an articulation of the unspeakable, the other side of discourse, the *ir*rational or, in Kristevan terms, 'the semiotic' " ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 91).[9] In my analysis of this prose poem, I will examine how Marlatt plays with the meanings of other words in addition to "character" in order to move into an unrestricted writing space for writing women's experiences.

In "Character," as in "Litter. wreckage. salvage," Marlatt introduces the reader once again to an unnamed woman on the street who: "walks so as not to be seen in / her exact skin / characterized as feminine . . ." (*Salvage* 103). The woman in these poems does not solicit the male gaze, yet on the streets she is frequently regarded as an object of desire. As Canadian writer Dionne Brand attests from her encounters with the male gaze on the streets of Cuba, the woman's

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[8] In her "Acknowledgements" at the beginning of *Salvage*, Marlatt notes that "Mauve" and "Character/Jeu de lettres" were first published as two separate chapbooks by NBJ (1985) and Writing (1986) presses, Montreal. They were also included in Nicole Brossard's *A tout regard*, NBJ/BQ, Montreal (1989).

[9] Carr writes that "The Marlatt/Brossard collaboration signals a new direction in Canadian women's writing - 'fiction/theory' " ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 91). For a discussion of fiction/theory as it pertains to the work of Marlatt and Brossard, please refer to Carr ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 91-92).

character is not considered. Brand writes: "There's another difficulty, writer, information officer, or farmer, I will walk the streets, paved or unpaved, as a woman. . . . They see my sex" (47).

In "Character," Marlatt makes a break with writing that fixes her as the object of someone else's gaze. As in *Double Negative*, she crosses the "street" of the sentence to abandon its "stop & go" structure that positions her as the object of the action: ". . . blank she crosses / stop & go the mind's traffic snow / a gulf i rides as rain at sea . . ." (*Salvage* 103). In writing with a lower case "i" instead of a capitalizing, capital "I," Marlatt does not assume a dominant position in discourse but approaches writing as a place of "shared ground," open to a dialogue of different voices (Marlatt "Difference (em)bracing" 192).

In the initial poetic sequence of "Character," Marlatt shifts from the "stop & go" street of writing to the fluid rhythms of the sea:

> . . . a sea
> not so much crossed as what
> her body impress nearness then tests
> going
> launches itself
>
> in its element not in
> character (*Salvage* 103).

The poetry of this passage calls up Inez Huovinen who is named in *Steveston*, a woman of presence in her element whose body moves in synchrony with the waves, who speaks in her own voice. In "Character," Marlatt separates the words

"launches itself" from "going" to suggest movement into a fluid form of writing patterned on the rhythms of a woman's body "in its element not in / character." The word, "character," is well-suited to her purpose as she employs it as a verb: to inscribe. She takes its root meaning from the Greek, to "stamp or impress" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), to introduce the idea of making her mark through writing attuned to her active body: "her body impress." In doing so, Marlatt works against how women are "characterized as / feminine" (103) by others in order to find a way for them to inscribe their own characters.

Throughout this poem, Marlatt continues to play with word meanings, deriving all three subsequent section headings of this poem sequence from the multiple meanings of "character" (Carr "Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 92). Entitled "<<a mark>>," section two of "Character" provides an example of a father-to-son heritage, comparable to the one at the beginning of "Litter. wreckage. salvage." Once again, Marlatt suggests that ownership of the word is a cultural birthright, handed from father to son: "born in name, I the undersigned/ established character" (*Salvage* 104). As Carr notes, men's activity in signing marks a cultural privilege that women have not had ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 96). Marlatt links male authority in the business world with male author/ity of the word:

"business, credit on tap, sign / this personage . . ." (*Salvage* 104). The word, "personage," conveys that this is a "person of rank or importance.[10]"

The heading of the third section of "Character," "<<instrument for branding>>," suggests a tool to mark possession, a trade mark. Farmers mark ownership of their cattle by branding them with the burn mark of a hot iron. Another mark of ownership is a "stake" (105) which establishes the boundaries of a property. Marlatt suggests that legal language empowers men's stake or claim in the world, men who are "in character, <<consistent with>> as if / character were company limited" (105). In comparison, the woman of this poem, "she[,] has no character meaning / indissoluble boundaries" (105). Marlatt protests that "so many terms for dominance in English are tied up with male experiencing, masculine hierarchies and differences (exclusion), patriarchal holdings with their legalities" ("Musing" 47). However, with no "stake in the real" (*Salvage* 105), women are free to "rupture" (105) from it, moving elsewhere. Indeed, Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard claim that the representations of women they freely create from the other face of the "real" can indeed break the enclosed circle of patriarchal discourse:

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[10] In a previous poem in this collection entitled "Shrimping," Marlatt suggests that patrimony, maintained through the authoritative word "of the Father," permeates institutions such as the church: "dirige Domine who hath dominion dominate in techne lord of the nets" (*Salvage* 30). The Latin words in "Shrimping" call up the Roman Catholic Church as one example of a religious institution that reduces women to the "*diminutive*" (30) by depriving them of the same right to speech as men. Not allowed to preach, women are also deprived of a say over the reproductive functions of their bodies, as this particular institution forbids the use of birth control.

> then, this other reality, from where we begin to exist, and in which girls again find themselves full of intensity, in the process of subject, like an essential force circulation among the spaces (Brossard 59).

Like Marlatt and Warland in *Double Negative*, in "Character," Marlatt and Brossard believe that releasing polyvalent word meanings can break the patriarchal real's "one-way sense of authority" (Brossard 110-111). In "Character," Marlatt as "s/he / s plural in excess of he" (*Salvage* 105) heads for "unknown and *unlimited* spaces" (111).

> It will take the strength of her and all her sisters to write through this dark, confusing place without tipping the balance to psychosis. . . . That's why the body, her body, which by its very leap transgresses, as it moves beyond cognizance towards excess, towards the danger zones spawned by dreams, feeling, memory, holds very tightly to the hand of her sisters. Sisters who like her see a tremendous future in inscribing the dialectics of subject. . . .
>
> Gail Scott, "A Feminist at the Carnival"

In the last section of "Character," entitled "<<pointed stake>>," Marlatt invites the reader to engage in a writing practice with her beyond the bounds of patriarchal discourse: "take a character, write s" (*Salvage* 106). The character, "s," is not "bound" or "limited" by male systems of representation. It is not branded, "not the S-burn hide, not / property marked with belonging" (106). In "<<pointed stake>>":

S does not belong, goes beyond
herself in excess of
longing to leap
right out of her skin (106).

One meaning of skin is to make a narrow escape by the skin of your teeth. Through the sound association of "skin," Marlatt evokes the word, "shin," which comes from the Old High German "*scina*," meaning to climb up or down a tree or a wall by using arms and legs. Marlatt contends that women can escape the bonds of the author/ial I / eye by the skin of their teeth, through the shinning action of their bodies: "climbing the walls even / to get over it" (55). With the words "S-burn hides" and "pointed stake," she insists on the necessity of escape by evoking images of women burned alive at the stake.[11] In this poem, the unnamed woman escapes obliteration by "biting through the traces" (106) or ropes. The woman in this poem is indeed any woman, possibly "you":

biting through the traces left
across her body
you (106).

In breaking her bonds, she escapes being marked by someone else's story of her. It is vital that she trace out, or write, her story where, previously, there have only been traces of her existence.

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[11] In seventeenth-century New England, a number of women who are excluded from the interpretation of "God's unknowable will," and challenge religious doctrine, are burned at the stake as witches (Rich *Of Woman* 135-137). In France, in 1431, Joan of Arc is burned as a heretic (Sackville-West 284).

Another meaning of trace is to ascertain the position and dimensions of an ancient wall by its remains. Here Marlatt suggests that the wall erected by patriarchal discourse that leaves women's experiences in its shadow will crumble in the wake of women's fictionalysis. In this passage, "s/he" (105) pulls up stakes, booking passage to trace elsewhere. Indeed, she reappears in the next section of *Salvage*, entitled "**Booking Passage**."

Through the final word of "Character," "you," Marlatt beckons the reader to join her in writing women in unmapped spaces. Writing from such territory in *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland collaborate to dismantle the unitary, authoritative script of poetic discourse as neither of them claims single ownership of the word. In "Character," Marlatt heads elsewhere, departing from poetry as Mikhail Bakhtin describes it:

> The language in a poetic work realizes itself as something about which there can be no doubt, something that cannot be disputed, something all-encompassing. . . . The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed (286).

In the final sequence of "Character," the various appearances of the letter "s" indicate that an initiation into signing is occurring. Resembling a child's initial experiences with writing, "scribbling" produces the letter "s":

> scribbler. scribbling. i look it up and it means writing. why do we think it so much less? because a child's scribble is unreadable? (she hasn't learned the codes, the quotes yet.) scribe is from the same

> root, *skeri*, to cut (the ties that bind us to something recognizable - the 'facts') (*Ana Historic* 81).

By having "s" sign itself: "signor, sister, son, sire, soprano" (*Salvage* 106), Marlatt explores collaboration and inclusion in writing across barriers of difference, including gender, sexual orientation, race, and language. In fact, in "Character/Jeu de lettres," Marlatt's play with "s" generates Brossard's play with "l" as "[illegible]" (110). Brossard writes:

> *elle est sans caractère signifiant*
> *insoluble l/imite*
> *i/lle:*
> *plurielles dans l'excès de ce qu'il* (109).

At the beginning of "<<*enjeu de pointe*>>" or "pointed stake," Marlatt's "instrument for branding" (105) becomes Brossard's "*de brûlant brandon*" (110). While the word, "*brûlant*," means "burning-hot," it also means "biting." Brossard employs both of these meanings in a subversive manner similar to Marlatt's in "Character." She works with two meanings of "*brandon*" here, one of which is "fire-brand." Moreover, she applies "*brandon*" as "mischief-maker" since she and Marlatt make their own brand of mischief, toppling dominant conceptions that poetry must be a one-way transmission of meaning from the writer to the reader. They have a motive: to rethink the world through words (Brossard 136). Brossard writes:

> When I say literally give birth to ourselves in the world, I really do mean that literally. *Literal* means 'that which is represented by letters.' Taken literally. Taken to the letter. For we do take our bodies, our skin, our sweat, pleasure, sensuality, sexual bliss to the

> letter. From the letters forming these words emerge the beginnings of our texts. We also take our energy and our cleverness to the letter, and we make of our desire a spiral which delivers us into the movement toward sense. Sense which originates with us (134-135).

I have shown how Marlatt and Brossard's "**Acts of Passage**" have transformed the unnamed woman in "Character/Jeu de Lettres" into a character who signs herself. In their poetic exchange, words reveal their multiple meanings and different forms as they move from noun to verb and back again. In this poem, Marlatt identifies the unknown woman we have met throughout *Salvage* as "you" (106). In my analysis of "**Booking Passage**" I trace another step in the evolution of this woman as Marlatt calls "you" to move out of the isolation of the singular form to become "us." I examine how this partnership between Marlatt and her imagined reader launches "us" into reciprocal writing with the possibility for naming the unknown.

"Real 2": Women's Re-visions of Themselves in the World

> In the middle of the night
> the house heaves, unmoored
> launched on a vast sea.
> Dorothy Livesay, "The Artefacts: West Coast"

In the first poem of "**Booking Passage**," in the final section of *Salvage*, Marlatt writes: "it's us who move into awake, finding our calling" (113). The words, "us" and "our," confirm her shared approach to writing. The reader of Marlatt's poetry becomes her co-creator, working with her to release an infinite number of meanings from words by supplying other contexts. This differs from the notion that the poet is the sole producer of meaning (Bakhtin 297).[12] Indeed, Marlatt points out:

> . . . we inhabit many borderlands . . . The complex of these for each one of us is not the same as for any other. This makes the differences in our language and in our sense of our selves crucial. It makes attention to difference in the work of others essential, and collaboration rather than assimilation an essential writing practice.

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[12] Mikhail Bakhtin writes of how poetry traditionally operates:

> The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. These ideas are immanent in the poetic genres with which he works. In a condition of actual contradiction, these are what determine the means of orientation open to the poet. The poet must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language, he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own, intentions. Each word must express the poet's *meaning* directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word (297).

> Only then can we learn not to dominate one another with our claims to reality ("Difference (em)bracing" 193).

In this section of *Salvage*, Marlatt describes passionate rather than impassive women in the first poem, "To write":

> gazing at trees, rocks, boats, we feel the boats rock waves in our arms, these arms of land go out of focus up the pass, ça gaze? things go okay? like us, 'like ones,' who come and go in the watery sound a sailboat makes, no wind, engine drone, and the wake rolls to us, eyes closed to avoid our gazing (gauze of a certain hue - nothing distinct beyond blue) we find how things are in each other's skin, undone up close, we rock our ends in each other's surge, wake on wake of desire's passing, shudders, shifts. . . (113).

Because of the lack of a period, Marlatt's words "come and go" (113) here. She writes to a moving rhythm patterned on the waves of erotic pleasure that the women within the sailboat experience. Since there is "no wind" (113), the women rock the boat with their mutual expressions of desire: "we rock our ends in each other's surge, wake on wake of desire's passing, shudders, shifts . . ." (113). Marlatt makes waves with words that flow back and forth in disregard of standard "stop & go" (103) sentence structure. Immersing "us" (113) in the fluid rhythm, she does not privilege the sense of sight: "this is not the distinction of looking (long and fixed the gaze)" (113). In fact, the lovers close their eyes "to avoid our gazing" (113). They rely on tactile and auditory senses as they "find how things are in each other's skin, undone up close" (113).

In the final line of "To write," Marlatt unfixes "us" from the object position this pronoun occupies in standard sentence structure: "it's us who move into awake, finding our calling" (113). She plays with the word, "awake," to call up images of passive women, such as Sleeping Beauty, waiting for her prince to come and awaken her with a kiss (Cixous *Newly Born* 65-66). Adrienne Rich describes the powerful social impact that this awakening is causing:

> This awakening of dead or sleeping consciousness has already affected the lives of millions of women, even those who don't know it yet. It is also affecting the lives of men, even those who deny its claims upon them. . . . in the last few years the women's movement has drawn inescapable and illuminating connections between our sexual lives and our political institutions. The sleepwalkers are coming awake, and for the first time this awakening has a collective reality; it is no longer such a lonely thing to open one's eyes ("When We Dead" 35).

> **dispel**. *transitive verb*. dissipate, disperse, scatter, (suspicions, fears, darkness). [from Latin DIS (*pellere* drive)] (*Oxford English Dictionary*)
>
> transport, Eleni said, is one of the nouns i like that move across borders, it's subversive, a mini-truck of pure delight. she was watching Eleni's mouth move its freight of words. green light? she laughed. they both drove. . . .
>
> Daphne Marlatt, "Territory & co.," in *Salvage*

In the second poem of "**Booking Passage**," entitled "(Dis)spelling," Marlatt suggests that fear prevents a woman from entering the current of writing "running

just offshore, off the edge of some clan pier which wasn't mine" (*Salvage* 114). "[C]lan" signifies the patriarchal control of the written word that denies her a foothold. In order to claim agency in writing, she must move elsewhere, a frightening proposition: "the sinking / feel of footings underwater, ankle-deep on what remains, / afraid I'll drown, swept out (there was a broom) to sea" (114). The speaker in this poem is "singular and isolated" by the distance between the I / you structure of the traditional lyric (Butling 170): "you call me and i am speechless. you call me and I am still" (*Salvage* 114). However, like her isolation, her "speechless" state is about to change.

In "(Dis)spelling," two women take steps together to dispel the wall of silence erected around women in canonized literature: "close by two women wade, prosaic under sun umbrella, hauling pigeons to sell" (114). The word, "prosaic" (114), suggests "unromantic" or "like prose, lacking poetic beauty." By describing the women as "prosaic," Marlatt works against a multitude of poetic depictions of goddess-like, beautiful women. A well-known one is Christopher Marlowe's description of Helen of Troy, whom he creates as ravishing in order to be ravished.[13] Adrienne Rich describes how the "almost always beautiful women" that male writers depict are unrecognizable to women readers:

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[13] Christopher Marlowe's much quoted line from *Doctor Faustus* describes the beauty of Helen of Troy: "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships . . . ?" (330). Marlowe describes Faustus' overwhelming desire to have Helen satisfy him sexually: "That I may have unto my paramour / That heavenly Helen which I saw of late" (330).

> She goes to poetry or fiction looking for *her* way of being in the world, since she too has been putting words and images together; she is looking eagerly for guides, maps, possibilities; and over and over in the 'words' masculine persuasive force' of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men. She finds a terror and a dream, she finds a beautiful pale face, she finds La Belle Dame Sans Merci, she finds Juliet or Tess or Salome, but precisely what she does not find is that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself, who sits at a desk trying to put words together ("When We Dead" 39).

In "(Dis)spelling," instead of walking on the streets, the two "wading" women are "waiting" to enter the "current, our swift magnetic current" (*Salvage* 114) of fluid writing. They haul "homing" pigeons, birds that can be trained to carry missives home. As she did previously in her description of "salmon homing in this season" (16), Marlatt mobilises "home" with her reference to "homing" pigeons. These are birds of passage in the hands of a pair of "prosaic" (114) writers.

Following in the footsteps of the women, the speaker launches herself into the waves of fluid writing where, in fact, she finds a foothold on "a new floor": "i too discover i can walk . . . deep / in this place that feels like history, old jossticks burning, / old offerings" (114). A murmur of discontent issues forth from her as:

> out of this murmuring wreckage of names, old beach,
> i am finding a new floor. miles off i walk in water feeling
> the current, our swift magnetic current run, all around the
> islands sinking in me and you (114).

Awakened to her ability to speak for herself and move into a current of writing, she discovers new ground for her self-expression. Marlatt invites her reader, "any

woman" (23) to dispel the silence around her through her own voice, to be "in her element in other words" (23). To do this in writing, she proposes a prosaic partnership of "me and you" (114).

> I am an instrument in the shape
> of a woman trying to translate pulsations
> into images for the relief of the body
> and the reconstruction of the mind.
> Adrienne Rich, "Planetarium"

In the concluding poem of *Salvage* entitled, "Booking passage," Marlatt continues to play with word meanings. For instance, "booking" can mean reserving a space, as on a sea-going vessel. "Booking" also suggests the "act of reading or writing a book; how to find the passageway into a book" (Butling 167). Yet, more than reading *or* writing, from my examination of Marlatt's writing techniques in this thesis, I would suggest that her poetry compels the reader to take an active, interactive role in the creation of meaning. Pauline Butling recognizes elsewhere in her discussion of "**Booking Passage**" that:

> there are words at play; subjects in motion; images forming, dissolving, re-forming; frames shifting in kaleidoscopic motion. . . . [A] polyvalent, multi-directional text demands that the reader join in the process of making up meaning. This I like. As well, such texts loosen the boundaries of meaning and thus allow for interventions - by both

> the writer and the reader - in the symbolic order ("'From Radical'" 167).

The poetry of **"Booking Passage"** is a two-way interaction between co-creators of meaning in the manner of the speech of conversation:

> In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement (Bakhtin 282).

The co-creator of Marlatt's poetry engages in both reading *and* writing simultaneously. Barbara Godard points out that the process of making meaning is an important focus of feminist theory:

> No longer is an author or speaker perceived to be a transcendent self or bearer of meaning (an *author*ity), nor the text conceived as a self-contained object, the product of an expressive self to be consumed by an empathetic reader who reduplicates pre-constituted meanings. The text is neither discrete nor self-contained, but is constructed in the discourses that articulate it, in an interactive context of reader and text and institution(s). Every text is a pre-text. The author, as reader, is rewriting precursor texts: the reader, as author, rewrites the author's text, investing it with meaning in the context of her own life and experience ("Becoming My Hero" 112-113).

In "Booking passage," Marlatt induces the reader to explore the multiple meanings of "passage." In the "passage" or short part of this book, she makes a transition to a different form of writing. Her allusion for this is a passage or crossing at sea. Through wordplay, she slips free of the restrictive noose of language and finds a "passageway" into writing for "any woman" (*Salvage* 23): "a path, channel

or duct. a corridor. a book and not a book. / not *booked* but off the record. this" (116).

The as yet unnamed "this" occurs at the end of a previous line in this poem: "there is the passage. there is the *booking* - and our fear of this" (116). The recurrence of "this" pulls the reader back and forth through the passages of the poem in a process of making meaning from Marlatt's multiple references. In fact, apart from the title, "this" occurs as the first word of the poem and twice in the first stanza-graph:

> this coming and going in the dark of early morning, snow
> scribbling its thawline round the house. we are under-
> cover, under a cover of white you unlock your door on this
> slipperiness (115).

By "this coming and going" (115, 118, 119), Marlatt refers to the waves of pleasure that the female couple experience in their love-making. At the same time, with the word "scribbling," she resumes the initiation into writing of the unnamed woman, "you" (106), from "**Acts of Passage**." The wet "snow / scribbling its thawline around the house" surrounds the women within while "you," the lover under the covers or "you," the reader between the covers of this book, open the door on the subject of desire between women.[14] Marlatt returns to the word, "thawline," further along in the poem, connecting it with female orgasm: "irresistible melt of hot flesh. furline

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[14] For a perceptive discussion of the body as translator within the context of Marlatt's essay, "Musing with Mothertongue," please see Chapter Four of Pamela Banting's "Translation poetics: Composing the body Canadian," especially pages 244-265.

and thawline align / your wet descent" (116). By making a pun between "align" and "a line," she writes against the cover-up in books of women's desire, which includes same sex love relationships: "this cover, this blank that halts a kiss on the / open road. . ." (115).

In "Booking passage," Marlatt plays with the words "slipperiness" (115), "slips" (115), and "slipping away" (118). In the first passage, "slipperiness" suggests the erotic, wet touch of the lovers' explorations of each other's bodies. At the same time, "slipperiness" refers to the difficulty of standing erect when one "slips" and loses a foothold on the ground. "Slipping out" means departing and, through sound association, it evokes another term of leavetaking, "shipping out." Indeed, the word, "slips," occurs next in the context of a writing practice that Marlatt is ready to embrace as she both slips and ships out:

> we haven't even begun to write . . . sliding the in-between
> as the ferry *slips* its shoreline, barely noticeable at first, a
> gathering beat of engines in reverse, the shudder of the
> turn to make that long *passage* out (115, emphasis mine).

As a ferry "slips" its shoreline, it detaches itself from the solid ground of land. Similarly, in her craft, Marlatt "slips" into a current of fluid writing with her "booking" (116) companion. Along with her reciprocal reader/co-writer, she "slips" being objectified in a sentence: "you are into our current now of going, not inert, not even gone as i lick you loose" (116). Here, we are *moving into awake*: "there is a light beginning over the ridge of my closed eyes" (116).

In their collaboratively written poems in "Reading and Writing Between the Lines[15]," Marlatt and Warland provide an example of how they "slip into something more comfortable" as they write together (135). This excerpt from their poem, "Let me slip," demonstrates their wordplay as they connect the word, "slip," to "lips:"

lābi, to glide, to slip
. . . . . .
slip of the tongue
'the lability of innocence'
labium 'any of the four folds of tissues of the female external genitalia'
four corners of the earth
four gates of Eden
labia majora (the 'greater lips')
la la la
and
labia minora
(the 'lesser lips')

not two mouths but three!
slipping one over on polarity

slippage in the text
you & me *collābi, (to slip together)*
in labiaiization!
slip(ing) page(es)
like notes in class

o labialism o letter of the lips
o *grafting* of our slips

labile lovers

---

[15] "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" was first published in 1988 in *Tessera* 5. It is published again in 1994 by Guernica Editions in Marlatt and Warland's poetic collaboration, *Two Women in a Birth*.

. . . . . .
giving the one authoritative version the slip
graft, graphium, graphein, to write

slippery lines
thought is collaboration (135-136).

In "**Booking Passage**," Marlatt focuses on opening up writing to women who desire women. Betsy Warland notes that "[f]or lesbians, who are twice defined by our feminine gendered bodies, this struggle is doubly crucial" (*Proper Deafinitions* 123). Marlatt embarks on reciprocal writing partnerships that no longer silence women engaged in loving women: "under the covers, morning, you take my scent, writing me / into your cells' history. deep in our sentencing, i smell you/ home" (*Salvage* 115). These are uncharted waters:

> nothing in the book says where we might head. my tongue
> in you, your body cresting now around, around this tip's
> lip-suck surge rush of your coming in other words (116).

While Marlatt repeats: "we haven't even begun to write . . ." (116), she conjectures that the way to express same sex loving lies directly in patterning words on the orgasmic "rush of your coming," "this rubbing between the word and our / skin" (116). Here, Luce Irigaray's "touch" is in evidence:

> This 'style' does not privilege sight; instead, it takes each figure back to its source, which is among other things *tactile*. It comes back in touch with itself in that origin without ever constituting itself in it, as some sort of unity. *Simultaneity* is its 'proper' aspect - a proper(ty) that is never fixed in the possible identity-to-self of some form or other. It is always *fluid*, without neglecting the characteristics of fluids that are difficult to idealize: those rubbings between two

> infinitely near neighbours that create a dynamics. Its 'style' resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept (Irigaray *Irigaray Reader* 126).

> I wanted to stop this,
> this life flattened against the wall,
>
> mute and devoid of colour,
> built of pure light,
>
> this life of vision only, split
> and remote, a lucid impasse.
>
> I confess: this is not a mirror,
> it is a door
>
> say the releasing word, whatever
> that may be, open the wall
> Margaret Atwood, "Tricks With Mirrors"

In the second section of "Booking passage," Marlatt opens the wall on invisible women, as she does in *Ana Historic* and with Betsy Warland in *Double Negative*. The time of "awakening" and "coming out" (*Salvage* 118) arrives for Sleeping Beauty and for any woman:

> tell me, tell me where you are when the bush closes in, all heat a luxuriance of earth so heavy i can't breathe the stifling wall of prickly rose, skreek of mosquito poised . . . for the wall to break
>
> the wall that isolates, that i so late to this:

> it doesn't, it slides apart - footings, walls, galleries, this island architecture (117).

Marlatt insists that "it's us who move into awake," (113) when we co-create, and thus, re-vise, images of women's realities. She writes that "[d]ifference is where the words turn depending on who reads them and how we bring who we are to that reading. When we each bring our differences into that reading, the multiple nature of the real begins to be heard" ("Difference (em)bracing" 189). Each collaborating reader who books passage claims agency to voice their realities. For all people invisible between the lines of someone else's story of them, Marlatt establishes a way "to combat this slipping away, of me, of you" (*Salvage* 118) :

> one layer under the other, memory a ghost, a guide, histolytic where the pain is stored, murmur, *mer-mère*, historicity stored in the tissue, text . . . a small boat, fraught. trying to cross the distance, trying to find that passage (secret). in libraries where whole texts, whole persons have been secreted away (117).

In her writing, Marlatt is "trying to find that passage (secret)" so that women in all their diversity may enter into a writing practice where they mark their presences. In the following stanza-graph from the third section of "Booking passage," Marlatt salvages fragments of Sappho's words, which she writes in italics. As Brenda Carr points out, the destruction of Sappho's work "because of its explicit celebration of lesbian eroticism" results in "only a small collection of fragments - the

trace of a women writers' tradition" ("Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts" 14).[16] Sappho's words are integral to Marlatt who is *moving into awake* in the company of other reader/co-writers:

> like her, precisely on the page, this mark: *a thin flame runs under / my skin.* twenty-five hundred years ago, this trembling then. actual as that which wets our skin her

---

[16] Carr cites Gubar's "Sapphistries," page 46, as her source on Sappho and a women writer's tradition.

In her essay,"It gives me a great deal of pleasure to say yes: Writing/Reading Lesbian in Daphne Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue*," Janice Williamson points out:

> Marlatt's poems not only 'come out' but also 'go public' on the airwaves of lesbian eros which hum with rhythms of an alternative series of love poems from Sappho to Phyllis Webb's 'Naked Poems' to Nicole Brossard's *Amantes (Lovhers)* and Adrienne Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems.' These writings refuse the canonical terms of 'tradition,' for the notion of a fixed lesbian essence or identity would deny the social historical dimension of sexuality itself. Lesbian historians and critics like Elizabeth Meese remind us that lesbian writing is not only constituted historically but also constitutive of what it means to write as a lesbian. Thus while one can trace certain social historical trends in the self-definition and writings of lesbianism, there are many differences in approaches. For instance, between Jane Rule and Nicole Brossard, formal and aesthetic differences can parallel different approaches to sexual identity and libidinal commitment. Daphne Marlatt's lesbian love poems do not stir up images of bad-sister butch/femme bar dykes which, during the 1950s, would have provided the lesbian reader with a recognizable code of signs. As in her novel, *Ana Historic*, Marlatt's poems write lesbianism in a current of contemporary lesbian representations where sexuality is embedded in romantic friendship and relationship (175).

As I have indicated throughout this thesis, I believe that the texts of *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage*, are open to response from a diverse group of reader / co-writers. Marlatt and Warland present a fluid form of writing that opens up poetic discourse to those silenced in writing, including female lovers of women. They do not place conditions with regard to sexual orientation on their reciprocal readers.

In their dedication of *Double Negative* to Jane Rule and Nicole Brossard, Marlatt and Warland indicate their openness to different approaches for establishing the presence of women, including those who engage in same sex love.

> words come down to us, a rush, poured through the blood,
> this coming and going among islands is (*Salvage* 119).

In *Salvage*, Marlatt works in a number of ways so that women who desire women, who are doubly debarred from poetic discourse, may present themselves through reciprocally written poetry that flows within their passionate embrace. The above passage demonstrates how she disrupts subject - verb - object sentence structure in her most recent writing in "**Booking Passage**." As Pauline Butling points out, Marlatt "resists the integrative networks of syntax and thus brings each word into focus, gives each word individual presence" (172). All parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, are dispersed in the wake of writing that is attuned to women's body rhythms. The way words operate in Marlatt's poetry in "**Booking Passage**" and in "**Real 2**," her collaboration with Betsy Warland in *Double Negative*, is very similar to Luce Irigaray's conception of a feminine syntax:

> . . . what a feminine syntax might be is not simple or easy to state, because in that 'syntax' there would no longer be either subject or object, 'oneness' would no longer be privileged, there would be no longer proper meanings, proper names, 'proper' attributes. . . . Instead, that 'syntax' would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation (*Irigaray Reader* 136).

In the third section of "Booking passage," Marlatt moves into territory "most strictly forbidden to women today, the expression of women's sexual pleasure" (125). In her writing, she reaches back through time to other female lovers of

women whose stories have been destroyed, rejected, or left unwritten, outside symbolic signification:

> this tracking back and forth across the white, this tearing
> of papyrus crosswise, this tearing of love in our mouths to
> leave our mark in the midst of rumour, coming out.
>
> . . . to write in lesbian (*Salvage* 118).

With "illicit hands cupped one in the other" (118), Marlatt's collaborative poetry reclaims women who engage in same sex love from being submerged under "Character's" "mark," "born in name, I the undersigned / established character . . . this personage / a person portrayed/ by himself" (104). With voice and agency, these "marked" (118) women, "we[,] are elsewhere, / translated here . . ." (118). Betsy Warland, with whom Marlatt collaborates in this enterprise in *Double Negative*, claims that:

> By her existence the lesbian challenges one of the basic concepts of property: she belongs to no man. So, too, we-the-lesbian-writers in *Double Negative* defy a basic patriarchal principle of the written word. individual ownership (*Proper Deafinitions* 134).

My examination of *Salvage* suggests how Marlatt's writing requires the reader to take and make, and sometimes break, meaning. The production of meaning depends upon the words Marlatt employs as well as the context the reader brings to those words (Bakhtin 284). As a result, in *Salvage*, an ever-changing collaborative text emerges. Through rhythmic writing attuned to the waves of women's desire, which requires the abandonment of subject - verb - object word

order, Marlatt breaks the one-way sense of the standard sentence. Indeed, she plays with multiple meanings of words to disrupt fixed meaning. In comparison to "Steveston:/ your women are invisible" (15) at the beginning of *Salvage*, a distinct female presence pervades every sense of the word in Marlatt's description of women making love in the final section: "you take my scent . . . i smell you home" (115).

Conclusion

nothing in the book says where we might head.
Daphne Marlatt, *Salvage*

Salvage marks a beginning of an innovative writing practice elsewhere beyond the bounds of fixed definition:

> It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisma, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate (Cixous "Laugh" 883).

Marlatt's writing suggests that it is possible for women, in the current of their exchange, to slip culture's objectifying gaze through collaborative, fluid writing: "this coming and going among islands is" (*Salvage* 119). With Betsy Warland, she creates an opportunity for many voices, similar and different, to respond to the question, "Who's There?":

> you and you (not we) in me and all of us reading, which is what we do when left holding the floor, watching you soar with the words' turning and turning their sense and sensing their turns i'm dancing with you in the dark learning to trust that sense of direction learning to read you in to where i want to go although the commotion in words the connotations you bring are different we share the floor the ground floor meaning dances on . . . whirling out to include . . . (Marlatt and Warland "Reading and Writing" 142).

My examination of Daphne Marlatt's three most recent books, *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage* focuses on Marlatt's movement into a new form of writing. The questions, "Who's There?" and "where are we?" from *Ana Historic* and *Double Negative* respectively, point the direction for my analysis. Marlatt's response to her "Who's There" (*Ana Historic* 9) question begins as she shatters the silence surrounding desire between women through her own life writing. As I have discussed, however, the writing she embraces, like the loving she engages in, is a partnered affair which opens this question up to all of her readers. In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Betsy Warland together, from the desert, pose the "where are we" (32) question in terms of women's invisibility in writing, a subject that connects this book to Marlatt's *Ana Historic*. A female couple, they are surrounded by a double wall of silence, the desire they experience relegated to the realm of the *unspeakable*. Seeking to undo their double negative position, they make their entrance into writing through their lovemaking, "kinetic at all points in touch / with coming incessantly" (18). Their reciprocal loving becomes the pattern for their interactive "coming and going" (*Salvage* 115, 118, 119) form of writing, this "tracking back and forth across the white" (118). In my analysis of *Double Negative*, I have demonstrated that Marlatt and Warland move into an open rather than an enclosed form of expression, writing not as one, but together, "not the same so much as reciprocal, moving back and forth between our sameness and our differences"

("Reading and Writing" 133). As I have indicated in Chapter One, at the end of *Ana Historic* Marlatt envisions the *awakening* of her reciprocal reader / co-writer: "it isn't dark but the luxury of being has woken you, the reach of your desire, reading us into the page ahead" (N. pag.). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland call on their readers to co-write their visions of themselves:

> in our doubleness, no, our plurality as we read (for) and write (to) you, all the you's in each other reading and writing too - a polylogue, such bends and twists - you see how this writing rivers out to various mouths immediately (Marlatt and Warland "Reading and Writing" 133)?

I have shown that the imagination and interest of the reader determine the meaning gained from *Salvage* since Marlatt's poetry leads towards many passageways. Indeed, Marlatt and Warland suggest that "everything entered is subject to change, subject to transformation in the reader's imaginary, the reader being she, after all, who constructs meaning" ("Subject" 165)[17].

The interwriting that Marlatt moves into in *Ana Historic* and *Salvage*, and in *Double Negative* with Betsy Warland, allows her to present herself in her desire as she experiences it with her partner. This "rhythmic synchrony" (Marlatt and Warland "Reading and Writing" 144) of writing breaks the positions of subject and object in the sentence, leaving words free to stir up meaning as they move in the

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[17] In this thesis I quote from Marlatt and Warland's "Subject to Change," published in *Guernica Editions* in 1994 on pages 149-169. This is a slightly modified version of their earlier essay entitled "Subject to Change: A Collaboration," published in *Capilano Review* 2.6/7 (Fall 1991).

mind's eye "so that the object transforms into the subject and back again" (Marlatt and Warland "Subject" 167). In *Ana Historic*, *Double Negative*, and *Salvage*, the "Who's There" and "where are we" questions remain open, awaiting the response of each new reader/co-writer who imagines herself *moving into awake*, in her element in other words. . . .

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