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Dialogic Imagination in Jane Urquhart's *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away*

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RÉSUMÉ DE SYNTHÈSE

Le chronotope est l'unité de base de Mikhail M. Bakhtin pour étudier les textes. Il est défini comme étant le rapport intrinsèque entre le temps et l'espace artistiquement exprimé en littérature, un récit édifié par l'entremise de lignes spatiales et temporelles. Bakhtin décrit le discours comme étant un phénomène verbal et social (hétéroglossie) où il y a l'interaction dialogique d'une polyphonie de voix caractérisée par diverses stratifications de langages, dont les génériques, les professionnelles, et les sociologiques, qui accordent des attitudes et valeurs non seulement divergentes et contradictoires mais inconciliables. Les interactions dialogiques et l'évolution des personnages deviennent alors plus importantes que l'intrigue et l'histoire du roman.

Dans le cadre de ces conceptions théoriques, la vision esthétique et la poésie textuelle de Jane Urquhart dans *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven* et *Away* peuvent être élucidées. Les paysages, fonctionnant comme des mises en scène de perspectives naturelles et folkloriques, sont des structures de signification en évolution constante constituant le monde créatif de l'auteur qui sont en relation réciproque avec les discours dialogiques, les caractérisations et les stratifications de langages pour permettre la découverte des représentations thématiques rattachées aux paysages en transformation et les relations inter personnelles que l'on retrouve dans les romans.

ABSTRACT

The chronotope, defined as the intrinsic connectedness of time and space as artistically expressed in literature, is Mikhail M. Bakhtin's unit of analysis for studying texts. It is narrative crafted along spacial and temporal lines. Bakhtin delineates discourse as the dialogic interactions of a polyphony of voices, each of which is not only verbal but a social phenomenon (heteroglossia) characterized by various stratifications of languages – including generic, professional, and sociological – which impart attitudes and values that are not only divergent and conflicted, but basically irreconcilable. The traditional plot/story assumes secondary importance to the dialogical interactions and evolution of the characters.

Within this theoretical framework, the aesthetic vision and textual poetics of Jane Urquhart in *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away* can be elucidated. Landscapes as settings, defined as folkloric and natural perspectives, are evolving and changing structures of meaning that constitute the author's creative world and interrelate closely with the dialogical discourses, the characterizations, and the stratifications of languages in the novels to reveal thematic representations linked to landscape transformations and interpersonal relationships.

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* * *

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INTRODUCTION

Jane Urquhart, a Canadian poet, short-story writer, and novelist of international acclaim, is the recipient of numerous awards for her novels, including Le prix du meilleur livre étranger in France for *The Whirlpool*. She was short-listed for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and co-winner with Margaret Atwood of the Trillium Award for her novel *Away*. She has been named a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France. More recently, she has received the Governor General's Award in Canada for her novel *The Underpainter*. Urquhart's prose style can be described as lyrical; it is laden with complex imagery and fashioned using intricate spatial and temporal chronotopic depictions. As well, her treatment of discourse is elaborate and multi-faceted; it explores the inner lives of her characters and their dialogic interactions. In order to examine the structural and thematic aspects of her first three novels, *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away*, and therefore uncover factors which contribute to her aesthetic vision, the insights of a theorist as far ranging in scope and imagination as Mikhail Bakhtin are necessary. A Russian scholar of major importance, Bakhtin is considered by some to be one of the most influential theoreticians of the twentieth century. Indeed, Tzvetan Todorov in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* characterizes him as "the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century" (ix). Bakhtin's most famous essays on the theory of the novel were developed during the 1930s, and are included in his posthumous work *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin*, which was not published and translated into English until 1981. Bakhtin's theories of the novel reveal a remarkable diversity of insight into Urquhart's three novels but have not previously been applied to her work. There are few dissertations on Urquhart; at the time of the literature review, none

focused on an analysis of the structural aspects of her fiction. As well, only one dealt exclusively with Urquhart and the three novels. Other research materials available on Urquhart include numerous articles, interviews, and reviews of her novels; these have been helpful in providing background information for the present study.

This thesis does not attempt to apply all of Bakhtin's theories of the novel to Urquhart's fiction. Concepts such as the carnival and reduced laughter, for example, have not been included in this analysis. This is not to say that such theories could not be applied to Urquhart, only that they are not pertinent to the methodology of this work. Rather, the thesis draws upon those concepts most relevant to a study of the structural and thematic aspects of the three novels in question. More specifically, divided in two parts, it focuses upon Bakhtin's principal concepts: time and chronotope and discourse. Part I deals with forms and fragmentation of time pertaining to narrative and vertical temporal structures, chronotopic motifs, and landscape depictions and transformations. Part II considers aspects of discourse including character portrayal, stylizations, and unfinalizability; dialogism; heteroglossia; stratifications of languages; dialogic interactions; double-voiced discourse; dialogue unfinalizability; authorial language; assimilation; and polyphony. The predominant and recurring themes and genres which emerge from this analysis, and the knowledge gained from the examination of the structural aspects of her work, help in the elucidation of Urquhart's aesthetic vision, defined as the nature and perception of beauty in the three novels, as well as the examination of fundamental beliefs and system of values which comprise her sense of art and responsibility. In "Forms of Time and Chronotope" major themes which emerge centre on landscape and environment transformations. In "Discourse"

significant themes to surface are associated with relationships and romantic love. These recurring thematic representations, which are present in *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away*, are set primarily against the gothic genre which provides the overall tone for the exploration of Urquhart's aesthetic vision.

Part I, which is divided into four chapters, opens with Bakhtin's reflections on the evolution in time and chronotope that have occurred since the advent of the ancient novel. These observations aid in uncovering elements of chance time, crisis/transformation, and inner life portrayal found in Urquhart's novels. Bakhtin's categorization of time in the second chapter as scattered fragments helps to uncover the varied techniques used for temporal depictions in the novels. Also, vertical structures of time, which encompass an eternal dimension including the mythological past and the supernatural realm, are found in both *Changing Heaven* and *Away*; they are employed extensively in transcending boundaries between spiritual and material states. Bakhtin's definition of temporal unfinalizability illustrates the ethereal nature of temporal depictions, and ascribes different qualities to time depending on its orientation in the past, present, or future, or combinations thereof. Of the three novels, *The Whirlpool* is perhaps the best example of future unfinalizability because most of the action occurs in a present that is anticipating the future, with future outcomes uncertain. In the third chapter, Bakhtin's distinctions between generative and degenerative forms of time – the former closely associated with the idyl where growth follows death in the cycle of the seasons, the latter with time taking on a meaning of ultimate end in the temporally isolated sequence of an individual life – are examined in the novels. Degenerative time coupled with landscape unfinalizability, defined as landscape always in

the process of transformation, are Bakhtinian concepts also found in Urquhart's novels. They help to expose the negative changes and transformations that have occurred in landscape/environment since the Victorian era. While Bakhtin recognized the unfinalizable nature of landscape, and that death had undergone a profound transformation from generative to degenerative time, he could not foresee the rise of environmental apocalypticism, a relatively new trope to emerge as a result of extensive human degradation of the environment. This trope, which is found in *Away*, is elucidated in Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* published in 1995. The last chapter of Part I focuses on Bakhtin's view that social and political events gain significance in the novel only because of their connections to private life. This is evident in Urquhart's novels where these events are subordinated in importance to the characters' interactions with the historical time in which they find themselves. Also in "Inner/Outer Landscape," Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability is applied to the locus between character and landscape. Indeed, in all three of Urquhart's novels there is often a melding of these two elements to highlight the interconnections between them.

Part II, "Discourse," is subdivided into eight chapters. In "Dialogism vs Dualism," Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, defined as the constant interaction between meanings in order to create new potentials, is contrasted against the more limiting concept of dualism. In Urquhart, the use of dialogism allows the reader the benefit of a richer perception of possible interpretations, a component necessary in the development of polyphony. The following chapter focuses on the orientation of the word in Urquhart's three novels – the

manner in which one speaks being directly affected by the person to whom one speaks. The orientation of the word is fundamentally important in setting up relationships between the characters, allowing for the emergence of responsive understanding or conflicting points of view. In Chapter 7, Bakhtin's stratifications of languages according to generic, professional, and sociological categories aid in revealing Urquhart's use of the gothic genre in setting the predominant tone in the three novels. As well, the presence of professional and sociological stratifications within the novels allows for an examination of the many social forces that comprise the background against which the characters interact. Chapter 8 examines the varied techniques employed by Urquhart in revealing the inner and outer lives of her characters. Two Bakhtinian concepts of importance in this analysis are heteroglossia and the evolution of character portrayal in the novel. "Character Stylizations" discusses Bakhtin's characterization of the rogue, fool, and clown as dialogic categories which help to establish fundamental character traits. Urquhart's character stylizations include all three categories, but the fool is used predominantly to expose the pain of inner life brought about by romantic love and romantic love obsession. The divergent and conflicted points of view of the characters which arise from these interactions become irreconcilable, leading to Bakhtin's concept of polyphony. Chapter 10, "Polyphony and Character Unfinalizability," analyzes Urquhart's creation of characters that cannot be finalized which allows them the possibility of growth and change. In the tradition of the second type of ancient novel, characters undergo transformation either through slow processes of accumulated, small decisions (prosaics), or by sudden, abrupt events that leave lasting impressions on their lives. Bakhtin's concept of character unfinalizability is in evidence in Urquhart's novels because

some of her characters are always in the process of transformation, with potential outcomes uncertain. The penultimate chapter deals with Bakhtin's characterization of the novel as being composed of many languages which consist of diverse points of view evident in the interrelations among characters. As a result, many factors enter into the process of decoding an utterance. In Urquhart, this process sometimes leads to active understanding; at other times, characters are drawn into the battle between points of view. Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse introduces hybrid constructions evident in Urquhart's novels. Also apparent are the manifestations of authorial language which surround the thoughts of the characters. The languages of the novels are constantly re-emphasized in the light of other languages. Chapter 12 focuses on dialogue in Urquhart's novels, revealing potentials where prior states might constrain outcomes but cannot determine them. Since language is not fixed neither is meaning, which changes and evolves over time. Bakhtin's concept of active understanding is combined with a relational model of communications, discussed in Jane Magrath's dissertation *The Resurrection of the Author:* Possession, Swan, *and* Changing Heaven, which emphasizes an approach to relationships based not on power struggles but on mutual understanding. The process of assimilation leads to a non-exclusive self necessarily defined in relation to others.

The concepts of time and chronotope and discourse overlap and intersect in numerous ways, and the twelve chapters which comprise this thesis are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Rather, their purpose is to extend a broader definition of the concepts with each subsequent chapter introduced. Aspects of novel analysis are interrelated in one form or another; some of the examples cited would be appropriate to illustrate concepts

different from the ones selected. The delineation into parts and chapters of Bakhtin's concepts and principles in the present work should be viewed as an effort to treat a basically circular, intersecting, and overlapping subject in a linear fashion for the purposes of clarity and order.

PART I: FORMS OF TIME AND CHRONOTOPE

Mikhail M. Bakhtin's unit of analysis for studying texts is the chronotope which can be defined as the intrinsic connectedness of time and space as artistically expressed in literature (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 84). Chronotopes are the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. They function as the primary means for materializing time in space, for concretizing representation, and as a force giving body to the entire novel (250). Narrative is crafted along spatial and temporal lines, making narrative events concrete where time becomes palpable and visible (250). The chronotope, as a ground for activity, is a way of perceiving and understanding experience. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* define it as a "specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and actions" (307). In literature, as in life, temporal and spatial determinations are each inseparable from the other, and are always coloured by emotion and values (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 243). In Urquhart, the chronotope can be said to encompass chronotopic motifs, structural aspects of temporal fragmentation and unfinalizability, inner/outer landscape and setting, as well as generative and degenerative forms of time. According to Bakhtin, novels have the most complex sense of chronotopicity by offering the most profound image of people, action, events, history, and society (Morson and Emerson 372).

CHAPTER 1: ANCIENT FORMS OF TIME AND CHRONOTOPE

Bakhtin categorizes three basic types of novels developed in ancient times: the Greek romance, the adventure novel of everyday life, and the autobiography. Each has its own unique way of artistically denoting time and space. These three ancient novel types, with various modifications and variations, are found in novels as they exist to the present day (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 85). The application of these ancient novel types to Urquhart's novels aids in revealing the evolution which has occurred in temporal depictions and character representations over time.

The Greek romance, which is in adventure time, gives rise to no indications of historical, quotidian, or biographical time, nor even biological or maturational time. It supplies no identifying traces of the era: the time sequences are made up of empty time characterized by a technical and abstract connection between space and time (91). In effect, people do not age. Actions lie outside time sequences, an extratemporal hiatus between two moments of a real-time sequence, therefore they are not realistic representations (91, 96). All of the moments of the time sequence are governed by the force of chance. In this chance time, irrational forces intervene in human life in the guise of fate, gods, demons, sorcerers, and villains (94). The initiative in this time sequence does not belong to human beings. They have no actual control over their fate. The hero endures the game of chance, overcoming all obstacles, but his essential identity remains absolutely unchanged (105). In the European novel, chance is seen either as an impersonal, anonymous force, as fate or divine foresight, as romantic villains or romantic secret benefactors, or as prophetic dreams or premonitions (95-6). Some of these time sequence elements in modified form are found in Urquhart's novels. She uses the element of chance frequently in the development of her action, and

uses prophetic dreams and premonitions to weave a more colourful and intricate backdrop for the basis of her action. Her characters are not purely influenced by chance, however. There are elements of human will and decision in their actions. Indeed, one could argue that most novels in the twentieth century employ chance and human will as determinants in the unfolding of the action.

In *The Whirlpool*, it is chance, the design of fate, that causes Maud's husband and his parents to succumb to an epidemic, leaving Maud and her child "untouched, not even with a sniffle" (23-4). Due to this unforeseen circumstance, the family unit is fragmented with Maud left as sole provider for her child. She has been left the family business by her husband, and again, it is due to chance that she must now assume the responsibilities as the town's new undertaker. Many individuals tempt fate in *The Whirlpool* by endeavouring to survive the journey over Niagara Falls. They build different types of boats, floatation devices, barrels, and even elaborate contraptions to protect them during their fall, but they are rarely successful in avoiding death. When some of these dare-devils are found, usually several days after their stunt, they are termed "floaters." The reason they are discovered is because they have floated to the surface with further progress down the river impeded in some way. These individuals exercise their free will in determining their fate. Once in a while, a perfect corpse comes down the river to the whirlpool because "with all the unreliability of chance, it [has slid] around murderous rocks and avoided currents destined for sharp branches" (183).

In *Away*, factors beyond human control cause the potato crop failure and subsequent famine in Ireland. This catastrophe leads to a mass exodus. As a result, Mary, Brian, and

their son, Liam, emigrate to Canada. They are fleeing their native land in order to avoid starvation. Urquhart employs much foreshadowing of the coming exodus through visions or premonitions experienced by Mary. Most are entwined with the dead sailor who "speaks" to Mary, and has caused her to be labelled "away." She is so involved with him that she has withdrawn from reality, unable to grasp with any certainty the events unfolding around her. He helps her to assimilate new knowledge and experiences:

> Coming from the island and living, as she now did, on the high, open land that led from her door to the cliffs, she had never seen a forest but, as he touched her, one grew over her head. He showed her the sapling that would grow to be a great tree. And then the great tree being cut down for the timber that would build the ship that killed him. He showed her the forest in which the sapling flourished. She was surrounded by shivering green, by light glancing from leaves and nuzzling bark. (98)

Mary's vision of forests she has never seen, since Ireland's have mostly been cut down, prefigures her voyage to Canada which, in 1850, is still largely covered by forest. The dead sailor comes to her again, this time to prepare her for the long journey:

> Then she saw the world's great leavetakings, invasions and migrations, landscapes torn from beneath the feet of tribes, the Danae pushed out by the Celts, the Celts eventually smothered by the English, warriors in the night depopulating villages, boatloads of groaning African slaves. Lost forests. The children of the mountain on the plain, the children of the plain adrift on the sea. And all the mourning for abandoned geographies. (128)

In the preceding passages, Urquhart employs Mary's visions and premonitions to foreshadow what is about to occur in her life. She deftly interweaves the theme of the dispossessed as she explains the reason for the coming exodus. In this way, Urquhart appropriates the supernatural to inform the subsequent action that is to take place in the novel.

The preceding examples are not meant to represent an extensive cataloguing of all the events in the novels which involve random chance or the free will of the individual. Rather, they are a representative sample that serves to denote the way chance and free will operate in late twentieth-century literature, particularly in the novels of Jane Urquhart. According to Bakhtin, "chance is but one form of the principle of necessity, and as such has a place in any novel, as it has its place in life itself (*Dialogic Imagination* 97). By encompassing both chance and free will in space/time configurations, a realistic portrait in novelistic discourse that surpasses those typified in the first category of ancient novel can be rendered.

The adventure novel of everyday life, the second type of ancient novel, is characterized by a mix of adventure time and everyday time. The nature of time in this novel allows for human transformation, a metamorphosis, defined by Bakhtin as a "folkloric image of man" (112). Metamorphosis serves as a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its more important moments of crisis as well as depicting the actual course of life undertaken. This allows the author to show how individuals become other than what they were, and gives rise to temporal sequences which are extremely varied. The hero is no longer a static or unchanging character as portrayed in the Greek romance. Crisis and rebirth, shown through the use of preferential time sequences, is an important technique employed by Urquhart. Her novels do not always unfold in biographical time. She often depicts the exceptional and unusual moments in the time sequence of the individual's life. Many of Urquhart's characters experience metamorphosis or transformation. Crisis and transformation will be discussed in Chapter 10.

The chronotope of the road, linked to the motif of meeting, is found extensively in Urquhart's novels. Indeed, Bakhtin asserts that most works contain a variation of this motif (98). It allows for meetings between characters that normally could not occur due to the restricted environment which they usually inhabit. Sometimes their entire fate may depend on such a meeting. In the adventure novel of everyday life, which fuses the course of individuals' lives with their actual spatial course or road, a unique novelistic chronotope is created at whose heart lies folklore. The "path of life" extends itself through familiar native territory in which there is nothing exotic or strange (120).

In *The Whirlpool*, travel is local. Only the daily events of Niagara Falls are featured in the body of the novel, with a prologue and epilogue that connect Europe to Canada implicitly by centring on the death of Robert Browning in Venice. The road chronotope is used to facilitate the chance encounters between Patrick and Maud's child. These strange dialogic interactions between Patrick and the boy occur in the child's yard, which is located on Main Street. They will be discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 9.

The chronotope of the road in *Changing Heaven* is modified to include hot-air balloon travel, overseas plane travel, and highway automobile travel. It is not so much used as a way for different characters to have the opportunity for chance encounters, but to enable individuals to pursue their individual course or road in life. For example, the balloon brings Jeremy to the arctic in order to facilitate his suicide in this locale, marking the end of his road. The overseas plane connects both Ann and Arthur with Europe, a necessary step in the actualization of their work. The actual travel by plane is not even mentioned in the novel. It is assumed that the reader can make these types of connections automatically; they

are part of the common occurrences which do not find expression in the novel. During Ann's recollections of her childhood, the road chronotope is also employed to connect the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This connection between the present and past is made possible by the advent of the highway which reduces distances to a smaller, more manageable time frame. By visiting her grandmother in rural Ontario – after "an hour and a half of grey speed" on the highway – "[she is] able to enter the nineteenth century; its general stores, its woodstoves, its large high-ceilinged rooms, its dusty gravel roads" (44). As well, the highway connects Arthur and Ann in their adulterous encounters outside Toronto. This travel along the highway is mentioned repeatedly in the novel. Ann muses to herself as she begins the affair that until now the highway had been "a summer road for her. Weather and the highway [had] not yet come together in her life" (87). As the affair progresses, the characteristics of the tempestuous winter road conditions become melded with Ann's frame of mind when she contemplates the hopelessness of her love for Arthur.

The chronotope of the road in *Away* is exemplified through the use of boat and train travel. The dead sailor is washed ashore because his boat is no longer seaworthy. The boat facilitates the emigration of Mary, Brian, and their child to Canada. The characters they encounter on the trip do not have a lasting significance in their lives. Rather, the chronotope is used to move the family through time and space from one geography to another. From the restricted environment of Ireland, they move to the restricted environment of rural Ontario where travel is by foot, horse, or boat. It is not until Brian and Mary's children, Eileen and Liam, reach maturity that train travel is introduced in the novel. This chronotope, which places the novel in a distinct historical time frame, is effective in reuniting

Eileen with Aidan, the man for whom she travels to Montreal. She arrives during the floods of spring, when the streets are immersed in water, so she continues her voyage by boat. These travel chronotopes are very important to the unfolding action in *Away*. Eileen is away from home for three weeks: when she returns to her brother's farm on the shores of Lake Ontario, she is pregnant with Deirdre, the only child she is destined to have.

The human image in the ancient novel was utterly exteriorized – the representation was of an entirely public nature (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 135). In following epochs, the image became distorted by increasing observations of internal life. Having thus lost the popular chronotope of the public square, a vast number of new spheres of consciousness and objects appeared in private life not subject to being made public (135, 136). Such spheres included sex and interpersonal relationships (136). The human image became multi-layered and multi-faceted, composed of an inner and outer reality (136). To a large degree, Urquhart's novels expose this inner reality. During an interview with Geoff Hancock, she explains the importance of the inner lives of her characters to her: "I have a much more reflective than active mind, I find myself more interested in what characters are thinking and imagining than what they are doing or how they are behaving" (30). She uses her "own emotions . . . to help [her] get inside and experience [her] characters" (33). There are usually several characters in each novel to whose thoughts the reader has access. The dialogue in which they engage represents an aspect of their external reality. The literature of private life, derived from the third type of ancient novel, the autobiography, thus evolved. It is essentially a literature of seeing how others live that exposes the secrets of human nature (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 123, 124). The manner for conveying and exposing

private life in Urquhart's three novels will be addressed in many subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURAL ASPECTS OF TEMPORAL FRAGMENTATION AND UNFINALIZABILITY

In the literature of private life, time is deprived of its unity and wholeness; it is chopped up into separate segments, each encompassing a single episode from everyday life. The everyday world consists of scattered fragments, deprived of essential connections (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 128). Urquhart employs Bakhtin's concepts of temporal fragmentation and unfinalizabiity in the three novels. As a result, each novel has it own distinct and unique temporal form.

The Whirlpool is the only novel by Urquhart whose action follows a strict chronological order of selected episodes in the lives of the characters. Events in the past are usually only referred to insomuch as they contribute to an understanding of the present psychological portrait or circumstances of a character. The action does not travel back in time. The epilogue and prologue of *The Whirlpool,* set in the year of Robert Browning's death in Venice (1889), probably reflect the same time span as the body of the novel in Upper Canada (summer 1889), but offer contrasting elements of space between the Old World and the New World.

Changing Heaven plays with time sequence elements by combining past and present interchangeably. The novel opens with a chapter on Arianna. In the first two chapters in which she is featured, her nineteenth-century world is treated as the present. Then she dies and becomes a ghost. The rest of Part I of the novel progresses chronologically through Ann's childhood in the 1950s; it is in scattered fragments, which helps to explain her present character. In Part I, there is also a chapter devoted to Arthur's past; once he meets Ann, he becomes integrated in the chapters of the book devoted to her, with one notable exception.[1] The novel enters the present in Part II when Ann goes to England. From then

on, the chapters devoted to her progress in an active present that anticipates the future. The opening chapter of Part III reverts back in time by focusing on Jeremy, Arianna's lover in the nineteenth century. The narrative is told from his point of view in this chapter, thus making it appear as if he were in the present, even though the novel has now progressed well into the twentieth century. In this way, present and past are intermingled, with the novel's penultimate and final chapters ending in the present featuring John, Ann, and the two ghosts at Ann's cottage as she and John prepare for bed. Urquhart's manipulations of time to make the past appear as the present creates an illusory time that transposes different temporal sequences to create temporal narratives which are basically incompatible with actual reality.

Urquhart, especially in *Changing Heaven*, employs what Bakhtin refers to as vertical structures of time:

> There is a greater readiness to build a superstructure for reality (the present) along a vertical axis of upper and lower than to move forward along the horizontal axis of time. Should these vertical structures turn out as well to be other worldly, idealistic, eternal, outside time, then their extratemporal and eternal quality is perceived as something simultaneous with a given moment in the present. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 148)

Arianna and Emily, the two ghosts in *Changing Heaven,* are beyond the limits of time: they live under conditions of pure simultaneity in an environment that encompasses the past, present and future. They can therefore travel back and forth through time at will. This altered temporal perception is explained in terms of weather: the ghosts travel through the seasons. At one point, they are in spring, and Emily tells Arianna that they can "go back to winter if [she] wants" (202). "When you are dead, time has no meaning and weather is

more capricious" (242). By focusing their attentions, the ghosts are able to slow the passing of the seasons (74). When they enter a time frame, it is termed "haunting." Their spatial perception is also altered because it is impossible for them to view objects whole. They are incapable of bringing an entire tree into focus; it is only the leaves, stems, and twigs that they can see (100). Arianna's death takes place in the nineteenth century, but the present of the novel is rooted in the twentieth century. Since Arianna and Emily can move freely through time, it is difficult to know with any degree of certainty which approximate time frame they are occupying in any given chapter. As they move through the seasons, they are not tied to any particular persons, and spend most of their time engaged in dialogue to get to know each other better. At the end of the novel, they haunt the English cottage where John is telling Ann the story of "Sindbad of the Skies." Losing their ghostly energy, they become reattached to time in the twentieth-century where they dematerialize, and are described as "experiencing brilliance and fragmentation. Emily dissolves. Arianna evaporates" (258). This occurs at the conclusion of John's story, after Arianna finally learns the truth about her murder by Jeremy.

In a novel that spans four generations (Mary – Eileen – Deirdre – Esther), the structure of time sequences in *Away* emphasizes the subjective and transient nature of temporal depictions. In the opening chapter, there are nine time-shift sequences that encompass three different time frames: events featured include those which occurred in 1842; those which took place when Esther was 12, and her grandmother Eileen recounted the selected history of her family to her; and those that occur in the present when Esther is 82, and spending the last night in her home on the shores of Lake Ontario. She is reliving

her family history, noting the changes that have occurred in this 140-year time span. The rest of the chapters in Part I of *Away* are devoted to a chronological and selected history of the past but it is told, in typical Urquhart fashion, as if it were occurring in the present. In Part I, the reader gets the background information on Esther's family in Ireland up until their emigration to Canada. Part II of the novel opens with a chapter in the present, when Esther is 82. She will resurface again in the opening chapter of Part III, but this chapter will focus on a childhood memory as well as on the present. In Part II, Esther's narration will recount the family's history in the backwoods of Ontario; in Part III she will focus on Liam and Eileen's story once they have relocated to the shores of Lake Ontario. Near the end of the novel, there are several chapters devoted to Esther. In Chapter 41, Esther will interrupt the otherwise chronological retelling of her family history once again. The two chapters preceding the final chapter of the novel are exclusively devoted to her. Chapter 45 takes place in the past when Esther is 12. Chapter 46 combines the past childhood memories and recollections of Esther with the present. Chapter 47, the last chapter, is devoted exclusively to the present, but Esther has been replaced by an unidentified narrator. Urquhart subjectively plays with time by employing these various time-shift sequences in order to make her narrative more interesting, suspenseful and intricate.

Overlaying these intricate and subjective workings of time in *Away* is the vertical time structure of the mythological past. Timeless and eternal wisdom is transmitted first through the consciousness of Mary and her otherworld lover, and then through Eileen in her personification of the crow who speaks to her in a dream and informs her that the "black bird" is coming (169). This prefigures the appearance of Exodus Crow with news of her

mother. Later, the crow informs Eileen that from now on her family would be visited by the curse of the mines (225). Eileen recognizes that Esther has a gift of premonition similar to her own. She has recounted the family history to her when she was 12 to aid her in better understanding her special nature.

The destruction of epic distance with the subsequent transferral of the individual image from a distanced plane to one of contact with the inconclusive events of the present, (and consequently the future), results in a "radical re-structuring of the image of the individual in the novel" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 35). "The future exists, and this future ineluctably touches upon the individual, has its roots in him[/her]" (37). According to Bakhtin, "the force and persuasiveness of reality, of real life, belong to the present and the past . . . – to the 'is' and the 'was' – and to the future belongs a reality of a different sort, one that is more ephemeral . . . is deprived of that materiality and density . . . essential to the 'is' and 'was'," which constitutes the interconnectedness of past, present and future (147). Thus, novels that are set in a present which is unfolding allow for a high degree of character and temporal unfinalizability since they are continuously in the process of transformation, experiencing events as they unfold with future outcomes remaining uncertain. Novels that recount the past deal with events which have already occurred; they are, therefore, already anchored in time because they begin in a moment of time in the past and end in the present (of the novel). There is less temporal unfinalizability because most of the action has already taken place. Unfinalizability is not to be confused with being aware or unaware of the next event that will occur in the novel. One narrative strategy relies more heavily on the temporal framework of the present and the past, whereas the other deals more

extensively with those of the present and future. One could say that the latter strategy utilizes the threshold of the next moment in the unfolding of the action, allowing for multiple potential outcomes and uncertainties. A discussion of temporal unfinalizability as it applies to the novels of Jane Urquhart follows; the concept of character unfinalizability, which is important to the study of dialogic interactions, will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Of the three novels, *The Whirlpool* could be characterized as containing the highest degree of temporal unfinalizability. Most of the action occurs in a present that is anticipating and unfolding into the future, even though it is set in the summer of 1889. Events in the novel "lead into a real future, into precisely that which does not exist but which at some point must exist" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 149). The potentialities and actualities are interwoven to produce an artistic image highly dependent on future outcomes. The third-person narrator of *The Whirlpool* informs us that Fleda often lives in a state of anticipation of future moments:

> She was often, mentally, one or two steps ahead of her activities, her location. In the dark rooms that she had left behind in town she had anticipated the journey on the streetcar. Now seated in the vehicle, she anticipated the arrival at her destination. . . . She kept a diary, and this combined with her compulsive reading, had proved to be the perfect device for distancing synchronized response. (31)

In this passage, Fleda is portrayed as an individual who often distances herself from the present through self-absorption with future events. On other occasions, however, she can be attuned to the present and to the threshold of the next moment:

> She checked her basket for this volume now, terrified for the moment that it might have been left behind. It was there however, wedged between the muffins and the cheese. Relaxing, she turned at last to the window. The car had passed the city limits and was moving steadily down River Road into a

> rougher geography. (31)

When Fleda cuts her hair, the reader is given a moment-by-moment account of the action, as well as of the events which directly precede and follow it:

> Fleda walked over to the tent and opened its soft door easily with the back of her hand. The mosquito netting clung for a moment to one of her shoulders then dropped comfortably back into place. Then, moving her fingers through the skeins of wool and spools of thread in her sewing basket, she soon grasped cold steel. Holding the blades downwards for safety, she took the scissors with her to the outdoors and placed them on a stump in the sunlight where they shone with an unusual, almost foreign, brilliance. Then she began to pull the pins out of the bun at the back of her neck.
>
> As she cut her long, long hair to a spot just below her shoulders, she remembered the years it had taken her to grow it; how, since she had been an adult, there had always been the morning problem of doing up her hair and how that problem would exist no longer. The act of cutting her hair now was difficult and required strength as it was thick and often resisted the blades. She managed however, by separating it into six parts as her mother always had when she braided it for school. The severed portions Fleda paid no attention to whatsoever, merely flung them to the wind or onto the ground. Finishing, she brushed off her skirt, and the part of her back she could reach, and decided to walk down the path to the whirlpool. (143)

For Fleda, the symbolic act of cutting her own hair is symbolic, foreshadowing her eventual emancipation from constricting social roles. By chronicling her actions and thoughts on a moment-by- moment basis during the actual process of hair cutting, Urquhart adds emphasis and significance to this event.

The temporal framework of *Changing Heaven* combines narrative structures of temporal unfinalizability with narrative structures of a past that is completed, as well as of a past that is completed but is complicated by vertical structures of time. The events surrounding Jeremy have all taken place in the nineteenth century. In the opening chapter of Part III, the reader learns that his journey ends on the white shores of Edge Island in the

arctic where he has flown his hot-air balloon. He has chosen this locale of white absence for his suicide, ostensibly to be reunited with his beloved Arianna, who has also died in the nineteenth century. However, her existence, which is depicted through the use of vertical structures of time, continues in the present of the novel in the form of a ghost. There is therefore a higher degree of uncertainty as to her eventual fate/state than there is with regard to Jeremy. The ghosts in *Changing Heaven* live in a temporal framework where they exhaustively review their past lives; they are no longer subject to the unfolding of future events in a manner which affects them directly. The temporal framework surrounding Ann, Arthur, and John contains a higher degree of temporal unfinalizability because they exist in a present which is unfolding into the future. Outcomes therefore remain uncertain. At novel's end, Ann's affair with Arthur is terminated; it is impossible to predict what new directions their lives will take. Ann has found a good friend in John, but the nature of their relationship is not fully defined. In essence, these characters' futures are open-ended.

In *Away*, individual methods of perceiving time are contrasted in Eileen and Aidan. Time structures rely heavily on recounting past events and actions. During the relating of the family history to Esther, Eileen had confided that she had "always [turned] the moment into something else altogether. Inventing it. Interpreting it," whereas Aidan had been "the energy of the real moment" (355). "He [had been] a performer continually on stage before the audience of his world . . . [and] ripples of response [were] activated by his presence" (315). Eileen had cautioned Esther that she perceived time in a manner inherited from both her grandparents. Having the ability to savour the present moment, she must also guard against the tendency to "drift away" (355). The novel, while recounting the past history

of Esther's family, also takes place in a present that is unfolding into the future. When the house at Loughbreeze Beach is vacated, the story continues with the new narrator's attention focused on the mining operation that has repeatedly intruded on Esther's thoughts throughout her narration (356). The generational saga is complete. Esther is childless and alone at 82; therefore, there are no open-ended uncertainties as to future outcomes for this branch of the family.

Bakhtin's concepts of temporal fragmentation, vertical structures of time, and temporal unfinalizability are employed extensively by Urquhart. Indeed, except for *The Whirlpool*, which although in scattered fragments is strictly chronological, temporal depictions are highly subjective and dependent on encompassing an eternal dimension. These vertical structures of time – representations of ghosts and the mythological past – are essential to the unfolding action in *Changing Heaven* and *Away*. They aid in transcending the boundaries between the material and spiritual worlds.

CHAPTER 3: GENERATIVE AND DEGENERATIVE FORMS OF TIME

The theme of death gives rise to generative and degenerative theories of time. The medieval generative view of time saw death as a mere service mechanism working toward the future eternal fate of the soul beyond the grave (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 193). Death was perceived as a limiting phenomenon, as lying on the fixed boundary between the temporary material world and eternal life, as a door opening on another, transcendental world (193). Death was therefore not part of an all-encompassing temporal sequence, but was seen as being on the boundary of time (193). In the folkloric world of Mary and Brian's Ireland in *Away*, death was perceived as creating a generative time sequence since growth would always follow death in the cycle of the seasons. The fundamentals of this generative time were present in the images or motifs of folklore. Bakhtin describes it this way:

> Generative time is a pregnant time, a fruit-bearing time, a birthing time, and a time that conceives again. The seasons of the year, ages, nights and days, copulation (marriage, pregnancy, ripening, old age and death): all these categorical images serve equally well to plot the course of an individual life and the life of nature in its agricultural aspect. All these images are profoundly chronotopic. Time here is sunk deeply in the earth, implanted in it and ripening in it. (207-8)

As well as, and similar to, folkloric elements, there are also traces of the idyls of love, family, craft work, and agricultural labour in *Away*. In the idyl, human life joins together with the life of nature in the unity of their rhythms (226). In the peasant class of Ireland, "the women knew that their bones would sing in the earth after their flesh had gone, and the men . . . knew that the song would make its way through the coming generations" (*Away* 108). The significance of the idyl in the development of the novel is enormous because of the age-old link of generations and the recurring human themes of love, family and childbearing, nature and death, which create a real link between the phenomena of

nature and the events of human life (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 225). During Mary's first pregnancy, she is tied to the earth, cottage, and fire (*Away* 58). Her otherworld lover assumes a marginal place in her thoughts. She learns to read and write, and is interested in the conversations of Brian and Father Quinn. Sometimes in her dreams she "dived into green and her fists clutched dark, wet, curls," but these dreams visited her less and less often (59). In the final months of her second pregnancy, Mary experiences a surge of energy, and becomes extremely industrious. She creates many objects, including shelves and a cupboard for her pantry. She raises a brood of chickens for whom she constructs a trim henhouse. She is again tied to the earth; there is no desire in her to "make and sing poems" or to "stand quietly in the late afternoon searching the stream" for her otherworld lover (153). During her pregnancies, Mary thus becomes a model of domesticity in the tradition of the idyl.

There exists in the idyls a special relationship of time and space: it is an organic fastening down, a grafting of life and events to a place, familiar territory, mountains and valleys (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 225). The limited spatial world of the idyl is self-sufficient; it is not linked in any intrinsic way with the rest of the world (225). In this spatially limited world, a sequence of generations is localized and potentially without limit. The action in *Away* is at first restricted to Rathlin Island. It then shifts to Coolanlough, a row of cottages two miles east of Ballyvoy, where Brian brings Mary home to be his wife. There is little travel between these two locales, even though they are but a ferry ride away. Father Quinn visits the O'Malleys on occasion, but Mary's mother does not visit them, even once her grandchild is born. As well, the setting is restricted to a limited area when the O'Malleys emigrate to Canada, and take up residence in the backwoods of Ontario. When

Liam and Eileen move to the shores of Lake Ontario so that Liam can fulfil his dream of becoming a prosperous farmer, their existence is still similar to the one found in the idyl. It is only with the passage of time and the advent of the industrial age that the landscape becomes substantially altered.

In contemporary times, the life of society has become abstract and almost plotless; it encompasses degenerative time in that individual fates stand out from the collective whole, and individual life sequences are linked to a class structure in which both individual life and subgroups are fragmented from the whole (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 209, 214). People are out of contact with each other and egoistically sealed off from one another (234). Thus, the motif of death undergoes a profound transformation in the temporally isolated sequence of an individual life. It becomes a degenerative time because the link between death and fertility is severed, as well as the link with the birth of new life (216). Death becomes an end, and is deprived of any real and productive associations (216). Urquhart's novels are saturated with this degenerative view of time when exploring the theme of death and human relations. Her novels usually span the period between approximately the mid to late 1800s up to the present day, although *The Whirlpool* is set solely during the summer of 1889. Except for *Away*, there is little use of generative time, and in *Away*, its principle function seems to be to offer a contrast between generative and degenerative forms of time. With the notable exception of Maud in *The Whirlpool*, no other major character in these novels has a child who exists in the present of the novels. The conception of Maud's child is equated with a nightmare about spiders, egg sacs, and webs she had the night of a severe quarrel with her husband; it is therefore not the most promising beginning for new life (96).

Fleda finds the name of her old carpet-sweeper, "Mother's Helper," "mildly ironic since she had never been, and somehow knew she would never be, a mother" (140). In *Changing Heaven*, Arianna and Emily are ghosts who do not experience motherhood before their deaths. As well, Emily Brontë, the writer upon whom the character of Emily is based, never married or had children. At the novel's conclusion, Ann is still childless; it is unclear what her future in this respect might be. In *Away*, the generational line ends with Esther, an old spinster without children. This lack of renewal through childbirth and motherhood in the novels can be linked to the theme of degenerative time and environmental degradation in Western society during the twentieth century. In *Away*, Urquhart uses the juxtaposition of folklore and idyl motifs of generative time with the present-day evolution of degenerative time to expose the negative changes and transformations that have occurred in society since the Victorian era.

The interconnectedness of past, present, and future affects all things in the material world. In Bakhtin's "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism," he observes that "everything from an abstract idea to a piece of rock on the bank of a stream bears the stamp of time, is saturated with time and assumes its form and meaning in time" (Morson and Emerson 413). The concept of unfinalizability, as applied to landscape, allows for the perception of "the filling of space not as an immobile background, a given that is completed once and for all, but as an emerging whole, an event" (415). According to Bakhtin, it is important to discern in all things "signs that show time in its course, beginning with nature, and ending with human customs and ideas" (415). Thus, landscape and human endeavours are seen as continuously in the process of transformation. Urquhart

amply demonstrates how landscape has been extensively affected and changed by human enterprise. In *The Whirlpool*, the differences between the natural world and the constructed world are highlighted through the use of authorial thought associated with Fleda. When she is riding the streetcar, the reader is informed that "if you avoided looking at the factories on the American side, you could almost believe you were in the wilderness" (31). As well, she contrasts the natural world with agricultural practices:

> The tough old rocks of the escarpment were in evidence everywhere, varying in size from the jagged edges along the road to the cliffs that dropped down to the river. They poked at times, through small patches of sumac or reared unexpectedly from clumps of long grass. . . . If she turned and looked through the windows on the opposite side of the car, however, she would see nothing but acres of rigidly planned, severely trimmed orchards. It was a geography of fierce opposites. Order on one side and, nearer the water, sublime geological chaos. (31)

Fleda prefers the natural landscape with minimal human intervention. She deplores the factories that populate the American side of the river. She is also critical of agricultural practices that alter the natural landscape to a marked degree. The authorial thought surrounding Patrick offers a similar point of view. The reader is told that his uncle's farm consisted of "land that had been forced into submission by several generations of large, heavy muscled men with strong, obstinate wills" (68).

John, as storyteller in *Changing Heaven*, recounts the vivid contrast in the life of workers before and after the introduction of machines and factories to the Yorkshire moors. Their way of life before is portrayed as a happy time:

> "Two hundred years ago these hills were inhabited by handloom weavers. . . . The Pennine people were strong from long bouts of walking over moors, from breathing fresh air, and from good work that involved a transformation

> process that they themselves controlled: from lamb to spindle to loom." (171)

With the introduction of the factory, the workers lose their independence and become enslaved to machines. Their wages are so low that children, and sometimes women, have to work in the mills with the men to provide for the basic necessities of the family. Their working conditions are miserable: they are deafened by the noise of the machines, and are continuously breathing in dust from the sizing which "[fills] every shaft of light from all the windows," falling down and covering everything in the room (172). John ironically equates the working conditions of the mill with conditions found at the seashore:

> "There's something to be said, I suppose, for clouded vision and ears filled with wind. Working in one of those mills could be like standing on a seashore immersed in blinding spray, if you look at it from that point of view." (173)

When the factory burns down, John comments that "the fortunate ones [returned] to the hills where they might have stayed in the first place for all the good it did them to descend into the valleys and attach themselves to machines" (135). Water diversionary projects also come under attack in *Changing Heaven*. Emily, who lived in a historical time predating the construction of reservoirs on the moors, "quietly [curses] the Power Authority for turning her favourite glens into reservoirs" (228). John views the pre-reservoir time as one when "the water in the valley was pure and chose its own direction, followed its own inclinations" (171). These transformations, effected in the landscape by human enterprise, are not viewed as favourable for the workers or for the land.

In *Away*, processes of landscape transformation are chronicled in meticulous detail throughout the novel. From the very beginning, the stage is set for the contrast between

renewable and non-renewable landscapes. Esther has, for the last ten years, "been able to hear huge machines grinding closer and closer to the finish of her world" (10). She reminisces about the various properties that her family has owned over the years since moving to the shores of Lake Ontario:

> There was, for instance, a grand house built by her father on a hill three miles to the north. It was struck, because of its high elevation, by lightning and it had burned to the ground. There was a resort hotel built by her father on a peninsula ten miles to the east. It was buried, because of careless farming practices and because of its low elevation, by sand. And fifty miles to the northeast the original O'Malley homestead – a territory of rock and scant pasture – is now composed of rotting log buildings and rock torn open by prospectors. (11)

Later in the novel, Esther muses about the essential differences between landscapes that are capable of regeneration, and those that are not:

> In Eileen's world abandoned structures decomposed, sinking back into the landscape from which they had sprung. In Esther's lifetime she has seen architecture die violently. It has been demolished, burned, ripped apart, or buried. Nothing reclaims it. Just as the earth at the quarry is wounded beyond all recognition and no one remembers the fields that flourished there. (135)

The theme of environmental non-renewal is superimposed over the retelling of the idyl or saga of the O'Malley family. Throughout the novel, the miners constantly intrude during Esther's story; they are a permanent presence encroaching on her landscape because they work around the clock (237). In the last chapter, when the house at Loughbreeze Beach is empty and the hold of the *New Dominion* freighter is being filled with "an avalanche of rock," the narrator who replaces Esther employs a prophetic vision of destruction while relating an account of the continued activity at the quarry:

> The men at the quarry, angered by something they don't quite understand,

> set their jaws and shift the gears of their equipment with grim forcefulness. Under the glare of artificial light the fossilized narratives of ancient migrations are crushed into powder. The scream of the machinery intensifies. (356)

Thus the curse of the mines, first prophesied by the crow to Eileen, ends with the "annihilation of the geography at Loughbreeze Beach" (135). In this instance, degenerative time, evidenced in Esther's lack of progeny, is melded with environmental degradation to produce the trope of environmental apocalypticism. According to Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination*, apocalypse is the "single most powerful metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal," the rhetoric of which "implies the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis" (285). As ecocatastrophe becomes an increasingly greater possibility, Buell foresees that occasions for environmental apocalyptic expression will increase and suffuse "essay, fiction, poetry, film, sculpture, painting, theatre, and dance in unprecedentedly powerful, mind haunting ways" (308).

Not all processes of land transformation in *Away* are portrayed as being deleterious to the environment. Farming practices during the second generation of the O'Malley family are associated with the idyl. Liam's dreams of farming the land are at first impeded when he inhabits the Ontario backwoods:

> Liam was certain he could hear the scrape of the shield beneath the blade of the plough. In his dreams, it hung like an iron collar around his neck, banging heavy against his breastbone as he walked, creating such pressure on his lungs that he awoke gasping. (213)

Farming is practically impossible in this region of Canada, where the soil is only a few inches deep before it encounters solid rock. Liam moves to the shores of Lake Ontario where the

soil is deep and fertile, capable of the transformation into orchards and fields that he so fervently desires. Liam doesn't "want to take anything out of [the soil] that he didn't put in [himself]" (224). In the tradition of the idyl, he wishes to maintain a generative landscape capable of future growth.

The interconnection in time of all elements of landscape and their link to humanity is a trope in *Away* that is demonstrated by use of the microcosmic world of the tidepool, the macrocosmic world of the forest, the personification of the earth and trees, and the characterization of objects as containing this same type of animate life force. Mary admonishes Osbert Sedgewick for disturbing the tidepool by attempting to isolate a sample of it in a tank in order to examine, sketch, and paint it. Within a few days, deprived of its natural environment, the life in the samples would die, leaving behind a brown sludge. Osbert heeds Mary's advice to leave the tidepools undisturbed in their natural state. When he visits Liam and Eileen in Canada, he grimly reports that tidepools have been ruined all over England by curious "people of culture" crowding the beaches and "lifting the life out of them with nets" (225). Osbert informs the children that their mother would have hated that. He compares the forest to a "tidepool of quivering life," drawing an analogy between the forest and the sea where all living systems are interconnected, with the removal of any element leading to unpredictable consequences. In the same vein, he considers it a moral question whether gold "should be removed from a landscape fortunate enough to contain it" (92). He realizes that, human greed being what it is, there is not much chance that it will remain where it rightfully belongs. Osbert feels "everything in the tidepools [is] connected, and that to remove life from them would be like tearing gold out of the earth" (92). To

highlight the link between humans and their environment, Urquhart uses human characteristics in her descriptions of the earth and the trees. Trees are personified as having "flesh," "arms," the shadow of branches are "a network of blue veins on the snow" (139, 226, 292, 297). Eileen enters the willow tree as a refuge from Liam. It is a "shimmering green world to which he [has] no access" (262). Veins of gold are described by Osbert as "earth's ligaments, a binding force without which the planet would simply fly to pieces" (64). Urquhart's narrator breathes life into inanimate objects as well. Mary and Brian are portrayed as "two adults who were like gods creating a universe. . . . Household goods were fondled or stroked like pets, and under such care developed an animate life, a soul"[2] (153-4). As well, landscape is portrayed as being able to modify the character of a building. When Liam and Eileen's house is moved by barge from Port Hope to its new location on the shores near Colborne, it is described as undergoing the following transformations:

> As the white clapboard building settled on its new foundation its former identity leaked slowly from it, the views from all its front windows, where the Great Lake still danced, changed utterly. From the west, the idea of orchard and pasture slipped into its rooms, from the east barnyard, pigsty and chicken coop, and, in the north, the dark tumescent shape of the cedar bush pushed its shape, and, in the late afternoon, its shadow towards the wooden walls. . . . No longer vibrating under the pounding of sailors' feet or the frenetic clatter of trains on the trestle bridge, the house assumed a state of sedateness that was almost refined. . . . Liam would never again refer to the structure as "The Seaman's" or "the Inn" and it relaxed, with grace, into its new, more banal existence as farmhouse. (268)

In the preceding passage, the definition of landscape is extended to include manufactured and constructed objects and their relationship to the natural world. Urquhart blurs the distinctions between animate and inanimate – as well as between human and non-human entities – in the language she employs, accentuating the universality of our shared origins.

Landscape evolution and transformation over time, identified by Bakhtin as generative and degenerative forms of time and landscape unfinalizability, have undergone extensive redefinition in contemporary society. In Urquhart, the development of a heightened sensitivity and awareness to the underlying composition of all substance is thus demonstrated.

CHAPTER 4: INNER/OUTER LANDSCAPE

In the literature of private life, nature begins to change and landscape is born. Nature is thus conceived as horizon (what is seen), and as an environment (background, setting) with which the private individual interacts, and from which s/he is inseparable. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 166). In Urquhart, there is often a melding of inner and outer landscape to highlight the intrinsic interconnections between them. As well, the outside world is subordinated in importance to private life, which is not subjected to or interpreted in light of social or political events. Rather, social and political events gain significance because of their connections to private life. The essence of these exterior events remains outside the novel (109-10). In each of Urquhart's three novels, landscape or setting appropriates historical fact. In *The Whirlpool*, Robert Browning (1812-89), did indeed die in 1889 as portrayed in the novel. David's interests in the War of 1812, General Brock, and Laura Secord are based on actual events and historical personages. Emily Brontë (1818-1848), the author of *Wuthering Heights*, is a character in *Changing Heaven*. The setting for part of the novel is the Yorkshire moors, the same setting employed in *Wuthering Heights*. In *Away*, the potato famine of Ireland is used as a backdrop for the exodus of the main characters to Canada. As well, D'Arcy McGee (1825-68) was indeed assassinated, but the events surrounding his death are mere speculation as Urquhart points out in the acknowledgments.[3] Also in the acknowledgments, Urquhart mentions that she has altered some facts and events to meet the needs of her story. Nevertheless, in all of her novels, many scholarly works have informed and inspired parts of her narratives.[4] These actual facts and events inserted in the novels ground the action but do not cause it. The focus is on how the characters interact with the historical time in which they find themselves. As a result,

events are portrayed with the primary focus being the subjective perceptions of the characters.

In *The Whirlpool*, the War of 1812 is viewed from the unique perspective of Major David McDougal. The reader is informed that his career as a military historian is due almost entirely to the influence that Laura Secord, an historical figure he has known only by reputation, has had on him. She came to him in a dream saying "remind them" (82). He is of the opinion that Canada won the War of 1812 despite three hundred and forty-two books in print in the United States that state total victory for the American side (83). David hates Americans; he views them as the enemy. The War of 1812 is one of the historical events which fuels his prejudices. As a military historian, he wishes to put forth his own point of view on the war. This is the principle backdrop for exposing his private life.

In order to render a representation that reflects a degree of historical accuracy, Urquhart, in *Changing Heaven*, relates some actual events in the lives of Emily Brontë and her sisters. Emily and Charlotte attended school in Brussels, Belgium, and Charlotte was indeed in love with her married teacher, Monsieur Heger. Other events accurately depicted include the description of the childhood games of the Brontë children and Branwell's indulgence in alcohol and drugs. The descriptions of landscape evolution in the novel are also grounded in historical fact; they allow for the emergence of John, a character of primary importance, who is attached to this landscape and imparts folklore about it through the oral tradition of storytelling:

> The landscape belongs to John, and through his attentions to Ann, to her as well; the tributaries of his stories travelling over the moors and into the valleys.

They are in place. (*Changing Heaven* 178)

In Urquhart's novels, there is sometimes a melding between landscape and characters. She explores the boundary between inner and outer landscape, where character leaves off and landscape begins. As quoted in Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, Barry Lopez defines inner and outer landscape in terms of relationships:

> I think of two landscapes – one outside the self, the other within. The external landscape is the one we see – not only the line and color of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, its geology, the record of its climate and evolution. One learns a landscape not by knowing the name or identity of everything in it, but by perceiving the relationships in it – like that between the sparrow and the twig.
>
> The second landscape I think of is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape. . . . The speculations, intuitions, and formal ideas we refer to as "mind" are a set of relationships in the interior landscape with purpose and order. . . . The interior landscape responds to the character and subtlety of an exterior landscape; the shape of an individual is affected by land as it is by genes. (83)

Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability as applied to the locus between character and landscape also extends the relationships between them. In Urquhart, some characters are portrayed as actual physical extensions of the landscape. As well, characters are sometimes connected to the spiritual realm through weather manifestations or landscape-as-lover depictions.

In *The Whirlpool*, Patrick examines the woods surrounding Fleda with deep interest "as if her environment was an extension of herself" (40). Later, he muses that she is "so much a part of the landscape that the foliage in which she stood seemed to germinate from her" (123). Patrick's equating Fleda with the landscape leads to his fascination with her. Both are foreign to him; they represent the unfathomable mysteries of existence. When

Fleda becomes aware of Patrick's interest in her, she begins to perceive of herself as "a part of the whirlpool" and "a part of the art of poetry" (145). When Patrick asks Fleda what she thinks exists at the centre of the whirlpool, he is "unsure if it [is] the whirlpool or the woman he [is] talking about" (180). This connection that Patrick makes between woman and landscape is a fundamental one: what he fails to recognize is that he is also a part of, and inseparable from, the landscape, as well.

In *Changing Heaven*, the wind is equated with the transitional state between life and death by bringing into existence the ghost of Emily Brontë for Arianna. When she first awakens after her death, the wind howls, wails, and snarls these words to her: happy, heartfelt hallelujahs, hallowed, hollow, hosanna, heather, helium, hag, and hello (36, 37). Arianna can accept single words "sighed" by the wind, but when it starts to give her a dictionary definition of "hag," she has cause to wonder (37). It is precisely at this moment that the ghost of Emily appears to her for the first time. The wind is personified on many different occasions during the dialogue between the two ghosts. At the end of the novel, the ghosts "become air, become wind, enter rock and ether, enter breeze and heather . . . they are clouds blown across the moon" (258). The reader is informed that when "ghosts become landscape, weather alters, the wind shifts, and heaven changes" (258). Urquhart defines different forms of energy in various stages of entropy through descriptions and manifestations of weather. Ghosts, survivors in a transitional form between the material and spiritual realms, are part of the "elements that change shape but never substance" (2).

Urquhart also links character with the otherworld through the intermediary of landscape. Mary, in *Away*, is in love with a young sailor who has died in her arms. He

connects her to the spiritual realm, and causes her to be labelled "away" because she becomes oblivious to her external surroundings, being wholly absorbed by her inner life with him. She sings and whispers to an invisible presence (25). Mary's lover is described as being part of the landscape, "the exact spot where the sea touches land, the precise moment of the final reach of surf. That was the place and the time of him" (25). As a result, Mary continuously explores shorelines and beaches in search of him. The sea becomes her lover: "she would swim until cold and exertion caused her body to ache and her mouth to gasp" (37). This would help bring him into clearer focus for her until "all of him . . . glided by her side" (37). She would afterwards stagger up to the beach where she would put her head on his still chest. The sea reconstructs Mary's lover for her over and over again. They share an eternal connection. She knows that [he will] crash over her . . . every Wednesday for eternity" (24). For this reason, when Brian asks her to be his wife, she responds: "I am here, but I am not here. I will be your wife but I will not be your wife" (57). When Mary gathers seaweed to nourish the land, her lover is no longer present at the sea. Instead, she finds him standing in the reeds near the shore of a small lake near her cottage. During this meeting with him, she vicariously assimilates some of his experience:

> When he entered her she was filled with aching sorrow. His cool flesh passed through her body and became the skin she would wear inside her skin. She heard the rocks of lakes and oceans rattle in the cavity of his skull and then in the cavity of her own skull. A battalion of young men, their bright jackets burst open by battle, their perfect ribs shattered, their hearts broken apart, marched in his mind and then in her mind, and so she came to know all the sorrows of young men as she lay on the earth; their angry grief, their bright weapons, their spilled blood. (84)

Her lover, whom she cannot summon at will, visits her sometimes when she has given up

all hope of being touched by him. He has put a voice in her brain and in her heart, and prepares her for the voyage to Canada (98, 99, 126-128).[5] After Mary gives birth in the new land to her second child, Eileen, she is permanently reclaimed by her lover. She abandons her husband, children, and the material protection of her home, to live on the shores of Moira Lake so she can be near him always. She spends seven years there, befriended by an Ojibway Indian named Exodus Crow who helps her to survive the long, harsh, Canadian winters. She tells him that she is "loved by the spirit of the lake," and she "will stay near him now until [she dies]" (181). With Mary's attachment and assimilation to her otherworld lover, Urquhart demonstrates spirits transcending material space and time by melding with landscape. The suggestion could be made that such associations are perhaps derived from her own personal experience, Urquhart having lost her first husband, Paul Keele, in a tragic car accident after five years of marriage when she was but 24 (Sherman 24).

The development of the emotional or inner life in Urquhart's novels is sometimes assisted by the outer landscape. There is a melding of emotion and weather to create storm. Ann's inner landscape in *Changing Heaven* is reflected in the weather that surrounds her. Before her affair with Arthur commences, she opens a window in her apartment because she wants "the storm's sharp breath to disturb the air and touch her skin" (90). She allows the storm to "assault and caress her" (90). When she spies "the curtain dance into life," she realizes that this is what she will become in Arthur's presence: "a curtain responding to storm" (90, 91). She opens herself up to him to such an extent that when she is recovering from her one-sided love affair, John believes that her lover has "torn" her, and perceives that

she is still in love with him (187). When Ann becomes physically ill, weather intrudes upon her in the form of hallucinations that the storm raging outside her cottage "has given birth to a disturbance of lovers" (143). The wind has become the beast that she and Arthur were, and she must let it out of the cottage (143). Ann learns that weather is something that "happens to you and around you with ruthless detachment [that] it even happens without you. It just doesn't care" (114). Storm is equated with romantic love: a force of nature so strong that when denied expression it can lead to violent upheaval, emotional turbulence, and physical illness. This theme is present in *Wuthering Heights* as well, where the denial of romantic passion between Heathcliff and Catherine also causes storm. Thus, unrequited or one-sided love, love that is not manifested, leads to emotional distress of such magnitude that, for added emphasis, it is mirrored by the stormy weather present in both *Changing Heaven* and *Wuthering Heights*. The authorial language surrounding the ghosts of Emily and Arianna summarizes the primordial nature of inner/outer emotion/weather:

> They see the ruins of farmhouses vacated by saddened people in the nineteenth century are much the same as stones left by Vikings or monuments erected by Celts. They see that weather's main purpose is to melt rock and that purpose is carried out with more tenderness than aggression. They see that storms are really acts of love and that the earth demands this passion, this tantrum of response to its simply being there. They see that every crack, every ripple, every undulation of surface, has been etched by wind requesting entry, by rain desperate for absorption; that weeds, heather, ling, the stunted trees are really currents of air reaching back to a heaven amazed by its own power. (246)

These manifestations of passionate response in inner/outer landscape are a celebration of the miracle of life in their sublimation of the natural world to divine order.

The exploration of time and chronotope in Urquhart's three novels reveals the use

of complex temporal structures of fragmentation and unfinalizability. Generative and degenerative forms of time are contrasted to expose a variety of deleterious landscape transformations effected during the last century. Inner/outer landscape, in combination with character/landscape, are melded to create a zone of contact that transcends usual corporeal and material boundaries. The purposes of such explorations are diverse; they assume their form and meaning in the mystical, spiritual, and metaphysical imagery and chronotopic motifs represented, leading to the emergence of predominant and recurring thematic representations related to landscape which contribute to Urquhart's aesthetic vision.

PART II: DISCOURSE

Bakhtin's definition of discourse is very broad. It signifies both individual words and the methods of using and interpreting words, thereby allowing for the development of a "novelistic environment" (Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination* 427). Heteroglossia is the "base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance" (428). In any given time or place, there are a set of social, historical, and environmental conditions ensuring that any word uttered at that time will have a distinct meaning which cannot be replicated under any other conditions. Language, according to Bakhtin, is never unitary: "It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete ideological conceptualizations that fill it and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of becoming that is a characteristic of all living language" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 288). Every utterance participates in the unitary language with its centripetal forces and tendencies, as well as in social and historical heteroglossia with its centrifugal and stratifying forces (272). Thus, language is subjected to forces from within and forces from without. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of the locus where these forces collide (Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination* 428).

National languages, and different national languages within the same culture, can be stratified into "social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, language of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 263). This internal stratification which takes place at any given moment is the "indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre" (263). The language of the novel becomes an artistically organized system of

languages, and stylistic analysis consists of uncovering the different orchestrating languages in the composition of the novel and understanding their dialogic interrelationships (410, 416). In addition to impersonal stylizations of generic, professional, and other social languages, there are also other ways of incorporating and organizing heteroglossia in the novel, including the more fully-embodied image of narrative voice, posited author, character, character speech, character thought, and character zones (332). All these forms allow for the indirect, conditional and distanced use of language in the novel (323). Urquhart's methods of orchestrating discourse in the three novels will be examined in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5: DIALOGISM VS DUALISM

In a world dominated by the different languages of heteroglossia, dialogism can be understood to mean that everything is part of a greater whole where there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which can have the potential or possibility of conditioning others (Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination* 426). This interaction – what will affect the other(s), how, and to what degree – is settled at the moment of utterance (426). This meaning is not fixed or static because it is capable of changing and growing over time, as well as over subsequent or future utterances. According to Morson and Emerson, Bakhtin rigorously avoids dualistic formulations, such as male vs female, social vs individual, negative vs positive, right vs wrong, us vs them, and so forth (446). Instead, he focuses on the "irreducible multiplicity of speakers, situations, discourses and purposes" (446). Urquhart also avoids dualistic formulations in the three novels; dialogism is in evidence repeatedly in the unfolding of the action, as well as in character portrayal and the motivations ascribed to them. The concepts of heteroglossia and dialogue "promote in utterances the crossing of numerous intentions, world views, and evaluations in intricate dialogic ways" (446). In dualistic formulations, one labels objects, persons, behaviours, concepts, or ideologies as belonging to either end of a spectrum without taking into consideration the infinite number of possibilities in the continuum which exists in between. This can lead to the oversystematization and oversimplification of the analytical framework.

In *The Whirlpool*, for example, actions are not portrayed as being either right or wrong, and any analysis that would attempt to characterize them as such would miss some of the subtler points to be exposed. Fleda abandons her husband, which could be construed as a wrong action on her part; on the other hand, it leads to her emancipation from social

roles that she is no longer able to assume due to their constricting nature. There is little reason for her remaining in a relationship in which she is no longer able to function effectively, that offers her no opportunity for real communication or self-growth. The treatment of Patrick's suicide in the novel is unusual and unique; it is a symbolic act, with surrealistic overtones, which does not promote a negative view of this action. If anything, the feelings he experiences before he walks through the ravine back to the river are described as a peaceful journey where his "fear cleared . . . [and] his spine relaxed [with] hands hung limply over his knees" (223). When the River Man fishes him out of the river, the action is described as a kind of reversed birth or birth into death:

> The body was coming in nicely. . . . The hook had connected, amazingly enough, with a belt buckle. The River Man shook his head. He had never seen this happen before. This way the body was being drawn forward from its centre, the rope looking like a thick umbilical cord, the limbs trailing loosely, slightly behind the torso. (226)

Patrick's suicide hardly affects his physical appearance except to place a "film across his eyes," which is "merely death" (226). The rest of him is perfect and undamaged. When the River Man brings him to the Undertaker's, Maud considers him to be a beautiful corpse. In death, Patrick has found a profound peace, and has retained all of his youthful beauty. Urquhart draws an interesting parallel between Patrick's death and Shelley's death in the framing prologue and epilogue, since both poets drown at a relatively young age. When Robert Browning lies on his deathbed, the narrator assigns to him these final thoughts:

> There were to be no last words. How inadequate his words seemed now compared to Shelley's experience, how silly this monotonous bedridden death. He did not intend to further add to the absurdity by pontificating. He now knew that he had said too much. At this very moment in London, a volume of superfluous words was coming off the press. All this chatter

> filling up the space of Shelley's more important silence. He now knew that when Shelley had spoken it was by choice and not by habit, that the young man's words had been a response and not a fabrication. (235)

Browning's epiphany seems to indicate that living to an advanced age had caused him to make of life a habit that did not afford him the possibility of much further growth or artistic development. Certainly Browning's death can be considered to be less beautiful or tragic than Shelley's or Patrick's.

Maud's abilities as a mother are not judged as being right or wrong in the novel, but her consistent neglect of her child, to the point where she can no longer stand to have him around and becomes "unable to cope with another moment in his presence," could be construed as bad parenting (200). The young boy's social isolation is extreme. He has no friends of his age, and engages in distinctly peculiar behaviour by first imitating and then describing the actions of the adults who surround him. Despite the distance this effects between him and his mother, at no point in the novel is Maud expressly characterized as a bad or uncaring mother. Some of her actions are of a responsive nature toward her child while others set her apart from him. When the child reaches for Patrick's corpse, Maud pulls him back toward her own warm body (233). At other times, she would shout at him to stop his senseless behaviour (201). The boy's social isolation does not appear to have affected his language acquisition skills, which seem to be unusually developed for a child of his age:

> She was astonished by the extent of his vocabulary; even in a normal child of his age it would have been remarkable. But for one who had held onto silence for years, the variety of words was overwhelming. As though he had been storing verbal symbols in a special cerebral enclosure until it became so full it simply had to burst. He had drawn the world that circled him inwards,

> had hoarded snippets of discourse, and then all of this tumbled out of his mouth like a mountain waterfall after the ice on the heights has melted. (201)

The child's unusual upbringing has inadvertently had a positive effect on the development of his language and vocabulary, demonstrating that there are many dialogic factors which must be considered in the evolution of a character.

In *Changing Heaven*, Jeremy's actions include both murder and suicide. During John's recounting of the story of "Sindbad of the Skies" to Ann, he tells her not to think too badly of Jeremy because he was not a hard man, nor an unfeeling one; he was "not a man, for instance, who had never loved at all" (252). John goes on to say that even though Jeremy had loved only air and absence, it was a lot more love than some men and women put into an entire lifetime (252). During his childhood, when the story was told to John by his father, a lesson in morality was always added about the dangers of illicit love, after which the children would read the part in the Bible about Jesus casting out the seven devils (253). When John replaced his father as storyteller, he decided that he wanted to tell the story differently. It seemed to him that the most interesting part of the story was Jeremy himself, so he wanted to "stay inside that mind and tell the rest of the story," from Jeremy's point of view (253). There is, therefore, no overriding authorial consciousness in *Changing Heaven*, as in, for example, *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot in which many actions occuring in the novel are judged on a moral basis. This promotes the development of dialogism which is necessary for polyphony.

In contrast to Urquhart's dialogic treatment of spousal abandonment, suicide, social isolation, neglectful parenting, and murder, a facet of her characterization of Major David

McDougal provides an example of polarized thought processes. His categorization of Canadians and Americans as "us" and "them" is the kind of dualistic thinking that provokes and promotes wars. By viewing an entire country composed of diverse individuals as the enemy, the Major's focus is very narrow-minded, indeed. It is an ironic truth of war that today's enemies could be tomorrow's allies, and vice versa. One might even have more in common with an enemy soldier than with a fellow soldier.

As in most situations, it is usually impossible to determine the possible repercussions or outcomes, good or bad, which might ultimately arise. Also, many situations in the novel are rendered in a surrealistic manner which further hinders their treatment in a realistic context. As well, it is difficult to define terms such as "good" and "bad" because they can depend on the uniqueness of the situation. Bakhtin believed in "a moral wisdom derived from living rightly moment to moment and attending carefully to the irreducible particularities of each case" (Morson and Emerson 25). What is good in one case could be bad in another. Timing is important as well: what might have been very good at one time could be disastrous at another. The child's social isolation and neglect, which could be viewed as negative, have led to his acquiring an extensive vocabulary. Maud is released from the societal constraints that her husband's life and death had imposed upon her. Fleda, misunderstood by her husband and scorned and feared by the poet, undertakes a journey, perhaps oriented toward self-actualization. Patrick finds his release in suicide, as does Jeremy. There is also the possibility, in attempting to polarize actions or events as right or wrong or of defining them using any other dualistic formulation, of drawing false conclusions because it is impossible to view situations in the original context or chronotope.

All judging or systematization involves actions or events which have already occurred, making it difficult to relive the original moment or context. Even objects acquire different meanings depending upon the context or time in which they are placed. The author whose narrative voice is polyphonic and maintains a distance from judgmental pronouncements or categorizations allows the reader the benefit of a richer perception of possible meanings and interpretations of experiences. The real fabric of existence is composed of the infinite shadings that lie in between.

CHAPTER 6: ORIENTATION OF THE WORD

The word in dialogue is directly oriented toward a future answer word, one that provokes and anticipates an answer, allowing responsive understanding to become a fundamental force (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 280, 281). The speaker and receiver of the utterance must contend with a background composed of contradictory opinions, points of view, and value judgments which complicate the "path of any word toward its object" (281). Understanding comes to fruition (if at all) only in the response; as a result, the speaker's orientation is toward the specific world and subjective belief system of the listener, which introduces new elements into his discourse. Also, the perception of the emotion or tone present in earlier utterances, such as hostility or sympathy, authoritative or feeble, can shape the style and content of future utterances (Morson and Emerson 137). It is with these considerations in mind that various social languages come to interact with one another in the novel and elsewhere (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 282). In Urquhart, this form of dialogism bears a "subjective, psychological, and frequently random character," which can lead to utterances of an "accommodating" or "polemical" nature (282). The manner in which one speaks is therefore directly related to and influenced by the person with whom one is speaking.

A somewhat unusual example of accommodating one's self to the point of view of another occurs in *The Whirlpool* when Maud is recollecting a conversation she had with her husband, a devoted admirer of spiders. She is "intelligent enough" to adopt the point of view of a spider when she endeavours to convince her husband to remove the accumulated cobwebs on the second-storey ceiling of their home:

"It would seem unlikely," she had begun, "that we shall have any new

> spiders in this room. There is just not enough space. Surely a young spider wouldn't want to move in up there . . . among all those wrecks." (90)

Charles replies that the spiders themselves could take care of the mess because he wasn't going to disturb anything. The fact that Maud was married to a spider fanatic deeply influenced the content of her discourse toward her husband on this subject. When she kills a daddy-long-legs, Charles is furious with her so he makes her search through the garbage to retrieve its body. Maud had to tailor her discourse to meet her husband's rather eccentric and demanding needs in an effort to maintain harmonious marital relations.

Patrick's discourse is dramatically altered when he attempts a conversation with Maud's son. He is perplexed by the random nature of the words the boy directs at him: nothing, bereavement, sorrow, wheelbarrow, floater, parlour, August, sofa, onion, shovel, salad fork (109-11). Patrick begins to sense a deeper meaning to the random words of the boy, and sets up a poetic association between "streetcar," a word he utters, and the boy's response, "river" (111). He is convinced that he will be unable to visit the river now without conjuring images of streetcars in his imagination. Likewise, he supposes that future journeys on streetcars "would include water moving behind his forehead" (111). He becomes even more drawn in by the child's language, and begins "to lay his own obsessions out in front of him like clothes on a bed, just to experience the words the boy might attach to them" (112):

> "Woman," Patrick began, tentatively, almost with embarrassment.
> "Thunder," the child replied immediately.
> "Forest," said Patrick.
> "Cellar door." The boy pointed up to the sky.
> "Swimming." Patrick held his breath, waiting for a response.
> "Keeping," said the boy, and then, as if sensing the importance of the subject

> he added the word collar.
> "Whirlpool," Patrick ventured, looking directly, and with emotion, into the little face.
> "Oh," said the boy reaching with his free arm across the barrier, the fence, catching Patrick's cuff in his small hand. (112)

Patrick chooses to believe that his discourse with the boy is of a profound and enlightening nature. Their conversation, which is really a random association of words, becomes invested with a highly subjective deeper significance which foreshadows Patrick's attempted swim of the whirlpool. He connects and makes a profound impression on the boy, who repeats every word they have spoken tenderly and carefully while he rubs his chest against the fabric of Patrick's cuff (112). The memory of this meeting has a lasting effect on the child, who brings it up on at least two separate occasions with his mother (154-55, 201). At their next encounter, the boy echoes the gerunds that Patrick employs in his sentences – looking, hoping, talking, walking, stalking, gawking, shocking, blocking, knocking, squawking – until it is a game and they are both reduced to hysterical laughter "shaking their rib-cages and rattling their windpipes" (187). They are clearly able to communicate on an emotional level that transcends language.

Fleda directs her husband's answer word toward an angered response by fabricating a reaction to Patrick's poetry that she does not really feel:

> "Short? That's all you have to say?" [says Fleda]
> "Yes, short . . . and with lots of pine trees." [says David]
> "Then, I'm not interested."
> "How can you not be interested? All you ever think about is poetry."
> "I am interested in the English poets."
> "Why? Because of the pine trees. Look around you" – David gestured to the left and right – "You can't live in this country and ignore pine trees."
> "No English poet," said Fleda," would spend a lot of time worrying about pine trees."

> "But," thundered McDougal, becoming quite angry, "*this* is not England!" (119)

Fleda knows that her lack of patriotism toward Canada is sure to exasperate David. She also knows that her argument is with David and not with the poet's choice of subject matter. She is able to incite an angry response even though she has "secretly, all the while, been imagining poems filled with the smell of cedars carried on the breath of the northern wind" (119). Her real anger is directed toward the fact that her husband wishes to witness the spectacle of a man named Buck O'Connor shoot the whirlpool rapids in a vehicle constructed of the tanned hides of several moose he had killed on hunting trips over the years (116). Fleda views the whole proceedings as utter nonsense. She knows what the river is capable of, and deplores the violence.

Ann, in *Changing Heaven*, assumes two very different personalities depending on whether she is with Arthur or John. Arthur, who does not love Ann but experiences a strong physical attraction toward her, views their relationship as illicit, and treats Ann at times in a cold, grim, and impatient manner. He experiences a high degree of guilt in committing adultery but engages in it nevertheless. When Ann mentions that he could come to her place, he is "busy, hurried, and angry" because he does not wish to know the details of her life (87). Ann puts up with this humiliating treatment by her lover because she has "inexplicably fallen in love" with him (87). Ann's love for Arthur eventually turns to obsession because of his unwillingness to be known or to share with her (104). This causes her to lose her self-esteem, and to "inhabit a region where no help is possible" (97). During their final meeting in Venice, Ann is full of anxious, nervous energy in Arthur's presence;

she is constantly talking and seeking his approval to the point where she is suffocating him. By contrast, when Ann is in John's presence, she is self-assured and relaxed because she can bask in the presence of his love for her. He makes very few demands on her, and treats her with respect. Unlike Arthur, he is interested in learning about her past and "a kind of beautiful order steps with John into [her] life" (182). Ann's self-image is at least partly constructed by the company she keeps. John nurtures her into existence while Arthur unconsciously tries to annihilate her.

The orientation of the word in discourse is of primary importance in setting up relationships between the characters in Urquhart's novels, delineating the manner in which they respond to one another. Sometimes it promotes active understanding between them; at other times, it leads to conflicts and power struggles.

CHAPTER 7: GENERIC, PROFESSIONAL, AND SOCIOLOGICAL STRATIFICATIONS OF LANGUAGES

Literary language, Bakhtin contends, can be considered unitary only in its shared, abstract linguistic markers and in its forms for conceptualizing these abstract markers. In its aspects as an expressive system, literary language itself is stratified and heteroglot in the forms that carry its meanings (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 289). Bakhtin classifies the stratifications of languages in the following way:

> This stratification is accomplished first of all by the specific organism called genres (oratorical, publicistic, newspaper and journalistic genres, the genres of low literature or the various genres of high literature). There is interwoven with this generic stratification of languages a professional stratification of languages: the language of the lawyer, the doctor, the [businessperson], the politician, the public education teacher, the scientist, and so forth, and these sometimes coincide with, and sometimes depart from, the stratification into genres. These languages differ from one another not only in their vocabularies; they invoke specific forms for manifesting intentions, forms for making conceptualizations and evaluations concrete. (289)

These stratified languages do not exclude each other but interact and are interrelated dialogically in various ways. At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from all perspectives: it "represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present" (292). Further, languages can be stratified according to sociological differences, including gender, social class, religion, and race. In Urquhart, professional and sociological stratifications provide the background against which characters interact, while genre stratifications impart an overall tone to her novels. As well, language can be stratified at the individual level – a technique employed by Urquhart in the fleshing out of her characters. Each individual has his/her own unique language, composed of many diverse languages which become specific points of view on the

world, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and value systems.

The novel permits the incorporation of many different genres. In *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, Bakhtin observes that we "think and conceptualize in utterances" ultimately formulated by "generic principles" (Morson and Emerson 275). For Bakhtin, meaning is neither located entirely in the text nor is it identical with the author's original intentions. Nor does meaning reside entirely with interpreters. Because works grow in meaning over time, artists create potentials for the future by exploiting the resources of the past (285, 288). Genres, as a "key organ of memory," have taken shape over centuries; therefore, literary history is a "profound story of genres" (278, 280). In her novels, Urquhart uses a variety of genres for various reasons. The prologue and epilogue of *The Whirlpool* are combined and included in her short story collection *Storm Glass*, under the title "The Death of Robert Browning." Other genres inserted in *The Whirlpool* include journal entries, short poems, nursery rhymes, children's prayers, and hymns. The use of many genres allows for a richer expression than straight prose by creating depth and diversity in the narrative. Storytelling, an ancient oral tradition which allows for the transmission of truths and wisdom generationally, is used extensively in *Changing Heaven*. John relates three stories to Ann; each has its unique contribution to the development of their relationship. The numerous references to *Wuthering Heights* in *Changing Heaven*, including a character named "Emily Brontë," place a novelistic genre within the novel. In *Away*, inserted genres include songs, poetry and storytelling; all elements that promote a mystical rendering of the narrative. A parallel is drawn between Irish/Celtic storytelling and Native American Ojibway mythology,

depicted in a friendship which develops between Mary/Moira and Exodus Crow.

The Gothic genre, with its definition extended to include "a type of fiction which lacks a medieval setting but develops a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror," and "represents events which are uncanny or macabre or melodramatically violent" sometimes dealing with "aberrant psychological states," can be found extensively in the three novels (Abrams 78). Indeed, Urquhart's novels can be said to be permeated with death, violence, and passion. The setting of *The Whirlpool* is distinctly morbid and gothic. Maud's life revolves around a funeral parlour. She has a macabre obsession with death. Most of the things she does are related to death and dying. She has a piece of jewellery fabricated that tacitly connects her to her dead husband, which she pins at her throat following nightmares about him:

> [A]n elaborate brooch made out of a lock of her husband's hair, his dead hair, an oval frame of gold would surround two desolate hairy willows which would, in turn, flank a hairy tombstone with his initials on it. All of this was to be placed under a bubble of thin glass, a sort of transparent barrier between that tiny hairy world of graves and weeping and the one that Maud walked around in every day. (23)

Maud's world is replete with violence. It is to her that the River Man brings the floaters for burial after their trysts with the whirlpool and the rapids. Maud buries seventeen floaters that summer before the River Man brings her a severed arm with no body. She uses verse to describe this arm in her book:

> Right arm of a man
> No marks to lead to positive identification
> except tattoo
> says, "Forget me not, Annie"
> Surrounded by a heart like shape. (161)

This matter-of-fact description in poetic form, combined with the romantic sentiments expressed on the arm, is an ironic statement on the fleeting nature of romantic love in the face of the permanence of death. Also, Maud's attempt to provide for future identification of the arm by describing it in her notebook appears to be an exercise in futility. Other gothic elements in the novel include David's obsessions with war and battles, and Fleda's obsession with the poet, as well as Patrick's mental illness, his obsession with the whirlpool, his alienation from romantic love and fear of the other, his nightmares about rooms in his uncle's farmhouse being entirely scrambled, and his suicidal death. All these elements combine to provide a gloomy representation of reality. As well, the entire novel revolves around the whirlpool, which can be regarded as a gothic symbol of the powerful force of nature that causes death to those who get too close to its centre. It is described as "moving nowhere and endlessly repeating itself" like "obsession connected to memory," a gothic definition of the abyss for which we are all ultimately destined (49).

Changing Heaven's gothic elements include ghosts, hauntings, murder, suicide, revenants, and the gloomy and unforgiving landscape of Haworth moor, which is the setting for *Wuthering Heights*, a novel also in the gothic tradition. It is also an exploration of the aberrant psychological state of obsessive romantic love. These gothic elements ensure that the overall tone of the novel is permeated heavily by stormy, passionate weather or emotion. In *Away*, this theme is also present; many of the gothic elements centre around obsessive love mystically connected to the otherworld, and to the death and dying brought about by a non-regenerative landscape. The gothic genre in Urquhart's novels utilizes resources of the past to construct potentials for the future, illustrating Bakhtin's concept of genres as

"key organs of memory" (Morson and Emerson 280). Urquhart's appropriation of the gothic genre in her novelistic discourse helps set the overall tone present in the three novels, contributing to her aesthetic vision.

Other forms of stratifications of languages in Urquhart's novels include professional, sociological, and, most importantly, individual. In *The Whirlpool,* the cast of characters is small so we do not find a representative sample of many sectors of society. The main characters for one of the story lines include an undertaker's wife, Maud Grady, who since her husband's death has assumed the roles of widow, undertaker, gardener, and mother; and her young son, who remains nameless throughout the entire novel. The other story line's main characters include a major, David McDougal, who is also a war historian; his wife Fleda, a housewife with poetic aspirations; and Patrick, a published poet who ekes out a subsistence living as a clerk in government (67). These two story lines function almost independent of one another, and the framing prologue and epilogue which features Robert Browning is completely independent of the other two story lines, except by association.[6] The professional stratifications in the novel reflect a fairly well-educated segment of society, one that attends lectures given by the Historical Society and appreciates or composes poetry (Fleda, David, Maud, Patrick and his aunt), or plays piano in an accomplished fashion (Maud). Even the boy, by novel's end, has acquired an extensive vocabulary quite unusual for his age. The child excepted, the main characters all belong to roughly the same generation. Fleda is 27, and Patrick is 33, a very symbolic age for death.[7] Maud's social interactions in the novel are predominantly with her child and her assistant. She does not engage in much dialogue. David, Fleda, and Patrick, on the other hand, do converse more

extensively, and use the educated language of their generation in doing so. All the characters in the novel are Canadian except for Robert Browning, who is English. As a result, difficulty in communicating, which arises from cultural differences is kept to a minimum. Being educated, and living out in the woods, affords Fleda and David freedom from societal constraints that are experienced by other members of society. Fleda is free to come and go as she pleases as long as she is punctual in serving the evening meal. David is passionate about his work and fascinated with the War of 1812, which occupies most of his spare time. Patrick, while not wealthy, has been educated in the hopes of his entering the ministry. His uncle is a prosperous farmer who offers him a home to recuperate from his illness. Patrick has difficulty in assimilating his native land. Educated in the British tradition, he has not acquired any skills which could attach him to the Canadian landscape in any meaningful way. He was taught to read Latin instead of acquiring practical skills such as how to make a "split rail fence" (69). So he attempts to get to know the land by writing poetry. He is "unable to deal effectively with either the body or the soul of the new country" (69). The main characters in *The Whirlpool* are, therefore, an elite and unusual group that cannot be considered representative of the general population in Upper Canada during the summer of 1889.

Religion, an important factor in the lives of most people of this era, is not referred to very often in the novel. Fleda and Maud do not attend church on a regular basis, nor does any of the action in the novel take place in a church. There is no mention of the men attending church at all except when David and Patrick discuss and reject the idea of church, "looking as pleased as schoolboys taking a day off" (207). This serves to isolate them

further from mainstream society, and, for this time period, reduces the number of possible societal interactions in the novel.

In the nineteenth century, gender stratification was quite distinct along occupational lines. Thus, it is all the more remarkable that Maud becomes an undertaker upon her husband's death, this profession being generally regarded as a male endeavour during this time. The positions available to women in the nineteenth century included teaching, nursing, crafts, and cottage industries. According to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, women in the nineteenth century were marginalized with no substantial connection to the world of men. They had no claim to personhood under the law, and their existence was confined mainly to the home, and to the rearing of children (23). Therefore, Maud's becoming sole owner and manager of such an enterprise, and doing so almost effortlessly, is perhaps an indication on Urquhart's part that women were kept out of some professions due to a lack of means rather than due to a lack of innate ability. The character of Maud Grady is based on Urquhart's husband's grandmother who was, in fact, involved in the undertaking business (Hancock 29). When Patrick and David choose to ignore Fleda during their discussions of war, they are exercising a form of gender stratification which effectively excludes the female sex on such matters. Fleda becomes so enraged at this rejection by the men that she reverts to childish behaviour, circling the men and chanting childish rhymes in a vain attempt to gain their attention. She is fully aware that her behaviour is immature, but the lack of respect she is being shown by the men in their disregard for her causes her to regress to acts of retaliation she engaged in during her childhood (210). This treatment by the men allows her to become uncaring and composed

in their presence. It is at this moment that she stops responding to either of the men (212).

As in *The Whirlpool*, the cast of main characters in *Changing Heaven* is small and does not reflect a broad cross-section of society in its professional stratifications. The exploration of inner life assumes primary importance with the external world fading into the background. One story line centres around Polly Smith, a seamstress, who meets a balloonist, Jeremy Unger, who changes her name to Arianna Ether. He eventually becomes her manager when she replaces him as balloonist to attract larger crowds, thereby making their venture more profitable. After Arianna's death – an occupational hazard of parachuting out of hot-air balloons – she meets up with Emily Brontë, a writer who is also a ghost. The other story line's protagonist is Ann Frear, a university professor of English Literature who is writing a book about the weather in *Wuthering Heights*. She becomes romantically involved with Arthur Woodruff, also a university professor, whose field is Art History. During her visit to the Yorkshire moors, she meets John Hartley, whose occupations are diverse and include "moor edger, grass burner, healer of the sick and mender of broken cottages" (134). He is also, or has been, a carpenter, weaver, and mill worker. These characters are almost completely isolated from the outer world, with most of their social interactions occurring among themselves. Interactions with the outside world are infrequent and incidental to the development of the action. When John walks with Ann in public, he proudly celebrates their union. Arthur, however, wishes to keep his affair with Ann from public view by meeting in out-of-the-way motel rooms. The two story lines overlap in foreshadowing common themes.[8] At the close of the novel, they are drawn together when the ghosts press against the cottage window to hear John's story of "Sindbad of the Skies"

before fading into the landscape.

The main characters in *Away* span several generations, and can be divided into distinct time periods and locales. In Ireland, Brian and Mary, a married couple, are part of a community of peasants whose landlords are the Sedgewick brothers, Granville and Osbert. As previously mentioned, their lives resemble that of the idyl with Brian as hedgemaster and farmer. As a teacher, he is able to educate his family so that they can learn to read and write in order to assimilate their cultural heritage. Father Quinn, the priest, is an important member of the community in Ireland; he performs religious ceremonies for the peasantry, and is instrumental in bringing about the marriage of Brian and Mary. Liam, Brian and Mary's son, eventually becomes a successful farmer in Canada. He supports his sister, Eileen, who never marries. She falls in love with Aidan, a tailor with a remarkable dancing talent. He is involved with the social and political problems and intrigues of his day. Esther recounts their story. A spinster at 82, she still lives on the family estate bequeathed to her. Thus, the professional stratifications in *Away* represent a broader segment of society than those in the other two novels.

Social class stratifications in *Away* contrast major differences between the rich and the poor. The Sedgewick brothers enjoy a life of leisure and privilege derived from the fruits of the labours of their tenants. During Osbert's serendipitous conversation with Mary about the tidepools, the narrator emphasizes the vast differences between the two classes: "the rough weave of a shawl such as the woman wore had never been in such close contact with Harris tweed" (90). Osbert recognizes that he has been granted "a brief flash of understanding" with Mary, but he knows as well that their "worlds divided the second that

she had stepped away from him" (91-2). This stratification effectively limits communication between the two social classes. Nor are social class distinctions limited to the rich and poor in *Away*. In the lower classes, further distinctions are apparent between smallholders and cottiers. Smallholders are owners of several acres of land whereas cottiers are renters of cabins and potato plots in exchange for permanent labour in the Sedgewicks' corn and grain fields. O'Donovan Senior is not pleased with his son's choice for a wife because he is a smallholder, and the girl's father is a cottier, part of a social class he considers to be inferior to his own (104).

Religion and race, which are marginalized in the first two novels, emerge as major stratifying forces in *Away*. Whether one is of the Catholic or Protestant religion is a determining factor of social class in both Ireland and Canada. In Ireland, Brian teaches in a hedgerow school, an out-of-doors establishment that is illegal and thus not funded by the government. With the introduction of the National schools to his area, Brian will not be considered as a prospective teacher because he is an Irish Catholic. Only English or Scottish Protestants will be eligible for this position, even though he is probably at least as qualified as the Protestant teacher who will be hired. The same types of distinctions are made in Canada, but they are less pronounced. The first time Brian applies to the Board of Examiners at Madoc for a teaching position, he is turned down (166). The men who refuse him are of the Methodist religion – they are in the process of establishing Orange lodges. They are "suspicious of Brian's Irish background in general and his loose association with the 'Papist church' in particular" (166). After several years, however, when the tiny log school is still in need of a teacher, they overlook "their secret Orange Oath to stamp out all

those of Papist inclination, and [offer] Brian twenty pounds a year to instruct between fifteen and twenty students a year, many of whom were of Irish parentage themselves" (167). When after many years of service, Brian changes the curriculum to teach a different history of the British Empire than that outlined in the prospectus for Upper Canada schools – one that includes "land seizures which preceded the plantation of English and Scottish Protestants in Ulster," and the Penal Laws which denied Irish Catholics the right to purchase or lease land, become educated, practice a profession or vote – the Board of Trustees unanimously votes to retire him from active duty (201-2). Liam, as well, is aware of the class differences brought about by religious affiliation and race in Canada. He notices that the lush land that borders Lake Ontario is "owned by men whose names [are] Smith or Johnson – not a Murphy or Callaghan among them" (213). Thus, religion and race in *Away* are denoted as factors in defining social classes in the history of both Ireland and Canada in the nineteenth century.

Underlaying the social class differences brought about by the Catholic and Protestant religions in *Away* is the more fundamental difference between Christianity and Native American and Celtic mythologies. Upon meeting Exodus Crow, Mary imparts to him some background information on Ireland's mythological past:

> She told him about . . . the poet Oisín who had disappeared into Tír na nÓg, the land of the young, and who had returned centuries later to argue for the old ways and the old beliefs. . . . She told him of the "others," those who lived under the ground and those who lived under the water, and how they were around always and in everything and how they made the most beautiful music – a music so sweet and so sad that once it was heard it was never forgotten. She said that on her island there was no man and no woman who was not somehow haunted by it. (179-80)

Exodus Crow believes in the Celtic/Irish mythology that Mary relates to him because "it was as if his own mother were telling him the stories of the spirits" of his people (180). In turn, he tells Mary about "manitou – the spirit that is in everything and that is moved by earth and air and water and light" (180). He then tells her about "sky worlds and cloud worlds and water worlds, and spirits that live in them that were friends to men and women and upon whom men and women must rely for the food that grows out of the ground and for success in the hunt" (180). He informs her that when the first missionary had visited his grandfather, he had told the Native Americans about Moses, God, and Jesus, and they had believed him. When his grandfather had tried to tell the missionary about Native American beliefs, the missionary had scoffed at them (181). Mary and Exodus Crow commiserate about the English: Mary because they had conquered Irish land and cut down the forest, Exodus Crow because they had seized the natives' land, killed many animals for sport, and abused their women. These shared confidences cause Mary to remark that "the same trouble stayed in the hearts of both [their] peoples" (185). A mythic link is thus set up between Native and Celtic cultures. Libby Birch, in her article "Irish Female Presence in Jane Urquhart's Fiction," points out that Moira, the name ascribed to Mary by her otherworld lover before his death, is a "pre-Christian form of Mary, [derived] from the Trinitarian form taken by the goddess Aphrodite as 'the Great Moira' said to be older than time" (116). Mary's transformation into Moira thus denotes a regression in her beliefs to a pre-Christian form of Celtic mythology. Christianity, a homocentric religion, is fundamentally different from Native American and Irish/Celtic mythologies which encompass ecocentric or earth-centred beliefs. This difference in orientation affects the basic way of perceiving environment: in

Christianity, nature is subservient to humanity, whereas in Native American and Irish/Celtic mythologies, humans are but a constituent part of a greater whole.

In *Away*, gender stratification is evident in the roles assumed by men and women. Women are not portrayed as having roles outside the home, except for Mary who camps out on the shores of Lake Moira alone. When Eileen travels to Montreal to look for Aidan, she is perceived by others as a target for unscrupulous characters who might wish to take advantage of her since she is unescorted. She is thus viewed as requiring protection. During the nineteenth century, it was an uncommon occurrence to see a young woman travelling alone in public. As well, Eileen is excluded from the world of politics and social justice. She would like to become a part of Aidan's world and thereby actively engage in political and social issues. Mrs. O'Brien, Aidan's father's wife, informs Eileen that men do not take women seriously in that regard (318). She is denied access to what is considered a man's world.

Bakhtin's theories on the stratifications of languages within novels aid in revealing Urquhart's use of generic stratifications in *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away*. Her use of the gothic genre to set the predominant tone in these novels contributes to the overall aesthetic vision of these works. The presence of professional and sociological stratifications within the novels permits an examination of the social forces with which the characters must contend. In many cases, these social forces limit or impede the characters' abilities to integrate successfully with their environment, leading to possibilities of character transformation and the development of divergent and conflicting points of view in narrative, Bakhtinian concepts to be discussed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 8: CHARACTER PORTRAYAL

The stratifications of languages at the individual level in the novel form the basis for character analysis. The languages of heteroglossia may be drawn in by the novelist for the "orchestration of his[/her] themes and for the refracted indirect expression of his[/her] intentions and desires (values)" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 212). Prose writers can make use of languages that are not their own, that are foreign to their usual modes of expression. They may treat them as semi-alien or completely alien to themselves while ultimately compelling them to serve their own purposes and intentions (299). The prose writer "does not purge words of intentions and tones that are alien to him[/her], he[she] does not destroy the seeds of social heteroglossia embedded in words" (298). As a result, authors often possess no direct language of their own, quotation marks of some kind being essential to novelistic style (Morson and Emerson 321). Distancing has infinite shadings and countless positions, and is employed for an illimitable variety of reasons, "few of which receive an explicit marker or statement, but all of which may be keenly felt" (325). The complex tracing of the degree and direction of irony present in "intonational quotation marks and interacting character zones" are part of the analytical activity necessary to understanding Urquhart's novels; they raise questions about her ultimate view of a character (334). Since direct access to the author's thoughts is not usually possible in the novel, it is fairly difficult to conduct this type of analysis with any degree of certainty. One can only surmise an author's intentions.

The complex self-definition of characters made possible by the extensive use of heteroglossia in the novel allows for characters to assume lives of their own, to be distinct entities with subjective belief systems. Speakers can compare belief systems, examine how

the same topic can be differently conceptualized, and come to consider or understand social facts illuminated by the use of different languages (310). As a result of the complex development of character, "plot is no longer the sequence characters are ordained to follow, but the "result of what they say or do" (247). Therefore, discourse becomes the primary component of the novel with plot assuming a secondary importance. Bakhtin describes the evolution of character portrayal in the novel in the following manner:

> Therefore human life and character may no longer be portrayed by means of an analytical enumeration of the characterological qualities of the man[/woman] . . . (vices and virtues) and through their unification into a stable image of him[/her] – but rather, one must portray [them] by means of . . . deeds, . . . speeches, and other extensions and expressions of the [character]. (*Dialogic Imagination* 141)

Character portrayal in Urquhart's three novels revolves, in part, around the dialogic interactions and other expressions of the characters. Heteroglossia is extensively present as well, with the depiction of inner life assuming primary importance.

Among Urquhart's methods of representing characters are narrative strategies of show and tell involving a third-person narrator. Patrick, in *The Whirlpool*, is an example of how she uses different techniques of telling and showing to flesh out the inner life of a character. The reader is told of Patrick's poetic aspirations and the development of his mental illness and subsequent nervous breakdown:

> During the past winter he had suffered an attack of pneumonia which had left him weaker physically and in a state of perpetual despair. He began to believe that there were forces beyond his control conspiring to erase all words from his mind. Finally, he found it difficult to speak at all. The idea of people gathered together, the noise, the maddening hum of conversation, caused him panic. His doctor, genuinely alarmed, suggested a twelve week vacation away from his work, preferably in a rural setting. The uncle was contacted and generously opened the doors of his healthy world – a world

> that Patrick would feel, initially, overwhelmed by. (69-70)

Later in the novel, the reader is shown Patrick's reaction to crowds by direct access to his thoughts when he is viewing the launching of O'Connor in his moose contraption:

> Another thirty feet of crowd had materialized behind him and was now pressing up against his back, hoping to catch at least a glimpse of the impending tragedy. Patrick felt as if his windpipe was beginning to close, denying him access to air. Searching for some form of meaningless distraction, he began to recite mentally all the nursery rhymes he could remember. . . . Baa, baa, black sheep, Patrick crooned inside his head. . . . Then he felt the straining belly of the man behind him brush his back, and a sudden nausea began to creep upwards from his knees. . . . Everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went. Patrick's mouth felt dry, his heart was pounding. . . . Patrick swallowed three times, and running out of nursery rhymes, he began a silent repertoire of children's prayers. . . . Patrick bolted through the crowd. . . . He managed to get thirty or forty yards beyond the last line of spectators before he flung himself down beside some flowering shrubs. (121-3)

One of the main aspects of Patrick's portrayal in *The Whirlpool* centres around his obsession for Fleda. On treks near his uncle's farm, he becomes fascinated when he observes her in the forest through his field glasses. A figure has entered his landscapes, and he becomes intent on studying her (56). Probably stemming from his deep-seated fear of people and crowds, Patrick wants to objectify Fleda and thereby control his image of her. He wishes to retain a safe, static image of her in which she is only a passive part of her surroundings:

> He realized that in his imagination, his fantasy, she was completely still. The words moved around her like part of her nervous system or electrical impulses suddenly becoming visible outside her brain. . . . [T]he idea of any activity taken as a decision on her part did not connect with his vision of her. The first image. She, reading, slowly turning the pages, not moving as the forest moved around her. The first image. He held to that. (97)

By objectifying Fleda, Patrick is able to maintain his distance from her. But this essential distance does not diminish his obsession for her. If anything, it fuels it to a frenzy. He

wishes to know her past, to observe her when she is not conscious of observation, to have revealed to him sides of herself that have not been revealed to anyone else. He wants to experience her when she is whole, "not fragmented into consideration of self and other" (107). He also wants to understand what forces had caused her to move into the forest, how she had ended up letting go of traditional domesticity in closed spaces. The reader is told that "he wanted to discover the exact moment when the whirlpool had taken hold of her life" (107).

Fleda's character is revealed extensively through her obsession with Patrick, as well as through her rejection of social conventions. Patrick is unaware that Fleda has noticed him spying on her and has, in turn, become romantically obsessed with him. She even begins to dress for him, wearing a pale blue silk skirt with white braid which is not appropriate attire for the woods (175). She is haunted, almost constantly, by the idea of the poet watching her; as her fascination grows, it begins to surround her like a bubble she can't break, placing a curtain between her and whatever else is happening (157-8). Fleda feels that her whole life has been leading up to the presence of the poet in her life (142). Often, the reader is told, she talks to him when he isn't even there, repeating words she had said only a few hours before in his presence (158). She begins to live almost solely for her encounters with Patrick, sinking deeper into her thoughts of him, allowing them to "cushion and protect" her from "the sordid, the ordinary, and the real" (174). These changes that Patrick effects in Fleda allow her to come to a better understanding of herself. Her journal entries chronicle a clear progression toward increased self-knowledge. In her last journal entry on 1 September 1889, after she has been rejected by Patrick, it becomes clear that she has

abandoned petty social conventions when she asserts that she would no longer be able to survive an afternoon tea. She has forgotten her manners, when to say please or thank you. She wonders when exactly she stopped wanting to say either (219). In effect, she has socially deconstructed herself, and is ready to set forth on a journey closely tied to the Canadian landscape.[9]

Fleda's husband, David, who is oblivious to her fascination for Patrick, is portrayed as unaware of the actual undercurrents of social interactions, being somewhat preoccupied with his research and opinions. The reader is told that he has a great love for his horse which he considers to be a national treasure, perhaps an ironic undertone regarding the priorities of his attachments. He is appalled when he witnesses the demise of Buck O'Connor in his moose contraption, becoming so visibly upset that he is scarcely able to hold the teacup in his hands as he recounts the gruesome details. He doubts that anything so grotesque would be seen "even in battle," an indication that he has probably never taken part in one (125). Much of David's character is revealed through his dialogue and interactions with Fleda and Patrick. He is a devoted admirer of Laura Secord, making Fleda suspect that he married her because of her supposed resemblance to the image David had of her when she came to him in a dream. This is confirmed when he admits as much to Patrick during a conversation at his hotel (86). He even thinks this may be the reason why he married her. He makes Fleda wear an old dress to bed to enhance his fantasies of Laura Secord during their lovemaking. The reader gets an interesting look at a facet of the Major's character following Fleda's disappearance and his subsequent reaction to it. This glimpse into his psyche will be explored in detail in Chapter 9.

The extent to which Maud is restricted by societal constraints is revealed through her dress and demeanour, as well as through the lasting effects of her husband's death. Her mourning costume is so severe that her weepers and veil restrict her vision. More than once, she has ventured into the path of an oncoming streetcar or carriage. For this reason, she usually stays close to home. The reader is informed that Maud was overcome by the tragedy of her husband's death, and now, after two years, the dreams she has of him have subsided to once or twice a month. She can no longer bring his face clearly into focus in her mind. For Maud, "disaster had not disappeared, but it had diminished in size, had become in a sense, manageable" (29). Maud's husband had exercised strict control over their lives. They had agreed not to discuss funerals in the evenings, so instead discussed spiders. The reader is made aware that Maud did not particularly want to discuss spiders, but when it came down to a "choice between spiders and funerals, what alternative did she have?" (89). These societal constraints placed on Maud, and those she continues to place most severely on herself, extend to the infrequent dialogue in which she engages. Even after her husband's untimely death, she has trouble overcoming the rigidity of her assumed social roles. The reader is shown, rather than told, that Maud is more comfortable with her beloved little friends – the little girls whose funerals she attends to – than with her own child:

> Then she would fling herself, sobbing, onto the bed. Nothing to do with death or children. Just that her beloved little friend had been taken from her; that their time together was over, forever.
>
> The following day she would find herself completely ignoring her child, treating him as if he had never been born. And he, mimicking her, would behave as if his mother had never given birth to him. (138-9)

Maud's child, perhaps in imitation of his mother's rigidity, is described as being "stiff," in

an "unbreakable pose," and with "straight knees" and "fingers which refused to grasp" his mother's hand (63). The reader has access to the child's thoughts only once;[10] he is revealed mainly through his dialogue, actions, and language acquisition skills. He is an enigmatic character, described perhaps inaccurately as autistic in two reviews and an article,[11] who sometimes functions as a mirror reflecting the adult characters with whom he interacts.[12] The child undergoes several different stages in language development; by novel's end, he is able to communicate freely. At first, to help her son, Maud names the objects with which she comes in contact. This does not seem to help him as he appears not to understand, and also ignores her. In frustration, Maud points her child directly at the sun and screams the word "sun" in his ear repeatedly. To her surprise, he finally responds to her, moaning the word "sa-a-a-w-n," and crying for the first time (67). Later, he begins to imitate sounds, first clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth to imitate horses, and then breathing through clenched teeth to imitate the wind in the poplar trees (77). He then undergoes a stage whereby he listens intently to adult conversations and makes connections between words such as "salute" and "gun," as well as repeating certain words employed by the adults (147-9). He attempts to inform his mother about Patrick by calling him "the man," and repeating several of the words used during their exchange. Maud, who has no idea who Patrick is or that her son has met him, believes that he is still repeating arbitrary words (155). Within a few weeks of this incident, the boy becomes a perfect mimic, imitating entire conversations he has overheard, not only repeating every word spoken, but eerily reproducing the tone and pitch of the voice as well (162). Maud and her employees are reduced to silence in his company for fear he might reproduce their conversations during a

social visit. The child then undergoes a stage where he fills up the adults' silences with a verbal description of their actions (200). As he becomes more verbal, Maud is reduced to silence. Once he has acquired language skills, his behaviour changes yet again, and he begins to sort and classify objects in imitation of his mother. Maud's "domestic geography [is] . . . tampered with, her home . . . [becomes] a puzzle" (204). In portraying the various stages of the child's development, Urquhart uses him as a foil to his mother, as an opposing force to show her the ways in which her own behaviour toward life is constricting her. Her frustrations in dealing with her child are a defensive barrier she sets up to shut out all live, human contact. At the end of the novel, the child is able to effect a conciliation with his mother by releasing the dreadful power objects have over her. By mimicking her behaviour in his own way, he shows her that her attachment and classification of objects is arbitrary, and her attempts to maintain or fabricate order out of chaos are futile. This aids her in overcoming her obsession with all things connected to death.

In *Changing Heaven*, a great deal of Ann's character is revealed through the intermediary of the third-person narrator. From early childhood, Ann is emotional and capable of a passionate response. She becomes obsessed at eleven years of age with *Wuthering Heights*. In the dark recesses of her basement dollhouse, she re-enacts dramas between Heathcliff and Catherine. She has dark, imaginative fantasies concerning these dolls, with Heathcliff as "angry [and] violent," and Catherine as "beautiful, petulant, passionate" (21). When Ann attempts to involve other children in these games, they are not interested, and prefer more ordinary fare that reflects their usual family lives. They want to send the dolls to school or to church, or they want them to sit down to pleasant family meals

(21). Ann is isolated during childhood; there is no mention of close personal friends. Socially inept, she leaves the first church basement dance she attends after enduring it for exactly half an hour (69). Ann is still a child when she encounters the lonely and disenfranchised for the first time in the form of a "lumpy-legged lady" struggling across the street with two full bags of groceries (29). She does not want to end up lonely and unwanted like this woman. Ann's material comforts are well provided for, first by a father who is not at home very often, and later in life by having prepared for a career as an academic. Her capacity for deep feeling and passionate response remains with her once she reaches adulthood. The intervening years between her childhood and the staff party where she first encounters Arthur are not revealed in the novel. It is left up to the reader to fill in the gaps in her development.

The character of Arthur Woodruff, Ann's lover, is also revealed extensively through the use of the third-person narrator. At fifteen, the reader learns, he becomes obsessed with Tintoretto. Arthur is depicted as having Italian blood from his mother's side of the family, which has a tendency to dance "sentimentally in his veins" no matter how hard he tries to repress it (59). Another aspect of his blood which keeps it in check is inherited from his father who has an almost "military fear of emotion" (59). In his mid-adolescence, "the battle is over," and "his father's blood has won" (59). Arthur is the victim of a fire that severely damages his hands, leaving his palms as smooth and polished as a child's. He is incapable of experiencing a finer sense of touch, such as differentiating between the feel of cotton or silk (117). He has never disclosed this to Ann, and has been adept at camouflaging and hiding his palms so that she is unaware of his defect. When Arthur and

Ann's affair is terminated for the first time, Arthur "believes that he feels nothing" (116). Once she leaves the hotel room, "his mind is a vacant house," and he reads the instructions for surviving fires on the hotel room door over and over again (117). Arthur is a man who is not in touch with his emotions. He does not know his own mind. He is incapable of admitting to himself that he misses Ann, yet he inquires about her whereabouts from a mutual colleague when she has left for England without informing him. He even obtains her address overseas. Finally, against all his arguments to himself to the contrary, he mails her a perfunctory letter informing her that he will be going to Venice unaccompanied. Arthur's distance from his emotions is an effective barrier which helps him to maintain a state of relative complacency that his daily life with his wife, daughter, and dog affords him. It is difficult to understand what motivation Arthur might have had in writing the letter to Ann if he does not care for her at all. During their disastrous meeting in Venice, he half believes that it is Ann's obsession carried across the ocean which forced him to write and mail the letter (231). Arthur does not appear to understand his capacity for passionate response the way Ann does.

In contrast to Arthur, John is not attached, so his relationship with Ann is not constrained by other ties. The reader gathers a description of John during several meetings with Ann, and it is through her eyes that he is revealed to the reader. During their first meeting, Ann notices that he has bright blue eyes, his hair is very fair, perhaps even white, and he is endowed with musical speech (133-4, 136). It is John who discovers that Ann is very ill, and brings the doctor to her cottage. While she is recuperating, Ann describes John as a "gentle . . . large, pale, friendly apparition" with "huge hands . . . large bones and broad

forehead" (149). He is a dependable sort who takes on the responsibility for Ann's weaknesses (152). John is also portrayed indirectly through his storytelling abilities, and in his dialogue with Ann. He has developed to a high degree the oral tradition for passing on folklore. As a result, he is revealed to be wise, astute, and discerning; he is capable of understanding the underlying motivations of characters and events. These attributes enable him to engage in a relational model of communications with Ann to be discussed in Chapter 12.

While Ann and Arthur are described mainly in psychological rather than physical terms, by contrast Arianna and Jeremy are depicted by the narrator in vivid physical detail:

> The one who walked tall, took the wind in his teeth and the low evening sun in his eyes, was a man of perhaps thirty-five years of age, dark haired, of a slim, strong build with wide shoulders and broad hands. . . . [H]e had the eyes of a changeling: eyes that are fickle and true in their colour only to that which is near to them. These eyes, surmounted by perfect black brows, were the predominant feature in a face of extraordinary beauty. . . . [O]n closer examination, one could see undeniable lines of acute anxiety. . . . [A]round his mouth as well . . . were traces of continued unhappiness mixed with the very stubbornness that would not allow him to bend his head to accommodate the dogged wind.
>
> At his side walked a woman who appeared to be the most delicate lady in England: a tall, pretty woman, exceptionally slender, with fine, fair, curly hair that would not lie flat upon her head regardless of the army of tortoise shell combs and barrettes called into action for the purpose. . . . [I]t seemed the wind might carry her away altogether, so weightless did everything about her appear to be. (5-6)

These physical descriptions of Arianna and Jeremy also impart information about some of their major characters traits. Jeremy is revealed to be stubborn and inflexible, whereas Arianna is ethereal and pliant.

Jeremy's character is further developed during his interactions with Arianna, which

reveal him to be cruel and abusive. When they are entering the inn, he allows the door to slam in her face (8). He is not above maliciously reminding her that if not for him she would be Polly Smith, "shopgirl, charwoman, barmaid, sculleryimaid, factory worker, or at best, paid slut" (9). He is extremely jealous of her because he believes she should be in the crowd watching him instead of him watching her. Other facets of Jeremy's character are revealed to the reader when John recounts his story about "Sindbad of the Skies" at the end of the novel. He describes him as requiring absence and distance, hating to be intimate even with objects, and fairly happy in his life as a balloonist before meeting Arianna because the world was clear and empty when he was lifted into the sky from village after village (249). When he is performing, he tastes nothing but ether, smells nothing, but most importantly is touched by nothing, except air (250). Jeremy falls in love with Arianna because she reminds him of air, and because "her eyes [are] blue and infinite and he [sees] the sky in them" (250). His life changes irrevocably when she enters his life; when she confides to him that she has begun to invent a rich inner life to counter the vacancy of her existence with him, he is very angered and his love for her is "broken" (251). His motivation for murdering Arianna is to return her to a "beautiful, beloved vacancy" so that he can love her again (251). A sad and bitter man after her death, he longs for the Arctic, the only region of the earth vast, white, cold, and empty enough to please him (251). In her portrayal of Jeremy, Urquhart maintains an ironic distance from her character, and employs the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia; she does not purge words of intentions and tones that are foreign to her usual modes of expression.

Arianna is mainly portrayed indirectly through her dialogue with Emily, and also by

the third-person narration that describes the drudgery of her life before she meets Jeremy. Motherless at a young age, she is raised by a father who takes to drink. Her job as a seamstress is tedious; the narrator characterizes her sewing machine as a "menacing little black devil," as "evil in the flesh" (71). When she escapes this existence to live with Jeremy, she does not even bother to inform her father of her departure. She is unaware that she is exchanging one form of prison for another. Emily and Arianna can read each other's thoughts, so they engage in lengthy dialogues throughout the novel. Because Jeremy was intent on Arianna remaining as vacant as possible by keeping her in white, impersonal rooms, she tells Emily of the house she had constructed in her imagination to offset the absence of setting (51). Jeremy might have been able to control Arianna's external environment, but he is unable to control her inner life. Emily is aware that Jeremy has murdered Arianna, but repeatedly evades Arianna's questions concerning her death because she perceives that Arianna is still in love with him. Arianna informs Emily that Jeremy had swept her off her feet. She tells her that she was flattered he paid so much attention to her, more than anyone had previously done:

> "On the train he sat across from me and just looked at me and told me to do certain things so that he could watch me doing them. Look out the window, he would say, or, Read this book. Put your chin in your hand, lean forward, lean back against the seat. Then, after each change, he would look at me with utter adoration." (74)

Arianna had allowed Jeremy almost total physical control over herself because of his promise to look after all of her needs. Her trusting and impressionable nature had led to her objectification, to her loss of control over her life, and to her subsequent murder by Jeremy.

Emily's character in *Changing Heaven* is complex and multi-faceted; it encompasses

both realistic and fictional elements in its rendition since it is based on an actual historical figure. In an interview with Jeffrey Canton, Urquhart characterizes Emily as "a strong character, a little bossy with an enormous imaginative scope" (4). Urquhart says she " [likes] to think of Emily Brontë as haunting her own presence in the story" (3). Emily's physical description in *Changing Heaven* is of a woman with "a pale face and clear blue eyes . . . who was almost as thin as [Arianna], but who was dark rather than fair" (37). This description is similar to one of the actual Emily. In *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life*, Emily is described as having "beautiful eyes, at times dark grey, at times dark blue. . . . [S]he was pale with straight brown hair" (Gordon 11). In *Changing Heaven*, Emily is revealed primarily through her dialogue with Arianna. The narrator seldom intrudes on her thoughts. Arianna and Emily discuss all of the things that encompassed their respective lives, "each nuance of their lifetime of emotion, all the frivolous details of taste (228). They analyze relationships in detail. Many of the actual events and circumstances of Emily Brontë's life are discussed between the ghosts. At different times, she reminisces about her father, her brother Branwell, her house and family, and Charlotte's one-sided love affair with her teacher in Brussels, M. Heger (99, 108, 129, 203).[13] Emily's characterization in *Changing Heaven* may be derived in part from some of the real Emily's childhood poetry, as reproduced in John Hewish's critical and biographical study of Emily Brontë:

> Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away,
> Lengthen night and shorten day;
> Every leaf speaks bliss to me
> Fluttering from the autumn tree.
> I shall smile when wreaths of snow
> Blossom where the rose should grow;

> I shall sing when night's decay
> Ushers in a drearier day. (31)

In *Changing Heaven*, Urquhart characterizes Emily, through her direct speech, as also loving winter because of its passionate and volatile power of transformation:

> "I think my early interest in the Arctic must have had something to do with my dislike of spring, my love of winter. You see," Emily was incandescent with enthusiasm for her chosen season, "much more is happening in the winter. It is a more active state. None of this slow practically imperceptible growth. . . . The wind attacks everything around it, it makes instant contact. . . . A blizzard changes everything. It's as if it cares about the landscape so much it simply has to touch it recklessly, has to fling itself upon it. Inappropriately sometimes, yes, but always fearlessly. Passionately. None of this gentle, sentimental coaxing." (202)

Emily makes frequent and repeated references to the weather in *Changing Heaven*. She "[loves] a room that is full of wind" (82). She is preoccupied with the changing of seasons "to allow for storms" (52). She quotes the real Emily's poetry for its weather content: "This is my home, where whirlwinds blow, where snowdrifts round my path are swelling" (42). She appears to be obsessed with the more extreme manifestations of weather, which can be said to mirror corresponding internal states of emotion. According to Hewish, the real Emily's work is "introspective and is characterized by a clash between a rigid and orthodox moral background and a tendency to emotional extremes" (9). Also, in *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life*, Emily is described as keeping her eyes averted and not often engaging in talk (Gordon 11). This trait is found in the Emily in *Changing Heaven* when she informs Arianna that she "never looked anyone in the eye," but scrutinized and investigated them (101). She confesses to Arianna that she has been inventing angry love affairs since she was nine (75). Urquhart portrays Emily as having a very dark view of

romantic love because of the dangers inherent in not having control over one's emotions and circumstances, and the pain that can result therefrom. In *Changing Heaven*, Emily recounts the effects that Catherine's absence/death have had upon Heathcliff:

> "He cannot eat, but he tastes her. She monopolizes him utterly. Everything that exists is a message from her. He carries her in his sleeves, in his pockets. . . . He breaks a goblet and *her* bones shatter, *her* blood spills. Her eyes stare out beneath his lids." (146)

This passage is similar to what Heathcliff actually expresses in *Wuthering Heights*. It shows that the power of romantic love is so strong that it is capable of dominating one's life:

> "In every cloud, in every tree – filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day – I am surrounded by her image! . . . The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her." (Brontë 398)

Emily sums up by telling Arianna that she never wanted to be in love because she considers it to be devil's work. Romantic love is a strong force that is capable of eliciting both great pleasure and great pain. When romantic feelings are thwarted, denied expression, or when trust in the other is shattered, the possibility exists that severe emotional and physical distress may result. When Emily asks Arianna if she understands what she means when she characterizes romantic love as devil's work, Arianna is quick to assent, having had her own painful experiences with Jeremy while still feeling great love for him (147). Urquhart's conception of Emily, while fictional, maintains a semblance of verisimilitude in its portrayal due to the similarities between her character and the actual Emily Brontë. It is a fitting tribute that *Changing Heaven* is dedicated, in part, to her.

In *Away*, both Brian and the sailor are described through the perceptions of other characters. During a visit to Brian's cottage, Father Quinn takes the opportunity to examine

his features while he is reciting some of his poetry:

> Through the several verses of the poem, the priest admired his friend's strong face, noticing the lines on the forehead and the cut of the angular bones, and then the creases made by worry, thought, and kindness around the dark blue eyes. He needed a haircut thought the older man, but the hair itself was neatly combed, though greying and thin at the temples. Altogether the man had a pleasant countenance. (31)

Father Quinn is assessing his friend as a potential husband for Mary. The sailor, who regains consciousness only long enough to whisper the word "Moira" twice, is assimilated by Mary. She gains more knowledge of a man's body in those moments than she ever would:

> But mostly she looked at the young man whose sodden shirt she held firmly in her hands – the dark curls pasted to his left cheek, the eyebrows like ferns, the lashes resting on the bones beneath his eyes. . . . One of his arms rested, palm upwards, in the water, the sleeve torn open at the spot where his elbow bent. She saw the fortune lines on his hand, the blue rivers of veins under the marble skin, the creases on the vulnerable places of wrist and inner elbow. She saw the Adam's apple and tendons of his exposed throat and the hollow between his collarbones just above his chest. By grasping his shirt she had revealed one of his nipples; the sun had dried the dark hairs around it so that they moved like grass in the breeze, as did the similar hair that grew down from his belly toward the mystery that his trousers held. Fabric was glued by sea water to his legs and Mary could see the shape of the hard muscles of the thigh and the sharp slice of shinbone, and then the marble skin and blue veins of his bare feet. (7)

Mary gains so much information about the sailor during their encounter that she would have been able to "scratch the details of his features on a rock or mould an exact replica of him from clay" (8). It is no accident that Mary devotes so much time and energy in getting to know the physical characteristics of the dead sailor. He is a presence that will remain with her, in varying degrees, for the rest of her life.

The physical descriptions of Mary, herself, are scant. She is not mirrored back by the sailor who dies in her arms. She is generally recognized as being beautiful and inciting

fantasies in the male villagers, as well as in Father Quinn, who begins to have "unsettling dreams concerning red hair and snow white breasts," and "a white neck, a green eye, a burning halo of hair" (23, 32). Much of Mary's character is primarily defined through her relationships with others, including her otherworld lover, Brian, Osbert Sedgewick, and Exodus Crow. Her transformation from Mary to Moira is addressed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 10.

The third-person narrator introduces the Sedgewick brothers in *Away*. They are afforded little physical description; some of their functions in the novel include facilitating the emigration of the O'Malley family to Canada by paying their passage, as well as later buying the family's land from Liam so that he can move from the northern Ontario woods of the Canadian Shield to the shores of Lake Ontario. They are described as being somewhat eccentric and fair-minded, as "well loved by the peasantry as any pair of landlords could every hope to be" (41). The Sedgewick brothers' portrayal, particularly that of Granville, can also be construed as a parody of the frivolity of upper-class pursuits. Granville is characterized as an idealistic dreamer who wishes for the emancipation of Ireland even though this would, ironically, eliminate his livelihood. When he is first introduced to the reader, he is intent on "composing his forty-third lament concerning the sorrows of Ireland" (39). These laments are ineffectual and over-sentimentalized attempts at poetry. When their tenants do not show up on rent day due to the extreme hardships of their circumstances, Granville begins to feel "like a child whose friends [have] failed to materialize for a long-anticipated birthday celebration" (101). He still does not realize the extent of his tenants' suffering even though he professes to understand the sorrows of

Ireland, believing that he has "given a voice" to them through his poetry (103).

The second generation of the O'Malley family, Liam and Eileen, are the direct descendants of Brian and Mary. Liam is portrayed as a solid individual, responsible and caring; it is he who cares for Eileen, thereby ensuring her survival, when his mother abandons the family. He develops a deep filial attachment to her which remains with him for the rest of his life. Liam's aspiration is to become a prosperous farmer. The narrator informs the reader that by his nineteenth or twentieth year, he "knew he wanted to make things grow, wanted, above all, to nurture, to be a farmer" (197). Liam is a doer who is engaged with the practical world whereas Eileen is a dreamer. She bears a striking resemblance to her mother, which becomes apparent when Osbert visits the O'Malleys in Canada and, at first glance, believes that she is Mary. Eileen typifies the fool in her obsessive love and mistaken assumptions about Aidan. She is revealed primarily through her inner life and the tranformative effects landscapes and womanhood have upon her. These facets of her characterization will be discussed in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10.

Aidan Lanighan is portrayed through his effects on various characters; his internal thought processes are not revealed to the reader because they contradict what the other characters, including Eileen, mistakenly believe him to be. He is described by the narrator as being a "tall, straight, [and] curly-haired young man" (247). By his mere presence, he is able to transform a room, "his vitality causing the late afternoon sunlight to plunge recklessly through the west window, the lake to push its rhythmic song under the door, the old accordion to become orchestral, the hair and eyes of the men to shine" (248). During his dance performance, he is able to reproduce "the histories of courtship, marriage, the

funeral, famine, and harvest . . . at once an expression of vehement gaiety and furious lament" (247-8). He is generally acknowledged to be the "brightest and the best" (247). His many charms cause Eileen to fall irrevocably in love with him.

It is through the intermediary of Esther O'Malley Robertson, the last female descendant from Mary's side of the family, that the story unfolds. The narrator informs the reader that Esther is "the last and the most subdued of the extreme women" (3). Esther's life has been one of unfulfilled promise. Everything had moved "away" from her including "a man, a few beloved horses, the possibility of children" (9). Esther, at 82, is described as having a weak heart and crippling arthritis in her hands, as someone who takes pride in her eyesight because she considers it to be "acute" (19). She is the last link to a past that will end with her death. The story is told from her point of view, "to herself and the Great Lake, there being no one [else] to listen" (3). Esther is thankful for this because the wrong questions might have been asked, such as "How could you possibly know that? or Do you have proof?" (3). She has always been too "mature" for "considerations such as these" (3). Esther relates the story from her head and heart.

The techniques for portraying character in Urquhart are diverse and multi-faceted; they reveal the inner and outer lives of her characters through physical descriptions, character thought, dialogic interactions, third-person narration, dress and demeanour, storytelling abilities, language acquisition skills, fictional and autobiographical elements in representing an historical figure, and so forth. The seeds of heteroglossia inherent in these characterizations allow for the expression of differing points of view from the author.

CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER STYLIZATIONS

In the novel, the stylistic functions of the rogue, fool, and clown help to establish fundamental character traits. These three dialogic categories that have organized heteroglossia since the dawn of the novel's history emerge in contemporary times with extraordinary surface clarity (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 405). The clown can speak in otherwise unacceptable languages, and can maliciously distort acceptable languages. The rogue's gay deception presumes that no language of any class, group, or profession contains a straightforward truth. He continually dons and discards masks to expose the falsity inherent in social roles and institutions, thereby revealing the underside and falseness of every situation (160). Incomprehension is the character trait that belongs to one or another type of fool. The author needs the fool who, by his very uncomprehending presence, resists the world of social conventions and makes the nature of inner lives more visible. "By representing stupidity, [the right not to understand] . . . regarding the world through the eyes of a fool, the novelist's eye is taught a sort of prosaic vision" (Morson and Emerson 361). The most basic task of the novel becomes "the laying bare of any sort of conventionality, the exposure of all that is vulgar and falsely stereotyped in human relationships" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 162). In contemporary times, these three categories have been refined, "cut loose from their external and symbolically static images," but continue to be important in organizing novel style (405). Today, they usually only represent facets of character personality unless the rogue, fool, or clown is inserted in the novel for purely stereotypical reasons. Urquhart's character stylizations include all three categories. However, the predominant stylization that she utilizes is the fool to expose the pain of inner life that can arise from romantic love and romantic love obsession, major

themes present in all three novels.

In *The Whirlpool*, the stylistic traits of the fool are in evidence. David's reaction to Fleda's disappearance exposes him as a fool and dupe. At first, his reaction is one of annoyance because she is late for dinner, and punctuality is a strict principle to which he adheres without fail. When it becomes obvious that she will not be returning for dinner, he searches the tent for her notebook, wondering for the first time what she has been writing in it all those afternoons. Since her notebooks and poetry books are missing, he surmises that she has gone off somewhere to write, read Browning, and record her "elevated thoughts" (227-8). He is ready to give her the Laura Secord lecture on her return, and imagines her contrite expression. After nightfall there is still no sign of her, so his unease shifts dramatically into panic. At this point, he imagines horrifying fantasies of the Americans kidnapping his wife, or, worse yet, an American historian trying to gain information through "God knows what form of terrifying means" on his views of the siege at Fort Erie (225). By ten o'clock, he has finished his emergency supply of whiskey, and is working on his emergency supply of gin. By the next morning, he concludes his wife is really gone. When he spies the River Man hauling in a drowned victim, he discounts the obvious conclusion, and instead makes a thorough search of the woods for her. It is late afternoon before he finally decides to visit the funeral home. When he discovers it is Patrick instead of his wife who has drowned, he begins to weep. When asked by Maud if he is a relation, he is so distracted that he replies that he doesn't know where his wife is, or "how to contact her at all" (231). David's reaction of shock and grief to his wife's disappearance, while somewhat paranoid about Americans, is a fairly typical reaction to loss. Fleda has

made a fool of David; Urquhart sets him up as her foil. David had never really attempted to get to know his wife or to understand her inner life. It is therefore not surprising that Fleda decides to leave her marriage. David is a fool because he did not perceive the warning signs leading up to this abandonment.

The stylistic functions of the rogue and clown in *The Whirlpool* are embodied in some of Patrick's actions. When he first meets David, it is under false pretenses, ostensibly to learn more about the War of 1812, but really to gain more information about David's mysterious wife. He deceitfully ingratiates himself with the Major so that he can be invited to their camp to witness their private life together. It is not until later in the novel that there is a shift of alliance so that Patrick visits the camp to see David instead of Fleda. He coldly ignores Fleda, and completely withdraws his previous attention to her. Patrick dons the mask of the clown when he performs for Maud's child, and they are both reduced to hysterical laughter (186-8). He is subverting adult language by rhyming gerunds in a ludicrous manner suitable for his four-year-old audience. This form of clowning around makes a mockery of habitual societal constraints that impose rigid forms of conduct on adults, and allows for the release of tensions that accumulate therefrom.

Many characters exhibit behaviours that could be construed as foolish in *Changing Heaven*. Ann is a dupe to her emotions for Arthur. Arthur is a fool because of his lust for Ann. Arianna is a dupe to her murderous lover. They are foolish due to the effects of romantic love upon them. Following the same trope, Urquhart also makes use of the fool by inserting one in John's first story to Ann. Jack Green is depicted as a man whose life experiences with romantic love cause him to turn his former love of trees to hate because

they remind him of the woman he loved. Urquhart fashions Jack as a man with a green thumb who could coax and charm forests into flourishing, as recounted by John:

> "He were right seductive with a tree, were Jack, and it was said when he was walking in the woods, trees would fling suckers out toward him as he passed or bring forth saplings right at his feet – even in winter." (156)

Jack works as a landscaping artist for a wealthy client. He falls in love with his client's wife. They make love in the forest but she does not return to see him again. He gathers a representative sample from every species of tree in the forest he has nurtured into magnificence, and brings it as an offering to her but she still does not appear. After his disappointment with love, he moves to the Yorkshire moors to escape the forests. He writes a long book condemning the tree which becomes a lifelong obsession with him. His vitriol is extreme: the tree "obscureth the view . . . hideth slugs in its flesh, the rodent inhabiteth it, it blocketh the sun, it maketh shadows in the grass" (160). He develops another obsession whereby he wishes to roll a very large boulder up to the graveyard; anything, it seems, to get his mind off the woman he loved. Urquhart uses the fool here to expose the pain of inner life. Jack Green turns against his lifelong work and love because he believes his lover has abandoned him. In an ironic twist at the end of the story, Jack's burial plot is said to have a laurel tree growing in each corner of it. One explanation offered as to how the trees got there is that a group of John's drinking companions planted them. But John's father believed that the wind had carried the seeds from a laurel tree in Jack's southern forests, a tree watered over time by Jack's lover's tears. Because, it turned out, Jack's "forests and the trees in them and the sorrowful woman herself had loved Jack much, much more than he ever knew" (164). Ann asks John if real stories end like this, and he replies

"more often than you think" (164). The story is a lesson for Ann: she is not alone in having been made into a fool by the overwhelming power of romantic love.

Some of the character traits associated with the rogue are embodied in the actions and discourse of Jeremy in *Changing Heaven*. Not only is he the murderer of someone he purportedly loves, who trusts him implicitly thereby defying social taboos against such crimes, but he also subverts discourse to suit his own purposes. In stark contrast to his deplorable treatment of Arianna, his rhetoric on the virtues of womanhood prior to Arianna's hot-air balloon performance exemplifies using discourse to one's advantage:

> "She stands here, as I've said, and represents the women, all the pure, unselfish women who daily ease the lives of the poor base animal known as man."
>
> "What you are about to see is the very spirit of British womanhood ascending to her rightful place with the angels in the clouds. . . . Who are these women who help us, after all, if not angels? And if this is impossible for all, should not there be one who can represent the rest?" (25)

Jeremy uses the language of the carnival and spectacle to draw a cheering response from the crowd. His idealistic grandiloquence is employed to glorify Arianna and womanhood, in general, to increase attendance at his events.

In *Away*, the stylistic functions of the fool are embodied in some of the character traits associated with Eileen. The romantic love she experiences for Aidan ensures that her passion is silenced before she reaches the age of twenty (8). She recounts her story to Esther, when she is twelve, in the hopes that she will evade the same fate and instead will choose "to hug the land – the real earth," and not be carried away by passion for a man as she had, the "trace of a man on a woman" being, according to an ancient Irish triad, one of

the three most short-lived traces (9, 206, 220). Eileen succumbs to many of the traps associated with romantic love. She loses touch with her past, having only recent memories in mind (253). She thinks that Aidan is "beautiful" (253). She inquires about him from the Captains O'Shaunessy, erroneously learning that he never speaks because "he has had his heart torn out by the traitor McGee" (255). From that moment on, Eileen takes up the Fenian cause in Canada in order to support Aidan. Eileen has no separate identity from Aidan; she views herself as his "attached shadow," and believes she would disappear if he shone his light elsewhere (258). She vicariously attempts to assimilate his experience with no prior knowledge of his life:

> She danced herself behind Lanighan's eyes and knew, suddenly, the dark pitch of the bellies of lakeboats, intense political agendas, a sordid slum childhood, nights in crowded Montreal boarding houses. She knew Lanighan's voice, his abandoned song, his pain, his silence. (258)

She constructs an image of Aidan partly from what she has been told by the Captains and their guests, partly from the Irish songs she has learned as a child, but mostly from her own imagination:

> At night she lay awake while storms howled and the house creaked in the wind, inventing a community for him – a brave and patriot band – composed of the few scraps of information he had given her, the Celtic sagas of "old sorrows" her father had told her, and the bizarre combinations of fact and fiction she read in the *Irish Canadian*. (292)

Eileen's complex of assumptions is an attempt to get to know Aidan in his absence. She carries the tension of waiting for his return "on her neck and shoulders like a taut bowstring . . . his continued absence . . . a strong thread strapped to her body, pulling her toward him" (274). She takes to reading the *Irish Canadian* because she is convinced it is "full of hidden

messages from Aidan Lanighan. In its sentences she [feels] the throb of his pulse" (285), while his voice whispers in her ears (270). Eileen is hopelessly, helplessly, and painfully in love with Aidan. She is "dazed, entranced, utterly without power – a captive . . . of heaving architecture afloat on a Great Lake" (266). She naively allows him to make love to her when he eventually visits her home for a couple of days. In the spring, she undertakes a journey to Montreal in search of him. When she finds him, she attempts to attach herself to his life without knowing anything of his true identity. It therefore comes as a great shock for her to discover that Aidan has been a supporter of D'Arcy McGee all along, and that she has unwittingly been an accomplice to his murder. The assassination of D'Arcy McGee, an actual historical event, is thus appropriated for use in the novel for its effect on the private lives of the characters. Ironically, this short-lived trace of a man on a woman leads to the birth of a daughter and granddaughter, extending the family history another hundred years or so. Eileen is made into a complete fool by Aidan and her emotions; the pain she experiences as a result is a lesson she attempts to pass on to her granddaughter, Esther.

The heteroglossia inherent in the stylistic functions of the rogue, fool, and clown found within *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away* allows for the development of Bakhtin's concept of polyphony because points of view remain or become divergent, conflicted, and irreconcilable between many of the characters in the three novels. This concept will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 10: POLYPHONY AND CHARACTER UNFINALIZABILITY

In polyphony, there is no overriding authorial consciousness into which all voices merge (Morson and Emerson 233). In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin defines characters in a polyphonic novel as "not only objects of authorial discourse, but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse" (Morson and Emerson 239). The direct power to mean should belong to several voices in the novel, and the area occupied by a character's voice must be larger than his direct and actual words, thus constituting character zones (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 320). These character zones also encompass a character's actions, thoughts, emotions, and interrelations with other characters, as well as authorial presence in character speech and thought. Polyphony is present in all three of Urquhart's novels. It arises whenever points of view that are divergent and conflicted become irreconcilable. A polyphonic novel retains the possibility for a work of art to depict characters as "unfinalizable, responsible, and open" (197). The polyphonic author is extremely active in conceptualizing whole personalities full of event potential, setting up open-ended dialogue, and inducing characters to speak (251). As a result, characters cannot be finalized or labelled because this denies them the possibility of growth, change, and unpredictability. They change through the slow processes of accumulated small decisions (prosaics) or by sudden, direct, and abrupt events in their lives that leave lasting impressions such as deaths, accidents, and so forth. As a result, the characters are always in the process of being created. "There always remains in [the characters] unrealized potential and unrealizable demands. The future exists and the future ineluctably touches upon . . . [and] has it roots in [the individual]" (37).

The past, present, and future affect characters; there is, therefore, always a degree

of uncertainty in their future actions. In *The Whirlpool*, some of the future actions of the characters are determined by accumulated, small steps toward an outcome while others are the result of an abrupt change, or a combination of both.

Patrick's suicide is a slow process probably beginning with his lack of preparation as a young man for a self-sufficient and fulfilling career.[14] This, combined with his poetic aspirations, serves to isolate him from his co-workers so that he stumbles "through each work day in a fog of utter loneliness" which in turn precipitates his illness and nervous breakdown, preparing the way for his subsequent fascination and obsession with Fleda (69). Early in the novel, the seeds are sown for the eventual form his suicide will take:

> Patrick, standing alone at the top of the bank, made a decision. He would swim again somehow. He looked out over the difficult whirlpool. He would swim there and take the world above with him, if necessary. (81)

According to Urquhart, Patrick has "an old world idea of what a poet should be, and is unable to live out that fantasy in nineteenth century Canada" (Hancock 38). As a result, he feels the need to do battle with the landscape. But this decision need not be a permanent one. In a discussion with David in which he informs him of his intended swim, he is advised against the foolishness of such an action because it is sure to kill him. David cites the example of Captain Webb who attempted to swim the whirlpool two years previously, and ended up "dead as a doornail" (102). He flatters Patrick by telling him to stick with poetry. Patrick equates Fleda with the whirlpool and the landscape (103); "she [is] chained in his mind, to the whirlpool, to the woods," and he is fascinated by both (108). Patrick is aware that attempting to swim the whirlpool is dangerous. When David returns from the O'Connor catastrophe visibly shaken, Patrick suspects that David's battles, like his own,

would take place primarily in the confines of his mind or "in the form of black marks on paper" (125). This causes one to suppose that Patrick has only been fantasizing about swimming the whirlpool up to this point, and does not intend to actually do so. Fleda broaches the subject of the whirlpool with Patrick before their confrontation; he is vague, and asserts that he will be swimming soon because watching the whirlpool is not enough (168). On another occasion, Patrick tells Fleda he has watched the whirlpool from the edge of shore, but he hasn't "been anywhere near its centre," and that if he had already swum it, he would no longer be afraid of it (180). Fleda does not attempt to dissuade Patrick from his projected swim; if anything, she fantasizes that it might enable him to approach her more openly (157). When Patrick's fascination with Fleda is pulled "into the mundane architecture of fact," Patrick transfers his obsession wholly to the whirlpool, believing that he had confused the woman with the whirlpool, had thought that somehow she was the landscape. At this point, the reader learns that Patrick indeed intends to take action because "there [is] a swimmer in his mind, and that swimmer would descend the bank without the woman, alone" (186). In his prosaic day-to-day journey toward suicide, Patrick knows he will continue to visit Whirlpool Heights often, but it will be the "landscape he [is] courting," and not the woman (192). Patrick's obsessions, which seemed to have kept his despair at bay, are now transferred solely onto the landscape, thus perhaps in some measure speeding up the process of his swim since his focus is no longer divided between the woman and the landscape. As Patrick prepares for his final earthly journey, he muses that there is "always a point where one set of circumstance [ends] and another [begins]. . . . [His] swim would be a journey . . . he would choose to make in full knowledge . . . that he hardly spoke the

language . . . that the river belonged to no country . . . [which made] the whole space alien to him" (221). Even with this realization, Patrick does not change his mind; he still wants to swim, to either conquer the whirlpool or, more certainly, perish in the attempt and cross over to where the boundaries between himself and the landscape are less defined. In direct consequence of this slow process of building toward his eventual swim, the reader is not surprised to learn of his eventual drowning. Patrick's death at such a young age marks an abrupt departure from life.

Fleda's departure from her marriage, like Patrick's journey toward suicide, has been slowly building up prosaically over time. David's gift to her of Patmore's *Angel in the House* marks a deep chasm in their respective beliefs concerning the role of a wife. Fleda's journal entry for 10 July 1889 shows that she had done some thinking since she comes to the conclusion that she is "nobody's angel" (106). Her sex life with David is described from what appears to be her perspective:

> He made love, for all his kindness, like a man fighting a short, intense battle, a battle that he always won. She lay passively beneath him like a town surprised by an invasion of enemy troops. Afterwards, he fell asleep almost immediately, like a man overcome by battle fatigue. (53-4)

The use of military imagery to describe their lovemaking emphasizes the lack of communion between them during the sexual act. Fleda begins to view her marriage as solely an accumulation of objects and property. In a conversation she has with David, she is discussing industrial pollution whereas he is talking about the war. This highlights the lack of communication between the two: she gets the feeling that they are not actually speaking to each other because they are not listening to what the other has to say. David begins to

spend more and more time in his study "untangling the mysteries of his battles," while Fleda begins to spend more time with her books, described as time spent with her "other men," whose language and fantasies begin to appear more real to her than her husband (171). Given the lack of communication, emotional and sexual intimacy between David and Fleda, it is not difficult to conceive why Fleda should fall in love with the young, sensitive poet. This further estranges her from David, who remains in blissful ignorance of any problems in his marital relations. Meeting Patrick causes an abrupt change in Fleda's outlook: she realizes she has been irrevocably altered, that she will be unable to continue in her marriage. She is already beginning to view the landscape as her home, and knows that for her "there would be no actual house, not soon, not ever" (142). When Patrick takes up a "final, permanent residence" in Fleda's mind, it coincides with her departure from everything she thought she would be (142). She is ready at this point to allow Patrick access to her, "whatever form that access might take" (149). When Patrick loses interest in Fleda – which requires a fair amount of adjustment on her part given its sudden nature – she does not return to David. Instead, it precipitates her leaving him. Her life has slowly been leading up to this departure from David, notwithstanding any other relationships.

Maud's life undergoes severe changes abruptly and irrevocably; her healing process is slow, and takes place over several years. Her husband's death places many new demands on her. Her days are filled with a series of tasks she feels obligated to perform: "she should be cutting roses in the garden, placing them in bowls of water in her dining room and parlour . . . she should at least be weeding her rock garden" (47). She is so concerned with what people might think or say about her that she no longer visits ailing friends because it

might be construed by the town matrons as "looking for business" (114). This self-imposed rigidity based on the possible thoughts or evaluations of others arrests Maud's capacity for prosaic day-to-day growth. As Maud becomes more distanced from her husband's death, she changes her entire wardrobe to mauves. She is no longer in full mourning (146). She even begins to sing, "a thin sound [carrying] all over her garden by the wind" (154). But, in spite of these gradual changes, Maud remains rigidly locked in her inability to consistently exude warmth and tenderness toward her son. Her universe is still too ordered and socially constricted to admit the possibility of sustained spontaneous reactions. When her child re-orders all her possessions including those she kept of the drowned victims, he causes her to realize she has been preoccupied with death instead of with life. This effects a marked change in her deportment. She discards everything, "all the crepe, all the mauve, and black and white cotton, all the kept things connected with death," including the many boxes of drowned victim possessions (233).

Aside from Arianna, who goes from a state of life to a transitory one as a ghost, Ann undergoes the most profound transformation in *Changing Heaven*. Her affair with Arthur, which keeps her in a perpetual state of ambivalence, terminates after one and a half years of grief and bittersweet pleasure. She travels to the Yorkshire moors to distance herself as much as she can from Arthur and a relationship in which there appears to be no future. While in England, she is still obsessed with Arthur; she writes him countless letters that she does not send (141). She yells out to the moors, "God damn him! . . . I want him to want me! I want him to want me! I want him to want this" (126). Ann's torment finally reaches a climax when she becomes extremely physically ill. It is while she is recuperating with

John's tender presence at her side that she slowly and prosaically begins to heal from her love affair. Arthur begins to intrude less often while Ann is writing her book on weather (183). Ann still loves Arthur; she admits as much to John, but she is slowly coming to the realization that Arthur's treatment of her is evidence that he does not love her (189). However, she suffers a major relapse when Arthur sends her the letter. She becomes feverish with excitement, and travels to Venice to meet him. She visits the museum daily for three weeks awaiting his arrival. Ann believes Arthur has written to her because he has decided that he wants to be with her; "she begins to construct the beautifully simple life she will give him" (217). She works herself into a frenzy, "locked as she is in the perpetual present of her own emotional landscape" (219). When Ann is finally confronted with the reality of Arthur, she comes to the realization that his feelings for her have not changed. After several days of one-sided exchange, Ann observes Arthur during sleep:

> [G]lancing at the unconscious man, [Ann] is at last able to see his fragility and his imperfections. His age. The obsession is breaking, is falling away. She hears Arthur's breath, helpless, lost in the rhythms of sleep, while the night hours fill the space that has always existed between the man that he is and the woman she is." (238)

All through the night Ann "falls to earth" as she realizes that she is the one who has allowed Arthur to have power over her (238). She rationalizes herself out of love with him, and returns to the Yorkshire moors to John and her book. Whether Ann is really over Arthur or not cannot be readily determined. Ann has many memories of Arthur; it will take time or another powerful romantic attraction to lessen his impact on her future. Ann remains an unfinalizable character because her future is open-ended and uncertain. She will probably return to Canada to teach, and maintain her relationship with John through long-distance

communication. It is left to the reader to imagine what directions their future relationships might take. Ann, John, and Arthur are the only main characters in *Changing Heaven* to have a future because the ghosts of Arianna and Emily fade, and Jeremy dies in the Arctic. One of the story lines, therefore, becomes integrated into the other.

Many characters undergo transformation in *Away*. However, most characters cannot be considered to be unfinalizable because their entire life history is reviewed within the novel. Esther is the only character whose fate is not clearly stated. One could suppose, since it is her last night in the house with no mention of further plans, that she has decided to end her life at 82. There is also the possibility that she is moving to a retirement home or elsewhere. She is the only character who retains a degree of unfinalizability even though there would probably be little further change in someone of such an advanced age.

Mary undergoes a significant transformation when she becomes Moira, and is labelled "away." She is touched by the supernatural world which affects her inner and outer life. Her gift of eloquence is taken from her forever upon encountering the sailor (6). Mary's transformation is a permanent one, and involves her relinquishment of most worldly attachments. She is tied to marriage and domesticity long enough to give birth to two children, but she later abandons them to be close to her otherworld lover on the shores of Moira Lake. She remains there until her eventual death.

Brian also undergoes transformation in *Away*. The circumstances of his life cause him to become old before his time. When the reader is first introduced to Brian, he is described as having a kind and amiable disposition (31). After the first winter following the crop failures, Mary notices that Brian's general countenance has turned to one of discontent

(80). Brian, Mary, and Liam become drastically altered by the famine in Ireland. They survive the journey to Canada, and recover from near starvation. In Canada, the fortunes of the O'Malley family are somewhat improved but dealt a further blow when Brian is left to raise a son and infant daughter upon Mary's abandonment of the family. Feeling politically betrayed in both Ireland and Canada, Brian dies an old and embittered man at fifty years of age. His body is that of "an ancient man: exhausted and withered" (203).

In contrast to his father, Liam's life becomes one of self-actualization in Canada. With the financial help of Osbert Sedgewick, he becomes a prosperous farmer, an occupation for which he seems to have been destined since childhood, when Mary first notices that the "field [had] claimed him, that he was no longer entirely her own" (80).

Eileen undergoes significant transformation from nature child to woman enclosed in an inner-theatre prison. As a child, she develops a relationship with a black bird (crow) who speaks to her of coming events in her life. The bird informs Eileen of the arrival of Exodus Crow with something for her (170). This is borne out when she searches her dead mother's buckskin clothing, and finds the braided circle of black and red hair that belonged to her mother and the sailor. Eileen, growing up in the forest, has a mind as yet unformed and inexperienced: "she is innocent of identification with any group" (200). Her father is a major contributor to the formation of her political orientation and opinions. By not comprehending the depth of McGee's vision for a Canada united without prejudice, he labels him a traitor to the Irish people in Canada. He also teaches her the songs of injustice from Ireland, which contribute to her revolutionary sense of betrayal. Once Eileen meets Aidan, she is transformed instantly into a woman in love. She becomes enclosed by the

house, and cannot recall the significance that nature had in her life (271). She forgets both the crow who guided her, and the Ojibway who returned her dead mother to the family. She relinquishes her past for a present that overwhelms her emotions, and causes her to become a dreamer, one whose internal landscape becomes more important than the actuality and physicality of her daily existence. Little is known of her life after McGee's assassination except that she continues to live in the house at Loughbreeze Beach, never marrying. Her child, Deirdre, is raised by Molly, her brother's wife, as her own.

As in the adventure novel of everyday life, the second type of ancient novel, many characters undergo transformation in the three novels. However, the methods for depicting these transformations have evolved over time to include small, accumulated steps toward change (prosaics), and sudden changes that leave lasting effects on the characters' lives. These changes allow for the possibility of personal growth, and help shape their eventual destinies. Urquhart's characters thus undergo transformations which closely approximate those associated with actual existence. Also in evidence in Urquhart's novels is Bakhtin's concept of character unfinalizability. Some characters are constantly in the process of transformation, with future events in their lives remaining open-ended and uncertain.

CHAPTER 11: POINT OF VIEW, AUTHORIAL LANGUAGE, AND DOUBLE-VOICED DISCOURSE

In Urquhart, many factors affect the points of view of characters, including the ability to decode an utterance and surplus information which aids in the perception of others. Authorial language is a "stylistic system of languages," large portions of which take their style "(directly, parodically or ironically)" from the languages and words of others (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 416). An authorial emphasis is present in these "orchestrating and distanced elements of language" but these elements are, in the final analysis, determined by the author's artistic will and responsibility; that is, "they do not belong to the author's language nor do they occupy the same plane" (416). One cannot speak of a unitary language for the novel because it is composed of many languages consisting of many different points of view. The creating artist must observe language "from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a different language and style" to create dialogism (60). Languages which enter into dialogue with other languages become more self-conscious, can see themselves from an alien perspective, and can examine how their own values and beliefs appear to other languages (Morson and Emerson 310). They become re-emphasized in the light of other languages (313). The authorial languages surrounding the characters in Urquhart's novels usually adopt points of view similar to those of the characters, sometimes filling in gaps to provide the characters with an external setting or imparting knowledge that can only be gained by indirect means. Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse, where the thoughts of one character are inserted into the thoughts or speech of another, create hybrid discourses which are sometimes used by Urquhart to highlight the nature of relationship between her characters.

In *Away*, Urquhart employs a third-person limited, omniscient narrator who has

access to the thoughts of many characters. Chapters of the novel are not devoted exclusively to one or two characters as in *The Whirlpool* or *Changing Heaven*. The reader has access to the consciousnesses of a diversified cast of characters: Father Quinn, the Sedgewick brothers, Mary, Brian, Liam, Eileen, and Esther. Others who are only revealed through dialogue include Aidan Lanighan, the Captains O'Shaunessy, Exodus Crow, Molly O'Doherty and her father. *Away* depicts the interactions of several characters in each chapter, both in the expression of their inner thoughts, as well as in their dialogic interactions. For example, Chapter 13 begins with a third-person limited, omniscient narration depicting the life of the Sedgewick brothers in Puffin Court. It is rent day and the tenants have not shown up to pay their rent as they normally do. Some dialogue is exchanged between the two brothers as they wait whereby the reader has access to some of Osbert's inner thoughts: "he wishes he had been able to witness the various stages of their decay," when he discovers the eyes of a butterfly from his father's butterfly collection are missing (102). The action of the chapter then shifts to an Irish wedding taking place in the O'Donovan family. From the information imparted by the narrator, the reader becomes aware that O'Donovan Senior believes his son has not made a good match. The actual wedding assumes a pathetic aspect due to the starvation that has overtaken Ulster County. The Sedgewick brothers decide to visit the ceremony to ascertain the reason for the nonpayment of the rents due them. When they are within hearing distance of the wedding party, they hear a particularly sorrowful song being performed, which causes the brothers to realize that their tenants are facing hardships that they are incapable of remedying; they leave before anyone at the wedding has taken notice of their presence. The narrative then

focuses on Mary, who is also at the wedding. She is thinking about the dim prospects for survival of her family, and of her otherworld lover. Brian engages her in conversation while they observe the wedding party playing games usually associated with a wake. The end of the chapter focuses once again on the Sedgewick brothers. This time, however, it is Granville's consciousness to which the reader has access. Osbert seeks out his brother to inform him that he believes he has found a solution to their tenants' starvation problem: he proposes to sell a couple of their Gainsborough paintings to raise enough capital to send some of them to Canada to start a new life. Thus, in *Away*, Urquhart depicts social interactions involving a whole community. The action of each chapter is not confined to the perceptions of one or two characters, and their interactions with others. Some chapters are organized around many characters' inner thoughts and dialogues, allowing their various viewpoints to inform the overall narrative.

The roots of dialogue reach deeply into the dialogic essence of language creating the potential for misunderstanding. Often there can be a "failure on the part of those speaking different languages to understand each other" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 405). In *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, Morson and Emerson describe active understanding in the following manner:

> Listeners must decode the utterance, grasp what it is being said, relate it to [their] own complex of interests and assumptions, imagine how the utterance responds to future utterances and what sort of response it invites, evaluate it, and intuit how potential third parties would understand it. Above all, the listener must go through a complex process of preparing a response to this utterance. (127-8)

Arianna and Emily sometimes decode utterances in a highly subjective manner in

Changing Heaven. Emily tells Arianna about her craft, about how she "[recorded] speeches, no matter how silly, and [let] the landscape intrude only at significant moments, mostly through windows" (180). Arianna is only interested in conceptualizing this utterance in terms of how it relates directly to her. She does not ask Emily about her writing but responds with her own personal perspective from a hot-air balloon: "I was always looking down on everything. . . . It was always passing beneath me. Emily then draws the conversation back to herself by answering, "I know everything about the stones beneath my feet . . . and I talked about that. I know everything about kitchens, copper pots, and cinders, and I talked about that too" (180). Again, Arianna's response is to ignore Emily's thread of conversation, focusing instead on some of her experiences in the hot-air balloon: "It was always happening down there and I was always two miles away. But you know, occasionally something would reach me, some sound: a laugh, the bark of a dog, a cow bell, the whistle of a farm boy, and once a phrase of music from a violin I couldn't see" (181). During this dialogic exchange, Emily and Arianna talk at each other. They are more interested in relating their own personal experiences than in furthering what the other has to say.

The argument that ensues between Aidan and Eileen in *Away* when she wishes to accompany him to Ottawa against his better judgment illustrates how real communication cannot be established if one of the parties is holding back important information from the other. Eileen believes that Aidan is a Fenian who supports the Irish cause in Canada. In reality, he is an avid D'Arcy McGee supporter. When Aidan is given the opportunity to reveal himself to Eileen and thus broaden her horizons, he obfuscates the matter instead by

responding that "she cannot even begin to understand what it is that [he] does" (322). Aidan's lack of openness and honesty with Eileen causes her to feel rejected and excluded (322). Eileen, who wants desperately to be a vital part of Aidan's life, manipulates the conversation by attempting to decode Aidan's utterances to her advantage. She offers to carry the gun for Aidan to Ottawa as there is less likelihood that a woman would be searched. Aidan is given another opportunity to inform Eileen about his real political orientation when she begins to wax enthusiastically about the cause. He begins to respond "the cause . . ." but does not finish the sentence nor follow through with any further information on the subject (323). Given her limited knowledge of him, Eileen attempts to decipher Aidan's utterances in any manner that she can because she loves him, and wishes to be with him at any cost. Real communication, however, cannot be established unless both parties are open with one another. Aidan's refusal to trust Eileen, to attempt to broaden her horizons and to share of himself with her, causes her irreparable injury.

The process of decoding an utterance is further complicated by the fact that one is incapable of viewing oneself in an objective manner. The other in a dialogue always has surplus information that we cannot access or perceive. They can observe our facial expressions, and can view us from a panoptic and detached perspective which allows for greater understanding if they function as an effective mirror toward us. They can see us whole, in our entirety, while we are inescapably limited to a narrower field of vision that does not include many corporeal aspects. According to Bakhtin in "Response to a Question from the Navji Mir Editorial Staff," our real exteriors can be seen and understood only by other people because they are located outside us in space and precisely because they are

other (Morson and Emerson 55). This surplus information is very evident in Patrick's voyeuristic preoccupations with Fleda in *The Whirlpool*. From a distance, he records these observations through the intermediary of the third-person narrator:

> [H]e watched the woman now with intense curiosity, scrutinizing the details of her dress, the rings on her slender hands, taking note of the lace on her collar, the gold band on her left hand. Mud on her boots and on the hem of her dress indicated that she had been climbing on the bank. . . . She was, he decided, very beautiful, in an unusual way. Some strength there in her face, in the way her body relaxed into the landscape – unafraid, unaware of the possibility of an intruder. (39-40)

This voyeuristic gazing on Patrick's part allows him to construct an image of Fleda tailored to his fantasies, and not to the actual reality of the woman. He uses the surplus information for his own personal satisfaction. His only interest in Fleda is in viewing her from a distance, as he expresses to her quite forcefully in the following passage:

> "Learn this," he hissed, "I don't *want* to be this close to you. Not now, not ever. Look what happens . . . when we're this close we can't see each other at all . . . not even each other's eyes. This close, you're a blur . . . and I'm nothing . . . completely nothing . . . nothing but a voice. You can't see me. My voice is so close it could be inside your own head. I don't *want* to be this close, Fleda. I want the distance." (181)

Patrick's overwhelming fear of intimacy, of being lost and becoming "nothing" during relations with another, precludes the possibility of getting to know who Fleda really is.

When the other does not function as a complimentary mirror, the possibility of conflicting and oppositional points of view in narrative arises. Indeed, "substantial masses of [character] language are drawn into the battle between points of view, value judgments and emphases that the characters introduce into it; they are infected by mutually contradictory intentions and stratifications," leading to polyphony when they are

irreconcilable (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 316).

Patrick functions as a complimentary mirror to Fleda only when he observes her from afar. He does not even want her to have a voice, does "not wish to face the actuality of her speech" because she would then leave the territory of his dreams, and he would lose some imagined control or power over her (98). During their first meeting, Patrick barely speaks to Fleda, saying only hello, allowing her to "perceive only the smallest hint of a response" (124), he pretends "that she [is] not [there] at all" (123). During their first conversation, he barely interacts with her, merely replying politely that he is very "flattered by her interest" when she asks about his swimming the whirlpool (128). The next time Fleda spies him observing her in the woods, she notices that "the grass he walked on was like a carpet of shattered mirrors" (129). This prefigures the fact that Patrick does not become a complimentary mirror toward Fleda in a relational context. She continues in her attempts to establish a friendship with Patrick until their eventual confrontation when he reveals his wish to keep her at a distance. She informs him that she has observed him spying on her on several occasions which causes him to feel threatened and lose all subsequent voyeuristic interest in her. Patrick's oppositional point of view toward Fleda ensures that no liaison will be established.

When Ann and Arthur, in *Changing Heaven*, meet for the last time before her departure for Europe, they have come to an impasse. Arthur professes not to love Ann – she cannot continue the affair under these circumstances. She experiences a high degree of guilt because she is involved with a man who does not belong to her. Arthur does not mirror Ann back to herself. This point is emphasized in the hotel room decor:

> There is no mirror in the room. Until now Ann has believed that every space they entered contained a mirror. Now there is not even the possibility that she can glance into a reflection to reassemble her own poise, her own sense of decorum. The room reflects nothing. (115)

Ann is left with nothing to reflect back at her except a print of a Brueghel landscape described as "a landscape for lovers lacking setting . . . [for] lovers lacking love" (115). Arthur's attempt to efface Ann's presence from his life is reflected in the absence of a mirror in their last motel room together.

Bakhtin refers to double-voiced discourse as discourse which is always internally dialogized. Examples include comic, ironic or parodic discourse, the refracting discourse of a narrator or character, as well as the discourse of a whole incorporated genre (*Dialogic Imagination* 324). These are hybrid discourses which combine the intentions of two different perspectives into a single utterance or thought. This allows "for great diversity in the treatment of character speech" (320). Bakhtin posits the term "quasi-direct speech" as a "threshold phenomenon," where authorial and character speech are combined in a single intentional hybrid. Formally authorial, the "emotional structure" belongs to a represented character whose inner speech is always necessarily somewhat controlled by the author (Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination* 433). In Urquhart, hybrid discourses occur when beliefs or memories of one character are inserted in the inner thoughts or dialogue of another character.

In *The Whirlpool*, the emotional structure of the authorial thought usually belongs to the character whose consciousness the reader has access to at that time. The authorial thought surrounding Maud's character, for example, employs a somewhat subdued,

resigned, and morose tone, especially near the beginning of the novel where her business in spring and summer is described as "dark roses and drowned flesh" (48). Even later in the novel, through authorial thought, questions that disturb and fascinate her are framed from her point of view:

> Why had this flesh dressed itself on the morning of its death? Why the choice of blue socks, or a blue tie pin? Why the coins in the pocket, the rabbit's foot, a *good luck* charm, religious medals around necks destined for annihilation, watches recording the exact moment of contact with the water, rings with their precious stones missing, eyeglasses in the breast pocket of a suit coat? Why the suit coat at all, when your destination is the river, the rocks? (164-5)

Sometimes, the authorial thought incorporates an element of parody as evidenced in the description of Charles's grave: "As she had expected, several spiders had made their webs between the marble columns on the front of the stone, from wingtip to wingtip of the angel that stood on top of it and in the grass adjacent" (76). Maud had "hoped to God that no overzealous caretaker would decide to remove the webs, believing in her heart of hearts that the ground for miles around would shudder with Charles' wrath were that to take place" (76-7). In reliving some of the moments of her life spent with her husband, Maud actually has a memory of one of her husband's memories, one that he had recounted to her about meeting a man whose walking stick had a rattlesnake entwined around it with the head prudently at the bottom of the stick, away from his hand (94). She recollects the emotion of shocked horror Charles had experienced while relating his experience. Charles's memories survive in part through Maud's recollections of him. She is so closely tied to his memories that sometimes there is an accent belonging to him inserted in the authorial thought surrounding her, as illustrated in the following passage:

> It had been as if, in her own life, emotion had been held in suspense, so that the rest of the world could live and love, *and more importantly, die*. (43)

The "*and more importantly, die,*" (my italics) is probably the influence of Charles on the authorial thought surrounding Maud because he was an undertaker whose business is obviously closely associated with death and dying. These hybrid constructions surrounding Maud show the deep impact that Charles has had, and continues to have, on her life.

The authorial thought surrounding Ann in *Changing Heaven* chronicles situations and events beyond her actual perceptions. Upon Ann's arrival in Venice, she is so caught up in her own obsessive world that the narrator fills in the gaps she is missing:

> Outside the hotel, the city reeks with assignations. Plans are being made or carried out, strangers occupy café tables, dogs lick spilt ice cream in the corners of campos and the seams of calles, waiters bend and scurry. She knows none of this and cares even less, is conscious only of her voyage to Arthur and the form it is taking, this easy, joyful drift. (217)

Ann is so preoccupied with her inner world that she is oblivious to her surroundings. As a result, the third-person narrator feels compelled to give her an external setting.

The authorial thought surrounding the cat Ann feeds every morning assigns internal states to him that can only be surmised through indirect means since the cat is unable to voice his thoughts or feelings. The cat is "uninterested" as he walks by a number of cottages where villagers are awakening to meet the day (212). He "arrogantly" walks away from a power contest with another cat, and he is "mildly annoyed" to discover no one is yet awake when he reaches Ann's cottage for his morning meal (212). He catches a bird, and is utterly engaged in "distributing equal doses of fear, hope, and pain to the bird [when] a furious woman" is intent on giving him a broom for breakfast (213). The woman is Ann;

when she enters the scene, the narrator switches over to her point of view.

In *Away*, the narrator informs the reader that Liam would be unable to remember the details of the birth of his baby sister:

> He would not remember how he had sat on a stump outside the cabin . . . and the sound of her cries filled the air, how he had covered his ears and squeezed his eyes shut, painting a picture of the white house in his mind, its windows and porches, its simplicity so unlike the exterior of the small, dark cabin. (154-5)

The image of Eileen's birth is conflated with the white house on Lake Ontario that Liam first glimpses during his family's emigration from Ireland. These images prefigure the fact that it is destined to be Liam and Eileen's future home. During Eileen's adulthood, gazing out on the lake will become a predominant pastime when she no longer actively engages in life as a result of her estrangement from Aidan.

In Urquhart, many factors in the interactions between characters enter into the process of decoding an utterance. Sometimes this process leads to active understanding; at other times, languages are drawn into a battle between points of view that are irreconcilable. Authorial languages become re-emphasized by the value judgments and belief systems introduced by the characters. To help establish intimate relationships between her characters, Urquhart sometimes employs Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced, hybrid discourse.

CHAPTER 12: DIALOGUE UNFINALIZABILITY, RELATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS, AND ASSIMILATION

In Urquhart's three novels, relationships can either lead to mutual understanding or to irreconcilable points of view. These outcomes are sometimes achieved through dialogic interactions between the characters. A character in a novel lives and acts in "an ideological world of his own" with perceptions of the world that are embodied in actions and discourses striving for social significance (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 333, 337). Bakhtin defines dialogue in the following manner:

> To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue, a person participates wholly and throughout his[/her] whole life: with his[/her] eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his[/her] whole body and deeds. He[/she] invests his[/her] entire life in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (Morson and Emerson 60)

Dialogue reveals potentials by provoking a specific answer that actualizes the potential (55). When characters are engaged in dialogue, time is continually in motion where each moment has multiple possibilities. Prior states might constrain potential outcomes but cannot determine them. This open-ended method of conceiving of dialogue involves the constant redefinition of the participants, the development and creation of numerous potentials in each of them separately, as well as between them interactively and dialogically (52). "Novelistic dialogue is pregnant with an endless multitude of dialogic confrontations which do not and cannot resolve it, and which, as it were, only locally (as one out of many possible dialogues) illustrate this endless deep-lying dialogue of languages; novel dialogue is determined by the very socio-ideological evolution of languages and society" (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 365). As a result, both dialogue and the potentials of dialogue are endless; indeed, "the final word has not been spoken and never will be spoken" (Morson and Emerson 52).

The uncertainties of dialogue progression between David and Patrick in *The Whirlpool* illustrate the unfinalizability and the many potentials that exist for dialogue. Patrick visits David at his office ostensibly to find out more about the historian's research, but really because he wishes to gain more information about David's wife. Even with this specific agenda in mind, he has trouble leading the conversation in the direction he wishes it to take:

> "I don't dream," McDougal answered, staring through the transparent water to the shallow bed near the shore, "but my wife does. Dreams a lot about water. Damnedest dreams, she has." (100)

At the mention of David's wife, Patrick has found the opening he needs:

> "What dreams?" Patrick wanted him to continue.
> "They could be nightmares, but she says they're not. She's always falling, or flying down from a great height towards a river at the bottom. Then as she gets nearer the river . . . nearer the point of impact . . . yes, I'm sure she says she's falling. Oh look." McDougal bent down to pick a small white flower, "Do you know this species?" (100)

Instead of answering David's question, Patrick draws his attention back to his wife and her dream: "She is falling . . ." (100). Soon after, David gets sidetracked again:

> "Don't talk to me about fireworks," McDougal interjected at this point. "I'm tired of the Yankees and their fireworks."
> "And then . . . ?" Patrick wanted to draw the Major back to the subject of the woman, her dream.
> "Then they get ridiculously patriotic, wave their silly flags, shoot off cannons, claim to have won the war of 1812." (100)

Patrick makes a direct reference to David's wife:

> "Was it the whirlpool she was dreaming about?"
> "Who?" Asked McDougal. "Oh, Fleda. She didn't say." (100-1)

The Major is obviously preoccupied with Americans and the War of 1812, and this

influences the responses he makes to Patrick's queries. As the conversation continues, it is difficult for the participants to know which direction it will eventually take. David tries to change the subject one more time by asking Patrick to identify a flower he is holding, but Patrick's agenda is so single-minded that he manages once again to get the Major to continue the discussion of his wife, her dreams, and the whirlpool.

In *The Whirlpool*, the characters each have a unique point of view that sets them apart from the other characters in the novel. These differing points of view hinder their ability to communicate with one another. As a result, there is a great deal of talking at each another instead of with each other. The unresolvable conflicts between Fleda and David, and Fleda and Patrick, are cases in point. Charles, David, and Patrick, most notably, are very set in their respective ways; and, as a result, experience little, if any, personal growth throughout the novel. They do not appear capable of assimilating points of view that differ from their own. Therefore, they are characters unable to engage in active listening or in much relational dialogue. In *Changing Heaven*, there are some power politics occurring between Ann and Arthur, and Arianna and Jeremy. Power struggles take place in these relationships between those who possess and those who are possessed. But the novel also focuses on a relational model of communications, most notably between Ann and John, and Arianna and Emily. Self-esteem is not achieved through self-possession, possessing the other, or even through self-knowledge. Rather, it is achieved through relating and interacting with others in a mutually beneficial manner. A dialogue that alienates and distances, makes one long for a self that is relational and connected. Jane Magrath describes relational communications as involving both parties in an active and mutually

beneficial way:

> The relational self is not one of possession or ownership, not one of power and oppression. It is a self that moves between giving and receiving, dependent on the combined processes of telling and listening. (42)

From their very first meeting, John and Ann engage in a relational model of communications even though they have some difficulty in understanding each other's humour. Ann informs John that she is doing research on the Brontës. He replies that he has spent his "time without searching, so could not be persuaded to begin re-searching" (133). He pauses, waiting for Ann's laugh; when it doesn't come, it is not because Ann has rejected his humour but because she has missed it. Unaware of this, he remains undaunted and continues their conversation. Ann finds that she wishes to continue speaking to John for reasons that elude her. John tells her about his occupation as a moor-edger, and that he is the carpenter who has fixed up her holiday cottage – an indication that he knows where she is staying even though she has not divulged this information to him. John informs Ann that the mill has closed, and describes it as having been a type of slavery for the workers because it attached them to machines. Ann finds herself whispering in an embarrassed manner "dark satanic mills," which John identifies immediately as poetry by William Blake (135). This surprises Ann who thought that John was uneducated, and now finds that she has more in common with him than she originally thought. This relational encounter is very pleasant for Ann, and she finds herself laughing as she remembers one or two of his statements (136). Emily and Arianna engage in dialogue throughout the entire novel; even when they talk at each other, it is relational. They listen each other into being. However, since they have only a past and no future to consider, they eventually become fully revealed to each other. No

longer having anything left to talk about, they begin to lose their energy – the animate force which kept them in vaporous material form. Once Arianna learns of her murder by Jeremy, the ghosts dissipate. They have satisfied their longing for relational self-knowledge gained through their mutual dialogic interactions.

Brian and Mary engage in a form of relational communications while Mary is nursing Liam before she is reclaimed by her otherworld lover (*Away* 72-4). Mary attempts to lessen the blow to Brian when National schools are introduced in their area, putting him out of work as Hedgerow Master. She begins the conversation by sympathetically asking what Brian intends to do now that he will no longer be teaching. He answers that perhaps he'll improve the farm. Mary responds in a supportive manner, mentioning a few ways that she might be able to bring in some extra money. She then asks him how much he will regret losing the school. He makes it clear that he will regret it greatly because being taught by English teachers will mean the loss of Irish identity. He foresees that the Irish will no longer know themselves in the same way. Mary tries to appease Brian by reminding him that he can still teach her and Liam, and that the farm will prosper. Brian responds that the poetry will be gone from their people. He also bemoans not having had a potential poet as a student. Now he will never have the chance. He ends his tirade angrily and bitterly by declaring that his own son will have to be taught at the National school, to which Mary replies that they will not allow it. Throughout their entire dialogue, Mary engages in active listening. She attempts to comfort her husband with regard to the imminent changes that will redefine their culture. She is supportive and attentive to his concerns, trying to minimize their negative impact on him.

Even as an attempt is made to analyze dialogue between characters, or any other elements of novelistic discourse, it should be remembered that persuasive discourse is not finite but open. In each of the new contexts that dialogize it, "discourse is able to reveal ever new ways to mean" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 346). Language is not fixed, it is unfinalizable. Therefore meaning, which evolves and changes with the passage of time, as well as with the person interpreting it, is also unfinalizable. For example, in *Changing Heaven,* the original meaning of Arthur's one-sentence letter to Ann is unclear even to Arthur: "I am going to Venice for one week . . . alone" (211). It fills Ann with a wild hope that he has realized that he does truly love her. The meaning of the sentence evolves over time, and with the person interpreting it. To Arthur, it comes to mean that he has set himself up in a situation from which he only wishes to escape. To Ann, it comes to mean an empty promise unfulfilled. But the meaning of the sentence is still not fixed: it remains unfinalizable. With time, it will probably come to mean less and less to both Arthur and Ann. It will fade into insignificance. But it is also possible that it might not. One never knows what could happen in the future. Arthur's wife might die or leave him for another man. Perhaps this would change Arthur's orientation toward Ann. Ann might allow him back into her life under different circumstances. Will Arthur fade from her memory? What is the ultimate meaning of his sentence? Each individual will have a unique interpretation of what is meant. One thing is certain, however: the stain of adultery is indelibly etched upon their relationship no matter what future course of action might be undertaken. A second example of the evolution of meaning over time in *Changing Heaven* occurs when Jeremy first informs Arianna that he loves her again, that all is set right between them.

Arianna interprets this to mean that he wishes to be with her, and perhaps even marry her. Even after her death, she continues in ignorance of Jeremy's intended meaning – that he wishes to possess her utterly in death and absence – which she finally discovers at the very end of the novel. The meaning of this utterance is perhaps more fixed than Arthur's sentence since both Arianna and Jeremy are dead, leaving little potential for further interpretation.

"Assimilation" is Bakhtin's general term for the processes by which the speech of others comes to play a role in our own inner speech (Morson and Emerson 220). Nothing is ever entirely our own. Instead, what does belong to us is our unique way of orchestrating the voices of others and the "complex and highly specific character of inner speech within us" (221). Our speech is "filled to overflowing with other people's words which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 337). What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to understand one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system by being in contact with someone else's belief system through dialogue with them (365).

In *The Whirlpool,* David asks Fleda who she would rather be: Patmore's wife or Laura Secord. She finds the question impossible to answer considering it would be highly unlikely that she would be called upon to be either. He presses her for an answer, so she chooses Patmore's wife, knowing that David's preference would have been for her to choose Laura Secord. As a result of this dialogue with her husband, she becomes able to define herself: she discovers that "she wouldn't ever want to be Patmore's wife. . . . Not

now, not ever" (54).

A familiarity between David and Fleda develops during their marriage so that they share a unique language of intimates, as observed by Patrick when he visits their camp:

> The couple were beginning to discuss their plans for supper. The woman was moving in and out of the tent carrying utensils and supplies, speaking with her husband in a language that was difficult for Patrick to follow; fragmented talk, references to the small events that made up the fabric of their life together. (126)

Patrick feels excluded as a result. He does not understand their special and private way of communicating. They have uniquely orchestrated their language to accommodate a private world for two, demonstrating that it is still possible to be intimate with someone even though irreconcilable differences may exist.

In *Away*, assimilation occurs during interactions between Mary and her otherworld lover, as well as with Eileen and Aidan, although she makes erroneous assumptions and draws false conclusions about his motives. Assimilation is linked to the trope of obsessive romantic love – getting to know the lover being integrated with one's own personal experience. Assimilation is also a term that can be used to refer to an individual's integration or relationship to landscape, which was discussed extensively in Part I.

In Urquhart, Bakhtin's concept of dialogue unfinalizability reveals potentials where prior states can constrain future outcomes but are incapable of determining them. Since language is not fixed, neither is meaning, which can change and evolve over time. Bakhtin's concept of active understanding, combined with a relational model of communications, emphasizes an approach to relationships based on mutual understanding, and not on power struggles. Assimilation is always present in dialogue although it is usually difficult to detect

since what belongs to us exclusively cannot be readily ascertained. More important, perhaps, is the notion of a non-exclusive self – one that is necessarily defined in relation to others – that is brought into being through various dialogic interactions, leading to a self that is connected to, and part of, a greater whole.

Discourse in the novel is the combined processes of many discrete elements that mutually intersect and overlap. Characters and dialogue retain the possibility of remaining open-ended and unfinalizable, with future outcomes uncertain. In Urquhart, heteroglossia leads to a polyphonic voice that explores character portrayal, dialogic interactions, and the various stratifications of languages that comprise the backdrop against which the action occurs and the characters interact. As a result, major themes which emerge are linked to relationships – specifically to an exploration of many aspects of romantic love and romantic love obsession – tropes that contribute to the overall aesthetics of Urquhart's vision.

CONCLUSION

Bakhtin sought to define the underlying form-shaping ideology of the novel by developing two main concepts: time and chronotope and discourse. The application of some of his novelistic theories to an analysis of Jane Urquhart's *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven,* and *Away* provides insights into many structural and thematic aspects of her fiction. Specifically, what is revealed is manifold and includes an understanding of her use of chance and human will as determinants in the unfolding of the action; her various methods for depicting inner and private life; her use of vertical structures of time to encompass the eternal dimension; her methods of structuring time sequences and their relationships to dialogue to produce a narrative that is not strictly chronological; her use of crisis and transformation, stylizations, and unfinalizability in character depictions and development; her use of polyphony and dialogism in setting up conflicts among her characters; her melding of character/landscape and inner/outer landscape to highlight the interconnections among them; her various ways of stratifying languages to set the tone and social background against which the characters interact; her use of generative and degenerative forms of time in landscape transformations; and her methods for manifesting temporal unfinalizability, differing points of view, and authorial language in her narrative voice and dialogue progressions to produce relationships between her characters.

Many factors contribute to the formation of Urquhart's aesthetic vision. In fact, most of the analysis which comprises the present work (structural, thematic, genre) provides some insight into her textual poetics and aesthetics. A complete overview of such an illimitable subject is, of course, impossible. However, by reviewing some of the major thematic representations found in "Time and Chronotope" and "Discourse," certain

conclusions may be inferred.

Urquhart's landscape/environment aesthetic is one of heightened sensitivity and awareness to all forms of substance. Present in all three novels is a deep appreciation and respect for the natural world – for its powers of transformation and for its fundamental beauty. Indeed, a trope in *Changing Heaven* sublimates the natural world to divine order – beauty being inherent in a passionate response to landscape. Urquhart's chronicling of landscape transformations can be likened to a sociological exploration of Western societal evolution over the past one hundred and fifty years or so. This melding of art and responsibility in Urquhart's novels exposes many tropes related to changes effected in landscape/environment: the mechanisation of the work force and the resulting enslavement to machines, the environmental apocalyptic vision brought about by degenerative time and the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, the destruction of ecosystems by the removal of or damage to the interconnected parts of the greater whole. Urquhart not only connects all elements in the material world; through the use of various forms of poetic mysticism, vertical time structures, inner (thought/emotion) /outer (landscape/environment) melding, she also draws associations between the material and spiritual realms, thereby positing the interrelatedness and fundamental unity of all matter. Death becomes merely a transitional state – it assumes a meaning of ultimate end only because of the possibility of destruction to a sustainable landscape/environment.

Urquhart's aesthetic vision also explores in detail many aspects of relationships, most notably romantic love and romantic love obsession. In Urquhart, romantic love is characterized as a mysterious and powerful force that defies rational explanation; it connects

characters separated by great distances, and can transcend the barrier between life and death. The manifestations of romantic love obsession can be traced to a longing for connection with another that is denied expression or is unrequited. Urquhart illustrates that the search for romantic love is sometimes ego-centred: it involves the other only in furthering its own interests or definition of self. This leads to power struggles in relationships. Urquhart also explores a relational model of communications which promotes active listening and sharing between individuals, allowing for the development of mutual understanding based on universal love. This model is used as a contrast to the alienation present in other relationships in the three novels.

The use of the gothic genre to set the overall tone in Urquhart's three novels emphasizes the alienation of individuals from their natural and social environments. This is demonstrated by the individual's lack of connection to landscape, and lack of communion with others in personal relationships. The individual's alienation from his/her natural environment leads to an exploitation of the environment unprecedented in history, with environmental apocalypticism a distinct possibility. Urquhart's aesthetic vision is therefore not very hopeful. Nevertheless, it is quite possibly a realistic one.

Bakhtin's theories of the novel have uncovered a remarkable depth and diversity of insight into Urquhart's *The Whirlpool*, *Changing Heaven*, and *Away*. It is hoped, as well, that his concepts have benefited from the illumination and substantiation so richly provided by the numerous examples in her work.

NOTES

1. In Part III of *Changing Heaven*, there is a chapter devoted to Arthur as he contemplates not writing and not sending a letter to Ann to inform her that he will be travelling to Venice while she is in England. He eventually airmails her a one-sentence note which reads: "I am going to Venice for one week . . . alone" (211).

2. Stated differently, a similar view has been proposed by Thomas Moore in the section "Things Reanimated" in his book *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*: "At different times in our history we have denied soul to classes of beings we have wanted to control. . . . A revival of the doctrine of anima mundi would give soul back to the world of nature and artifact. If we knew in our hearts that things have soul, we could not govern them as conscious subject over inert object. Instead, we would have a mutual relationship of affection, respect, and care. We would be less lonely in a world that is alive with its own kind of soul than we are in a mechanical world we think we need to sustain our technological efforts." (New York: HarperCollins, 1994) 280-81.

3. The McGee assassination is subordinated in importance to its effects on Eileen and Aidan in *Away*. Please see page 109.

4. In *The Whirlpool*, Urquhart acknowledges being inspired and informed by Julia Cruikshank's diary, published in 1915 and entitled *Whirlpool Heights: The Dream House on the Niagara River*. For *Changing Heaven*, Glyn Hughes's *Millstone Grit* and Peggy Hewitt's *These Lonely Mountains* are credited for informing and inspiring part of the novel. In *Away*, Urquhart lists many sources, including *The Great Hunger* by Cecil Woodham-Smith; *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* by Lady Gregory; *The Great Migration* by Edwin C. Guillet; *M'Cahan's Local Histories* published by the Glens of Antrim Historical Society; and two books by T. P. Slattery, *The Assassination of D'Arcy McGee*, and *They've Got To Find Me Guilty Yet*.

5. Please see page 14 for some of the visions Mary experiences in preparation for her voyage to Canada.

6 The connections between the two main story lines in *The Whirlpool* are found in two conversations between Patrick and Maud's child, and in Patrick's ending up at the Undertaker's. Another link between the two stories occurs when the reader is informed that Maud saves the cannonballs she finds in her yard for Major David McDougal, the military historian. She has heard rumours that his wife lives in the forest, but she discounts these because she has seen Fleda in town on several occasions (77). Patrick's uncle, a farmer, and his wife discuss Major David McDougal and his young wife. His aunt plans to attend a lecture the Major is giving, and Patrick asks to accompany her in order to make his acquaintance, and possibly find out more about his intriguing wife.

7. Patrick is the same age as Jesus upon his crucifixion. While their deaths are not similar, Patrick's attributes include a heightened awareness and sensitivity to his environment. The reader is informed that his response to stimuli is "so finely tuned that even a change in geography might disorient him" (*Whirlpool* 38).

8. Similar themes are juxtaposed between the two story lines in *Changing Heaven* on several occasions. Emily reminisces about her childhood home on the moors which prefigures Ann's buying a one-way ticket to the Brontë moors (108-12, 120). Arianna and Emily discuss what it is like making love, Arianna commenting that sometimes it is "like a terrible accident . . . [where] afterwards you are shipwrecked, broken" (93). This occurs in the chapter preceding Ann's first sexual encounter with Arthur (94). Emily and Arianna discuss at length the letter that Charlotte awaited from Mr. Heger, which never came (204). This prefigures the chapter devoted to Arthur's writing the air-mail letter to Ann telling her of his planned visit to Venice alone (208-11).

9. Social organization did not develop entirely for the support of filial needs or the promulgation of petty social conventions. Social organization is also an effective survival strategy. For an individual who lives alone without any social contacts, the chances of survival are potentially pretty slim.

10. The child's thoughts in *The Whirlpool* are exposed as he watches the fish in the pond: "He wanted to move the fish around, to remove them from their various prisons, to interrupt their monotonous, seasonal journey from pool to tank and back again" (75-6)

11. The child is described as being autistic in an article and a couple of reviews, but no reasons are given for drawing this conclusion. Since the child eventually acquires extensive language skills and learns how to communicate, he can no longer be considered autistic, which is defined as an inability to communicate or relate to other people. See Laura Hancu's "Escaping the Frame: Circumscribing the Narrative in *The Whirlpool*," Sherie Posesorkis's "Jane Urquhart. *The Whirlpool*: Review," and Alice Vanwart's "*The Whirlpool*: Review" in the Bibliography.

12. As well as mirroring his mother's stiffness, the child also mirrors Patrick's obsessions back to im in their first conversation together (*The Whirlpool* 112).

13. All of these references to Emily Brontë's life can be found in Lydall Gordon's *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life*.

14. See also page 73. Patrick has not acquired any practical skills to help him adapt to the Canadian landscape.

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