By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept: The Novel as a Poem

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In her forward to *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, Brigid Brophy heralds the novel as one of the "half dozen masterpieces of poetic prose in the world." Its mastery, she says, is a "mastery of metaphor."[1]

Metaphor signifies metamorphosis, as love transforms ordinary experience into an apocalyptic vision based on the narrator's declaration "there is no reality but love."[2] The novel evokes a world of literary and legendary characters as images, metaphors, and allusions metamorphose into each other creating a poetic language that resonates with love's power and emotion. Smart relies on doctrinaire Christianity for her images and her mythology; she also relies on the literary world of Rilke, Blake, and the metaphysical poets Donne and Herbert in order to align what might be considered an ordinary love affair with the heroic ideals of love. In this way, she creates a world that transcends the concrete ordinary world as it moves outward to encompass all love and all lovers' hope and despair. In effect, love is the stimulus that creates the narrative. Smart refashions the narrative into a lyrical process that transcends the temporal and the spatial, and in doing so she extends the dimensions of lyrical poetry to the novel. She harmoniously integrates narrative intentions and poetic conventions to create a work that functions in the manner of a poem-novel.

In *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, the usual signposts of fiction are only obliquely given. Brophy says, "the story goes scarcely beyond the bare three lines of a love triangle, and even those have to be inferred from the narrator's

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[1] Brigid Brophy, "Preface," *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (Toronto: Popular Library, 1966) 5.

[2] Elizabeth Smart, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (Toronto: Popular Library, 1966) 44. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and page references will be contained in the text in parentheses.

rhapsodizing or lamentation over them."[3] The events and the action within the novel act peripherally: they are deflected off feelings, located, as Jean Mallinson says, at "the intersection of the figures of speech."[4] Similarly, although time and place are important, they are important only in relation to the narrator's feelings. Time, which is that of the second world war, is important only because, ironically, the narrator feels her love is more powerful than the power of war. She says:

> So I say now, for the record of my own self, and to remember when I may be other than I am now: In spite of everything so strong in dissuasion, so rampant in disapproval, I saw then that there was nothing else anywhere but this one thing; that neither nunneries nor Pacific Islands nor jungles nor all the jazz of America nor the frenzy of war-zones could hide any corner which housed an ounce of consolation if this failed. In all the states of being, in all worlds, this is all there is. (72)

In the same way, the various settings within the novel—California, New York, Arizona, and Ottawa—superficially link the narrative, but only as backdrops for the emotional drama unfolding in the heart of the narrator. Although the journey taken by the unnamed narrator and her lover is an actual one, from the southern coast of California to Arizona, and to New York, the real journey is in the heart. Place acts only as a correlative to the narrator's internal state: the consummation of the love affair occurs in the lush California landscape; her lover's betrayal, however, takes place against the cheap hotels and cafés of New York. And, although the narrator and her lover are the central characters of the novel, they have no names; he is only a point of reference while the narrator is a lyrical voice, an isolated soul suffering the ecstacy and pain of love. The other characters are merely voices that counterpoint the narrator's. An extravagantly hyperbolic and emblematic language and a tortured, convoluted syntax convey the obsessive state of the narrator as she interprets, distorts, and magnifies her personal experience in the face of a brutal, uncaring objective world.

Structurally the novel is divided into ten sections; each section reveals a further progression in the understanding of love, faith, and betrayal. Within each section, the accumulating revelations progress not through event but through association and paradox encompassing the polarities of good and evil, ec-

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[3] Ercphy 7.

[4] Jean Mallinson, "The Figures of Love: Rhetoric in *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*," *Essays in Canadian Writing* 10 (1978): 110.

stacy and despair, and life and death. Love is an active force; it is both spiritual and sexual, specific and universal; it is the purveyor of both life and death. Thus, revelation structured in paradox, and conveyed through allusion and image, not plot, creates narrative progression in *By Grand Central Station.*

The bare fictional line in the novel begins with the first meeting of the narrator with her lover and his wife, and ends with his betrayal of the narrator and their love. As the events unfold, the narrator has an increasing perception of a mundane, banal, and external world indifferent to love. Yet, ironically, she establishes her own heroic ideals of love against this world. Smart creates both an inner landscape of love and passion and a concrete external world of objects that anchor and define the personal force of love. By placing the narrator's inner world of feeling against the external world, Smart establishes a pervasive pattern: an alternating sense of concentration and extravagance, of the concrete and the universal. The opening paragraph establishes the pattern: as the narrator waits on a corner in Monterey for the bus carrying the man she loves, she says, "apprehension and the summer afternoon keep drying my lips, prepared at ten minute intervals all through the five hour wait" (17). "Apprehension's" abstraction pairs with the concreteness of "summer afternoon" and "five hour wait," a contrast repeated in the next paragraph when the narrator is confronted with the man's wife: "It is her eyes that come forward out of the vulgar disembarkers to reassure me that the bus had not disgorged disaster" (17). The juxtaposing of a concrete and an abstract word is repeated in the third paragraph:

> Behind her he for whom I have waited so long, who has stalked so unbearably through my nightly dreams, fumbles with the tickets and the bags, and shuffles up to the event which too much anticipation has fingered to shreds. (17)

The contrast between the concrete image of "the tickets and the bags" with the generality of the "event" and ominous bodings of "apprehension" creates an alternating pattern of concentration and extravagance, a pattern that underlines the pervasive sense of two worlds juxtaposed but in conflict. Smart's language, which determines the distance and the difference between the two conflicting worlds, structurally reinforces the gap between them. A tightly sustained first person monologue, "a language of feeling—subjective, passionate, and extravagant," exists in ironic tension with the intruding language of the external

world.[5] The contrast between the narrator's language of the soul and the language of the intruding world is central to the novel's theme, style, and structure. Jean Mallinson points out that the reader of *By Grand Central Station* feels the experience "apprehended and suffered through the language"; in fact, "it happens as language in recognizable and often formal ways."[6]

Specifically, Smart uses rhetorical and figurative devices to define the language of the soul and determine the novel's lyrical or poetic mode. Metalepsis is the novel's dominating and central trope. Mallinson calls it "the trope of allusion used not incidentally but pervasively and as an element in structure."[7] The metaleptic trope links the world of the novel with the Biblical world of Babylon and, more specifically, the Biblical love in exile with the world of Grand Central Station. This allusion to "Psalm 137" recalls the exiled people of Zion: significantly, the narrator finds herself exiled through love in an alien and material world, and further exiled from love itself when her lover abandons her in New York in order to return, out of pity, to his wife. In fact, the novel is about love in exile, but, by associating this love with the Biblical love, it encompasses a tradition, an idealized literary past. Further, although "Psalm 137" provides the novel's metaleptic structure, the Biblical "Song of Songs" explicitly draws into sharp, ironic conjunction, the visionary love, with which the narrator aligns her life, and the external world's antithetical view of it. Smart counterpoints the lyrical "Song of Songs" with the brutal police interrogation the narrator suffers after she and her lover are arrested in Arizona, for having committed adultery.

> But at the Arizona border they stopped us and said Turn Back, and I sat in a little room with barred windows while they typed.
>
> What relation is this man to you? (My beloved is mine and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.)
>
> How long have you known him? (I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.)
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> Did you sleep in the same room? (Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair: thou hast dove's eyes.)

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[5] Lorraine McMullen, "A Canadian Heloise: Elizabeth Smart and the Feminist Adultery Novel," *Atlantis* 4:1 (1978): 76.

[6] Mallinson 108. I am indebted to Mallinson's study for identifying the novel's primary structural pattern.

[7] Mallinson, 109.

> In the same bed? (Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant, also ;our bed is green.)
> Did intercourse take place? (I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.)
> When did intercourse first take place? (The king hath brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.)
> Were you intending to commit fornication in Arizona? (He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.)
> Behold thou art fair my beloved, behold thou art fair: thou hast dove's eyes. (51-52)

The sharp irony of the scene illustrates the contrast between the banality of the policeman's hostile questions and the profundity of the narrator's feelings, by explicitly counterpointing the two discourses within the novel and thus reinforcing the novel's metaleptic frame.

Connected to the trope of metalepsis and working in relation to it is zeugma, "a Figure by which things very different or contrary are compared or placed together and by which they mutually set off and enhance each other."[8] Zeugma is central in locking discordant pairs in the novel, signified specifically in its title. Hence, the twentieth-century image of Grand Central Station suggests a Biblical Babylon; it is the song of Eros or "The Song of Songs" sung in a material and alien world. The title of the novel recalls the exiled people of Zion; and the words, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psalm 137), emphasizes the plight of love in a world that does not speak love's language.

A third and extensive trope, hyperbole or exaggeration, dominates the tone of the novel. Hyperbole is both appropriate and effective in creating the intensity of the narrator's obsessive, passionate love. She reiterates her conviction of the boundless powers of love in extravagant terms. In fact, hyperbole and conceit constitute the "language of love" whose force moves outward to embrace all of nature; at one point the narrator asserts, "I am the land, and he is the face upon the waters. He is the moon upon the tides, the dew, the rain, all the seeds and all the honey of love" (42). The narrator speaks the language of love where extremes of hope and despair know no middle ground, even though it is spoken in an alien and hostile world. In short, the language of *By Grand Central Station* is the language of lyrical poetry; it evokes a world where "nothing is neutral": events

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[8] Mallinson 110

and actions take on mythic significance, the central characters translate into archetypes, and the prosaic details of life turn into signs and emblems that affirm or deny love. The narrator asserts, "there is no angle the world can assume which the love in my eye cannot make into a symbol of love" (41).

To define and reinforce her vision of love, the narrator turns to and embraces mythical, Biblical, and literary traditions, where love and suffering are heroic and oppose the mundane world; the narrator says, "the very word love offends with its nudity." Repeated allusions to mythical and literary traditions reinforce the metaleptic framework and create an associative pattern that thematically and structurally unifies the novel. Allusions are an integral part of the narrator's thought, and they delineate her emotional struggle as she experiences the vicissitudes of love; in fact, she says her thoughts are "archives full of archetypes." Initially, she aligns herself with the legendary characters of Leda and Daphne whose own legendary transformations into other forms were the consequence of amorous pursuits. The narrator thus projects herself and her lover into the world of myth as archetypes of love. Because they take on mythic significance and because their love is thus inextricably tied to legend, they become, in turn, a part of the legends. The progression of their love is already written in the legends:

> It is written. Nothing can escape. Floating through the waves with seaweed in my hair, or being washed up battered on the inaccessible rocks, cannot undo the event to which there were never any alternatives. O lucky Daphne, motionless and green to avoid the touch of a God! Lucky Syrinx, who chose a legend instead of too much blood. For me there was no choice. There were no crossroads at all. (23-24)

Immediately following the consummation of their love, the narrator thinks, "Jupiter had been with Leda . . . and now nothing can avert the Trojan wars" (27); thus her thoughts portend the future disaster of their obsessive love. Later, when her lover abandons her, the narrator thinks of herself as Dido, who has been abandoned by Aeneas. She laments, "By the Pacific I wander like Dido, heaving such a passion of tears in the breaking waves, that I wonder why the whole world isn't weeping inconsolably" (108). In this way, Smart elevates the particular to the legendary, strengthening the tension and reinforcing the contrast between an external reality and a visionary inner world.

By aligning the central characters with a legendary world, and by establishing the particular characters as symbols of love,

Smart enables her narrator to transcend imaginatively her particular circumstances. Essentially, the narrator finds solace and relief in the world of the imagination, in the mythical world of heroic lovers, and in the world of literature where erotic desire and pain unite natural passion and the imagination. The transformation of the lovers into archetypes thematically links the lovers of the particular world with the legendary world of heroic ideals. Through love, the lovers become one with the myths, and, as Brigid Brophy suggests, "a legend of a metamorphosis is itself a metaphor of the very process of literary art."[9] Thus, love, which is the catalyst of the metamorphosis (since the lovers become the myths through love), affects the text, "the process of literary art." Specific passages within the text point to this process: the typewriter is seen as a symbol of love and the lovers spend their early days at the typewriter. At one point the narrator exclaims, "how stationary life has become"; their life is the stationery upon which the text is written. The metamorphosis the lovers undergo results from love's power, which initially enables the narrator to transform into various protean shapes:

> But I have become a part of the earth: I am one of its waves flooding and leaping. I am the same tune now as the tree, hummingbirds, sky, fruits, vegetables in rows. I am all of any of these things. I can metamorphose at will. (45)

Ironically though, the power of the love's despair can also transform the angles of the external world, as when Lexington Avenue "dissolves" in the narrator's tears, and "the houses and the neonlights and the nebulae fell jumbled into the flood" (118). In metamorphosis, there is a change from one form to another, a change that occurs in the text, as allusion and image refashion character and narrative convention to poetic function.

In *By Grand Central Station*, narrative progression occurs in the network of literary allusion and image motif. Allusions to Blake, Shakespeare, and the metaphysical poets Donne and Herbert work in conjunction with the metaleptic framework to reinforce the Biblical idea of love in exile, while images of blood and water establish the paradox of love and suffering and create a visionary and symbolic world of ecstacy and pain. Specific literary allusions connect the narrator's vision of love to Blake's and her final agony to Macbeth's. She rationalizes that her union with her lover represents transcendence of what Blake calls "division" to unification and a state of grace.[10] In this state, the

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[9] Brophy 9-10.

[10] I am partly indebted to Michael Brian Oliver's essay, "Elizabeth Smart: Recognition,"

boundaries between good and evil and time and space disappear. Ironically, however, the narrator's reference to Blake's "Ah Sun-Flower" and "I Asked a Thief" reveal her inability to solve what is, in fact, a moral problem:

> I am far, far beyond that island of days where once, it seems, I watched a flower grow, and counted the steps of the sun, and fed, if my memory serves, the smiling animal at his appointed hour. (24)

A *mélange* of allusions echoing Blake, Donne, and Rilke convey the narrator's confrontation with sexual desire and temptation when she encounters this married man:

> My heart is eaten by a dove, a cat scrambles in the cave of my sex, hounds in my head obey a whipmaster who cries nothing but havoc as the hours test my endurance with an accumulation of tortures. Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic orders? (24)

But, because love is creation, nature cannot be refused, and the narrator obeys the imperatives of love: "The new moss caressed me and the water over my feet and the ferns approved me with the endearments: My darling, my darling, lie down with us now for you also are earth whom nothing but love can sow" (26). Yet, once that love is consummated (or sown), she feels guilt. The consummation of love may be god-like, but it also exists within a world whose moral code the narrator cannot deny; at the end of part one of the novel, God's reaction is seen in the image of a "long black rainbow" and the narrator realizes she can do nothing but "crouch and receive God's wrath" (30).

An allusion to Donne's "spider love," also conveys the narrator's feelings of guilt: she says it is not God, but "a spider who is weaving my guilt" (34). Her struggle continues as she appeals to "Gabriel, Michael of the ministering wings" and alludes to Herbert's religious struggle in "The Pulley":

> What was your price, Gabriel, Michael of the ministering wing? What pulley from headlong man pulled you up in the nick of time, till you gushed vegetable laughter, and fed only off the sun? Was it your reward for wrestling successfully with such despair as this? (38)

Essays on Canadian Writing 12 (1978): 106-34. I am also indebted to Elizabeth Smart for allowing me to see a yet unpublished gloss for the sources of the allusions in the novel.

The narrator confronts the central problem and the paradox of man's moral inquiry: a fall from humanity might elevate her to another purer state of "vegetable laughter," but she realizes she can follow only her own conscience since finally "the texts are meaningless." The dictates of her conscience are those of nature, and nature is sexual; she admits, "my heart is its own destructive. It beats out its poisonous rhythms of truth" (38), and, "my foot danced by mistake over the hopeless, and bled no solace for my butchery. My hurt was not great enough to assuage my guilt" (38). The references to Macbeth and his butchery reveal the narrator's feelings of treachery, feelings that have earlier been intimated. When the narrator and her lover first betray his wife she likens herself to Macbeth by saying, "I keep remembering that I am their host. So it is tomorrow's breakfast rather than the future's blood that dictates fatal forebearance" (18). Finally, however, it is "the future's blood" that dictates; yet, the irony is apparent since the consummation of their love carries its own imminent conclusions. Later, when she knows she has been betrayed, and finds herself pregnant, she sees her betrayal as a double one: nature's purpose may have been only the propagation of the species and she has been only "the seedbag." Life then withers for this woman when the man she loves refuses the fruit of their love and returns to his wife. For the narrator, the prospect of a life without this love is the prospect of a life devoid of meaning: now, like Macbeth, she faces an abyss where "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow lie as locked and uncharted as the other face of the moon" (108).

Contributing to the novel's allusive structure and its narrative progression is a pervasive and integrating image motif. The recurring images of blood and water establish a powerful yet contradictory view of love as both birth and death. As the most powerful force in the novel, love creates both the birth of the world and the birth of the individual; it is "land emerging from chaos." The recurring image of blood suggests not only the birth of love but also its death; after love's consummation the narrator asks, "who will drown in so much blood?" Thus, blood also represents suffering in the face of love by paradoxically representing both love's birth and death. The narrator asks, "Will there be birth from all this blood, or is death only exacting his greedy price?" (34).

Later, after the narrator has been betrayed, blood colors her perception so that "the streets were slushy with blood." Blood is powerful, but finally it is not as strong as love itself, which is "as strong as death." The narrator's belief in the strength and power of love in the face of all adversity is summed up in another powerful image of blood: "not all the poisonous

tides of the blood I have spilt can influence these tidals of love" (41). "The tidals of love" suggest the opulence of love or "the water of love that floods everything over" (41).

Images of blood associated with the consummation of love and its subsequent guilt pattern the second section of the novel; in the third section, however, images of blood transform to images of water as the narrator basks in her new found love. Throughout the novel water is equated with power, consuming everything in its wake. As the narrator says, "the water of love floods everything over, so that there is nothing the eye sees that is not covered in." It is so strong that "even the precise geometry of his hand, when I gaze at it, dissolves me into water, and I flow away in a flood of love" (41). Ironically, the flood of love is so strong that when her lover betrays her she begins to drown in its unrelinquishing power. Water, the symbol of love, becomes the symbol of grief:

> There is no end. The drowning never ceases. The water submerges and blends, but I am not dead. O I am not dead. I am under the sea. The entire sea is on top of me. (118-19)

Stricken with grief, the narrator goes "whoring after oblivion," which in her dreams appears as an image of drowning. The water of love that once had flooded everything with life now brings death:

> And I am drenched before I reach the surface. I am drowned before I reach the waterweeds at the bottom. I avoid the glance the river gives me. But it dances on. It has lust for me. (125)

In a dream, the narrator comes upon a frozen waterfall which ironically recalls the falls where her lover "surprised me bathing and gave me what I could no more refuse than the earth can refuse the rain" (26). Only now, "the water freezes into ice, the waterfall that promises liberation stands stockstill and disobedient" (125). Finally, images of drowning suggest the narrator's overwhelming grief and in her imagination takes over the external world:

> But the sea that floods is love, and it gushes out of me like an arterial wound. I am drowning in it. The fifty-storey windows glitter and collapse into water. The water is all full of astronomical points. It is a magnetic deathtrap. Everything is caught in its rush. (118)

Like the image of blood, the image of water suggests both birth and death; however, neither blood nor water suggests redemption, since the only hope for redemption lies in a reconciliation with her lover.

In effect, an allusive and imagistic language creates the experience of love as the narrator experiences and understands it. Interestingly, as the emphasis in the novel shifts from the referential to language itself, the poetic structure derives its force by working in relation to the mimetic expectations associated with the novel. The semantic relation of every word to its surrounding context comes to the foreground and creates an internal emotional landscape; yet, ironically, in the concluding section of the novel, the apocalyptic vision of "there is no reality but love" transforms back to the dawning of a new day when "the black porters arrive and usher in the day with brooms and enormous dustpans" (127). The world of timeless love that "transforms the angles of the world" ends in Grand Central Station, where, pregnant and abandoned by her lover, the narrator sits down and weeps. The external world, and its indifference to the nuances and metaphors of love, now asserts itself in pregnancy and inconvenience, the world of "transient coffee-shops and hotels," "the gloom of taverns," and "the crooning of Bing Crosby out of a juke-box." Ironically, this is the tangible, unhappy reality to which the narrator now clings just as earlier she had learned to smoke for something to hold on to:

> I dare not be without a cigarette in my hand. If I should be looking the other way when the hour of doom is struck, how shall I avoid being turned into stone unless I can remember something to do which will lead me back to the simplicity and safety of daily living. (29)

The narrator's vision of love is finally betrayed as the facts take one over; she realizes it is "the fact, the unalterable fact: It is she he is with: He is with her: He is not with me because he is sleeping with her" (97-98). Thus, the reality that increasingly intrudes in the final section of the novel reinforces the tension between the narrator's vision of love and the reality of her situation. For the narrator, the failure of their love is not "the police, domestic scenes, cooling friends . . . the sordidness of hotels which were powerless," but that "he did the one sin which love will not allow":

> He did sin against love, and though he says it was in Pity's name, and that Pity was only fighting a losing battle with Love, he was useless to

> Pity, and in wavering, injured Love, which was, after all, what he had staked all for, all he had, ungamblable. (95-96)

The final tragedy is not that the world of "daily living" betrays the narrator's visionary and heroic ideals of love, but that her lover betrays her irrevocably. All she has left is "the language of love"; her love is now a legend in which he is "beautiful as allegory. He is as beautiful as the legend the imagination washes up on the sand" (124). Although she reaches for the sublime through her imagination and finds its equivalent in legend, her love is rooted in fact, in the day-to-day realities of a tangible and material world.

In the concluding section Smart's language explicitly reinforces the sharp division between the narrator's vision of love and the indifference and the hostility of the world in general. The unfeeling and clichéd response of others to the narrator's condition contrasts with her own torment and grief and increases the tension between the two worlds.

> They eye me. They bore a hole in my wedding finger because it is bare, and they measure my belly like tailors, to weave a juicy bit of gossip.
>
> You're in a bad way, aren't you, my dear? You're in quite a spot?
>
> Oh no, thank you, I'm all right, I'm fine. A little short of cash, maybe.
>
> If there's anything you'd like to tell me, you can tell me, you can trust me, you know. I've been around, my husband and I, we've been around. (111)

Thus the metaphoric, allusive, and hyperbolic song of love is sung in an alien and material world and contrasts significantly with other discourses in the novel. The policeman's crude interrogation and his final warning, "let this be a lesson," and Mr. Wurtle's sneering, "You should have gone to different hotels," reflect a general hostility towards love, while the trite advice of her parents, "Be reasonable," shows their inability to understand the power and magnitude of this love. And, the banality of the comments, of the various onlookers, "Don't you feel blue all by your lonesome" (110), or , "Sure Kid. We all got our troubles" (120), further reinforces the gap between the prosaic world's view of love and the narrator's belief in and lyrical celebration of it. Her own awareness of this distance is reflected in her wry comment:

> So there be no obsequies. There is to be no mention of that which was to have conquered the world, and after the world, death.
>
> Not one of all these martyrs nailed to every tree in the western hemisphere will find favor in the editor's measuring eye. On the amusement page, to fill up space, one inch and a half, perhaps, of those who were forced to die. Butter is up ten cents. The human being is down. (69)

In the final section of the novel, there is an alternating awareness of these two worlds in conflict. Although the narrator may reach for the sublime through her imagination and find its equivalent in legend, her love is rooted in fact. Although she insists, "I will *not* be placated by the mechanical motions of existence, nor find consolation in the solicitude of waiters who notice my devastated face" (117), she now clings to this world, a world oblivious to the legends of the language of love, a world where "odours of disinfectant wipe out love and tears," and where "the early workers overrun the world they have inherited, tramping out the stains of the wailing, bleeding past" (128). Appropriately, as facts take over the literary transformations that elevate the love affair to another state cease, the narrator acknowledges, "the page is as white as my face after a night of weeping. It is as sterile as my devastated mind" (127). She admits, "all martyrdoms are in vain" and "all battles are lost." There is a shift from the sublime back to the banal as the referential world reestablishes itself; the "Song of Songs" fades, and in the final passage the voice gives way to platitudes and clichés:

> Well, it's too late now to complain, my honeydove. Yes, it's all over. No regrets. No postmortems. You must adjust yourself to conditions as they are, that's all. You have to learn to be adaptable. I myself prefer Boulder Dam to Chartres Cathedral. I prefer dogs to children. I prefer corncobs to the genitals of the male. Everything's hotsy-totsy, dandy, everything's O.K. It's in the bag. It can't miss. (128)

The paucity of the language here reveals the extreme distance between the narrator's imaginative world, the novel's evocation of the language of love, and the particular world where love is just another four-lettered word.

In *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, the drama exists in the language of the soul. Ironically, the novel derives its very force by its author's manipulation of mimetic expectations: although the emphasis on the novel shifts to the aesthetic, it ex-

ists in tension and opposition to the referential. Yet, in essence, *By Grand Central Station* is an extended lyrical poem; it creates the intensely lyrical expression of one person isolated from the rest of the world by the experience of love. Brophy calls the novel "a chant" whose insistent rhythm is "the rhythm of a throb." Mallinson says, "it is as kind of obligato, an accompaniment to action, interspersed with arias." Because it refashions character and action through patterns of imagery and allusion, and combines them in an inward yet aesthetically objective form, *By Grand Central Station* also extends the dimensions of lyrical poetry to the novel and harmoniously integrates narrative intentions and poetic conventions to create a paradigmatic poem-novel.

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