

# Green Water, Green Sky: Gallant's Discourse of Dislocation

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George Woodcock says of Gallant's writing in general that it is "likely to be spatial like a painting rather than linear like conventional fiction."<sup>1</sup> As a case in point, he describes *Green Water, Green Sky* as "episodic," a "cycle of related short stories."<sup>2</sup> This statement concerns itself with the content of the novel, the "relatedness" of the stories; in considering form, however, the book could also be described as "a-novelistic," a term used by John Graham in describing Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there are similarities between these two works, though the comparative links with Woolf will not be developed at great length here. Aside from the obvious use of water imagery, both texts are written in what Wayne Booth terms a "modern" mode,<sup>4</sup> in which authors make use of impartial narration in the presentation of different points of view. As in Woolf's *The Waves*, the third-person narrative voice speaks indirectly from several points of view, so that the narrator or speaking subject is difficult to define. This dislocation of the speaking subject in *Green Water, Green Sky* is achieved by Gallant's manipulation of point of view, of time, and of language; the narrative enacts in form, as well as suggests in content, a Lacanian perspective on reality. Gallant's "late modernist"<sup>5</sup> text takes "modern" concerns with representation and combines them with more contemporary social concerns. Her text is context-bound, then. In other words, Flor and the decentralized speaker stand in opposition to what is reductively ordered and patriarchal, in life and language respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> "Memory, Imagination, Artifice: The Late Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant," *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978): 81.

<sup>2</sup> "Mavis Gallant," *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. William Toye (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1983) 285.

<sup>3</sup> "Point of View in *The Waves*: Some Services of the Style," *U of T Quarterly* 39.3 (1970): 193.

<sup>4</sup> *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) 55.

<sup>5</sup> Brian McHale makes the distinction between "modern" and "late modern" texts in *Post-modern Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987). The former is predominantly concerned with epistemological concerns, which contrast with ontological concerns of "postmodern" texts. Late modern texts are placed between these positions, and can move in either direction.

Gallant's third-person speaker<sup>6</sup> is the epitome of the self-effacing narrator, and Gallant, as the implied author, achieves her Woolfian goal "to be invisible" as completely as possible.<sup>7</sup> The speaker, too, is impersonal (almost invisible), and the reader is aware of its existence only by its absence, or rather its elusive presence: each shift in point of view indicates that a speaker is at work, though the multiplicity of voices it projects obscures its own identity. What Michel Fabre calls the "polyphonic voice, a collective voice borne from the overlapping points of view"<sup>8</sup> is more precisely a single voice which articulates several points of view. As Woolf asked of herself while writing *The Waves*, "who thinks it?" (qtd. in Graham 197),<sup>9</sup> so the reader must question the identity of the thinker/speaker which is present in *Green Water, Green Sky*.

Many terms could be used to name such a speaker. Graham calls Woolf's speaker a "translator" (196) who is usually not omniscient, but instead "omnipercipient" (204). Gallant's speaker is similar; not usually omniscient, it translates the actual perceptions of characters, and no more. For example, in presenting a scene from Bonnie's point of view, the narrator cannot make definitive statements about things which Bonnie herself could not be sure of: "Bonnie thought her thoughts. . . . They were trailing baggage out of a fabricated past. The furnishings had *probably* responded to Bob's need for a kind of butterly comfort" (39; emphasis mine).<sup>10</sup> Thus when a character guesses, and when the narrator is speaking from that character's point of view, then the narrator, too, guesses: "his mother-in-law was in the drawing room, poised for discovery. She *must have* heard him come in. . . ." (38; emphasis mine).

This second example demonstrates how adeptly the speaker moves from voice to voice. "His mother-in-law was in the drawing room" is spoken in the narrator's voice, but "poised for discovery" could either be the undercutting voice of the speaking subject itself, or the speaker articulating Bob's (here sarcastic) point of view. "She must have heard him come in" is voiced from Bob's point of view and mimics his actual thought process, though not in his own words. The thoughts of Bonnie

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<sup>6</sup> I have chosen to refer to this speaking subject as "it" rather than he or she in order to emphasize the anonymity and irreducibility of the narrative voice.

<sup>7</sup> *Paris Notebooks: Essays and Reviews* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1986) 176.

<sup>8</sup> "'Orphans' Progress, Reader's Progress': Voice and Understatement in Mavis Gallant's Stories," *Gaining Ground*, eds. R. Kroetsch and R. Nischik (Edmonton: Newest P, 1988) 156.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (London: Hogarth P, 1953) 146.

<sup>10</sup> *Green Water, Green Sky* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959).

and Bob are played off each other, suggesting the tensions that exist in attempts at male/female communication. In this way, Gallant renders several "social consciousnesses" with a single speaker, leaving the issues open for the reader to interpret.

Paradoxically, the narrator's mobility in voice both questions and confirms its own reliability; while providing information from non-omniscient stances, the tone is nevertheless so consistent that the reader is obliged to trust the narrator, as Fabre notes (155). Gallant forces the reader to question the authority of the narrative presence, but also to accept it; her multiple voicings allow the reader to situate him/herself both within and outside of linguistic authority, and to judge for him/herself.

Despite the openness achieved with this fluctuating point of view, the style or tone of the speaker remains consistent. We are given a character's perceptions, but they are reported in a translated version, in the words of the speaker or translator. For example, Doris, the out-going American neighbour (and another example of the "dislocated" female), is reported to have "told Flor that she woke up fairly optimistically each day, but that the afternoon was a desert and she couldn't cross it alone" (74).

Even parenthetical comments, which jolt the reader into focussing on the narrative style and into questioning the voice of the speaker, relay that second parenthetical voice while maintaining the consistent style of the speaker. For instance, the sentence "She had read with her husband across from her at the table and beside her in bed" is followed with two sentences in parentheses: "(She had been reading a book, in a café, alone, the first time he had ever spoken to her. He had never forgotten it)" (28). The narrator adeptly moves from Flor's to Bob's point of view, while maintaining the characteristic tone of the detached narrating consciousness.

The tension between these two characters is understood implicitly by way of the narrative style, which avoids "realistic" descriptive background information. Gallant's style almost follows Hemingway's "iceberg principle," in the sense that the theme of non-communication (which results from problems with gendered interaction) is rendered by the juxtaposition of thoughts of characters who hold drastically different views of life.

With this narrator, Gallant creates a "strategic position" within the text. Such a textual/linguistic position is modulated and codified by patriarchal cultural values; we are "moulded

into speaking subjects by language" writes Nelly Furman,<sup>11</sup> language which itself has recently been labelled as "logocentric" by Derridean theorists. In other words, classical, traditional discourse stems from and perpetuates patriarchal order, an order which is based on the "logos" of a patriarchal god of society. In a feminist context, then, traditional literary patterns and the strategic position of the subject in the texts are related to sociopolitical hierarchies or positions. "The social and the sexual cannot be separated," as Linda Hutcheon argues in "'Shape shifters': Canadian women novelists and the challenge to tradition."<sup>12</sup> Traditional discourse, then, with a centralized speaking subject and linear narrative strategies, is deemed "masculine"<sup>13</sup> or patriarchal.

Gallant challenges this tradition with her decentralized speaking subject. While this subject is ungendered and impartial, the text which it produces via narration is "feminine" or matriarchal. Gallant's narrative subject-position aligns her technique with that of Woolf, whose writing "undermine[s] the very idea of any centralized moral standpoint, any authoritarian idea of 'omniscience,' by a strategy of continual modulation of tone of voice" as Virginia Blain notes.<sup>14</sup>

This distrust of authority implies the rejection of a patriarchal, authoritative linguistic system. The speaking subject's infidelity to this system is, in the context of feminist critical theory, a "feminist practice of undermining [this system]".<sup>15</sup> The narratorial self-effacement of withdrawal from a position of authority (which parallels Flor's withdrawal from her marriage and social position, one that validated her existence by aligning her with a male) puts the reader in a position where she must also question authorial trust, a trust which is rooted in patriarchal language. Through manipulation of language, Gallant defies this patriarchal form and replaces it, as does Flor.

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<sup>11</sup> "The Politics of Language: Beyond the Gender Principle?" *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, eds. Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn (New York: Methuen 1985) 69.

<sup>12</sup> *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*, eds. Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon/Newest, 1986) 220.

<sup>13</sup> My use of quotations around the words "masculine" and "feminine" indicates a certain concession to the charge that gender-oriented adjectives may themselves be sexist and/or reductive. I feel that the terminology is, however, necessary at this stage in the development of feminist/genderist theory, and it would be especially difficult to supply new terms at this time, in consideration of the psychoanalytic aspect of the analysis in this paper.

<sup>14</sup> "Narrative Voice and the Female Perspective in Virginia Woolf's Early Novels," *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays*, eds. P. Clements & I. Grundy (London: Vision P, 1983) 128.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 48.

The rejection of linear patriarchal discourse, by Flor and by the narrator, is also implicitly formalized in the "spiral" shape of the narrative in *Green Water, Green Sky*, as Geoff Hancock describes it.<sup>16</sup> Structurally, the chapters are divided into the near past of Chapter I, where Flor and Bob have just been married (although the distant past is recreated through George's memory); Chapter II is a more recent past, where Flor loses touch with temporal reality; the focus of Chapter III is on the summer when Flor and Bob meet; and Chapter IV follows Chapter II temporally—Flor has been institutionalized, but her story (according to George) has been distorted: Bob and Bonnie "were creating an unmarred Florence" (147), by transforming their memories. The reader must piece together the story; any singular point of view, or memory, is not to be trusted. Gallant, as a "late modernist," forces the reader to question the epistemological certainty of memory, of narration—of reality.

The various levels of mental reality, which are a-linear and atemporal, are explored through the memories of the characters. The narrating consciousness translates perceptions; hence it transforms the reality, but does not duplicate it. This is a further manipulation of time as perceived by the characters themselves. "Past and present struggle for dominance," writes Lorna Irvine, and as a result the narrative voice is problematic, "because beginnings are difficult to write."<sup>17</sup> The narrative voice moves in and out of minds, and back and forth in time, making a convoluted pattern out of it by mixing the past with the present. We see that Flor, like the fragmented speaking voice, is herself dislocated in time by her mental confusion of temporality and of reality:

She was in a watery world of perceptions, where impulses, doubts, intentions, detached from their roots, rise to the surface and expand. . . . (111)

Flor becomes exiled from herself; her "psyche achieves rootlessness"<sup>18</sup> as she exists in an atemporal reality, which is madness.

Thus Flor moves from a marginal social position as a female in a patriarchal system (where she is made into an object by Bob and by her mother, both of whom play protective paternal

<sup>16</sup> "An Interview with Mavis Gallant," *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978): 45.

<sup>17</sup> "Starting from the beginning every time," *A Mazing Space* 249.

<sup>18</sup> D. B. Jewison, "Speaking of Mirrors: Imagery and Narration in Two Novellas by Mavis Gallant," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 10 (1985): 95.

roles),<sup>19</sup> to a marginal reality altogether. From George's point of view, she becomes a fictional character, part of a hallucinated vision: a "changeable figure . . . a queen in exile, plaintive and haughty" (154). To Bob, her dislocation seems deliberate (37).

Deliberate or not, Flor's dislocation or marginality correlates to the protean and marginalized speaking subject, which is, as current theory posits, "unlikely to produce a fixed, authority-claiming" language.<sup>20</sup> Flor's flight is liberating, as is Gallant's narrative technique. Flor finds a way to get out of the patriarchal family structure which has been essential to Bonnie's life; she has flown the patriarchal coop, to paraphrase one of Gallant's own comments (Hancock 23). Indeed, Flor has left the text itself in Chapter IV: her point of view is not voiced through the speaking subject at all after she has departed from ordered reality and language.

Flor's perceptions in the first three chapters and the language of the decentralized speaking subject suggest that both Flor and the speaker belong to a pre-patriarchal (or in semiotic terms, pre-referential) intuitive existence. Elizabeth Bishop, a Woolf scholar, distinguishes between the intuitive and the logical modes of perception<sup>21</sup>—the former, deemed feminine, is repressed by the latter (logical) mode, which is deemed masculine since it is a product of patriarchal societal values. Flor can distinguish between these two discourses most clearly when she experiences "vertige" (30), when "the sidewalk came up before her. . . [it] was a soundless upheaval:" (27), but this occurs when she is most sensitive to discursive differences:

At this hour, at this time of year, the crowd around the Café de la Paix was American. It was a crowd as apart from Flor as if an invasion of strangers speaking Siamese had entered the city. But they were not Siamese: they were her own people, and they spoke the language she knew best, with the words she had been taught to use when long ago, she had seen shapes and felt desires that had to be given names. (27-28)

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<sup>19</sup> Bonnie is a complex character in the novella; she embodies both roles of mother and father for Flor, whom she dominates in a masculine effort to control. Bonnie is role-playing; her adopted pseudo-male position is really an attempt at resisting her marginalization in patriarchal society.

<sup>20</sup> A. R. Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of *l'Écriture féminine*," *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. E. Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 363.

<sup>21</sup> "Toward the Far Side of Language: Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 27 (1981): 366.

These "words she had been taught to use" were "words out of the old days, when she could still read, and relate every sentence to the sentence it followed" (28). But the texts, the language, were "plugged casks filled with liquid words" (28). When Flor tries to relate to Bob in this (his) language, it is "a vertiginous effort to turn back on her voyage out" (67), and she fails: "'Sometimes when I want to speak,' she said in the same way, 'something comes between my thoughts and the words'" (67). She is exiled from the world of masculine language and logic, a language which is inadequate to relay her own reality. She knows that Bob's letters would not say anything to her (78), and that she requires "her [own] private language" (30). Had she had the choice, Flor would have "depended less on words; she would have belonged to life" (29).<sup>22</sup>

Gallant's speaker depends on words, of course, and portrays Flor's mental process by "psychonarration," a term which suggests a stream-of-consciousness technique, but which in fact describes how the events in the psyche are indirectly reported in the tone or style of the narrating consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Gallant is therefore able to use the speaking subject to render Flor's pre-verbal, not sub-verbal, state of mind. In so doing, she explores the production of discourse within the psyche, as Flor's pre-verbal thoughts enact a different type of discourse: the disordered matriarchal discourse which originates in the psyche, *le sémiotique*, as Julia Kristeva defines it.<sup>24</sup>

*Green Water, Green Sky* lends itself to a psycholinguistic study. Psychoanalytically, the content of the psyche is considered feminine; it represents the unarticulated language which, when articulated in the symbolic form of patriarchal discourse, is masculinized. Jacques Lacan defines language itself as "a gendered symbolic system centred upon the father as representative of sociality and power."<sup>25</sup> Lacanian ideas seem to be implicit in the text; Flor rejects the "Law-of-the-Father," which is "Lacan's formulation for language as a . . . medium represented and enforced by the figure of the father in the family" (Jones, "Writing" 375n2), just as she rejects her sexual role in the male-oriented society. Flor, then, exemplifies the

<sup>22</sup> This seems to be an intertext with Yeats's "Words," a poem which reflects the modern concern or obsession with the art/life relationship. This concern prefigures the late modern obsession with the language/life relationship, which, I have argued, underlies Gallant's text.

<sup>23</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. L. Roudiez, trans. L. Roudiez, T. Gora, A. Jardine (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) 133.

<sup>25</sup> A. R. Jones, "Julia Kristeva on Femininity: The Limits of a Semiotic Politics" *Feminist Review* 18 (1984): 57.

repressed sexuality which is alive in her psyche; it is an "unspeakable" energy which Roland Barthes calls "jouissance."<sup>26</sup> This repression is often noted by Bonnie: "she's never been a woman. . . . She's never even had her periods. . . . I think she's innocent. . . . But she's cold. . . . She's twenty-four and a piece of ice. . . ." (114). There is the sense that Flor is analogous to the speaking subject which Gallant uses to articulate her alinear, matriarchal text, because both are dislocated and asexual, and both defy the "Law-of-the-Father." Gallant's text seems to enact Barthes' suggestion that "[t]he text is (should be) that uninhibited person who shows his behind to the *Political Father*" (53).

Gallant observes that the role of the father in (Canadian) fiction is significant: "That has struck me. The father seems to be more important to us in fiction than the mother" (Hancock 25). Though Flor's father is absent from the text, except for hostile references on the part of Bonnie and (once) of Flor, his presence is strong in the effect he has had on both his wife and his daughter. The effect is felt in terms of psychological, pain as well as in the dislocated, transient, and marginalized lifestyle which Bonnie leads as a compensation for the loss of her social position and marital status. The subsequent effect on Flor's psyche and point of view as rendered by the narrator is increasingly evident, and as Flor's dislocation begins to occur, her irrational (pre-verbal) thoughts are rendered in translation through the speaking subject. Though the speaking subject has itself been dislocated throughout, it is at this point that the narrative voice identifies so strongly with Flor's point of view that its characteristic style changes, becoming almost *staccato* in its imitation of Flor's fleeting thoughts:

Flor had no time for doctors. She had to finish sewing a dress. She became brisk and busy and decided to make one dress of two, fastening the bodice of one to the skirt of the other. For two days she sewed this dress and in one took it apart. She unpicked it stitch by stitch and left the pieces on the floor. (78)

This metaphoric division of the self, the fragmentation of the dress as costume, or social "mask," is indicative of Flor's rejection of her designated social role.

Once the "mask [of social language] is shown to be a mask," writes de Man, "the authentic being underneath appears

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<sup>26</sup> Trans. R. Miller, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill, 1975) 21.



necessarily as on the verge of madness."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Flor has abandoned the mask and appears on the verge of madness. This section of the text notably occurs when Flor not only recalls being abandoned by her father, but also when she has just been left by her husband and mother as well. She is alone at this point, free from social restraints imposed upon her by these people and their relationships to her. So, her "reality" and her language carry positive connotations, ironically, and her abandonment by the latter pair is welcomed by Flor herself.

A temporary reprieve for Flor is indicated at the end of this section. Her "return" from madness is instigated by her reading of Doris' letter, which tells of her own plans to leave *her* husband after cabling her father to send money (thus her role as dependant on males, too, is clearly emphasized). Flor's mental shift is rendered by the speaker in symbolic, ordered prose which identifies the shore as linear reality, and the sea as psychic, irrational reality (very Woolfian analogies). Finally, we are told, "at the edge of the sea, the Fox departed" (84). The "fox" is suggestive of the "wild," pre-verbal language which accompanies her vertigo, since Flor herself terms the experience the "triumph of the little fox" (30). When the fox departs, she believes she has taken the "right" direction and goes "into her father's arms" (85). His presence in her mind draws her from the sea to the shore, and to "triumph" (85).

Flor's experience and relationship with her mother also follow a Lacanian pattern. Flor fails to undergo entrance into the symbolic order (the Law-of-the-Father) because neither she nor Bonnie would permit the natural separation between mother and daughter: "Your daughter's your daughter all your life. . . . Why, Flor at eighteen was like a little baby. She was never finished with me" (147), Bonnie tells George. The speaking subject implies that the women are not aware of the problems that their relationship has caused, even when the crisis has occurred:

But their closeness had been a trap, and each could now think, If it hadn't been for you, my life would have been different. If only you had gone out of my life at the right time. (55)

The narrating consciousness does not say or imply that this point of view belongs to either Flor or to Bonnie; it is not a translated thought of either character, but a statement of a possibility as seen by the narrating voice.

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<sup>27</sup> "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. C. S. Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1969) 198.

The normal separation between mother and child is the "initial step in the process of an individual's integration in the social system" and is what Lacan terms the "mirror-stage," when the child sees itself in a mirror and recognizes its own image as being separate from the mother's. Since Flor does not surpass this mirror-stage, she is unable to differentiate between herself and her image in the mirror. The two are equated in her mind; she needs "to steal glimpses of herself in shop windows" to affirm her existence (27). Thus, Flor is able to remain in the pre-patriarchal (pre-symbolic) state.

Later, when dislocated from society, from Bonnie, and from herself, she is finally able to see herself as "other": "she saw her image in her own bed in the silence of an August afternoon" (31). She has become a split subject: "Flor moved out of the range of the looking glass and could no longer be witnessed" (77), the implication being that the "witness" is the "other," but also herself. But now her dislocation is so complete that she evades her identity (as does the speaking subject) in preference of anonymity, of absence. She even withdraws from therapy and writes a letter to her analyst with what she calls a "lethal pen," an "instrument of separation" (33), because she recognizes that Dr. Linetti has succumbed to the "indignities" which her "tribe" is subjected to, and that she "practi[s]es] the same essential deceits" that men do (32). Flor has thus chosen to become absent from the world of the masculine, of symbolic order.

Like the speaking subject, which is also defined only by its absence (or by the presence of other existing voices), Flor finally exists only through the other characters' voices, which do exist in the symbolic order. Flor has become silent.<sup>28</sup> Theoretically, if language is male, and woman is other than male, then woman is silence. Julia Kristeva states that woman is "something that cannot be represented, something that is not said" (qtd. in Jones, "Julia Kristeva" 62).<sup>29</sup> Gallant's novel is about things that are not said, about a silent discourse. Relatively little dialogue occurs, and the speaking subject translates the thoughts of the characters, the pre-verbal content of their minds.

Flor's illogical thought (a sudden quotation from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*) is translated directly only once:

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<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that one definition of "staccato" includes "producing silence through most of the written time value of each note; very short and detached" (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary*, 1982). Flor has moved from the previously mentioned staccato style of discourse to absolute silence.

<sup>29</sup> Julia Kristeva, "La femme, ce n'est jamais ça," interview, *Psychanalyse et Tel Quel* 59 (1974): 19-24.

"upon the beached verge of the salt flood . . . ." She did not say this. Her lips did not move, but she had the ringing impression of a faultless echo, as if the words had come to her in her own voice. (28)

This "feminine" language exists separately and silently. Like Flor's silent "salt flood," Gallant's speaker uses the sea image in connection with this unspoken language: "Nothing was said, nothing was said about anything, and the silence beat about them like waves" (64). This intertextual reference to Woolf's *The Waves* is obvious. But more significantly, Woolf's aesthetic statements on the role of language specifically correlate to Gallant's implicit aesthetics; for example, the unspoken /un-speakable language in Flor's mind indicates that she has taken the "dangerous leap" that Woolf suggests is necessary to understand the reality which poetry attempts to convey. Woolf says that

[it] is necessary to take that dangerous leap through the air without the support of words which Shakespeare also asks of us . . . . Connecting them in a rapid flight of the mind we know instantly what they mean, but could not decant that meaning afresh into other words. The meaning is just on the far side of language.<sup>30</sup>

The speaking subject of *Green Water, Green Sky* mimics Flor's Woolfian "flight of the mind," and Gallant's reader must participate in the novel, since no definitive viewpoint is offered. The narrating consciousness is so quiet in this respect that the reader of *Green Water, Green Sky*, like Flor, must make an "intuitive leap, to apprehend a reality that will not submit to denotative [masculine] prose" as Bishop writes of Woolf's work (343). Thus, the novel's style reflects its theme: the narrative voice, dislocated by Gallant's manipulation of point of view, of time, and of language, defies conventional "denotative" prose. This narrative voice is like Flor, who is self-exiled from patriarchy, but is unlike Flor in that it is able to speak from the margins, whereas Flor falls silent. Though it is "impossible to define a feminine practice of writing," as Hélène Cixous so aptly puts it,<sup>31</sup> and though the current theoretical literary terminology may be part of the problem, Gallant's *Green Water, Green Sky* is an example of a kind of writing which is voiced by a decentralized speaker, a peripheral figure who is linguistically removed from traditional (masculine) authorial subjectivity, just as Flor is psy-

<sup>30</sup> *Collected Essays*, ed. L. Woolf 4 vols. (London: Hogarth P, 1966) I:7.

<sup>31</sup> "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. K. Cohen and P. Cohen, *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 883.

chically removed from patriarchal domination. Gallant's text demonstrates a different discourse, one that is voiced by a marginalized speaking subject; it is a matriarchal discourse of dislocation.

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