

ELIZABETH SMART'S NOVEL-JOURNAL

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*Surely it was time someone invented a new plot,
or that the author came out from the bushes.*

— Virginia Woolf

There has been critical debate about how to categorize Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*.¹ "One of the questions, that has repeatedly bewildered reviewers and critics of *Grand Central Station* since its publication more than 40 years ago," David Lobdell writes, "is whether the work should be considered a novel or a poem" (64). In her introduction to *Grand Central Station* Brigid Brophy describes it as one of the "masterpieces of poetic prose" (5). Michael Brian Oliver argues, "*By Grand Central Station* is an extensive and very special poem"; he distinguishes between poetic prose (which is only "like poetry") and concentrated prose (which "is poetry") (108).² We can understand the characteristics which lead to this difficulty in categorization if we examine the origin of *By Grand Central Station* in Smart's journals. It is surprising that many critics should either neglect or invalidate the relevance of Smart's journals to her published fiction because those journals not only constitute the bulk of her writing, but are crucial to the development of her artistic form and play an integral role in her writing process; Smart does not write poetry and fiction and keep journals, but rather writes parts of her works *in* her journals.³

That Smart composes her drafts in her journals has important critical and theoretical implications. The form one chooses to write influences how and what one writes. Smart, for instance, writes parts of *By Grand Central Station* in her journal and the journal, in turn, influences the way in which she expresses her

ideas. As Shirley Neuman points out in "Life-Writing" in the *Literary History of Canada*:

Moreover, the Canadian life-writing which is most sophisticated and thoughtful about the problems of inscribing the self in literature, and most innovative in its presentation of auto/biographical content, is not auto/biographical in any strict formal or generic sense at all. Instead it crosses and recrosses the borders between auto/biography and fiction in order to question static and holistic conceptions of the writing subject. (333)

Describing Eli Mandel's concept of poetry, Neumann adds:

The autobiographical assumptions common to many of these poems are two: that our 'lives'—or at least our awareness of them—exist only in our cultural representations of them, and that, therefore, they are shaped by those representations. Poetry, for Eli Mandel, becomes a *Life Sentence* in which the poet situates poems and travel diaries contiguously in a manner that he hopes will allow him to avoid the confinement of self within any single discourse and to intimate, in the interstices and intersections of different genres, a more multiple and fluid self which both writes and is rewritten. (335-336)

The blending of genres in Smart's work widens both our appreciation of the breadth of the novel as well as the particular strengths of the journal as a narrative form.

As Alice Van Wart points out in her introduction to *Necessary Secrets: The Journals of Elizabeth Smart*, "Far too much has been written about the biographical implications of *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*." Van Wart correctly argues that this work "is not so much about the love affair between two people as it is about Smart's life-long love affair with language." While Smart's journals do chart her life and give us insight into the genesis of the work, their importance is not as a kind of autobiography, but as a form with distinctive characteristics: truthfulness, credibility, compression, and intimacy are the four which I will concentrate on. Smart uses these to create a new kind of literary form—a *novel-journal*—born of and sharing many of the characteristics of the journals.

The flexibility of the journal form enables Smart to examine her experiences in different ways and to explore different forms of writing. This link is such that what she writes influences how she uses each journal. The fact that she often writes in several journals simultaneously also indicates that she uses each one for different purposes. For example, Smart used two journals (1936-38, 1938) to compose her apprentice work, *My Lover John*, and in a journal for 1939 she drafts articles for *The Ottawa Journal*, poems, and much of *Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother*.⁴ A green journal (December 1, 1940-March 1, 1941) contains the drafts for *By Grand Central Station* and a red notebook (October 30, 1941-February 4, 1942) contains poems and the moving "Journal from Magnanimous Despair Alone."

In 1948 and 1949, Smart does not keep any journals and this silence may be a result of the lack of critical attention for her work, *By Grand Central Station*, when it was first published in 1945. From 1950-1970, her journals are mainly address and appointment books with occasional notes for commercial writing, and drafts of book reviews; these journals reflect Smart's financial strain and need to write according to the demands of the market to provide income for her family. It is not until 1970, and again in 1976, that she resumes her own writing again. The 1976 unpublished journal illustrates how what Smart writes in her journal influences the function she assigns it.⁵ In contrast to many of her 1950-1970 journals (which are often small and frequently soft-covered), the 1976 journal is large and hard covered. This suggests perhaps her endeavour to create something more permanent and her resolution to persevere at her own writing. Smart begins this journal with plans for, and as a beginning draft of, her autobiography. Although she never completes her autobiography, the fact that she starts this work in the beginning of this journal establishes the journal's function; it is a journal in which she reinitiates her own creative writing. This writing, as opposed to her commercial writing, is her priority once again.

As a writer's notebook, Smart's journals reveal the seeds and evolution of her style; her journals evolve from external to internal observations and from personal writing to a more developed form in which Smart begins to speak in her own voice and portray her life as crafted art. The journals contain apprentice works and numerous attempted, but incomplete, works. They

also show the important correlation between her life/art and her journals/published writing. At times, they reveal how Smart conceives of ideas for some of her published works and contain parts of her drafts of her poetry and prose.

Smart's new form—novel-journal—is completely different from the genre of the diary-novel, of which Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is a good example.⁶ The diary-novel is fiction which employs the techniques of the diary, whereas many of Smart's works *are* journals. Nevertheless, her writing is not just private musing, but thematically focused and artistically unified. That Smart is able to express her experiences in such a coherent, artistic fashion is remarkable and suggests that her imagination and romantic sensibility play a crucial role not only in how she perceives, but also in how she responds to her experiences. By using her journals *as* her art, we glimpse how life and art are intertwined; just as she lives segments of her life as art, so Smart also sees writing as life.⁷ In *By Heart*, Rosemary Sullivan recounts how Smart saw her relationship with George Barker as realistic rather than romantic:

'You get into a state where you fall in love ... The fact that I was madly in love with the English language and with poetry may have given vent to my feelings.' (155)

Neuman's claim that "the writing is the life" and that "within such a poetics of life-writing, to change the life, one must change the writing" is an apt description of Smart's life and writing (336).

The qualities that make *By Grand Central Station* distinctive are direct descendents of the journal.⁸ Michael Brian Oliver seems anxious to invalidate the role that her journal plays in the creation of this work:

I do not mean that *By Grand Central Station* is a portrait of the artist as a young woman. The dullest reader could not help thinking that the book is in some way 'autobiographical,' but in reality it is much more than a *kunsterroman*, more too than a memoir or a diary. The reason is, when Miss Smart wrote the book she refused to take refuge in either distant objectivity or naive privacy. Instead she applied vision to herself, her intimate self happening in space and time. The result is unusual, almost paradoxical: the 'I' of the narrative is not separated by age and values from the author, yet neither is

she limited in her understanding of herself. Just the same, the author is left open and unprotected against the misunderstanding and cynicism of the superficially educated reader. Elizabeth Smart definitely wrote about herself in this book, but, for the record, it should be noted that she wrote the first part of the book last (in British Columbia) and the rest of it piece by piece as it happened. From the beginning her vision was equipped with design. Not surprisingly, this method of composition is essentially poetic. *By Grand Central Station* achieves, confidently and nonchalantly, a brave lyrical balance between lived experience and aesthetic retreat, though none of the author's emotions were recollected in tranquillity and the red-hot coal of her mind faded very little in creation. (109)

Taken out of the context of his article, Oliver's comment that *By Grand Central Station* achieves a "brave lyrical balance between lived experience and aesthetic retreat," is an accurate definition of the journal. Oliver admits that the book is derived from Smart's journal insofar as she literally wrote it in her journal. What he does not acknowledge, however, is that all of the qualities he admires about the book exist because they are derived from the journal form itself. His statement that Smart's "vision was equipped with design" is problematic because whereas most writers imagine or preconceive the design of a work, Smart's design—and there is design—is not imagined or preconceived in *totality* prior to her writing, but develops as she lives through these experiences. For Smart to have had a preconceived design about how her life would evolve implies that she was a seer.

Foremost among the characteristics born of the journal which make Smart's style in *By Grand Central Station* distinctive is, what Smart calls, "truth" (NS 30). In other literary forms, the writer may try to depict the truth through fiction, or imagined events. The journal is a repository for truth, albeit a subjective truth, insofar as the writer is able to perceive it. One of the reasons the journal can function in this way is because the journal lends itself to the illusion of privacy; the writer is not consciously writing for an audience. Thus, the writer does not have any reason to conceal the truth; however, the writer may be unable to perceive, or unwilling to face, the truth. In both cases, the block is part of that writer's subjective truth. Smart's truthfulness in *By*

Grand Central Station has important repercussions for the narrative. She describes feelings and experiences with an invigorating sincerity and intensity and reaches depths of feeling few people have the courage to explore, let alone express.

Her journal reflections on the nature of truth and beauty are central to her creative process and her concept of it and of art. On June 24, 1933, Smart writes:

What is writing? Isn't it just getting things on paper? What things? Just putting them down? But there is an art. Yes. But doesn't that make artifice. Can that be truth too? The truth, the truth—but there's too much of it. Self-consciousness. Self-analysis. Even writing this. I am saying—am I pretending? Trying to be truthful and soul-sighing! Copying K.M. (Katharine Mansfield) Because she did. No it isn't that. Honestly. I hate this spirit of self-analysis. Selma Lagerloft says something about it. It kills something. G.S. (Graham Spry) gave it to me. He knows it. He doesn't think it's a poison. It is. Oh! Why can't I write the truth—and if I do, why isn't it right? What bores?—surely long windy artifices signifying nothing? (NS 30)

As a novel, *By Grand Central Station* has a theme: love. There is significant evidence which suggests that Smart does not set out to compose her works in her journal, but merely writes down her experiences in her journal and then later uses it as a draft for parts of her public writing. For instance, Smart writes in her journal about Mexico and her relationship with Alice and Wolfgang Paalen and Eva. In the course of writing these journal entries (which later reappear in *Dig A Grave*), she makes a note in which she vaguely conceives the idea for this work (NS 195 ff.). Although Smart, in the following quotation, is discussing her conception of *Dig A Grave*, she later writes her major book about love in *By Grand Central Station*.⁹ On November 26, 1939, she writes:

I want my book to be about love. But love is so large and formless. (But so full of new worlds).

Durrell's book was all love and joy though it was about 'the decay of English civilization.' But not formless—concentrated. At the end I felt—OO—I have been well loved. (NS 198)

Her concept of love is closely related to her notion of beauty and truth; love is an intuited, felt experience. It is an expansion and a means of completion. While Smart, in the above quotation, has a vague conception of the theme of her book, she is not yet aware that what she is writing in her journals is the book. She continues to compose unconsciously the draft for *Dig A Grave* in the months ahead. She is unaware that she has already written *Dig A Grave* in her journal because after writing all of these entries, she contemplates her book about her mother, the book which becomes *Dig A Grave*:

And the book about Mumm I say I must rend the Now, the Now is only important—I can't reconstruct the past, and if I could I'm afraid of missing the present. The important juice-drops are small, but worth a million of the garrulous chaff that the will forces out when it says do this or that. I cannot write a novel—the form needs padding, the form needs to be filled up with air—for no nugget of truth can last so long or be so boringly consistent. I want each word to be essence, irreplaceably and authentically the only only note. Mummy can only be a book about now, with Mummy as a recurring note slowly revealing its source. More (NOW) would be drudgery or cheating. (NS 236)

Unlike a novel, however, there is no preconceived plot or story in *By Grand Central Station*; Smart tells the truth, here, as she knows it without foreknowledge of whether or not these sequences of events and experiences in her life would comprise a story. Smart's concept of truth is naive insofar as she is skeptical of, and seeks to escape from, self-consciousness and artifice—to mine truth directly. She sees "truth" as intuited, something she perceives and feels on a deep level. Irrespective of the merits of this concept, her views about self-consciousness and artifice imply an abdication of individual responsibility; Smart is unwilling to think about the "truth" she intuits.

As she writes in *The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals*, her sequel to *By Grand Central Station*, her form of writing does not have a story or characters in the conventional sense, but is instead a form in which she sets out to depict her subjective truth:

What's it about? What's it all for? No story, no characters, no memory of people, places, things.

Out of all those conversations in the heaving fertile evenings, mind to mind, heart to heart, soul to soul, such clear close views into another's being, with persons known then, and persons unknown then, names, faces, and every single word evaporated to a mere rich residue, a social apotheosis.

(...) But the bleak point, the boring truth, the stark illogical necessity is simple as a rose's: the eccentric genes impart their message: Write! and the moving finger writes through gales. (120)

In a letter (February 1977) to Jay Landesman, publisher of Polyantric press and of *The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals*, Smart adds a note in which she states that her books are not novels:

My prose books are not novels or novellas. They are short, but that is their right length the length they have to be, and I don't see why they have to be put into the old categories. What would you call *Alice in Wonderland*? *Tristram Shandy*? *The Natural History of Selbourne*? The works of Edmund Lear? ¹⁰

For Smart, truth and beauty are closely interrelated and are the basis for, and goals of, art. Truth is primary and she endeavours to apprehend it in her personal life and to convey this knowledge in her writing. Five years later, her views have evolved and she writes:

But we grow too wise. We see. We cannot deny our own self-consciousness.

O floating world, like a great shy bird I strive in vain to stroke!

I will be good.

The truth I will have. (NS 172)

Earlier in this same year, Smart defines her notion of beauty. She believes it is not something one can actively seek; like truth, beauty must be intuited, felt:

Beauty is rare.

You strain after it. You grope. Often you say to yourself, This is beautiful. But it is not beauty. It is dead. On your awakening to its reality, it is dead.

Beauty is not sight or sound. It is a feeling. It is a spirit. It permeates through you. It urges you out in a gesture of aban-

donment or surrender. Yet it leaves you impotent. There is no end for beauty. The fixed gasps of a million poets fall dead at the heel. It is a melting.

Beauty is holy. Beauty is earthly. It is God. It is sex. It is the momentary harmonious union of God with nature. (NS 170-71)

Smart's definition of beauty, here, is closely related to her concept of an intuited truth, and both are important to an understanding not only of what she writes, but also the style and form in which she expresses her ideas.

A related characteristic of the journal is its credibility. In a work of literature the writer creates psychological realism by constructing credible characters and circumstances, whereas in the journal the characters and events are credible because they represent real people and events.¹¹ The credibility of *By Grand Central Station* stems largely from the fact that Smart is writing about her own experiences rather than imaginatively constructing a fictional world. Consider, for example, her moving description in part two of the narrator's confusion and misery when she envisions her lover's spouse:

Is there no other channel of my deliverance except by her martyrdom? At first my eyes reported what they saw but gave no meaning to the sight. I had no communication with misery. By severing all the wires of understanding I functioned like a normal being, and went about among devastation without seeing that it was there. (BGCS 33)

And again, in part eight, Smart describes her narrator's despair as a state of confusion in which, "I review all I know, but can synthesize no meaning" (BGCS 91). Smart takes us into the narrator's experience moving from the heights of ecstasy and hope to the depths of despair and suffering and out again. A reader may rightly argue that the sustained intensity of her descriptions lacks psychological realism because no one continuously lives life that intensely. Nevertheless, these are credible, and often painfully honest, descriptions of significant moments in the narrator's emotional states.

"One of the first things that strikes the reader of Elizabeth Smart's 'novel,'" Lobdell observes, "is its apparent formlessness." He rightly argues that there is a form in this apparent formless-

ness. Lobdell sees the work as a series of "set pieces" which, in turn, consists of other "set pieces". These scenes are linked by "a string of soliloquies, dreams, visions, declamations, invocations, and allusions (...), all of which serve to remind the reader that the action of this highly charged drama is unfolding simultaneously in the natural world and in the narrator's imagination" (66-67). Lobdell comments on the chronological nature of time in Smart's work:

The events of the story are told in much the same order in which they might have occurred in life—though the abrupt shifts in setting frequently leave us with the disquieting impression that it is more the chronology of dream than of reality.(68)¹²

Nevertheless, Lobdell's description of the sudden shifts in setting as indicative of the chronology of dream is valid and is another characteristic which this work shares with the journal.

A journal can have a dream-like quality, especially in meditative, reflective writing wherein the writer attempts to write with a minimal amount of conscious control in an endeavour to follow the non-linear, associative processes and thoughts of the mind. The writer of literature may write with conscious control even when trying to simulate the associative processes of the mind because the writer is often adhering to a preconceived goal and design of the literary form. But the journal writer does not have to consider a reader other than him/herself, whereas the author of a work of literature does.¹³

Compression is another characteristic of the journal. The illusion of privacy and the variety of the journal, with its open form insofar as the journal writer determines and can change the form of the journal at will, allow the writer to abbreviate thoughts and to sketch impressions. In a work of literature, on the other hand, the writer must elaborate on the ideas and develop the impressions.¹⁴ The author must find some universal aspects within his or her personal experience so that a wide variety of readers from diverse backgrounds can comprehend it.

Like a journal, *By Grand Central Station* is compressed. In this work, Smart uses juxtaposition, alliteration, allusion, repetition, rhythm, and cadence to approximate more closely through poetry the intensity of the narrator's feelings. The opening pas-

sage of the novel is a good example of her compressed style. Instead of spending several pages, or even chapters, describing the narrator's fear, Smart puts the reader *in medias res* and concisely contrasts the ordinary outer experience of waiting for a bus with the inner turmoil of conflicting feelings of terror and desire. Further, she personifies will and terror, thereby making these the dominant images:

I am standing on a corner in Monterey, waiting for the bus to come in, and all the muscles of my will are holding my terror to face the moment I most desire. Apprehension and the summer afternoon keep drying my lips, prepared at ten-minute intervals all through the five-hour wait. (BGCS 17)

Later, Smart contrasts the narrator's love for the man to her perception of his wife, whom she betrays:

On her mangledness I am spreading my amorous sheets, but who will have any pride in the wedding red, seeping up between the thighs of love which rise like a colossus, but whose issue is only the cold semen of grief. (BGCS 34)

Another distinctive characteristic of the journal is the intimacy and, at times, confessional quality, which arises from the use of the first person singular. The journal writer, unlike the writer of a work of literature, has the freedom to shift voice and point of view at will, whereas in a work of literature the writer needs to be consistent in order to enable readers to follow the flow of the narrative. If the writer shifts the point of view or voice, then he or she must contrive this shift in a way that readers can follow.¹⁵

By retaining the first person singular of her journal draft in *By Grand Central Station*, Smart invites readers to share, and respond to, her private feelings and experiences. At times, however, she shifts the point of view to contrast the narrator's inner feelings and vision of love to the unfeeling, alienating world, which perceives love as an offense. Smart, for example, does this in part four when the police interrogate the narrator. Here, Smart parodies the morals of society by paradoxically contrasting the harsh words of law and order to the narrator's liturgical and rhapsodic recitation of parts of the *Song of Solomon*. The inter-

rogator later becomes the interrogated when the narrator demands:

Do you not believe in love?
 He leered. Love? Eh, I've been around, you don't need to
 tell me.
 (...) But you care about justice, inspector, or you wouldn't
 be where you are?
 I don't make the laws, he said, it isn't up to me, I have no
 authority. (BGCS 54-55)

By this ironic strategy Smart makes readers, like the inspector, re-examine values and consider the abdication of responsibility for one's actions.¹⁶ The narrator emphasizes the point by asking frankly, "But what is important in life, what is it for?" (BGCS 55). Later, in part six, after describing her parents' insensitivity toward and dismissal of the narrator, Smart dramatically shifts to the narrator's direct appeal to her lover.

In comparing the seven corresponding sections between her journal drafts in *Necessary Secrets* to the published text of *By Grand Central Station*, it is clear that her revisions (excluding part five of the published text in which she makes more changes) are minimal. She tightens the text by making minor changes and she preserves more or less the same order.¹⁷ By examining four aspects of revisions: omissions, additions, changes, and emendations, it is possible to see that Smart makes few revisions in her journal drafts and the minor alterations and omissions she does make are for the purpose of clarifying and unifying her ideas.

The content of the journal draft and the published text changes very little. In the text, Smart reduces the amount of bitterness and cynicism that exists in the journal draft. The content is more focused in the text. In particular, she clarifies the text and no longer makes as many assumptions now that she has to consider readers other than herself. In the journal draft, for instance, Smart writes, "Is there no other channel of deliverance?" (NS 248), whereas in the text she writes, "Is there no other channel of my deliverance except by her martyrdom?" (BGCS 33). By inserting these pronouns, she sharpens the contrast between characters and heightens the tension. While Smart often alters her work to clarify

her meaning, there are places where she changes it in order to intensify the language and make it more emotive.

This suggests that Smart undergoes a different process than the writer who becomes further removed from the subject and from the emotional intensity of the present moment of experience with the passage of time. In other words, for many writers the longer the interval between the actual experience and the written record of it, the more the writer is apt to delete or modify (lessen, not heighten) the intense emotions experienced at the time. Here Smart introduces, for example, the idea of martyrdom or sacrificial suffering. The style of the writing is much the same in both the journal draft and the text; it is elegiac, lyrical, and dramatic. In the text, however, Smart makes the writing more dramatic by giving a better sense of the narrator and speakers. While the journal draft is still quite similar to the text, she inserts pronouns and expands her ideas further to contrast, for example, the narrator and the woman. In the journal draft Smart writes, "Threateners of life are horrible enough and she my penalty lies gasping on the land," while in the text she expands her ideas further and writes, "Threateners of life are horrible enough, and she whom I have injured, and whose agony it is my penalty to watch, lies gasping, but still living, on the land" (NS 249, BGCS 36). By making these additions, Smart clarifies for readers the compressed idea in the journal draft. Further, she tightens the diction in the text, although she still uses the same metaphoric, hyperbolic style evident in the journal draft.

The content and style are largely the same in both the journal draft and the text. The only major differences are that the text is more focused and Smart's ideas are more developed. In addition, here, as above, she introduces much more explicitly and expansively the idea of suffering and of the eros-thanatos syndrome. In these examples, the text is lengthened, not shortened, and the suffering and the guilt rendered far more explicit.

Smart omits unnecessary and often unclear imagery and similes as well as redundant words. For example, in the journal draft, she writes, "It was angular with the tears that should have blurred with liquid her unendurable torture," while in the text she changes this to "It was angular with the tears that should have blurred her prolonged torture" (NS 248, BGCS 33). At times, Smart omits sentences in the journal draft which do not con-

tribute directly to the narrative. For example, she omits the following description from the text, "Cut, the rocks breathe their accumulated gases and the greedy castor tree casts them up and down the canyon that is so in love with tragedy" (NS 249).

Smart makes additions to the text in order to clarify the speaker, imagery, and idea as well as to make the dramatic presentation clearer. She also expands and defines her ideas further. In the journal draft, for instance, she writes, "By severing all the wires I functioned severally" (NS 248). Although this is concisely phrased it is not as clear as the version in the text which reads, "By severing all the wires of understanding I functioned like a normal being, and went about among devastation without seeing that it was there" (BGCS 33). Smart also makes additions to the text to make transitions to, and introduce, the following paragraph. In this way, she makes the narrative more unified and consistent. In the text, for example, she writes, "And then I force my vanity to stand on the cliff and let self contemplate self which only suicide can join" (BGCS 35-36). This sentence is not in the journal draft. There are several examples of sentences that are not in the journal draft which Smart adds to the text in order to expand the idea.

She also makes minor changes in the text. For instance, she changes the tense in order to make her meaning more precise. In the journal draft, she writes, "I am blind but blood not love has blinded my eye," while in the text she changes this to "I am blind, but blood, not love, blinded my eye" (NS 248, BGCS 34). By changing from the present perfect tense, which implies that the blood is still blinding her, to the simple past tense Smart stresses the past and creates a sense of finality. She also changes tense in places to shift the emphasis and alter the meaning. The best example of this is when she writes, "The trap is springing and I am in the trap," but changes this to "The trap is sprung, and I am in the trap" (NS 248, BGCS 34). The first sentence implies a continuous process, whereas the second one, by shifting from the present perfect continuous tense to the present perfect tense, creates more finality and intensifies the sense of entrapment. These kinds of changes in tense, undoubtedly, also reflect the differences in time in the processes of composition. Smart writes the journal draft as she experiences these events and feelings. Hence, the continuous form is appropriate. The corresponding sections

in the text, then, are a re-consideration of already expressed thoughts; thus, Smart gains more perspective on her work insofar as these sections of the text are later journal drafts.

She also changes the diction in order either to clarify and focus words or to alter the meaning. An example of the latter occurs in the journal draft when Smart states, "When we meet and I clasp the deceiver in my arms our liquidation will poison the sea" (NS 249). She alters this in the text so that the sentence reads, "When we meet, and I clasp that deceiver in my arms, our amalgamation will poison the sea," thereby changing from the idea of dissolution to one of unification (BGCS 36). Smart's emendations involve changes in syntax and diction, again to clarify the meaning and to define the focus further. In addition, she omits extraneous images, adds qualifiers and modifiers, and clarifies referents. Compare, for example, the following paragraph in the journal draft and the text:

But it is not easing or escape I crave when I pray god to understand my corrupt language and step down for a moment to sit on my broken bench. Will there be a birth from all this blood or is death only pouring out his fatal prime? Is an infant struggling in the triangular womb? I am blind but blood not love has blinded my eye. Love lifted the weapon and guided my crime, locked my limbs when the anguish rose out of the sea to cry Help and now over that piercing mask superimposes the cloudy mouth of desire. (NS 248)

But it is not to be eased from my pain which I crave when I pray God to understand my corrupt language and step down for a moment to sit on my broken bench. Will there be a birth from all this blood, or is death only exacting his greedy price? Is an infant struggling in the triangular womb?

I am blind, but blood, not love, blinded my eye. Love lifted the weapon and guided my crime, locked my limbs when, like a drowning man with the last lifeboat in sight, her anguish rose out of the sea to cry Help, and now over that piercing face superimposes the cloudy mask of desire. (BGCS 34-35)

Out of the seven corresponding sections between the journal drafts and the text, only one contains a significant revision of the material (NS 251 ff., BGCS 63 ff.).

In this section, Smart rewrites the material. The subject matter, the Prodigal theme, is the same, but the text is clearer. She inserts the "I" of the narrator to sharpen the contrast between the narrator and her parents, thereby heightening the dramatic effect. Smart also alters the order of the text. Further, when she recollects her native land and her fellow Canadians at the end of the textual version, the tone is more positive. The journal draft, on the other hand, is more distant. Here, Smart only describes her view of her parents. Her journal reads more like an essay on Canada and the United States as she moves beyond specific personal remarks about her family to a general commentary. Her journal also has a more bitter tone and there is a deeper sense of Smart's personal loss and her confinement by her family, societal conventions, and regulations.

The above comparative reading of the journal draft and the published texts shows that Smart's journal not only affects our critical reading of the published text, but also provides insight into the writer and her writing process. Overall, Smart's revisions are minimal and her process of revision illustrates her attempt to define her experiences and refine her writing further. Her writing process is unusual because while she uses her journal to draft parts of her text, she does not make the decision to use this material as a draft until after she has written it.

Throughout *By Grand Central Station*, Smart preserves the openness of the journal form by having the narrator vacillate between catharsis, meditation, rhapsody, and dialogue.¹⁸ Truthfulness, credibility, compression, and intimacy are some of the strengths of her form. She undergoes a radically different creative process from the one in which the events described in the work are largely a product of the writer's invention. By using her journal as much of her writing Smart is less self-conscious and less consciously reliant on artifice; she sets out to write, and comes closer to achieving, the aesthetic ideal, or "truth," which she has intuited and lived. She not only uses journal extracts in many parts of *By Grand Central Station*, but also characteristics of the journal form to try to capture "the essence" of her experiences and also her personal "truth." By composing her works in this way, Smart creates an experimental novel—a novel-journal—which bears some resemblances to established forms as the lyric,

elegy, confession, autobiography, as well as metaphysical and surrealist poetry, but is a powerful and unique artistic vision.

NOTES

¹ Hereafter, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* will be abbreviated to *By Grand Central Station*.

² Lorraine McMullen places Smart's work in the context of a feminist adultery novel. Jean Mallinson sees the work as a novel of poetic prose, "a romance in the lyric mode which, according to Frye's definition of poetic prose, employs many of the rhetorical resources traditionally associated with poetry" (109). In *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, Rosemary Sullivan describes it as "a love story written in the form of a rhapsodic prose-poem" (762). Alice Van Wart places the emphasis the other way around, describing Smart's work as a "poem-novel" in which Smart "integrates narrative intentions and poetic conventions" (38).

³ Smart was an avid journal writer from her childhood up until her death. She wrote thirty-four notebooks of different sizes, many of which overlap in their dating.

⁴ Elizabeth Smart, *Journals* (Black, [1936-1938, 1938], ms., Elizabeth Smart Papers in the Literary Manuscript Collection, National Library of Canada, Ottawa, Box 3, f. 1, 3. Henceforth, *Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother* will be abbreviated as *Dig a Grave*.

⁵ Parts of this journal have been published in Elizabeth Smart, *Autobiographies*, ed. Christina Burridge (Vancouver: Tanks, 1987).

⁶ The reader should bear in mind that Smart did not suddenly create a new form; *My Lover John* and *Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother* are precursors to *By Grand Central Station*.

⁷ It is important to acknowledge that Smart did not always lead her life this way, but that she did so when involved in romantic relationships. For example, she bases the following works on people with whom she has romantic attachments: *My Lover John* on John Pentland, *Dig A Grave* on Alice Paalen and *By Grand Central Station* and parts of *The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals* on George Barker. Smart's writing during her silent years (of her own creative writing) and much of her early journal writing is different.

⁸ Some see the journal as a distinct genre, others see it as a form of autobiography and still others see it as so diverse as to constitute no genre at all. Whether or not the journal is a genre, a part of an autobiographical genre, or whether

autobiography itself is a genre, the journal as a form of discourse has several distinguishing characteristics which can be examined.

⁹ Lorna Knight, a librarian at the National Library of Canada, commented that Smart was a "one book author" and there is a certain degree of truth to this observation. Nevertheless Smart's difficulties finding a publisher and her financial and familial restraints made it difficult for her to pursue her own writing. Without these problems, Smart might well have written numerous other works. That she wrote as much as she did is remarkable given these constraints.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Smart, letter to Jay Landesman, February 1977.

¹¹ By using the terms "work of literature" and "journal" here and elsewhere in this paper, I do not wish to suggest that a journal is not a work of literature, but am only trying to differentiate between the journal which has the illusion of privacy and other forms of writing which do not.

¹² It is important to remember that many of these events did occur in Smart's life and that, as Oliver points out, "she wrote the first part of the book last (in British Columbia) and the rest of it piece by piece as it happened" (109).

¹³ Smart was friends with Wolfgang and Alice Paalen, Jean Varda and other surrealist painters and was well acquainted with the tenets of surrealist painters and writers. Like the surrealists, Smart struggles to express her deepest emotions and feelings with as little mediation or alteration as possible, which is not to say that she writes effortlessly. In her journal for 1976, Smart describes how she wrote this work in sections, each of which was strenuous and often painfully difficult to write. Smart, however, does not veil her feelings and experiences behind fictional masks or contrived devices, but describes them with subjective honesty.

¹⁴ The difference between Smart's journal and her prose works is that she does not sustain this style of compressed writing throughout her journal, although she often does for many entries.

¹⁵ In some modernist and post-modernist works, however, the writer can shift the point of view without apparent consideration for the reader, but the writer does this deliberately either to achieve a particular effect or, as in the case of metafiction, to draw attention to the method of narration itself.

¹⁶ In *Feminist Alternatives*, Nancy Walker discusses irony as strategy.

¹⁷ In my investigation of Smart's unpublished journals, I found that Van Wart did not tamper with Smart's journals in any way which would alter the information in the following discussion. I did not investigate the input of the editor of *By Grand Central Station*.

¹⁸ In *By Heart*, Rosemary Sullivan writes, "Elizabeth had begun *By Grand Central Station* before she met Barker, but it continued under the stimulus of the encounter as a dialogue, which, from the *Song of Solomon*, has always been the exquisite form of the love poem" (175).

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