CHAPTER - IV

MARGARET HOLLINGSWORTH: WOMEN IN SOCIETY
AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

I object to being called a feminist writer as much as I object to being dubbed a woman playwright. My beliefs and attitudes will naturally inform what I write; that should be enough.

Margaret Hollingsworth

In Canada the pursuit of a female vision is unique, for it examines the notion of gender and female identity through the lens of cultural mythology. Canadian women playwrights attempted to write about “myths and legends of landscape”. (Howells 30) which symbolized self-discovery and the quest for an aesthetic as well as socio-political feminized space. When women playwrights emerged on the Canadian dramatic scene in 1960’s, the Feminist Movement was a potent influence on the awareness of women writers. The women playwrights examined the dichotomy between woman’s private sphere as homemaker and the masculine control in the public sphere. Robert Wallace, describes the Canadian women dramatists, who are in the process of writing as “writing themselves into existence”. (80). Thus women began to dramatize their personal visions in theatre. By writing
about themselves, they entered a new territory in the realm of drama and feminist thought. The Canadian women dramatists, especially in the twentieth century began to recognise women’s place in Canadian society. Books on women gave momentum to the latent women’s movement throughout the world and galvanized women to question the society that made them politically and socially powerless. Women playwrights began to transfer notions of gender into the realms of aesthetics. Gerda Lerner observes that women must move out “of a world in which one is born to marginality, to a past without meaning, and a future determined by others, into a world in which one acts and chooses, aware of a meaningful past and free to shape one’s future”. (34).

Many playwrights explore the alienation and exclusion of women trapped in the male dominated society. In the playwright’s vision, alienation, poverty, fear, old age and stereotyped sex roles represent, the many faces of oppression and stops women from becoming active participants in society. In Canadian fiction, writers like Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Margaret Lawrence probe the relationship between female and national identity. Canadian women playwrights like Margaret Hollingsworth, Aviva Ravel, Antonine Maillet, Belty Jane Wylie and Cindy Cowan tried to dramatize Canadian cultural mythology from the standpoint of the female
imagination. Kate Lushington expresses that the new venture of the women playwrights develop the "tools of analysis" (80) to enable women to recognize a female consciousness from within a female aesthetic and national framework. This chapter attempts to study two plays of Margaret Hollingsworth Islands and Ever Loving in the light of the treatment of women's issues.

Margaret Hollingsworth was born in Sheffield, England. She grew up in London and was trained as a Librarian. She immigrated to Canada in 1968 and settled first in Montreal. She travelled extensively before she came to Canada. She worked as a chief librarian of the public library in Thunder Bay and got her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. She took a Master's Degree in Theatre and Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. She worked as an editor and free lance journalist on Galiano Island for five years. She moved to Nelson, British Columbia, to teach creative writing at the David Thomson University centre In 1983, she came to live in Toronto and in 1992, she began teaching in the Creative Writing department of the University of Victoria.

Margaret Hollingsworth's first Play Bushed (March 1973) and Operators (April 1974) were both one act plays. Both plays were set in a small northern town surrounded by a vast expanse of forest.
Margaret Hollingsworth’s experiences of life in Northern Ontario are reflected in these plays. Alli Alli Oh (March 1977) focused on the domestic oppression that led to a female’s (Allis’s) fragmented state of consciousness. Islands (January 1986) explored the female innerness in connection with patriarchal tradition. The play Mother country (February 1980) is about Canadian culture. Ever Loving (November 1980) deals with the problems encountered by three immigrant women who had come to Canada as war brides and how they try to express their female identity by asserting their rights to lead a life of independence. The Plays, Diving (March 1987), The Apple In The Eye (January 1983) deals with the psychic states of women day dreamers. War Babies (January 1984) deals with a world in a state of war from which the female protagonist feels alienated.

Margaret Hollingsworth’s plays create a synthesized vision, which portrays both a feminist aesthetic and a national consciousness. The playwright has transformed the ‘Literary Myth’ of wilderness, the struggle for survival as immigrant and the dominance of colonialism into a dramatic female mythology. She identifies the ‘wilderness’ of the outside world as the metaphorical female psyche, the ‘immigrant’ as a symbol of women’s sense of marginality and the ‘colonial’, ‘imperial’ mentality as suppression through patriarchal
tradition and thereby adds a new dimension to modern Canadian drama in the search for national and female identity. The landscape symbolizes woman's individual incertitude, her isolation as an immigrant in a foreign setting and her low status in a male-dominated society. The heuristic effect of her perception of female isolation, displacement and the search for individual locality is enhanced by Hollingsworth's own position as a playwright, a British immigrant and a woman.

Margaret Hollingsworth uses regionalism to represent a female consciousness. Regionalism is related to female identity and the exploration of regional characteristics has become symbolic representations of cultural myths. Anton Wagner expresses this as the "uncharted iconography of the imagination". (16). Hollingsworth focuses her attention on the discovery of inner psyche of her women protagonists. She uses the external setting as a backdrop for the internal landscape and the realization of a female sense of place. The sense of place is powerfully felt in her plays. Hollingsworth explores the search for a home in her plays.

_Here comes in again and again in my work. It's about relating to the place that you're in and finding a place for yourself in a foreign environment which is what I'm doing. Feeling out of context, out of_
Place, motivates me and informs my work. Without it, I wouldn’t be writing anywhere. (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 90).

In her early plays one can feel the yearning for a place of one’s own. She has portrayed the restlessness or the remoteness experienced by the foreigner in her plays. In her short story Widecombe Fair she expresses her feelings about home, “Home meant limits, security, love, a barrier against the outside. Home meant familiarity”. (109).

Hollingsworth’s plays express the psychological and emotional struggle of her women characters for the search of self-identity. Hollingsworth has depicted women’s separation from mainstream society and their misery in a domestic home. Her plays articulate the estrangement and disorientation experienced by women in the society. The reality of Hollingsworth’s immigrant status shapes her perspectives about society. The central characters in her plays appear as foreigners, outsiders and intruders. Hollingsworth has portrayed the socio political structures of patriarchy in her plays, following the essence of the 1970’s feminist movement. She has also attempted to write about isolation, loneliness, boredom and frustration, which affected women. She is interested in depicting the ‘female’ approach to problems, which takes the form of exploration rather than answers or solution. She presents in her plays the psychological
orientation of women and gender distinction in the society. Hollingsworth talks about the dramatic changes in the roles and experiences of women in family and society. Her plays argue that the trauma of being a woman is directly caused by the unbalanced social structure prevailing in the society.

Hollingsworth, in her writings, explore the circumstances that made patriarchy a dominant and oppressive social practice. Hollingsworth focuses her attention on women’s issues and her sympathy is obviously with the women, who later emerge as braver, stronger and more admirable than their partners. She describes male drama as “linear with conflict”. A Female drama, with the characteristics she values, has a new way of looking at material.

*It’s unlinear, concerned with getting inside people’s heads, into the thought process. There’s an earthy rhythmic sense to a lot of final writing, an effort to be more universal, to find a wholeness, a diffusing quality. (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 25).*

Earlier women in Canadian society internalised the values and requirements of the dominant culture. These women followed the stereotypical notions of womanhood that existed in the Provincial Canadian Society. Hollingsworth’s women are torn between male society’s views about female behaviour and their loss of authentic self.
This social repression causes psychic malady in them. The women who remained silent and submissive without even demanding to have an equal status with men, rebelled against the patriarchal society in her plays. In the changing social scenario she projected how man-woman and woman-woman relationship affected women in society. Her protagonists are presented as strong, practical and pragmatic individuals who struggle in their relationship with men and women in the society to achieve a state of freedom and independence.

The women protagonists in her plays search for their roots and their rights in the society. Their search for liberation from patriarchal mould viz, to compete men in the realm of society is a challenge to them. She portrays how women break free of the constraints imposed upon them. Their journey towards wholeness and self-fulfilment help them to achieve a true sense of womanhood. The women protagonists face many difficulties in the course of their struggle against the patriarchal social structure and finally they succeed in acquiring female empowerment in the society by operating at the individual and psychological spheres.

The play Islands was first produced by the New Play Centre, Vancouver, at the Waterfront Theatre in February, 1983. In Islands, Hollingsworth traces the protagonist Muriel’s retreat from
civilization to a secluded island in British Columbia. The play portrays how Muriel flees from the corruption of civilization and the demands of patriarchal society to define herself in a situation outside social roles and expectations.

The opening scene of the play shows Muriel working on a partially constructed desk. She designs experimental techniques for her farm to succeed in her independent work in the island. Muriel constructs her own farm in the island to acquire the recognition of her own powers. In Islands as in Ever Loving the quest for female consciousness finds its expression in the imagery of wilderness. The protagonist’s anxiety and her fear, force her to confront and overcome the dangers inherent in the physical environment. In Islands the wilderness offers the opportunity for female self-actualization, which is unhampered by the constraints imposed by patriarchal urban society. Through the wilderness, Muriel projects her inner world. The play traces Muriel’s flight northward to a secluded island in British Columbia to abandon the stifling values of her mother’s conventional world. Allison Mithcham observes “the northern wilderness is a place where men and women in flight from what they feel are the decadent and sterile values of the ‘South’ may seek a heightened self-awareness perhaps even perceptions so transcendental as to be termed ‘Salvation’”. (17).
The protagonist Muriel tries to map out the female interior space in the wilderness. She is uncertain about her identity within the society and her family and finds the untamed island a stimulating setting in which she can project her inner self. Muriel’s mother Rose is the representative of sex role stereotypes within conventional society. Rose comes to the Island for a visit for the first time in five years. Rose is the reminder of conformity from which Muriel has tried to escape.

Rose : you can’t build a house (Muriel continues to work) not on your own.

Muriel : I’ll get help if I need it

Rose : Your grandfather built our house. It nearly killed him. Look at your hands. (pause) I’m not against hard work. I’ve worked hard all my life (points at the blueprint). That’s man’s work.

(120).

In her social realm on the mainland of British Columbia, Muriel had no clear definition of self. Muriel is able to explore and penetrate her inner psyche without intrusion in the solitude of the island. In the setting of the Island, outside the boundaries of society, Muriel attempts to rid herself of the limited role of women. When the duties of men and women are determined by the ideology of gender,
Muriel rejects this gender-divided society. Michael Barret sees this gender divided society as "sexual division of labour" (74). Muriel's mother Rose who is working within the domestic realm of the traditional female role, interprets her daughter's desire to live alone and work on the land as a deviation from that role.

Muriel's new understanding of self helps her to shape the external reality and to define her female sense of place. Muriel later learns that her mother has come to the island, to make her fiancé to buy property on the island. Muriel feels that Chuck as a banker exploited the farmers and destroyed their connection with the land. She finds her mother's relationship with Chuck as part of the corruption of society. This play can be compared to *The Tomorrow Box* by Anne Chislett, where the protagonist rejects human relationship in an attempt to define her own selfhood, in the construction of the farm. In *Islands* Muriel's farm gives her confidence to reject the human relationship. Rose describes her life with Chuck and their visit with his 'married daughter' and tries to revivify Muriel's acceptance of the traditional place of women in society. Muriel forces her mother to question her own stereotypical notions of female behaviour.

* Muriel: Did you know about the cockfights?
* Rose: He was a fine man
Muriel: On Wednesday nights when you were at the
ladies Auxiliary

Rose: On Wednesdays ............ I ........ (124).

Both Muriel and Rose attain a new level of intimacy, by expressing feelings they previously concealed. Muriel feels protective of her mother’s helplessness, but at the same time blames her mother for being weak and complacent. Muriel realizes that her parents do not offer guidance outside gender uniformity. She finds that she cannot identify with her mother in her search for individuality. Muriel feels angry for not being taken seriously as a woman.

Muriel: I told you I’d make it alone, well I have, haven’t I? I ran a business – I got this place together and now I’m going to build the best gaddamn house on the Island. On my own. To my own design (126).

Muriel’s insistence on managing the farm alone is a clear rejection of the values of her parents. Muriel’s father plans to leave the farm to her brother Ronnie, even though he is incompetent as a farmer. Though Muriel showed her interest and talent in farming, she was denied inheritance because she was a woman. Rose reaffirms her late husband’s idea of farming as an ‘unproper’ vocation for women. She
reminds Muriel of the importance of social interaction. Muriel tries to explain to her mother her decision to create a business on her own, without interference from outside.

A few months ago something happened here.

It .......... kind of threw me for a while.

Made me sit down and reconsider you know - take a look at what I really wanted out of life. (126).

Hollingsworth expands her dramatic vision of the wilderness myth by associating the idea of female escape from patriarchal tradition with the potential for new definitions offered in a natural setting. The play traces the feminist quest for alternatives to women's traditional position in the Canadian society. Kate Millet comments about the stereotypical role of women that "assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male". (26). She confronts the uncertainty of coping alone in a secluded island in British Columbia and rejects the trappings of social conventions. By escaping from established structures, she is trying to attain self-discovery in the island. Her life in the Islands emblemizes Muriel's attainment of a separate identity and her disconnection from the demands of others. Margaret Atwood observes, "Island - as - body, self-contained a Body
politic, evolving organically, with a hierarchical structure”. (32).

Hollingsworth exposes Margaret Atwood’s concept of the islands, by metaphorically representing the island as a sanctuary. Hollingsworth traces the notions of escape and survival in the Canadian society. Muriel’s life on the island symbolizes both the Canadian “Spiritual Survival” (33) a metaphor quoted by Atwood and the British metaphor of island as haven and stronghold. Muriel takes on the responsibility of her own process of development and salvation by struggling against the external elements of the wilderness.

The play Islands is a continuation of the play Alli Alli Oh and Hollingsworth explores the relationship between Muriel and Alli in the play. The play Alli Alli Oh focuses on the domestic oppression which leads to Alli’s fragmented state of consciousness. Islands deals with Muriel’s attempt to rid herself of social obligations, which includes the demands of Alli. In Alli Alli Oh, Alli helps for Muriel’s search for identity and in Islands Muriel begins to reject Alli, to achieve her own autonomy.

In Islands, Alli arrives at the island without warning, to meet Muriel and she is the antithesis of the conforming woman. Alli who is mentally ill and bisexual, lives on the periphery of conventional society. Through her quest for identity, Muriel finds that she can be
stifled by the intrusion of others. In Alli Alli oh Muriel has been living with Alli in a lesbian relationship and she perceived lesbianism as an escape from patriarchal domination. Miller points out, “lesbian women by their very existence challenge the fundamental structure of women’s dependence on men” (138).

In her quest for an alternative position to women’s traditional position, Muriel discovers that her lesbian relationship with Alli, is not a solution to the traditional female role. Muriel is still controlled by the values and expectations of her mother’s world, because she could not disclose her lesbian relationship to her mother. Muriel’s involvement with Alli represents their love relationship outside the conventional realm defined by her mother. Radicalesbian claims, “The lesbian is the woman who often beginning, at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society cares to allow her”. (240)

Muriel’s daring venture includes, her exploration of new, revolutionary farming methods called hydroponics by which the plants are grown without soil, leading to her search for self-sufficiency. Muriel’s experiments with science and technology to make the plants grow are a deliberate manipulation of the natural world. She finds satisfaction in her self-chosen project and turns her energy towards
creativity in order to achieve fulfilment. Muriel attempts to gain control over her environment and shapes it to her own design. Muriel finds this as the creative ordering of her physical environment. Miller points out the personal change in the lives of women as,

> For women to act and react out of their own beings is to fly in the face of their appointed definition and their prescribed way of living. To move toward authenticity, then also involves creation, in an immediate and pressing personal way. The whole fabric of one's life begins to change and one sees it in a new light. (113-114).

Muriel's desire for self-empowerment includes the reassessing of social values and political systems. Her dissatisfaction with her family and the stereotyped position of women in society leads Muriel to question the breakdown of all social institutions.

> Muriel: You can't have a political system that's built up on single isolated entities. Politicians depend on mass sentiment. You know if they were really interested in our well-being they'd be educating us to live alone. But they daren't. (128).

Muriel rejects the habitual female behaviour by abandoning all social ideologies that limits individual potential. She believes that the struggle for selfhood in mainstream society is stunted by social indoctrination. Millet observes, that "Patriarchy is a socio-
political institution controlling all aspects of life and every avenue of power within the society” (25). Rose’s intrusion in Muriel’s life signifies the difficulty Muriel has in shaking the restrictions of her social realm. Muriel thinks that her life with Chuck and Rose would be a real threat to her private world and so she tries to discourage her mother from coming to the islands. Muriel’s inner world – her psyche, and her external world – the island are threatened by the invasion of society and its expectations from which she has tried to escape. Muriel has a fear that she would be drawn into her mother’s stifling world. By reminding Muriel to confirm to that traditional female role that women should occupy within the confines of the patriarchal mould, she wants to perpetuate gender inequality. Rose reminds her of her deviation from her expected traditional role assigned in the society, “Your father always used to say that the blood got mixed up. You were the oldest and you should have been the boy, then it would all have worked out”. (130). Muriel is angry with her mother, who upheld gender roles and acquiesced to her husband’s decision to force Ronnie her brother into farming and Muriel into studying for an arts degree. Rose encourages the perception of a woman’s place inside the patriarchal model and wants Muriel to accept traditional roles assigned to women in the society.
Hilary Lips comments about the cultural images of female weakness and the exclusion of positive images of female strength and power.

... the accepted imagery of power and the accepted imagery of femininity in this society are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive. "Proper" feminine images are filled with powerlessness and weakness, and those feminine images which do incorporate power are portrayed as evil and frightening. (7).

Rose expects Muriel to fulfill the traditional female role and Rose is shown to be instrumental in perpetuating the dichotomy of gender identity. Stacey and Price believe that women are "architects of the reproduction of their oppression". (10) Rose’s lack of opportunity and unfulfilment under patriarchy results in her limited perception of her daughter’s potential in her career. Rich observes that "it is easier to hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her". (235). Alli is trying to expose Muriel’s inner feelings. She provokes both Rose and Muriel into disclosing intense emotions, using her mental instability. Muriel expresses her dislike of Alli’s insensitive probing, her disruption of social order and her destructive honesty. Muriel comments, "You haven’t changed a bit have you? You’ve a wreaker, Alli, A wreaker". (139). When Rose blames Alli for upsetting her
daughter Muriel, Alli in turn shows her own hostility towards Muriel for being unemotional and always ‘in control’. (139)

Alli: Upsetting your daughter? Your daughter’s calm.

Made of steel, your daughter.

She’s got a smile like a steel trap.

Always damn well in control.

Everything under control (139).

Rose and Muriel are drawn into Alli’s inner world, when Alli narrates her life after she left the island. Muriel expresses her shock when she hears that Alli lived on the disreputable Hastings Street and worked as a chambermaid. Alli tries to evoke feelings of guilt in Muriel by describing the humiliation and cruelty she encountered in the mental hospital. “They put a rubber gag in your mouth. Your whole body—turns into water”. (140). Muriel forgets her anger and hugs Alli. At this point, Rose is forced to acknowledge the fact of her daughter’s lesbian affair. The viol of decorum is discarded and Muriel reveals the hidden secrets in her life.

Muriel expresses her own concealed feelings of failure for not being the kind of woman her mother expected her to be. Muriel feels that she is caught between the two women and what they represent. She runs outside, unable to go to either of them. Stacey and

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Price write about the uneasiness caused by women breaking the traditional role.

*Notions of the, “proper place” and ‘proper behaviour’ are deeply ingrained and emotionally loaded, such that acute discomfort is felt when the norms are violated. For the actors concerned, the norms have come to appear as ‘natural’, as part of an externally given order without which there could only be chaos.*

As with Muriel, Alli finds the island as a place to escape the expectations of others and it offers her peace of mind. Mitcham sees this as "the unmaterialistic regenerative potential". (11) of the wilderness. Rose also wants Alli out of her daughter’s life and offers her money to go away, telling her to hide it from Muriel. When Rose and Alli leave for the mainland, it appears that Rose and Muriel have not reconciled as mother and daughter. But Muriel and Alli express their deeper care for one another.

Muriel finds herself alone again in the island. She contemplates her involvement with Alli, by placing the quilt made by Alli on the bed and sits on it. Later she diverts her attention, by returning to the desk to focus her attention on the development of her farm. She continues her search for self identity in the light of her newly defined relationship with Alli and Rose. Rose’s conventional world and
Alli's disordered world have both disrupted Muriel's search for self
definition. Muriel struggles to construct her own sense of place in the
wilderness. Muriel's relation to the farm and her work in the farm
brings her satisfaction. She is liberated and independent in the end
and succeeds in her attempt in farming in the island. The last image
focuses on Muriel alone, to reflect her autonomy and self-actualization.
Muriel's place in the wilderness is connected with her search for
individuality and the liberation from the patriarchal mould. Muriel
finds the secluded island an escape from the limitations of social
expectation. Muriel refuses marriage and motherhood out of fear of
losing autonomy. She withdraws from the urban, public world to the
seclusion of nature. Muriel by becoming a farmer separates herself
from urban mainstream society. This separation offers her power over
environment rather than isolation. She protects herself from the
demands of others and chooses the safety of solitude in the island. She
constructs a female space on her own terms by embracing farming
operations in the island leading to her empowerment in society.

Rose - Muriel's mother is portrayed as the traditional
mother who sacrifices her own individuality for the sake of the family.
Her unquestioning acceptance of her role as a traditional mother
creates an illusion of harmony. Rose begins to reflect upon her role as
a mother and wife in the island. She expresses to Muriel that she knew about the illicit activities of Muriel's father.

Rose : I used to dread Wednesdays.

Muriel : Yes. Know?

Rose : I lived with him. (124).

Rose expresses the hypocrisies of her position as the peace keeping wife and mother. Later on she admits that she knew about the cock fights and her husband's affairs. When she thinks of her relationship with Chuck, her fiancé, she quickly returns to her orthodox approach. Rose seems concerned with Chuck's expectations and clings tenaciously to the moral values Chuck represents. Rose's hypocrisy is apparent when she keeps an air of respectability by not sharing a bed with Chuck when he comes to the island, "it wouldn't be suitable". (125). Muriel's sense of betrayal indicates the ambivalent relationship between herself and her mother. She blames her mother for being weak and complacent.

Muriel : ......... You know..... You know I .... stuck around longer than I wanted to because ....... I thought he used you and you needed me as a buffer against him. And now I find out that even that was a sham - that you knew all
the time. You probably even knew about shenanigans
with Maggie Butler. (125-126).

Rose defends her position by saying, "If you marry a wild
man you take the consequences". (126). Jean Bake Miller writes about the
position of motherhood in patriarchy and its effect on mother -
daughter relationships. "Mothers have been deprived and devalued and
conscripted as agents of a system that diminished all women. Daughters have
felt the confusing repercussions of all of these forces". (139). The depiction of
motherhood and patriarchy in the play reflects that motherhood is an
extension of male control which has individual female potentialities.
Adrienne Rich observes this as "motherhood as institution". (13). Rose
explores their institution of wife and motherhood by internationalizing
the gender stereotypes. De Beauvoir calls it "bad faith". (225).

Muriel attempts to make her mother see that her father
hated women and opposes her father for fostering Rose's self-sacrificial
approach. Rose expresses that she does not have the quest for
individuality as part of female experience. Rose does not see Muriel's
activities in terms of individual growth but as unnatural. She reminds
Muriel of the traditional view of women in relation to men.

  Rose : I'll bet there's a dozen good men who'd come

       here in an hour's notice if you'd only give them
half a chance.

Muriel: It'll run itself. No need for men.

Rose: What if something happened to you? You could lie in a ditch for days. (127).

Rose considers women as helpless, and attempts to undermine Muriel's efforts to obtain control over her own life. Rose is the voice of the conventional woman who stifles the truth for the sake of appearances. She denies her individuality in order to gain social acceptance. Rose is passive, inscrutable and feels that she has failed as a mother, because of the way Muriel has turned out. Alli ridicules Rose's romantic love when Rose arranges the flowers for Chuck. "Oh, they're for the fiancé (to Rose) You know you're lucky to get a second go. At your age". (136). Rose is dependent on the economic power of men in patriarchy, especially to Chuck. When Rose learns about her daughter's lesbianism, she wants to keep all experience within the confines of respectability and evades both honesty and self-knowledge. She is not ready to accept and express unpleasant truths. Rose learns about Alli's world of psychological flux. Alli makes Rose deal with a side of female experience, she has never acknowledged before. When Alli says 'I can't help it'. (144). Rose associates lesbianism with mental
sickness and abnormality. She expresses her feeling of failure as a 'good' mother.

Rose : (Suddenly) Is Muriel sick?
Alli : Sick? You mean like me?
Rose : well - what did I do? where did I go wrong?. (144).

She experiences a sense of guilt from the heavy demand, placed upon her as a 'good' mother. She feels responsible for her daughter becoming a 'woman' - getting married and having children. Rich observes "the mother is the first to blame if theory proves unworkable in practice or if anything whatsoever goes wrong". (222). Alli criticizes Rose as a serious person. When Alli denies Rose’s social values, Rose wants to cling to those values even more. Alli confronts Rose’s idea to keep things hidden from Muriel "you are always covering up after everybody. Like a cat....". (144).

Rose considers Chuck as a symbol of sense of security within the old patriarchal tradition, where Rose's social status is clearly defined. In her respectable social framework, Rose has found a limited kind of order and integration. Rose refuses to search for individuality outside the dictates of assigned roles. Thus Rose's inner world, the exploration of her inner female consciousness is left untouched.
Muriel’s lesbian relationship with Alli shows their love relationship outside the conventional realm. Alli does not stay long in the island. She immediately finds out that things have changed. Muriel never once visited her at the asylum. Being released from the institution, Alli wants to come “home”. She has nowhere else to go and she comes to the island. Alli is psychologically affected and still in bad shape. She is abrasive, offensive and insensitive when she talks about herself and her horrendous hospital experiences. Alli eventually turns the level of reality away from trivialities towards the darker world of psychological fragmentation. By narrating her experience in “the nut house”, Alli draws the attention of Rose and Muriel. Alli’s presence is shown to confront and disrupt Rose’s established values. Alli is portrayed as mentally ill and she is separated from society’s customary perception of women. As a lesbian, Alli defies the traditional view of female sexuality which is a threat to the society. Alli’s husband considers her as an unfit mother. But Muriel does not consider her as mentally ill and calls Alli’s repetition of phrases as meditation. Alli asserts in the end that she has been ‘cured’ and adds ‘I really don’t have to talk to myself’. (134). She confesses that she was not a good mother.
The play traces Alli’s mental disintegration is in part an escape from social responsibilities. By being mentally ill, she has a socially defined role and fails in her traditional role as a wife and mother. She is aggressive when she forsakes the norms of society. Alli tries to evoke feelings of guilt in Muriel by narrating her bitter experience in the hospital and in the Hastings street, where she worked as a chambermaid. Alli reviews her psychological flux to Rose. Alli’s personal life was probed by the doctors and she had been labeled as a paranoid schizophrenic “what about your husband” cold storage. “Were you on good terms socially? Cold storage sexually? Cold storage”. (141). Alli narrates how she wandered around Hastings Street and met an alcoholic Indian woman.

Atwood talks about the Indian “as a symbol of the ultimate victim of social oppression and deprivation”. (97). Alli describes the Indian woman who is struggling against male oppressors. Alli likes the Indian woman who possesses individuality and dignity in the face of despair. But Alli realizes that the Indian woman has stolen her wallet and ring. Alli’s search for the ring suggests her loss of eternal marital happiness. She connects her quest for the ring with her individual search for integration and meaning. She is caught by the police and again taken to the hospital where they considered her insane. Before her release,
when the officials demanded her address she says, "I told them I lived on an island. On a farm on an island, with a woman". (143). In her state of instability, she considers Island as a place of refuge from society and its corruption. Alii finds the place as an escape from the expectations of others and it offers her the harmony. Muriel can hold Alli responsible for her madness which skirts the real issues: Self-protection, self-assertion and self-reliance - the traits Rose labels "selfish". Hollingsworth states, "Alli-didn't disintegrate. She chose to use madness to terminate the relationship." (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 97).

Alli represents the loss or surrender of self to the union. Her madness is the culmination of her confusion about identity and self-definition. Madness isolates her completely and the play traces the separateness of each person-about isolation and island both physical and psychic. Alli by rejecting the traditional view of female sexuality takes refuge in the island thereby asserting her identity in the island.

The play Islands traces the life of the young woman Muriel who rejects the traditional role assigned to women in Canadian society. Thus Muriel is breaking away from the corruption of civilization and the demands of patriarchal society. She struggles against the external elements of wilderness to construct a female space on her terms by raising farming operations in the secluded island. Her
quest for alternatives to women’s traditional position in the society leads her to explore new farming methods in the island leading to her autonomy and self-realization. Muriel separates herself from the urban mainstream society to acquire the recognition of her own powers. Thus Muriel’s search for self-discovery leads her to achieve empowerment in society.

**DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES**

Margaret Hollingsworth’s dexterous use of dramatic techniques makes Islands enjoyable. The spotlighting technique in the play serves various purposes. It helps to show the change of scenes which motivates the protagonist Muriel. The power-packed action of Muriel with a wide range of skills in developing new farming methods in the island helps her to lead an independent life. This one-act play shows different persons successively in the same scene during their drive to the desired destination. The intense, psychologically provocative and mysteriously alien landscape is what Hollingsworth does best. To ensure this intensity, brevity seems an important factor to Hollingsworth. By having Islands as one-act sequel to Alli Alli Oh, she has continued to explore the technical possibilities of her craft.
Hollingsworth has experimented with length, with structure and with style—a blend of realism and surrealism seeming to suit her best. This play reveals her ongoing desire to present emotional realities, the external ones and to give the audience access to the inner world of her complicated characters—Muriel and Alli. She has concentrated on new issues and newer modes of presenting them in the play. The last image focuses on Muriel alone, a common technique used in women’s plays, like Kelly Rebar’s Checkin’ Out, where the final frame of the heroine reflects her autonomy and self-actualization. The final frame of the play stresses the idea that Muriel as an independent person acquired empowerment in the social realm.

THE LANGUAGE

The language is a vital element which makes Hollingsworth’s plays distinctly feminist. The language of the woman protagonist Muriel is a pointer to the central theme of the play ‘Female Empowerment’. “A woman on her own-making it without help from the system. Do they still make jokes about spinsters back home”. (128). The title of the play Islands symbolizes female interior space which the protagonist Muriel tries to map out. Hollingsworth treats the title Islands as a metaphor to represent the island as a sanctuary. Muriel’s decision
to live in the island symbolized the British metaphor of island as haven and strong hold. Hollingsworth has used the natural environment as a symbol to describe the disruption of Muriel’s private world of solitude on the island. Muriel’s assertive speech in the play brings credit to the dramatist. In the words ‘cold storage’ describes the fragmented consciousness of Alli. Thus Hollingsworth has grasped the moods and deeds of her women characters through the use of language.

The play entitled War Brides opened on the Belfry stage and it was radically changed during intensive workshops in the spring of 1979. The workshopped material was extensively revised, and retitled as Ever Loving. The play Ever Loving was premiered at the belfry Theatre in Victoria, British Colombia, in November 1980, directed by James Roy. The play was remounted in Montreal (1981), Halifax (1982), Toronto (1983), Vancouver (1983), and on Vancouver Island (1989). Ever Loving has proved to be the most popular, best known and most produced of all her plays.

Ever Loving deals with the life of the three brides, Luce, Ruth and Diana, who arrive in Canada after World War II, to join their Canadian husbands. The husbands Chuck, Dave and Paul in the play, are shown to be the victims of the colonial mentality as native Canadians. They identify themselves with the male hierarchy because
of the superior position as men. The play traces the psychological and sociological segregation of these women in the Canadian post-war society. These female protagonists struggle for autonomy and access to the social arena leading to their empowerment.

Margaret Hollingsworth in *Ever Loving* expands the vision of imperial male domination and the multi-faceted psychological and social ramifications of female dislocation in Canada. The play deals with the stories of three European women who come to Canada as war brides. The women are of differing class and nationality. Ruth is Scottish - a fishmonger's daughter, Diana is an upper - class English woman and Luce is from an affluent milase family. The script traces their courtship with their soldier lovers, their journey to Canada to be reunited with their husbands and their lives until 1970. Hollingsworth portrays the women's excitement about emigrating and great romantic hopes for marriages with men they hardly know. By incorporating brief enactments of their particular fantasies, the play makes clear the enormous gap between what each one imagines and what she in fact experiences in the Canadian Society. Although the three immigrant women come from different places, they are excluded from the imperial power structure, because they are women.
Hollingsworth interweaves the complex issues of national identity, immigration and female alienation in the play. The playwright explores two concepts 'colonialism' and 'immigrant exile' in the play and relates them to gender issues. In the play the three men Paul, Chuck and Dave, the husbands of the three women as native Canadians experience feelings of inadequacy and dislocation due to the British control and European influence. John Moss George uses the terms 'colonial mentality'. (13) to describe the dislocating effects experienced by them. The physical displacement of 'immigrant exile' intensifies the feeling of being an outsider and results in conflicts in the society. The three women experience a sense of alienation, which stems from their situation as immigrants and their marginal position in the structure of patriarchy. The sense of being exiled from their familiar European setting is emphasized by the vastness of the landscape. The wilderness initially encroaches upon the individuality, the psychic sense of place of the three women. The women are confined by primeval nature, limited by colonial and patriarchal expectations. They learn to lead their life with profound loss of self-esteem and experience fragmented states of consciousness due to ostracism. Coral Ann Howells offers explanation about female experience in patriarchal society.
They are close parallels between the historical situation of women and of Canada as a nation, for women’s experience of the power politics of gender and their problematic relation to patriarchal traditions of authority have affinities with Canada’s attitude to the cultural imperialism of the United States as well as its ambivalence towards its European inheritance. (2).

The sense of effacement and dependency of the three women is increased by their immigrant status and by their position dictated by ‘sexual politics’. Kate Millet expresses, “status, temperament and role are all value systems with endless psychological ramifications”. (54). Within the tradition of patriarchy Dave, Paul and Chuck, the husbands in the play, identify with the male hierarchy because of their position as men. Feminist’s critics like Kate Millet, Adrienne Rich and Elizabeth Janeway claim that social conditioning offers superior status to men and inferior to women. Hollingsworth incorporates the feminist search with the Canadian literary search for identity. Atwood claims, “We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here”. (62).

Hollingsworth affiliates the displacement of the immigrants in a foreign country with the denial of female authenticity in a male-dominated environment. The play can be compared to John Murrell’s Waiting For The Parade which deals with the isolation of
women left at home. But Ever Loving deals with the complexities of trying to feel at home in an alien land and in the socio-political fabric of patriarchy.

The structure of the play develops in an unchronological fashion. The breakdown of time and space, and the shift from one woman’s experience to another, create a fragmented perception of the three women’s development in Canadian society. The play begins in 1970, with the established lives of Ruth, Diana and Luce who are gathered together in a restaurant in Niagara Falls in 1945. Through the dinner conversation of the couples, the external reality begins to fade as the memories of the past visualize into being. Through Diana’s consciousness, the play shifts back to 1945. Diana and Ruth have just arrived in Canada and they take the train to meet their husbands. The journey through the wilderness frightens them and leads them to reflect upon the future of their own lives in an unfamiliar setting.

Ruth : It feels ...... different ........ Creepy Foreign

(Pause, has no word to express her feelings) Big,

Diana : Don’t look at it

Ruth : I can’t help it

Diana : (Irritated) well don’t

Ruth : Don’t’ shout at me
The wilderness becomes the first image in Diana and Ruth’s imagination. It portrays their state of inner disarray and their feeling of uncertainty in a foreign and male-oriented country. The image of wilderness in the play takes on a double meaning: On an internal level wilderness expresses the disordered, unformed female self; on an external level, wilderness is a metaphor for the social world of male experience. Kreisel observes, the feelings of anxiety and fear as “the impact of the landscape on the mind” (257). The boundless forest appears to illuminate a dark and mysterious terrain within them.

Even though Diana had the fear and anxiety when she looked at the forest, it appeared to offer limitless possibilities. She has an ambivalent perception of herself in her new environment. For her, it is both frightening and inspiring. It is also rejuvenating after the horrors of war, ‘It is all ......... Untouched. London’s horrible now Ugly. Here everything’s so splendidly...... untouched’. (41). Like the landscape, her untapped inner resources remain untouched. Diana finds nothing that is comfortable and expresses that there is nothing to destroy in the Canadian land. The threat of the wilderness accentuates the protagonists’ feelings of vulnerability and dependency as women. The wilderness makes her feel that she does not have control over the
development of her future life. She is unable to articulate a sense of identity in a new environment.

The wilderness reflects male social environment in which she does not have a place. She is powerless within the confines of her husband's environment. Diana in order to avoid the feeling of helplessness evoked by the forest wants to cling to the security of domestic life. Diana escapes into the sanctuary of romantic love. The reliance on romantic love and the refuge of domesticity makes her exclusion from public society. Janeway points out, "women have 'broughtin' to the social mythology whereby they trade "private power in return for public submission". (56).

The home in the patriarchal tradition becomes a woman's only source of power. Diana finds home as a refuge from the outside world in which she has no place. Through her consciousness, she remembers her life before marriage. By revealing her inner world, Diana shows that her daydreams are without focus. She dreams about becoming a pilot like her brother and she then slips into dreaming about foreign men and the excitement they offer. This romantic love exemplifies the feminist notion that it can prevent women from achieving a state of autonomy. Even though she possesses the desire to develop her potential, Diana dreams about exotic men and forgets her
identity. She meets Paul in England in 1941. She personifies the excitement of the exotic and foreign men, which Diana longs for. But Paul expresses the Canadian nationalist sentiment and the rebellion against colonial domination.

Diana lacks self-awareness and has no authentic goals of her own. This leads her to live vicariously through men like Paul. She wanted to be a pilot in the WAF, so she could explore the Amazon. But her mother convinced her to join the police force as it was 'safer'. She wanted to become a foreign secretary, but the school was closed down during the war. She wanted to get away from England and find something meaningful in her life. When Paul proposes marriage to her, she realises that she must go to Canada after her marriage. She does not want to break ties with her family by eradicating her past. "I can't. You don't understand. They'd never forgive me, My parents. I could never come back here". (72). But she marries Paul thereby giving up her past identity. She sees marriage to Paul and emigration to Canada as a means of escaping the limitations of her social milieu. She wants to start a new life in Canada. But Canada with its colonial connection to Britain is equally dominated by patriarchal tradition. She had the hope that she will live happily in a land of peace and protection. She assumes her husband's identity and his social status in Canada. She
finds frustration and insecurity in her marriage. She is unable to adapt to her husband’s social setting. Paul sees Diana as the traditional farmer’s helpmate, imagining her in his grandmother’s apron baking bread. Paul believed in the patriarchal power and he takes her for granted that Diana will accept his choice as her own. He wants to conquer and mould the land. He compares the land to his wife Diana and hopes that he can also shape her identity. Atwood calls it, “Nature-as-woman”. (202).

Paul perceives the land as ‘patient lover’ waiting to be shaped by male experience. The breaking of the land is considered as a form of male dominance to assert the ego. Both nature and woman accept and reject their conqueror as ‘willing and unwilling mistress’ and Diana sees only the ‘dead grass’ (76) in the field. Paul’s desire to dominate the land and produce fertile ground is a foreign idea. She is forced to accept the reality Paul has chosen. Diana who is cut off from her past is unable to find a sense of definition in that lifestyle. When she realizes Paul’s domination and power she feels that she is helpless and entrapped by Paul. She begs, “I don’t know what I’m going to do... please ...please. I can’t go back Paul. I’d never be able to hold my head – up. (78).
Hollingsworth depicts how the patriarchal domination affects women in the Canadian society. Adrienne Rich analyses patriarchy as 'power of the fathers'. (57). Here the Canadian men determine women's fate in a socio-political, ideological and familial setting. Paul attempts to work on the land but fails in his attempt, even though he is supported by his father. But Diana without economic power hopes that she can make the farm a success. She is ready to do the manual labour on the farm, "I wanted to clean the truck tonight. I haven't had time to—we can't all sit around dreaming of the perfect farm. Somebody has to do the work". (82). Paul is not ready to do manual labour. Diana has planned for her life and strived to achieve success through farming operations.

Diana longs to have a child. She believes that motherhood will give her the definition, she lacks in life. She is relegated to a powerless position in her life. Diana's upper class background gives her the confidence to question her husband's authority. Even though she accepts her husband's power, she is very much affected by her husband's characteristic attitudes. Gender becomes her greatest barrier to integration into society. Diana views Canadians as uncultivated and devoid of values. She finds the community unsophisticated. "If only
somebody had a sense of humour. They’re not even interested in local politics, in getting anything done”. (84).

Diana is propelled by the desire to succeed in her life. She wants to do fish farming and change the economy of the region. But Paul does not want to take risk like Diana and cancels the project without consulting her. Without economic power, she could not proceed with the work. The protagonist Diana imports English flower seeds from Britain to construct her own garden. But Paul relates this to her intrusion into the male domain of his prairie farm.

Diana : My mother sent them. I was planning to make a real English garden.

Paul : You’re not supposed to import seeds, you know that? (90).

Diana attempts to reshape the prairie farm by growing an English garden. Paul opposes her idea of fish farming and English garden in his farm. Diana attempts to gain control over what she perceives as the unnurtured Canadian wilderness. She is trying to construct a female territory within her husband’s prairie setting, the realm of male activity. She wants to assert her rights to Paul by saying that the flower garden is part of her heritage. She feels that her son should have a sense of his past. Paul considers this as British
superiority and ridicules her. Paul is trying to isolate her from her past and he refuses to grant her an equal position in his social domain.

The gender power structure leads her to the helpless position. She scrutinizes her lack of power and exclusion from the society, as the manifestation of male domination of women. In the end, she asserts her identity by constructing and shaping the English garden to her own design. Paul realizes how he has deceived Diana. He acknowledges his mistake "I've led you a hell of a dance, haven't I?". (91).

Diana is finally able to articulate her sense of insignificance caused by the isolation of her prairie environment. Even though she is asked to give up her past identity, Diana is very firm in her decision to connect herself to her past. Diana by criticizing the Canadians as unsophisticated, proves herself as a upper-class woman. In the beginning she passively accepts Paul's oppression in the home and in the society. Later on she becomes brave to question him and to pave her own path in the society. Diana appears to have integrated into the prairie, social setting. She has involved herself in various committees to forge her own identity. She also realises that she has exchanged one patriarchal system for another by immigrating to Canada. Margaret Hollingsworth stretches the boundaries of the
dramatic imagination by expressing the need for an authentic female voice as part of the national literary search for identity. In her quest for self-identity, she struggles against an environment that produces disappointment to get empowerment in the Canadian society.

In the beginning of the play the protagonist Diana finds the wilderness of Canada frightening. She is totally helpless and powerless in the new environment, which is dominated by the patriarchal society. The gender becomes a great barrier for her to play an active role in the society. Her husband Paul forces her to accept his ideas and he takes all decisions without consulting her. As an immigrant and as a woman, Diana experiences isolation and marginalization in the society. She faces domestic oppression, which prevents her to achieve autonomy in the male social environment. Later the realization of female inner self gives her confidence to question her husband. Diana is trying to construct a female space within the social realm of her husband. Even though her fish-farming project is rejected by Paul, she is firm in constructing an English garden to achieve a superior status in the society. She struggles to improve the economic condition of the region. With her farming operations, she wants to gain power in the society by involving herself in various
committees. Through her struggle she gains an authentic female voice resulting in her empowerment in society.

The wilderness brings to the surface Ruth’s subconscious feelings of anxiety and fear. Ruth has come to Canada with her child Rita, with the intention of assimilating into Dave’s world. She learns that Dave is living in Canada without a job – Ruth and Dave are forced to live in Dave’s mother’s house. Since the feeling of helplessness is evoked by the forest, Ruth clings to the security of domestic life. She perceives the retreat into the domestic realm as a refuge. “Oh, it’ll be all right – as soon as I see my house. He’s going to love Rita”. (39-40). Her husband Dave feels that Ruth should take up the responsibility of bringing up the baby. Dave is uncomfortable around the new baby. When Ruth talks about her three A.M feedings, he replies, “well, just as long as you do it quietly”. (75).

The play shifts to 1938 when Ruth dreamed about her future life. She reveals her secret desires for romantic love. “When I get married, I’ ll have a bed room with three mirrors” (47). Her romantic love stops her from achieving female identity. Ruth exemplifies female identity waiting to be shaped by male experience and she associates her inner fulfillment with obtaining a husband. Ruth’s inability to construct a reality outside romance as pointed out by Shulamith
Firestone as "inauthentic" (166) female experience, distorted by patriarchal conditioning. She is fully dependent on her husband and wants to assume her husband's social status.

Ruth meets her future husband Dave in 1941. Dave provokes Ruth's interests by his description of endless summers at the cottage by a lake. Ruth starts to fantasize about Canada as the pastoral dream. She dreams that there are plenty of roses growing around their cottage door and she roasts a moose which is trapped by Dave. Her pastoral dream is connected to romantic love which prevents her to acquire self identity in the society. She envisions Dave as an adoring husband. She expects her husband to adore her as, "I can't take my hands off you. You're the best wife a man could have". (58).

Ruth wants to find identity in the security of a happy domestic life. Like Diana, she accepts her husband's social milieu. Unlike Diana, Ruth passively accepts Dave's choices as her own without confrontation. She adjusts herself to the new environment to make the best of life. But isolation and marginalization in the society make her to express her sense of exclusion and feelings of frustration. Dave refuses to take Ruth out because she is too fat. He isolates her from the public realm and keeps her confined to the domestic world. He rejects her for she does not represent his idea of feminine beauty
and separates Ruth from the external reality. Kathleen Storrie calls this as "social and psychological segregation" (4). Dave believes in the stereotyped image of women and stereotyped role assigned to women.

Thus Dave makes Ruth lead a life without freedom. Ruth does not raise any question to Dave regarding her identity. But when she is alone Ruth asserts herself and expresses her helpless position in the home. Ruth expresses her disbarment from the social realm of power to which Dave has free access. Ruth has six children and her experience of motherhood as a form of oppression expounds the feminist notion that the motherhood has undermined the possibility for female development. Adrienne Rich calls it 'Motherhood as institution'. Through the continuation of the species, Ruth is doomed to 'immanence' and subject to male volition. Ruth is from a working-class background and she is completely overwhelmed by her husband's power. As a working class woman, she could not act independently and achieve success in the outside world. Ruth's apparent disdain for Canada stems from the frustration generated by her subordinate position as a woman; Ruth finds Canadians like Dave and the community of Hamilton is without gaiety.

Ruth : Who with? I can't even have people in...

She......
Dave: ssssssh.

Ruth: Well, in Scotland you can just go and Knock on any one’s door and they go down to the pub with you. You won’t even dance now.... In Scotland they’re kicking up their heels” till they’re eighty. No one here even picks up a couple of spoons and clacks them; where are your songs? (95).

Ruth continues to live in her married life and experiences feeling of isolation and frustration. Hollingsworth shifts in and out of Ruth’s consciousness breaking the barriers of time and space. In 1957 on New Year’s Eve, she expresses her frustration and precarious identity in Canada. She writes a letter to her parents in Scotland and tries to give good impression about her husband Dave and Canadians.

She expresses in her letter that Dave likes children and people in Canada have “lots of money. Dave’s real pleased, he loves children. I’m sending a picture of us all, that’s me in the back”. (97). The end of Ruth’s letter unveils her deep-rooted loneliness and her longing to go home. She drinks alone. (Takes a drink). “Tell Agnus to hurry up and come up on the races so he can send me a ticket to come home. I miss you. no. (Drinks) Love from Ruthie”. (97). Ruth finds herself even more as a foreigner in her homeland, Ruth’s position as an exile, and her
situation as the victim in the society reflects the limitations of her social milieu caused by the patriarchal power structure. She experiences isolation and frustration due to her inexorable domestic world and the cruel indifference of her husband. Dave refuses to let her go to Scotland by stating that they don’t have money. When Ruth wins prize money in a contest, she plans to take a trip home to visit her family. Dave informs her that he has already spent the money to buy a car. He states, “This way we can have an extra half hour in bed in the morning. I won’t have to take the bus” (87). Ruth expresses her frustration that she will still have to get up as usual for the children. Ruth becomes increasingly marginalized and her status as an outcast intensifies her feeling of isolation.

The death of Ruth’s father symbolizes her broken ties with her past. Her daughter Rita represents her unacknowledged female self and the link with her motherland of Scotland. Rita has a university degree and she is equipped to determine her individuality which was denied to Ruth. Dave’s resentment towards Ruth mirrors, his own Canadian sense of hostility towards British control.

Dave : I fought for Canada.

It’s the greatest - goddamned country in the world, so what’s the matter with you all?.
You name one that's better.

Scotland?. Don't make me laugh.


Dave does not realize that just as he feels inadequate in the face of colonial influence, Ruth feels without place in the face of patriarchal power. The oppression of women as a literary symbol adds another dimension to the evolution of the Canadian consciousness. The female “question of being authentic”, (Firestone 157) mirror the women’s search for identity in an alien country. As an expression of the lack of insight into female experience Dave can only perceive his personal inadequacy in relation to colonial rule and national independence.

Dave shows his indifference towards Ruth’s alienation from her past by undermining her heritage. She becomes alcoholic due to the silent domestic misery. Dave prevents her from going off to drink alone and coaxes her to make a toast to Canada, which is an ironic way of toasting her subordination in Canadian society. In the end he praises Ruth as the best wife a man could have for her integration into the Canadian patriarchal society. Ruth’s inertia epitomizes her severe state of oppression, one that has destroyed her ability to free herself.
Ruth wants to assimilate into Dave’s world in Canada and enjoy peace in the new country. She adjusts herself to the new environment. She is isolated and marginalized due to her husband’s social milieu. Dave segregates her psychologically and socially from the external reality. Her sense of exclusion from the society makes her take refuge in the domestic world. As an immigrant woman she becomes the victim of the patriarchal society in Canada. Ruth remains passive and accepts her husband’s choice. The frustration she experiences makes her to assert her identity when she is alone. She asserts herself by expressing her helpless position in the home and her exclusion from the social realm of power. Through the act of self-expression about her frustration and an unequal position in the social domain, Ruth achieves female empowerment in the society.

The protagonist Luce is an upper-class young woman who differs from the two other women immigrants in her belief to get female autonomy. Luce wants to go to America to become a singing star. She does not have freedom in the Italian Sexist society to marry an American to fulfill her dream. It is through Chuck, a Canadian of Italian descent, Luce has the chance to discard her old identity and pursue her dream of becoming a singing star in New York. She is unaware that Canada is not part of the United States and that Halifax is
a far cry from New York city. With Chuck’s description of Canada, Luce incorporates the American dream of success with the myth of romantic love. "I’ll show it to you, listen, I’ll go and see your papa. Listen, you’re gonna sing, “You better do it over there". (65). Luce believes Chuck’s glamorous depiction of Canada, and desires to escape from the restrictive position of women in Italian society. She too indulges in dream. She dreams in perfect English,

For Christ’s sake tell those people to stop following me…….

There is no one can tell me I can’t smoke,

It is my voice. Mine.

My apartment. My manager.

I’m just too busy. And I don’t give autographs. (47).

Chuck has a stereotyped view of women. He jokes about his father’s advice, “you marry nice Italian girl, Carlo, you never have to clean your own shoes again”. (65). Chuck possesses the same perception of wifely duties. Luce wants to attain the American dream of stardom and become popular in New York. But she lives in an Italian ghetto in Halifax, on top of her father-in-law’s pizza business, confined to a one-room apartment. Chuck expects her to be a traditional Italian wife to serve the family.
Chuck sees his country, as the land of opportunities within the pastoral dream, and Frye sees this as "the nostalgia for a world of peace and protection with a spontaneous response to the nature around it". Luce differs from the two other women immigrants, in her belief to achieve success as a singer. She finds that the marriage with Chuck entails submission to the conventional duties expected of a wife. She realizes that she must reject both her patriarchal marriage and motherhood in order to achieve success in the life. She struggles against an environment that produces failure. As an immigrant woman, she feels disappointed and alienated in a new land. Atwood observes "Canada stands always ready not only to manufacture and export failure but to attract it and provide for it an appropriate setting". (157).

Luce refuses to have children and this rejection of motherhood increases her autonomy, Luce is able to reject the conventions of patriarchy and begins to forge her own definition of selfhood in the New World. Luce becomes a part of Canadian society, by breaking free from the isolation Chuck has placed her in. Unlike Diana and Ruth, Luce is not hindered by the myth of romantic love, she identifies with her individual self and not with the imposed perceptions on women. Luce's first seven years life in Halifax is
dictated by her husband Chuck. She dreams of achieving her own independent status even though she is trapped in a conventional life.

Luce has left to Italy to escape from the patriarchal conception of women to expand her public and private boundaries. Firestone observes it "cultural dichotomy" (161). She experiences frustration in Halifax due to the male-dominated society. She wants to break free the traditional conventions imposed on her. "I cannot go back to Italy - "I cannot to go back to Italy - There above they keep me in chains. I cannot to leave". (88). The notion of race and class in relation to gender offers a new dimension to Luce’s experience in Canada. Luce’s upper class background leads her to question her husband’s world. But her belief in herself as a singer allows her to defy social expectations. She feels there is ‘no culture’ in her husband’s parochial social milieu. Luce articulates a deeper understanding concerning the limitations of her husband. She expresses that Chuck himself is shocked by the traditions of patriarchy and is unable to perceive Luce’s ideas.

Luce : Many things I did not know how to say
Chuck. No…… was not language. Not English, not Italian. How to make you understand. How to make you hear when you do not know how to
listen (Pause) Not listen to words but..... (Reaches down inside herself, then gives up, shrugs). (92-93).

The fact that Luce does not speak English well intensifies her sense of exclusion. She is also ostracized as an upper-class woman living amongst working-class Italians. Luce resists integrations with her social setting, she is seen as an outsider and called a ‘fascist’ by the Italian peasant immigrants. Although Luce is limited by nationality because she is not British, she is not impeded by notions of gender. As she is unfettered by society’s definition of female experience, she leaves her stultified existence and search for success in Toronto. Since Luce is not British, she struggles for access into English Canadian society and begins in the marginal position as a broadcaster on an Italian radio station. John Moss writes, “Anglophone exile” (384) which reveal how the women’s perception of the Canadian society is influenced by gender and how a distinct sense of dislocation is experienced by European immigrants. Moss observes,

Their Canadian adaptation tends to appear as barbarous distortion, parody, ignorance, or contempt. His exile is further aggravated by the apparent indifference of the resident populace to the degeneration of values and desecration of ideals, as he sees them. (84).
Luce has contempt for Chuck and his native town of Halifax, "but is not possible drink wine, is hypocrite town no culture". (92). Chuck is threatened by Luce's disapproval of Canadian society. In her quest for self-realization Luce is inspired by successful actresses like Lotte Lenya and Marlene Dietrich. Chuck calls these German actresses 'a bunch of spies'. (88). Chuck is unable to conceive a female definition of reality, and Firestone calls this as "male bias" (157). Chuck discloses his antagonism towards Luce's pursuit of individuality by tearing up the pictures of the women she venerates. The actresses represent an existence outside the domestic abode for Luce. This female parity signals the belief in the new independent life for Luce. Firestone observes this as "female reality". (160). It envisions an end to female alienation through the alliance of women's universal recognition of a meaningful past.

By going to Toronto and becoming a media figure Luce succeeds in her attempt to become a singer. Even though her career as a singer is considered as stereotypical form of success for women, her act of achieving public recognition outside marriage and family disengages Luce from her conventional role. Luce comes to the ultimate realization that only by relinquishing the security of her life with Chuck, she can assert her individuality. Luce, on New Year's Eve,
is broadcasting in Toronto after five years of living independently. Luce meets Chuck in a street in Montreal and learns that Chuck has married the girl who used to work in his father’s restaurant and has two sons. She proves her success to him by offering to help him get a contract at the Holiday Inn in Toronto “may be I can do something for you. (Gives him her card) Why don’t you give me a call when you get into town”. (101). Luce also obtained a job for Chuck at the Holiday Inn in Toronto. Although Luce and Chuck are divorced they are shown as friends. The play ends as Luce sits at the table nearby, listening to Chuck play the piano.

The female protagonist Luce wants to become a singer in New York. She considers Canada as a part of America and marries Chuck, a Canadian Italian decent. Since her husband believes in the patriarchal power structure, she wants to reject the conventional life imposed on her. She decides to reject her marriage and motherhood to succeed in her attempt. She is unfettered by society’s definition of female experience and struggles for access into English Canadian society. Luce is the only one who breaks out of the patriarchal enclosure and she is therefore a symbol of Ruth and Diana’s unrealized potential.
All the three women find that their husbands do not offer protection and security, but isolation and domestic oppression. The three women express different levels of female experiences. Ruth exemplifies female identity waiting to be shaped by male experience as she associates inner fulfillment with obtaining a husband. Luce represents the potential for female autonomy and the belief in individuality outside the boundaries of social expectations. Diana displays characteristics of both women and she possesses the desire to develop her potential to achieve her identity. For the women characters, Canada becomes the inversion of the pastoral myth. They are assuming their husband's identities and social status. They find frustration and insecurity in their marriages and could not adapt to their husbands social setting. For them, failure is induced by their inferior positions as women. Through their insularity, the women are united by a shared inner world.

The social landscape of Diana, Ruth and Luce is similar in that they are relegated to a powerless position in the society. They scrutinize their lack of power and exclusion from the public world due to male domination. The last scene of the play sees the fusion of the three streams of female consciousness. The last scene is the continuation of the first scene of the play which began in (1970) with
Ruth, Dave, Diana and Paul gathered together in Niagara Falls. The three immigrant women show the same female consciousness only on an unconscious level. As women and as foreigners, they experience homologous feelings of alienation and their struggle for integration into hostile setting. Ruth and Diana's self-deception signifies their inability to perceive reality through their own eyes. Luce, on the other hand, instead of living the romantic myth, is merely singing about it. As a symbol for the unattained female potential of Ruth, Diana and Luce have transcended the psychological boundaries to expand their vision to gain access into English Canadian society which leads to their empowerment.

Margaret Hollingsworth’s two plays Islands and Ever Loving articulates the estrangement and disorientation experienced by women. Hollingsworth searches the self-realization rooted in a feminized space through her women characters. Hollingsworth projects her vision to enable women to move out of the silent margins into a vocal celebration of life. The selected plays explore the female inner self in connection with the inherited colonial tradition and the patriarchal tradition. She portrays women’s sense of isolation and their quest for self-recognition to achieve national identity in the post-colonial age and the female struggle for identity in the traditions of
patriarchy. In both plays, Hollingsworth explores female identity in relation to their environment. In the play Islands the protagonist Muriel withdraws to a secluded island to escape from the connections of the society. Her place in the wilderness is related to her search for individuality and the liberation from the patriarchal mould. Muriel rejects marriage and motherhood out of fear of losing her autonomy. Muriel's separation from urban mainstream society offers her powers over her environment rather than isolation.

In the play Ever Loving the female immigrants search for their roots and struggle in an unfamiliar setting. They are marginalized as women and as immigrants and they express different levels of female experience distorted by patriarchal conditioning. The physical landscape in the play reflects female oppression and their psychological and social entrapment in the society. Luce like Muriel breaks away from the restrictive social realms rejecting her marriage and motherhood. Rose and Diana attain female identity at different levels. The three protagonists by charting out their own career achieve a sense of autonomy resulting in their empowerment in society.
DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

In *Ever Loving* theatrical techniques and realistic character portrayals exist comfortably side by side. Hollingsworth clearly delineated the fantasy and the 'realism' in the play. The play is composed of thirty eight short, swift scenes which move back and forth in time, and the script covers the years from 1983 to 1970. The play begins in 1970 with the established lives of Ruth, Diana and Luce. They are gathered together in a restaurant in Niagara Falls for the first time since their first arrival in 1945. Through Diana’s consciousness, the play shifts back to 1945. The play again shifts back in time from the train ride in 1945 to the three women’s lives in Europe prior to and during the war in 1938.

The structure of the play develops in an unchronological fashion. The breakdown of time and space and the shift from one woman’s experience to another, create a fragmented perception of the three women’s development in Canadian society. Even though the characterization and dialogue are naturalistic in the play, structurally the play is very complicated. The play is set in varying locations in different parts of the country. The use of inner monologue and stream of consciousness expresses the private, emotional level of female experience, adding a dimension of fantasy to the realism of the play.
The last scene of the play is the continuation of the first scene of the play which begins in 1970. Through Hollingsworth’s use of ‘romantic fantasy, in the play she makes her characters Diana and Ruth escape from reality to indulge in fantasy, which helps them not to bring their dissatisfaction into the open.

THE LANGUAGE

Margaret Hollingsworth’s writing had a poetic and surreal quality. The language was not used naturalistically. It was multi-layered, diffused in focus, open ended and oblique. In an interview the actors stated that they found it difficult to follow the style. Hollingsworth herself has found her work as dense and felt “hard to take off the page” and translate into stage action. Hollingsworth in an interview with Wallace and Zimmerman stated that the director of the premiere production of Ever Loving expressed that Hollingsworth has an obligation to be clear. Hollingsworth has commented “I don’t know whether that’s my problem or not. I can’t change the way I see things and I don’t if I’ll basically change the way I write”. (quoted in Wallace & Zimmerman - 92).

Hollingsworth uses the fragmentation of language to emphasize the women’s psychological displacement and lack of
control. Ruth tries to express her own perception but her thoughts disintegrate into incoherent utterances. "It’s all so ... so" (42). The shared consciousness of the three women is explored as the structure of the play dissolves into inner reflections through overlapping dialogue. Hollingsworth’s concern is with romance with the idealizing and dreaming that can undo youthful hopes. The dialogue swings from superficial chit chat to the fragmented revelation of inner consciousness where intimate details of the hidden frustration in their lives are exposed. The use of Nature as ‘woman’ and the ‘wilderness’ metaphors make the play impressive.