Chapter III

A wish for transformation

Rachel Cameron is the protagonist of A Jest of God. She is a thin, thirty four years old spinster, a dutiful teacher by profession living with her widowed mother in the city of Manawaka. Rachel, who always has a thought of being the second daughter is a reason for her misfortune and has to face a usual dry uninteresting life. She tries to create an identity of her own and lead a life for her but she is unable to move from Manawaka as she is the one who has to look after her mother. During her holiday she met Nick kazlik, son of Nestor kazlik, a milkman, who has brought many changes in her life. She thought he is the one who designs her life with colours. He is a high school teacher in the city, returns to Manawaka to spend time for his parents. She finds a correct time to ask him to be his life partner and ready to go with him where ever he goes because she thought there won’t be life without love. But she was unexpectedly hurt, when he shows his son’s photo. As per her friend Calla suggestion she decides to move somewhere by appointing a housekeeper to her mother. She misunderstood her tumour in her uterus as pregnancy. Few days later she had a chance to meet Nick’s parents, through them she comes to know Nick is a bachelor. It was a great shock to her and realised one who loved by her not deserving her love. She decided to move to Vancouver with her mother, where her sister Stacey lives, with the hope of starting a new life with freedom and self-confident.

Margaret Laurence keeps on her probe in projecting people’s persistence of an anxious modern world through her writing and A Jest of God is one more example to that. A Jest of God is about the one of the divisions of Modernism that is feminist
perspective where Rachel has been broken by hegemonic discourses and applications, which prevails common to the society. “I do not know how many bones need to be broken before I can walk. And I do not know either, how many need not have been Broken at all”. (208). Rachel’s offences are interior and outwardly unseen, but make use of the term broken bone in order to offer an appearance that is more simply assumed and more readily valued by mainstream of the society. By symbolising her psychological illness as corporeal wounds, Rachel sorts the obscure observable and there by repel being recognised as uncontrolled or stubborn. This approach of constructing the invisible visible symbolizes many of Rachel’s movements towards the novel. In The Stone Angel, train has been used as a signifier of parting and loss. The Train tracks are used to represent the division in A Jest of God:

Nothing is old here, but it looks old. The timber houses age fast, and even the brick looks worn down after fifty years of blizzard winters and blistering summers. They are put to shame by the new bungalows like a bakery’s pastel cakes, identical, fresh, and tasteless. This is known as a good part of town. Not like the other side of the tracks, where the shacks are and where the weeds are let grow knee-high and not dutifully mown, and where a few bootleggers drive anew Chevrolets on the strength of home-made red biddy. (17).

Rachel sees the train tracks as divider of Manawaka in to two, she sees her side as good one and other is not called directly as bad but it is unstated as so. The good part of the town includes many old houses with new ones where as the other part filled up with new ones owned by aristocrats. The other side of the town is enigmatic, tempting but cannot be reached except through words with the children of the other side. Rachel longs to have the
experience of the other world. The struggle of Rachel Cameron is different from her sister Stacey. She rose against the concrete roles of the women laid by the patriarchal society. She is a prey of the routine as a young spinster who has yet to adopt the role of a wife and mother. She struggles with the world of her by being a teacher, daughter, friend, lover, and so on. She struggles because none of the roles give her happiness. She feels a continuous anxiety while adopting these routine roles. She thought the dominion power of male centered social structure laid these roles on her back. She could not accept the changing roles of the women which are already written. She expresses her fear to face those laid roles as: The fear that Rachel expresses at the beginning of the novel—"God forbid that I should turn into an eccentric" (8). But at the end of the novel there is a reception of eccentricity in her she says: “I may become, in time, slightly more eccentric all the time. . . . I will ask myself I am going mad, but if I do, I won’t know it” (209). As it is stated in the beginning of the novel, Rachel fears of being eccentric but she realises the freedom that eccentricity going to offer her.

In her article “Ex-centriques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literatures of Canada” Barbara Godard uses a model of eccentricity as a metaphor for the marginalization of women: “Ex-centriques. . . they are transgressing literary codes in a manner approximating madness-hence eccentric” (57). This approach of women by means of remove, or deviating from the centre. A place from which to repel and subvert the centre is valuable when thought of A Jest of God. This approach discourses the methods in which women contract with their sense of estrangement from an apparently unified centre. This superficially unified centre may occur both outside and inside the subject. Rachel senses isolation from her as well as from the town. She forgets that she is the part of the society of Manawaka. Judy Kearns’s article “Rachel and Social
Determinism: A Feminist Reading of *A Jest of God* for an early feminist reading dealing with “women’s internalization of masculine values and definitions” (101). Cafe-or in the other relegated bodies in Manawaka-such as the Tabernacle of the Risen and Reborn. Certainly, she does not even sense however she fits in her body. She looks at herself as graceless, too thin and too uncontrollable. There is strangeness in her words, thoughts and deeds. This unusual behaviour found in Rachel continues ultimately to make a grip on decentered position. She feels burdened and decides to leave the place.

Rachel’s possesses some characteristic to be called a hysteric subject living in the modernist era they are her isolation, pessimism, and disintegration. Though Rachel can be assumed as a modernist’s divided subject but unlike Freudian’s view of hysteria. Rachel is expected to be the victim, but unexpectedly she repels and opposes victimisation and performs various actions and finally becomes an outstanding character. Contrasting the Freudian analysis of hysteria, which classifies the subject as invalid and in valid, but this hysterical subjectivity, certifies Rachel as commendable and avid one.

The reason why Rachel was called an outstanding, lies on the difference between the male stream modernist hysteria and female’s on the other hand. The changes took place in the body of Rachel and the word she speaks makes her to recognise her change. The body becomes the show case to her to see changing symptoms which she names it as eccentricity. On the other hand hysteria in Male Stream Modernism perceived as deficiency and perilous. It is essential to make note that the patriarchal naming of hysteria is pathological but not in the case of woman where the body stands to relocate the male stream addresses. Hystera is a medical term known to a common man as an inexplicable panic. Possibly Rachel is a victim of such panic as she encounters unsteadiness due to her societal atmosphere. More to that, exactly it was stated by
Rachel P. Maines in the first Chapter of her book *The Technology of Orgasm: Hysteria, the Vibrator, and Women’s Sexual Satisfaction* conveys prototypes of diseases and says that many of the classic symptoms of hysteria—such as amnesia, sleepwalking, hallucinations, nervousness, anxiety, irritability, erotic fantasy, sensations of heaviness in the abdomen, and lower pelvic edema—are indications of prolonged stimulation. These mentioned symptoms are clearly visible in the case of Rachel to prove that she is subjected to hysteria.

Canada meets the identity crisis during this period. 1960s and 70s were the period people are in the panic situation, where unable to give up their identity, but they have to adopt a new identity based on UK or USA’s dissimilar features as their own. That was also the period of modernist era. People were expected to accept the new policies and offer their cooperation in building nation’s unified national identity. Dominant to this new identity was a rising alertness of women’s rights. Women authors in Canada functioned to signify this uncertainty and confidence through their writing. A gynocentric Canadian Literary Modernism arisen from this environment of transformation. *A Jest of God* is a creation of this modern condition, and Rachel Cameron’s hysterical subjectivity is symbol of a discordant, disturbed countrywide atmosphere.

*A Jest of God* was published at this juncture in 1966. Rachel lives in this multicultural nationalist society as an active woman struggle to overcome the societal, cultural and political norms of the prosperous patriarchal society. This type of projection leads to the arise of Second Wave Feminism and gynocentric Canadian Modernism. Rachel can be considered as a representative of Canadian women who search for identity. Alison Prentice in her chapter “Prelude to Revolution” reflects upon the changes
in the lives of Canadian women between 1945 and 1970. She discusses the “shifts in the life cycle and the greater degree of freedom [young women] enjoyed” (319). Rachel has to come across changing roles of being daughter, hostess, and lover to attain the status of liberty.

Rachel’s liberation occurs on several levels. In her every role she attains freedom. She challenges the mother daughter relationship she has with her mother; she rejects the role of hostess and redefines the roles of mother and daughter. When she encounters her own sexual embarrassments, she sheds the role of virgin and struggles into even more difficult role of lover. Rachel faces the same problem which she couldn’t name at all and that has become one of the reasons for her hysteria as she unable to freely name that desire or pleasure which is a part of human nature. This incapability resulted in hysteria. The women still fought to have their pleasure acknowledged as something in and for itself. The words cannot do justice in explaining the desire of Rachel as it unstable. The longings of the body shifting from pleasure, death, children and for recognition.

Coral Ann Howells in her article “Weaving Fabrications: Women’s Narratives in A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers” claims that Rachel’s

Consciousness is dominated by gaps in comprehension and by the untranslatability of language, where words become signifiers whose meaning is always deferred. In her mind words separate themselves from meaning or at best exist in unstable relationships, so that language becomes the agent not of human communication and self-expression but of alienation. (97)

In modernist period incomprehension and alienation are unavoidable factors and Rachel is not exception to this. As Howell suggests these two are the major features of
hysteria which Rachel has. Further Howells added, language cannot be a suitable medium in expressing one’s self. In general, such problem is faced by women, so the inability provokes their tears as language is phallocentric. In addition to this Howells asserts that “although It would seem that the ostensible cause of Rachel’s hysteria is sexual. . . such a reading would be an over-simplification. . . It is a fear of death which is the true subtext of her narrative” (98).

Such a notice of the sexual and a naming of death as the true hint challenge Howells’ s earlier assertion about the untranslatability of language and the deferment of meaning of the desire. Undeniably, Rachel’s desire and fear are positioned in both the sexual and her fear of death. The male stream modernist fear of eradication and the requirement of creative destruction exist in Rachel’s complaint, yet she reconstructs this fear by a gynocentric strategy of re-creation as she practices her body to indicate her desire in conducts that cannot be communicated.

The beginning of the novel leaves an important role in Rachel’s verbal communication the dominant subject. She has chosen a prewritten text and modifies it to express her fear and desire she goes to the extent of modify a thin giant in to a queen and inserted her name in to the chant in order to represent as a common woman. This transformation of the child’s chant has comprised the association of the child to adult, the separation between memory and forgetting, the conversion of invisible desires into visible landscapes, and the sound of a woman’s yearning:

   The wind blows low, the wind blows high
   The snow comes falling from the sky,
   Rachel Cameron says she’ll die
   For the want of the golden city.
She is handsome, she is pretty,
She is the queen of the golden city. (7)

The chant is a suitable interpretation of Rachel’s mind. Rachel says her desire of having a golden city amidst her rise and fall and explains her divided subjectivity hysteria, by stating desire and death. Even as she is the epicene queen of the golden city, she is ready to die for it. Further this rhyme confesses complexity, fluidity, contradiction, desire, and Nihilism.

Rachel changes from one role to another from the state of virginity, she shifted to be lover of Nick. This is a gain to her, as it helps her to come out of her imaginary lover from the imaginary world. She sheds the role of virginity and step in to a of role lover. After her sexual relation she finds her relieved psychologically and semantically.

Lacan defines as the division within a speaking, desiring subject-by questioning, whether her desire and pleasure signify that she is imbalanced or laughable. In order to know more of completely the consequences of Rachel’s confrontation, it is vital to sketch subjectivity first reveals itself in a disorder, for psychoanalysts it is hysteria.

Rachel is subjected to hysterical imposes to know about psychoanalysis as a Feminist and Modernist discourse. Marcia Ian in Remembering the Phallic Mother: Psychoanalysis, modernism and the Fetish opens her Chapter “Language as the Real: Psychoanalytic Modernism” by quoting Fredric Jameson: “In ‘pure’ psychoanalytic criticism, indeed, the social phenomenon with which, the private materials of case history, of individual fantasy or childhood experience, must initially be confronted is simply language itself” (167). Rachel opposes verbal recurrently all over the novel, and acknowledged language is familiarly related with how she estimated herself. Her self-intellect is created as she analyses her body and her linguistic through keen-sights and
hearing herself over society’s eyes and ears. Rachel bumps into her history every time she sees a former student, she finds nothing changed at her side; she remains with old clothing, the same hair style and paces down the same street each time. She always remembers her past and thinks about what she does and what she desires and what she has done. But she finds everything changed around her, make her to feel lacking.

Comparison of self with the existing, which came across many changes always makes anyone to feel lacking. This estimation of inferiority arises when one compares themselves with the superior. Poor people compare them with the rich people. Similarly people compare themselves with others based on the gender, class, caste, race etc. The feeling of lacking automatically drives them to imitate the treaties of their superior or one who dominated them and wish to create an identity similar to their superior. While adopting the treatise, there came a conflict which makes them to realise their presence and induces them to release themselves. An opposition which took place in the mind of Rachel reflected through her speech. Her independent speech opposes directly the hegemonic constructions. Her sensations are reflected through her body earlier before she diagnoses herself self completely.

As Rachel is a hysteric subject, the novel needs to be viewed in the perception of psychoanalysis criticism. One more important factor is psychoanalysis comes under modernist criteria. According to Marcia Ian psychoanalysis is psychoanalysis is the quintessential modernist discourse psychoanalysis exemplified the coherency model of aesthetic high modernism; that it participated in the simultaneous erasure or “bracketing” of both individual and world in favor of its own symbolic process; and that it both reflected
and generated a cultural trend by construing consciousness as an epiphenomenon of instinct. (168)

Ian’s states this valuable for stating a revisionary Modernism because it opinions to Psychoanalysis in Modernism as both a discourse of coherency and a discourse of bifurcation. The high modernist discourse of psychoanalysis supports or removes the specificities of the individual and the world while simultaneously foregrounding both personal and social language. As the focus is made on hysteria an ailment which gives the way to psychoanalysis may emphasis the importance of language and voice in individual and communal identity. The Modernist psychoanalytic discourse is injected through the hysteric female body. Especially Feminist Canadian Modernism, by reconsidering hysteric female subject in the modernist psychoanalytic discourse, makes it a successful formation as it focuses on the prominence of language and body to the individual and community.

The psychology of an individual and the sociology of the community are woven together. The association cannot be parted and Ian’s modernist discourse proves it as it was considered one of the indispensible approaches towards modernist psychoanalysis. While exhibiting the psychology of an individual’s psycho sexual development under Oedipus/Electra complex, the state of the female individuals were not expressed clearly. The state of the women is exaggerated and sometimes surpassed the pathology created before. Finally the uncontrollable bodies of women and their experiences are labeled as hysteria a disorder, pathology or a pervasion by the high modernist discourse of psychoanalysis.

The society which is existing now formed by men and their experiences, includes and sometimes removes women out of the fear of disordered society. Psychoanalysis
considers on psychic realities of the individual that differs from the culture of the community. They are the reflections of both the state, as the cultures of the community inform the individual and the reflection of the culture in the individual is also visible in the community. Rachel is an individual who struggles between these two. She questions against the roles, which is assigned to women which is wiping out their wishes gives duty. She asserts against the desire of the individual fulfilled in the society, the imagination the individual and reality they face. Individual’s memory with their happening.

She struggles to emphasise her individuality in a society that emphasises specific, limited roles for women that erase desire and posit duty. As Rachel looks at her body and listens to her voice, she laments the space between desire and fullfilment, between imagination and substantiation, between memory and event. She feels, the longings of the individuals’ are perceived by them and they are visible subjectively but invisible and ignored by the society. Rachel who always holds on her individual subjectivity, while doing something best in the society of Manawaka.

The difference between the individual and the community is also visible in Canada as the identity of Canada raised from the psychical and cultural realities. But there is a doubleness in the subjectivity of Canada as it is formed as English and French Canada. But the culture of the community is based on the United States. The subjectivity is dual now; this can be diverse when the dualism is revisioned. The novels of Manawaka not only concentrated on the dual culture of Canada but also of English with Scott&, Slavic, and Metisculture. In this novel A Jest of God Rachel Cameron and Nick Khazlik cross the boundaries different ethnic group, spatial and temporal, historical and topical, individual and communal, psychical and cultural. Rachel can feel her doubleness
and stressed throughout the novel. She would like to come out of it by creating a world of herself filled with probabilities and her voice. She lives in the community of Manawaka from the beginning to the end. She escapes from the society physically for her degree at Winnipeg, but that too has become a temporary because she returns back to attend her Father’s funeral and stays with her mother. She sees her return as failure and unfullfiled wishes.

Rachel’s strive to come to voice silently; the voice inside her needs an outlet. At the end of the novel she didn’t protest silently she moves in to action. There is a hope inside her after her hysterical subjectivity, her impatience and disappointment. There is a positive attitude emerges inside her to live in the familial and societal structures exist in Manawaka. The Fire Dweller is a sister novel to A Jest of God literally and metaphorically. Stacey is elder sister of Rachel, so both the novels are set in the same period and posits in the middle part of Manawaka cycle. Like Jason and Bram of The Stone Angel, person from different entities shares the same history and future. Like Rachel, Stacey struggle to balance the memory and present.

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan describes and exhibits the expansion of the hysterical subject in Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary. She initiates with the idea that psychoanalysis develops with Freud’s treatment of hysteria. As formerly specified, symptoms of hysteria comprise anesthesia, hyper aesthesia, seizures, and nervousness. In 1905, Freud associated hysteria with sexuality and later with biological homosexual tendencies. More relevant to this discussion is how in 1968, Jacques Lacan translates Freud’s outcomes into issues of identity and language, rather than biology. The hysteric’s sexual indecision “links sexuality and identity: her discourse reveals the fundamental impossibility of reducing identity to gender in the first place” (Ragland-
Sullivan, 163). Problems of identity increase when gendered stereotypes constrain discovering the difficulty of their identity. Rachel was under dilemma as she attempts to fix how her desire fits into her life. Mainly, she is repelled by her body and its longings; she has no entree to desires that are legalised for females in the social order.

Monique David-Ménard in *Hysteria From Freud to Lacan* enquires the hysteric’s revulsion with her body and tells this revulsion to the idea that a woman’s body and her longings are not signified in society. She appeals responsiveness to the hysteric’s divided subjectivity and the creation of the hysterogenic body as an additional for the lack of an erotogenic one.

The psychic body comprises both sexuality and language as it positions in for the absence of pleasure expected through mouth and lips. Through the language of jouissance, the hysteric theories a pleasuring body that resists stasis and negation. The erotogenic places on the body-the mouth and lips-are doubled on the woman’s body.(88, 99)

Her language and her masturbatory instants deal the chance of both pleasure and sedition. This language befits vital to Rachel’s presence particularly, when the immediate consequences of the meaning of jouissance are discovered. The absence of depiction of women’s desire encompasses outside the corporeal. Betsy Wing transforms jouissance in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément’s *The Newly Born Woman* as whole sexual joy and more. Orgasm and pleasure are also oblique in the word, but it takes it to go even more to contain,

some of the sense of access and participation in connection with rights and property. . . . It is, therefore, a word with simultaneously sexual, political and economic overtones. At the simplest level of meaning-
metaphorical-woman’s capacity for multiple orgasms indicates that she has the potential to attain something more than Total something extra-abundance and waste (a cultural throw away), Real and representable. (165)

It is the approval of jouissance as both physical and representable with which Rachel problems, though she is not available with the language to express, Rachel dares to change further than the suppression of social characters and into the freedom of unconventionality. David-Ménard discovers the transformative options of jouissance, Ragland-Sullivan also reflects a Lacanian viewpoint that realises the reason of the hysteric’s impasse as incapacity to recognise with her mother. In its place, “the hysteric identifies with her father and is, therefore, not able to find a model of signification for her desire” (163). In particular ways, Rachel’s search is to catch her father and within get her because it is her mother who mainly continues feminine cultural labels that Rachel repels, often unsuccessfully. Rachel’s invisible father makes it in evading Manawaka by receding into the world of the dead. As the city mortician he survives on the limits, a man separate the conventions of society who “possibly felt at ease with them, the unspeaking ones, and out of place in our house” (20). Like Rachel, her father struggles to find his place in a world where death, like desire, is unmentionable.

There is a conception prevails in the society, that of desire is unmentionable unspeakable, and un representable finds a lack in culture and in knowledge. Ragland- Sullivan abridges and links Lacan’s and Cixous and Clement’s ideas of the subversive elements of the hysterical subject. If hysteria links language and suffering, then hysteria in patriarchal culture traces a mistake in culture. In further disputes, if patriarchal culture outlines hysteria as a neurosis, it is for the reason that of the un representable-and the
hysteric’s answer to this difficult of unpresentability, of challenging cultural norms-is intolerable to the position. The hysteric, thus, converts a dissident figure, and rather than being neurotic, Lacan claims that “hysteria is the condition of the division of any speaking, desiring subject”. Furthermore, Cixous and Clément see the hysteric as a “threshold figure for women’s liberation and as a form of resistance to patriarchy” (Ragland- Sullivan, 164-65). Rachel Cameron as a hysteric upsets society and shows her as a revisionary model for the individual. She encounters not only the structure of the world but also the method in which an individual take part in that structure.

To enhance her sound, an effort to give volume to the un heard voice is also part of the hysteric struggle. She tolerates the suffering of hysteric even before her speech. The method of finding voice covers the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Betsy Wing in the Glossary to The Newly Born Woman summarises the Lacanian use of these three terms as follows,

Lacan’s Imaginary, the order of perception and hallucination, is fantasy-full but never fanciful. The Symbolic, the order of discursive and symbolic action, demystifies the symbol, which can no longer pretend to represent an adequate ‘truth’. And the Real is not simply ‘reality’ but the designation of what is absolutely unrepresentable. (164)

All over A Jest of God, Rachel Cameron disciplines herself for her insight, for her speech, and for her conducts of being in the world. For example, when Rachel changes from the fantasy of masturbation to the action, she still repels her longing and senses as though she wants to explain her necessity for desire and for escape. Rachel wishes to be present in the world, how she observes others want her to be, and how she misjudges herself spread out into her daily life as well as her imagination at night. When the novel
begins, she understands in herself the probable to become a marginal figure and repels this probability:

Stupid thought. Morbid. I mustn’t give house room in my skull to that sort of thing. It’s dangerous to let yourself. I know that . . . Whenever I find myself thinking in a brooding way, I must simply turn it off and think of something else.

God forbid I should turn into an eccentric. This isn’t just imagination I’ve seen ---------happen Not only teachers, of course, and not only women who haven’t been married. Widows can become extremely odd as well, but at least they have the excuse of grief (8).

Rachel considers that within the roles of teacher, single woman, and widow are traces of the eccentric. Rachel didn’t aware of the fact that eccentricity is a liberating factor but she thought it is dangerous to be eccentric. She rejoices with her inner self where she can move and live anywhere as she likes and builds her own world. She finds her imagination as key, which can simply turn off her present and releases her from the problems. She doesn’t aware that this action is dangerous than eccentricity. This type of unchanged stereotyped imagination leads her to fully realised neurosis. Furthermore, she shows the difference between imagination and sight, favouring optical insight over the imaginary: she trusts what she perceives. She has seen the conversion of an ordinary woman into strange and rare examples. Rachel is capable to envisage other potentials for herself; she will neither subvert the signs that suppress her nor change into the communal space of unthinkable knowledge and identity that contains the Real. This communal, real-time space that the familiar subject dwells includes past, present, and future and is
comprised in the Actual. Betsy Wing outlines and explores the actual. According to her

The Real is,

what is, what has been, and what will become, and though itself, it is non-
narrative and nonrepresentational, Like history, it can be thought only
when it is textualised. One must participate in this unthinkable Real
because it cannot lack our participation Also, Like history, it can be
experienced as the site of resistance to individual desire. . . . when the
Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real intersect in the subject, it is
possible for one to ‘know’. (Cixous and Clément, 167).

If portion of Rachel’s problem as a focus is to hold her doubled nature and to opinion
innovative options for herself, she wishes to identify herself as unique. As an alternative
of trying to strike a balance amid talking too gently and talking too sternly, she wants to
exhibit herself as an eccentric, de-centred woman and take part in, rather than reject, her
limits, her boundaries. She will have a misinterpretation of her identity once she
represents, or at minimum recognises, her potential as a separated, discourse, and craving
substance. The practice of Rachel letting her eccentric, hysterical awareness expands the
length of the fiction. She inquires the sound of her voice and the trace of her mother in
her voice. In its place of recognising her identity as comprising the voices of her
dynasties, she tries to find her father and wipe out all traces of her mother:

Oh God. I don’t mean to be condescending. How can it happen, still, this
echo of my mother’s voice? My navy wool dress is three years old and
much longer than they’re being worn now. I haven’t had the energy to
take up the them. Now it seems like sackcloth, flapping mind my knees
and the ashes, where are they? I dramatize myself I always did. No one would ever know it from the outside, where I’m too quiet. (10)

If the Real is what is, what has then, and what will become, Rachel avoids the first two of these phases, which gives confidence for what she will become. For now, however, she assesses what she is because it is made up of the past. She is happy in neither her body nor her clothing. In its place, she sees herself outfitted in sackcloth, symbol of mourning. Rachel’s inner grief and disorder are indicated through her attire and her imagination, but she sees a dissection between her internal noise and her external tranquility. She rejects the exterior speech that her inner speech longs. Rachel does permit herself an external voice; she perceives that speech as a voice of duplicity. It is a voice of nervous and wild. Undeniably her body performs on its own, shocking her into damage: “My own voice sounds false to my ears, a Peter-Rabbitish voice, and I find I am standing beside my desk, holding a new piece of orange chalk so tightly that it snaps in my fingers” (11). This nomadic body of her deceives the strain between Rachel as subject and object. Her own wish is reproduced in her chosen student, James Doherty: “He goes his own way as though he endures the outside world but does not really believe in it”(11). She discovers herself alive in other bodies. One more male character that inspires Rachel’s sense of self is her principal, Willard Siddley. As a personality to whom she is all together strained and disgusted, he signifies Rachel’s repudiated longing for her own body as well as for the body of another:

My own hands, spread out on the desk, are too large. Large and too thin. Like empty gloves. . . . It is only now, concentrating on my hands, the nails nicely manicured and coated with colour less polish that I realize something else. When Willard Siddley’s spotted furry hands & were on
my desk, I wanted to touch them. To see what the hairs felt like. Yet he repulses me. I didn’t. I won’t. I didn’t feel that way. I’m only imagining things again. (15)

Rachel’s understanding of her own figure as a body without bones, her particular frame without substance, hints her to want a male body. She looks at her nails, the insensible and colour less part of her hands, she evokes another set of hands, oddly animal hands. She recollects her wish to touch Willard’s hands, and think of how she did not gratify her wish. Though, in the very next second, she also rejects the craving jiffy. She declines both her craving and her reminiscence, as she lessens her dreams.

This assessment of her body persists throughout the novel. She ponders her body and then tries her viewing into a comparison. Frequently, Rachel hurts in the comparison as she realises herself as deficient. In the first part of the novel, Laurence emphases on setting up Rachel as a focus, who remits her life allowing to a series of good/bad binary constructions where Rachel is continuously in the feeble state an inferior position. Rachel’s improvement from her feeble state exhibits Laurence’s critique of patriarchal discourse even if Rachel herself does not see her movements as resistant. Rachel does not understand that, by enlisting her father in the secondary position, she is by now disrupting powerful patriarchal edifices:

I haven’t seen my sister for seven years. She never comes back here. Why should she? She’s lived away for years. She has her own home, and wouldn’t be bothered to visit here, not even so Mother might see the children. She’s very decisive, is Stacey. She knew right from the start what she wanted most, which was to get as far away from Manawaka as possible. She didn’t lose a moment in doing it. (17)
Rachel recollects Stacey’s escape from Manawaka however, Stacey may be actually away from Manawaka, Manawaka is never away from Stacey. Rachel’s another prediction and cries are founded upon what she is not, what she is requiring: if only she were not so skinny, if only she were more significant, if only she were not born second, if only she had not come back. This deficiency in her and what is existing in others that frame her is the center for much of her grief. Her prejudice is divided into self and other where the other is outside and advantaged.

Rachel’s divided subjectivity is also a partition between the care of tradition and the wish for transformation, the safety of the past and the indeterminacy of the future, the constancy of the conservative and the changeability of the present. All of these divisions can be precised as the division between the known and the unknown. Laurence builds Rachel as a modernist subject who is scared of the unknown, while she is concurrently drawn to it. By creating Rachel as a divided yet keen subject, Laurence finds the prospective, which is existing in the uneven and the body as the place of this potential. She has her hair done in the same fashion every week, but surprises what would happen if she asked for hair “like candy floss, a high cone of it, and gold” (19). Her bedroom is the same, but she reflects altering the “girlish. . . old fashioned furniture” (22). Rachel survives on the edge between youth and age, between innocence and experience. Not to have awareness is shameful but she senses she is too old to inquiry, as however she has been by now entirely molded and cannot convert her mold.

In the beginning of the novel, Rachel reflects her feeble position, when she is opposed by students whom she has formerly educated. The two young women she sees are about sixteen years old now, and Rachel gets them as very dissimilar from her. At first she sorts them as lives from a different world, but then changes her description to
term herself as the alien: “They look like twins from outer space. No, not twins necessarily. Another race, Venusians. But that’s wrong, too. This is their planet. They are the ones who live here now” (18). Expressively, she tags them Venusians, beautiful women related with sensual love and longing. Rachel cannot measure a world, where she is eager or required; younger others have progressed into that cosmos.

As an alternative, Rachel surprises whether she look as if ‘antediluvian’ to the Venusians. This specifying of herself as probably antediluvian, as old and out of date, as fit in to the time before the biblical flood, detects Rachel’s incapability to envision herself as part of attains recent facts: “But what beats me is how the Venusians learn to do all these things the present, as part of a “new” and changing society. Instead she wonders how one for themselves. They don’t have their hair done. Who teaches them? I suppose they’re young enough to ask around. At that age it’s no shame not to know” (19). Rachel names age as a restriction to knowledge, as though there is a un controllable break that splits the ‘subject supposed to know’ from the subject who does not know. This meeting between Rachel and her students is associated to the course of transference. Toril Moi in her entry in Feminism and Psychoanalysis titled “Transference/Counter transference” connects hysteria and transference by acknowledging that Freud concludes his account of his treatment of Dora’s hysteria by claiming that, it failed because he did not understand transference. That is, he neither understood his role in Dora’s unconscious fantasies, nor did he understand that he complicated the process by “projecting his own unconscious wish for gratification on to the patient” (432). Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis in The Language of Psychoanalysis outline transference as a “process of actualization of unconscious wishes, where infantile prototypes re-emerge and are experienced with a strong sensation of immediacy” (455).
Although transference frequently happens in a logical condition and plans her desires on to the analyst, Rachel’s transference befalls in her communications with many others and also with herself as both analyst and analysand.

Agreeing to Moi, Freud’s miscarriage to admit his site with Dora is significant from a feminist outlook because it requests attention to the problems of authority between a woman subject and a male figure of authority that makes her the object of his attentions. Moi drives on to explore Lacan’s view of this problem of authority. She realises Lacan’s linkage of authority with knowledge as just the space that is, from a feminist perspective, packed of potential. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* Lacan claims that “transference is unthinkable unless one sets out from the subject who is supposed to know” (253). Lacan’s opinion is central to Rachel as a hysterical subject who does not know. Lacking self-knowledge, Rachel cannot comprehend the course of transference and, consequently, cannot represent her craving, whereas her infantile examples re-emerge and are practiced with a sturdy sense of nearness. Rachel does not know this skill as decisive to her course of expansion. As an alternative, she repels her girlishness and performs herself in the role of the old maid or the antediluvian. Rachel’s unconscious desires can been understood easily throughout the progress of the novel. Laurence creates a Feminist Modernist Narrative of Rachel’s rise as a craving subject that is so gradual it is almost imperceptible. Therefore, it clearly visible the moments where Rachel effectively relocates patriarchal discourse long before Rachel declares her potential.

Moi furthermore converses Shoshana Felman’s works on transference in the association between teacher and pupil. This exchange illumes Rachel’s fluid divergence
as both teacher and pupil. The novel’s first chant receipts Rachel back to herself as a child and a student while she stands in the classroom window as an adult and a teacher:

Twenty-seven years ago, which seem impossible, and myself seven... It would certainly have surprised me then to know I’d end up here, in this mm, no longer the one who was scared of not pleasing, but the thin giant She behind the desk at the front, the one with the power of picking any coloured chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard. It seemed a power worth possessing, then- (contemporary culture,7)

Rachel echoes on the apparently impossible passage of time that has made her no longer and still the one scared of not pleasing. Rachel also preserves the stereotype of the high skinny elementary schoolteacher. Expressively, still, her opinion has altered; now she no longer perceives a teacher’s power. Once she has power, she no longer gets it as treasured.

The image of the teacher at the front of the class, the subject supposed to undergo modifications for Rachel now that she has presumed that position of power. Her very next action reviews this model of knowledge and the teacher’s place within that model:

Spanish dancers, turn around

Spanish dancers, get out of this town.

People forget the songs, later on, but the knowledge of them must be passed like a secret language from child to child-how far back? They seem like a different race, a separate species, all those generations of children. As though they must still exist somewhere, even after their
bodies have grown grotesque, and they have forgotten the words and tunes, and leaned disappointment, and finally died. (7-8)

Rachel perceives the children as the ones with knowledge, and the knowledge they obtain does not derived from words written on a blackboard by a symbol of power with control over others: the knowledge comes from the secret language of children’s songs. In this expression, Laurence reveals Rachel’s mindfulness of the presence of language that repels patriarchal discourse, though Rachel is not attentive that she owns such a language. Both A Jest of God and The Fire-Dwellers starts with a children’s rhyme, and the knowledge kept in those rhymes alter according to the singer and the listener, both of whom comprise the memory of the child. Rachel’s retention of herself as a child proceeds her back to being a child. In this reminiscence, she is both a child and an adult who holds at an unrecognised knowledge that becomes identifiable over recurrence over the space.

Like the students Rachel sees in the street, Rachel understands children as a different race of beings as she trusts their knowledge is different from hers and unattainable by her. Knowingly, their secret language and the children themselves are present even after their bodies have changed into the ridiculous. This consideration to the body recommends that the body holds a knowledge that is articulated another way than the figurative language of patriarchy. Each child’s song in both the novels holds a female protagonist in effort, in the course of leaving: the Spanish dancers leave town; Rachel Cameron dies from desire; and the ladybug flies away. Rachel receives the songs and resides in a subject position of both deficiency and wish. She is not the child-student, but she needs the knowledge that she grasps children and students possessing. Inconsistently, Rachel is both the child-student and the mother teacher; still, she does not yet realise that
she conquers all of these positions. If hysteria is chiefly a spot in desire, where the body expresses without being unstated, then Rachel is a hysterical subject since she does not cognize the knowledge her body states. Pamela Banting in her article ‘The Phantom Limb Syndrome: Writing the Postcolonial Body in Daphne Marlatt’s *Touch to My Tongue*’ talk over the body as a spot of confrontation that writes back:

As material substance, as that which resists the operations of naming and categorization. . . the body also resists and displaces the official order which it acquires dong with its native tongue. As flesh, the body is both vulnerable and resistant to languages, discourses, and social formations. And in both its vulnerability and its resistance. The body ‘writes back’. That is, the very properties which make it susceptible to inscription also preserve some measure of its resistant agency and signifying potential. The body protests. The body goes on strike. The body has other agendas. This is perhaps most strikingly evident in hysteria. Even in the crippling illness of hysteria—thought to be a resistance to, even a defiance of, the overwhelming impositions of phallogocentric constraints, repression, and overwriting—the body retains its ability to sign for itself. (8-9)

Whereas Banting practices the postcolonial terminology of writing back to the centre, The Thesis will carry on to converse how Rachel’s body communicates back to the centre. Rachel’s problem is to emanate to voice, and it is significant to realise that her body expresses earlier she intentionally attacks the centre by voicing her desire. This Chapter will emphasis further on three moments when Rachel’s hysterical body repels and challenges patriarchal hassles. In every incidence, Laurence focuses how Feminist Modernist Narratives practice corporeal language to prove replacements to oral
language. Rachel’s body expresses her insolence in her masturbatory moments, her delighted exclamation, and her untrue pregnancy. Every single of these manifestations is a communication back to a patriarchal treatise. In the primary image, Rachel’s body tells back to a patriarchal historical narrative. In the secondary sample, she voices back to spiritual address. In the final state, Rachel’s body confronts medical discourse and in doing so also communicates back to Manawaka. In all moment, Rachel recites and misinterprets her body—or heeds to and then lay off her body’s speech—and consequently at the beginning she is incapable to distinguish the transformative probability of being a hysterical, eccentric subject who repels a centre that suggests control and restriction as positions with potential.

Rachel’s masturbatory moments are actions that happen in the darkness when Rachel is tiresome to get to sleep. She motives that she must reach the days of preference in order to relaxation. This perception proves that Rachel has affected by patriarchal limitations on women’s desire. But, her body confronts her motive when it builds a tale of pleasure even when Rachel ponders she does not be worthy that comfort:

-When Egypt’s queen received Antony, that book said, she used to fall upon him even before he had taken off his armour. Think of that - even before he’d taken off his armour. They used to have banquets with dozens there. Hundreds. (65)

This postponed imaginary voices back to a previously built historical narrative where a woman’s pleasure is animalistic. This opening similarly evokes the novel’s opening song in which Rachel is queen of the golden city. By not specifying Cleopatra, Rachel envisions herself into the part of Egypt’s queen. By performing so, Rachel concepts herself as subject and object, member and spectator. She is both the queen who
drops upon her lover and the slave, who lookouts the Egyptian girls and Roman soldiers. She is a hysterical divided subject, who wishes but able to express that longing through her body. Rachel makes a situation, in which she inscribes herself into a previously written narrative of pleasure. She recounts the fantasy, but she does not express of touching her own body. She does not admit the concurrent narration and touching. Laurence, conversely, proves how symbols on the page can show corporeal pleasure. The breaks in Rachel’s description are the seconds when she touches herself, when she pauses from the saying in order to take breaths, to inhale, to exhale, and to climax. In this technique, Laurence generates a Feminist Modernist discourse of pleasure over the use of stillness and space that states and challenges. A comparable moment of transformation befalls, when Rachel goes with Calla to the Tabernacle. Rachel is tremendously painful in this place where people “make a public spectacle of themselves”(41) by communication and by observing to those who communicate:

I want to go home. I want to go away and never come back I want-. . .
Silence. I can’t stay. I can’t stand it. I really can’t. Beside me, the man moans gently, moans and stirs, and moans-

*That* voice!

Chattering, crying, ululating, the forbidden transformed cryptically to nonsense, dragged from the crypt, stolen and shouted, the shuddering of it, the fear, the breaking, the release, the grieving- Not Calla’s voice.

Mine. Oh my God. Mine. The voice of Rachel. (42-43)

Coral Ann Howells delivers Rachel’s jest on crypt and cryptic as the clue to Rachel’s fear of death as the “true subtext of her [hysterical] narrative” (98). As an alternative, this paragraph indicates a bodily and intuitive answer in which the external and deepness of
the body adapt the banned into language. Rachel’s understanding of being controlled or occupied over is added hysterical indication and is an answer that is not founded only on a fear of death. Relatively, Rachel’s body rivals Faustian heroism in an effort to overcome death. She relocates this destructive tale, still, as the body does not decease. As an alternative, the body is taken from its inclusion. The body resists demise. The unencumbered body implies Rachel’s requirements, worries, potential, and anguish. The speech of Rachel is caught even though not yet unstated. As in Rachel’s masturbatory moments, Laurence uses the dash and spaces to indicate what Rachel cannot yet express. Laurence delivers the resonances that the man expresses; she does not provide Rachel’s words or sounds. In its place, Laurence displays how Rachel’s body voices. She moves the man’s moaning with the woman’s speech. This transposition signifies a test to a logo centric modernist society that surrounds and eliminates women’s speech.

Rachel’s pregnancy is the third example of how her body challenges patriarchal bothers. The term hysteria is from the Greek hysteros meaning womb, and then Rachel’s made-up pregnancy is her body’s most hysterical, bold sign. The tumour that the body yields, which Rachel in the beginning misunderstands as a foetus, concurrently shows longing, demise, conflict, irritation, defenselessness, faith, anxiety, communication, maternity, perversity, abortion, and infidelity. On an additional correct level, one might claim that Rachel’s tumour is a biological reason for her hysterical indications. Nonetheless, it is central to remembrance that inferior pelvic edema is a hysterical symptom. In further arguments, Rachel’s displeasure may be the cause of her tumour or her tumour may be the source of her signs. Irrespective, as Rachel goes over the development of determining that she has a tumour in her uterus, having the tumour detached, and takes away herself from Manawaka, she realises how societies speak and
misinterpret her body. In keeping the tumour as an unclear or nomadic sign, the body challenges patriarchal discourse in Manawaka. Doctor Raven is resisted since he reads Rachel’s body as virginal. The town is resisted since the rumours that flow everywhere Rachel’s body name her as desperate and immoral. All of this identification is both factual and untrue, but Rachel’s denial to reject the rumours reveals that she in conclusion titles her body as a site of confrontation that expresses back to the status quo in methods that oral language cannot complete. When Doctor Raven looks Rachel and procedures out pregnancy because she is such a sensible girl. Rachel replies in her thoughts with sound and signal: “No words for my anger could ever be foul or wounding enough, against him, for what he’s saying. I could slash gouges out of his seemly face with my mils. I could hurl at him a voice as berserk as any car crash”(184). By now Rachel is start to recognise that both her body and her vocal sound are implements. She realises words as insufficient for what she wants to direct. As an alternative, she creates her own language that is endorsed through her body and adorned on this. By visualisation extorting the doctor’s look and hurling chaotic sound against his ears, Rachel generates a language of additional and throws it out into the public that tries to restrict her.

Rachel envisions physical responses to Doctor Raven’s diagnosis, she does not yet move from imagination into action. She is still a divided subject who has two voices, and she distinguishes this when the doctor voices her that she has a tumour: “My speaking voice, and then only that other voice, wordless and terrible, the voice of some woman mourning for her children” (187). This nonverbal voice is the sound of her body in grief. It is unrelated that her body does not house a literal foetus. It is sufficient that she sees herself with child. At the opening of the novel, the reader perceives Rachel
rejecting to give “houseroom in her skull” (8) to gloomy thoughts, yet now she has agreed houseroom to the idea of a baby and “No delicate probing would ever dislodge it” (179).

The displacing arises when Rachel has the action to eradicate the tumour. Although Rachel is below an aesthetic, she gabbles, “I am the mother now” (191). The body announces itself and is gotten. When the nurse reprise what Rachel has whispered, Rachel does not discharge the speech. She heeds to her body. She unites the phrase into her stirring existence and practices it to counterattack her mother’s warnings and state her own desires. Rachel turns out to be a talking subject who provokes those who have measured and restricted her. She expresses back to her mother once Rachel claims that they travel to the Coast. She confronts Willard by walking out the school. She competes with Doctor Raven by demanding that he has no control to identify her mother’s complaint. She encounters Manawaka people when she rejects to expose the rumours. In end, Rachel frees herself by parting Manawaka and by specifying herself an eccentric. By ask for this redeeming role, she relocates the hegemonic treatises that have narrowed her.

It is enlightening to place this conclusion adjacent to a Male Stream Modernist narrative in order to assert in what way Laurence performs against traditional modernist models, which finish in impossibility and/or devastation. A Jest of God calls a contrast to T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, for example. Undeniably, the closing stanzas of the poem display Prufrock, like Rachel, deliberating on increasing old. He describes himself as At times, certainly, practically absurd-

Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old. . . I grow old. . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall Wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. (118)

Equally Rachel and Prufrock recognise with the character of the Fool, and both of them envision mounting old and rousing upon the beach. The foremost variance amid the two narratives is situated in the attitude of the contemplation. Rachel clasps her hue, though Prufrock express grief. Rachel realizes herself as portion of the rhythm of the landscape, allowed by the wind. Prufrock lingers “in the chambers of the sea”, (131) but he go down in these hollows hearing but not partaking in the mermaids’ Song. Together these narratives are love songs; Rachel chants her song, rejoicing the sound of her personal expression. Despite the fact Prufrock catches the festive songs from remoteness. Lack of confidence in future somewhere his own love song proclaims his demise. Laurence initiates A Jest of God with a child’s rhyme that transfers Rachel to a concerned likeness on her childhood, and she finishes the novel with Rachel’s elated eagerness of her future. The verbal that Laurence provides Rachel while nearing the end of the novel is fascinating, reminiscent, amusing, perceptive, and lyrical. It is a verbal utterance coming from a subject who sees that she will not recognise all. It is a language that states of a spoiled body learning to rebuild. They are the sentences that carry the narrator to a place by a sea that she has not seen, even as she pictures herself there. It is a dialectal that does not fail to recall the body as it sends the mouth:

I may become, in time, slightly more eccentric all the time. I May begin to Wear outlandish hats, feathered and sequinned and rosetted, and dangling necklaces made from coy and tiny seashells which I’ve gathered
myself along the beach and painted coral-pink with nail polish. And all the kids will laugh and I’ll laugh, too, in time. I will be light and straight as any feather. The wind will bear me, and I will drift and settle, and drift and settle. Anything may happen, where I’m going. (209)

This paragraph displays Rachel’s actuality stirred by the wind. In its place of the wind blowing high and low but always blowing, this wind symbolizes both association and stability. Rachel gets her state as one of binaries, of immoderations. Instead, she recognizes the possible of time and the freedom of space. She can perform and also be performed upon. Her body indicates her eccentric subjectivity even as it is abided by the wind.

Rachel assertively allows her being eccentric when she recognizes eccentricity can offer her freedom and hope for living. Stacey is an elder sister of Rachel Cameron, being married and mother of four children overcome repentance in different situation confidently.