Connections in prairie fiction: Paradigms of female adolescent development.

Karen Day

Résumé: *À la lumière des travaux de Gilligan et de Lyons sur le développement de la personnalité de l'adolescente, Karen Day analyse trois romans; celle-ci démontre comment les jeunes héroïnes, grâce au voyage spatio-temporel, parviennent à échapper à l'emprise familiale et à découvrir leur identité dans un monde mieux ordonné dont le sens devient enfin compréhensible.*

In 1987 three Canadian novels were published, all portraying female protagonists who learn to face their lives in a meaningful way when taking a journey via the literary device of time travel. Time travel places the protagonists in a position that allows them both to form connections with their ancestors and to develop a sense of harmony with nature that spiritually nourishes their sense of identity. Initially, all the protagonists find themselves physically separated from familiar urban surroundings and psychologically alienated by their parents' divorces. These girls encounter or become their ancestors and resolve the anxiety of separation by forming relationships and by developing connections to family and to the land. Upon reintegrating into the present, they have matured through gaining a greater sense of their identities. In Cora Taylor's *The doll*, Meg's illness separates her from her parents. She travels into the prairie past from a bed in her caring grandmother's home. Spiritual and psychological healing takes place when Morag's (Meg's) family shows its dependence upon the land for their food by picking berries and snaring rabbits. Elizabeth, in Margaret Buffie's *Who is Frances Rain?*, finds it difficult to trust in relationships after being left by her father. She finds a resolution to this problem through her trips into Rain Island's history. When Elizabeth paddles upon the northern lake and digs in the earth for her roots, she finds a connection to her grandmother and a oneness with the land. Kit Pearson portrays Patricia in *A handful of time* as growing to understand her mother's anguish when Patricia travels back to her mother's twelfth year at a lake in Alberta. Patricia is accused of being "a little Easterner" when she does not enjoy the lake, but eventually becomes "at home" with the land.

These three novels follow a tradition of time travel in children's stories that began with the British author E. Nesbit's *The House of Arden* and sequel, *Harding's luck*, in the early 1900s. Other British authors to use this literary device were Philippa Pearce with *Tom's midnight garden* and William Mayne

with *Earthfasts*, which takes the reader back to the time of King Arthur. In Nancy Bond's time travel fantasy, *A string in the harp*, Peter comes to terms with the death of his mother by travelling to the time of the bard, Taliesen. Canadian authors, too, have written time-travel stories. Two examples are Janet Lunn's *The root cellar*, and *Fog magic* by Julia Sauer in which Greta is able to travel back into the past of Nova Scotia until her twelfth birthday.

Was it purely coincidence that the 1987 publication of the books by Taylor, Pearson, and Buffie employed the literary device of time travel that took their protagonists back to earlier Canadian times to search for their identities? Perhaps, but they all come at a time when we are searching for our Canadian identity. They are written at a time when our country is asking, "What does it mean to be a Canadian?" These protagonists come to self-identity as a result of knowing their past and forming a sense of harmony with the land, just as knowing the land and its history has significance for forming our Canadian identities.

Egoff (1988) points out that the fantasy element of time travel novels is only in the travelling, not in the past events or present. The past is historical fiction that cannot be changed by the protagonists. The present, in the three novels being discussed here, is essentially a problem novel. Each of the families of the protagonists has been upset by divorce; each of the protagonists is unsure of her place in her new situation. The girls ask, "Where do I belong?" They escape into their families' pasts to help them answer this question. In the past they either witness their ancestors, as in *A handful of time* and *Who is Frances Rain?*, or they participate in the action as one of their ancestors, as in *The doll*. They discover that they do have a place in their families and that they belong to a land that gives spiritual significance to their identities. None of these girls remains in the past, but each returns to the present with a greater sense of identity and a sense of where she belongs, and is hence better able to cope with new situations.

The common theme of maturing through fashioning connections and relationships finds psychological grounding in the studies of education psychologist Carol Gilligan (1982, 1990) and Nona Lyons (1990). They obtained evidence supporting the idea that forming relationships and making connections are vital to the development of healthy adolescent girls and to emerging into female adulthood with a sense of identity. By interviewing adolescent girls in order to arrive at an understanding of the patterns of moral development, they learned that making relationships encouraged development, and that fear of isolation and separation thwarted development. Gilligan (1982) suggests that "for girls and women, issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the process of individuation" (8) as they do for maleness or male identity. Rather, adolescent girls form their identities through establishing relationships with others. Gilligan (1982) further suggests that:

> Thus women not only define themselves in a context of human relationships, but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. (17)

Lyons (1990) has determined that it is important that girls become interdependent, not dependent or independent (54). Logically, forming one's identity leads to a self-knowledge balanced by an understanding of others. The findings of Gilligan and Lyons strike a resonant chord with the portrayal of the fictional adolescent protagonists in these three novels.

The three protagonists, in part, form their identities as they learn to care for others. They learn that relationships can help them to grow; that it is not necessary or desirable to be independent. And they grow to realize the importance of understanding others on their own merits.

The doll combines three genres. It is a problem novel in that it is the story of Meg's coming to grips with her parents' still unannounced separation. It is also a time-travel fantasy. By holding Jessie, a family doll, when she goes to sleep, Meg is able to travel from the present to the past and to move into the time of her great-great-grandmother. The third genre is historical fiction. The reader travels with Meg into the past and witnesses the settling of Western Canada by pioneer families, specifically the Shearer family who made their way across the prairies to a homestead near Fort Carlton, Saskatchewan, in the 1880s. The author enables the emergence of both the protagonist's sense of identity and her sense of home by substituting a more ordered past in which family members are supportive and the land provides spiritual nourishment for her present problem world.

Meg is a ten-year-old whose relationships with the people closest to her are jeopardized in three significant ways: by her parent's impending divorce, her illness, and her relocation. Janet and Mark, Meg's mother and father, are unable to talk with their daughter about their separation, thus "By protecting Meg they were isolating her" (53). But Meg knows by her mother's tired and sad face that her parents would have more time to argue when she goes to stay with her grandmother. She also perceives that there are problems when her father hugs her a little too long. Janet and Mark both work, so when the sickly Meg does not get well, it is necessary for her to stay with Grandma Grace. Although Meg likes Grandma Grace and the old Cameron home in the country, it is not her own home, filled with the school relationships and connections that were important to her.

Taylor uses Meg's rheumatic fever as an external symptom of the distress that Meg feels inside. Of course, the illness separates her from friends at school. As a result of the separation caused by her illness and the separation caused by her parent's excluding her from their marital problems, Meg requires sleep and escape and comes to appreciate the nurturing care of her grandmother. How Meg ultimately gathers strength to face her problems is

the focus of *The doll*.

In a society in which mothers have careers that leave little time for nurturing their children, this lucky protagonist has a grandmother who can provide not only "hot nourishing broth" but the wisdom to give Meg time to herself. Most importantly, Grandma Grace gives her Jessie, the invalid doll that has had the power to restore the health to generations of sick Shearer girls.

The doll is presented by Taylor as Meg's connection to the past. Its power lies in the fact that it represents family, security and tradition. When she goes to sleep with the doll in her arms, Meg is transported to the time of her great-great-grandmother where she becomes Morag. As Morag, she is a member of what is known today as a traditional family. The Shearers, who are struggling together to establish a homestead in the Carlton District of present-day Saskatchewan, depend upon the co-operation of every member. Morag's relationships are clear and firm. She knows immediately that she belongs to the family by the clothes she is wearing; the fabric is the same as her mother's and the same as Papa's shirt, and even matches Jessie's clothes. Morag builds strong, supportive relationships by taking responsibility for the care of her younger sister, Lizzie. Learning to care for others is important in Meg's development. Her role in the Shearer family is clear and helps to establish her place within the family. She has no such opportunity in the present, as she is an only child.

Meg learns that Morag was good with animals, as well as all generations of Shearer women had been. She gains the respect of family members and a knowledge of her own strengths when she successfully herds the troublesome Evangeline with her new-born calf. Geordie's respect for Morag's ability to handle the difficult cow convinces him to give her the honour of naming the heifer, further strengthening her sense of belonging. It includes her as another member of this family who has kept the tradition of naming cows.

Learning to deal with sibling rivalry is part of her family experience. Initially, Morag calls Geordie a "jerk" for his teasing, not understanding that it is often evidence of his caring. She grows to love and appreciate being called "Midget." Taylor follows Morag's development from being annoyed with Geordie's teasing to being able to tease Geordie in return. Her ability to stand up to Geordie and declare herself "just the right size" foreshadows her ability to stand up to her twentieth-century parents.

Meg does not gain a sense of identity quickly. In the present her legs are still wobbly, indicating that her inner self is still unsure. She depends heavily upon Jessie, the doll, for escape, and she continues to depend on the bed as a way to hide from her problems.

In the present, Meg receives a letter from a school friend, Allison, from whom she has been separated because of Allison's parents' divorce. A summer visit to her father allows Allison to visit Meg. But re-establishing the connection between friends is not easy for either Meg or Allison:

'Allison!' There was no doubt that Meg was surprised...and delighted. But then she didn't know what to say. She climbed onto the bed and sat crosslegged facing her friend.

There was an awkward silence for a moment as they sat smiling at each other, waiting to see who'd speak first. Meg was afraid she's say something stupid. She did. (58)

By saying "something stupid", the girls are able to mend severed connections with shared giggles. Meg learns that Allison is not unhappy about her recent move away from her father because it keeps her from being passed constantly back and forth between her parents. For her own future benefit, Meg heeds Allison's lesson of objecting to being passed back and forth between parents.

Meg's two worlds begin to merge as she begins to think that the present is a dream and that the past is real. She is confused and hopes that the present is happening to someone else. The confusion leads her to ask questions about the past in order to gain a perspective for coping with the present. She feels a need to establish a connection between her two worlds. She establishes connections for herself by asking her Grandmother about family tradition for naming cows and discovers that many of the names have been used over and over, one being Evangeline. After seeing her reflection in the water, Meg asks her Grandmother who in the family she looks like. When the two look through the family album, they find a picture of the Shearer family where Meg recognizes each member. She discovers that she is most like Morag which helps her make the connection between her nineteenth- and twentieth-century families.

Taylor then builds up the tension between living in the past and living in the present by putting her protagonist in a crisis. Meg can't find the doll and so can't return to the past, a past in which she wishes to find permanent escape. Her feelings of isolation and loneliness increase as she searches in vain for the lost doll. Finally, it is the sensitive cat, Poss, who helps her find it and retreat to what has previously been the safe past. But problems brew there as well. There is a dangerous river crossing and even more dangerous prairie fires. When Jessie is thrown from the wagon and Lizzie jumps out to retrieve the doll, Morag takes the responsibility of retrieving the child and doll which causes them to be caught in a prairie fire. They do their best to survive in a ditch which contains very little water. The girls survive, but the experience weakens the already fragile Morag and she dies just as the family reaches Fort Carlton. The death of Morag forces Meg to live in the present. Her grandmother alerts the girl's mother and father of Meg's weakened condition when she finds her granddaughter in a coma. The author uses Morag's death to force Meg to realize that she cannot continue to be both Morag and Meg. Meg finds this an exhausting experience, but as she recovers, she is ready to "stand on her own two feet" and get out of bed.

Fortified by the support of her pioneer family, the relationships she has built and the connections she has established, Meg is able to face her twentieth-century problems. She is able to talk with her parents and tell them what she feels is best for her. At first, "Meg hardly recognized her own voice" (85).

She screams, fearing that she will not be heard. Then, gaining control, she recognizes that using her voice helps her parents who are having equal difficulty finding their voices. She demands that she be accepted as a person. And then Meg comes to a new awareness of her parents:

> They don't know what to do any more than I do, Meg thought, amazed. Maybe even less than I do. They had to make the decision; I just have to do the best I can, like with the cow, or the badger. She was surprised at how calm she felt. (86)

Her new strength leads Meg to realize that it is herself whom she must know before she is able to help others. Through this strength, and as a result of her established relationships, Meg is able to know her own voice and know that she belongs to a family in a meaningful way. Perhaps her family is not as perfect as she would like, but she knows she will find her place within it. Finding her voice, thus, represents forming the needed relationships and an awareness of her identity.

Who Is Frances Rain? (Buffie 1987) is also a problem novel set in modern-day Manitoba, a fantasy of travel in time to the era of Elizabeth's great-grandmother which leads to a setting appropriate for historical fiction. Elizabeth is an adolescent who is afraid to form relationships as a result of being abandoned by her father. Her mother remarries Toothy Tim, which is the nickname Elizabeth gives her new step-father because he is always smiling. Tim desperately tries to form relationships with each member of the family, but finds the fear of being hurt so strong as to render relationships nearly impossible.

Fifteen year-old Elizabeth rejoices in her yearly summer holiday at Rain Lake with her grandmother, Terry. She is accompanied by her brother Evan who has become increasingly bitter because his father has not sent for him to live in Toronto as he had promised. Elizabeth becomes the housekeeper and "mother" to the family, and cares for Erica, her younger sister. She finds her mother, Connie, cold and distant. Connie buries herself in her work to avoid dealing with her recent separation. She is so torn apart by her husband's leaving that she is afraid to risk new relationships. Elizabeth feels separated from her mother because her mother does not communicate with her about her recent decision to remarry.

Connie marries Tim who is viewed by Elizabeth and Evan as an intruder but by young Erica as a friend. He is a homebody who tries to forge links with his new family. But, he is able to form a fatherly connection only with Erica, which causes Erica to desert Elizabeth in favour of him. As a result, Elizabeth feels abandoned by her sister and feels that she no longer has a place in her city home.

However, Elizabeth does feel at home on Rain Lake with her Grandmother, Terry. Grandmother can see how desperately her daughter's family needs to forge bonds. The catalyst Terry sees for forging such healthy connections is her new son-in-law, Tim. Elizabeth hates Tim even more when she finds out

that he has been writing to Terry, thus threatening to come between her and her grandmother. The grandmother's relationship with her daughter has always been strained, but there is little fear of separation from her granddaughter who is a kindred spirit. In the kitchen, Elizabeth and Terry share confidences, but it is in the kitchen that Connie and her mother often have verbal battles. Terry confronts her daughter in the hope of helping her open up. She tells her daughter:

'But Connie, [ex-husband] he's the loser. Not you. It wasn't your fault. But you're starting to lose everything, too. By closing yourself off. Shutting out Tim. You have to decide. Tim won't leave you. Not like Carl.' (67)

Nevertheless, Connie feels that she has remarried too early. The impossibility of her having a trusting relationship with Tim leaves her unable to help either herself or her children.

Elizabeth begins to find strength and healing for herself as she deals with her own identity and often feels more like, as she says, "reckless Lizzie." She finds strength not only in her Grandmother, but also in May Bird who runs the lodge on the lake. May and Elizabeth work in the kitchen together and talk about family, and Elizabeth's connections to the lake area. May Bird's teenage nephew, Alex, has ideas of forming a relationship with Elizabeth, but finds her sarcasm and defensive manoeuvers exasperating. Even though Elizabeth does notice "this new Alexander Bird" (63) as kind and thoughtful, she continues to push him away. Elizabeth's refuge becomes her canoe trips to Rain Island. This is the one place her grandmother forbids her to go, warning her of dangerous rocks just under the water which represent the Grandmother's unresolved questions about her own past. Elizabeth is unaware of her Grandmother's questions. Instead, she feels a need to escape when she is called by a restless spirit to the island. Her first trip to Rain Island nearly ends in disaster when she does not heed her grandmother's warning of a storm which blows her further and further away. As she tries in vain to paddle against the wind, she hears Tim calling her name. His rescue attempt is clumsy, but successful. Buffie represents Elizabeth's emotional situation metaphorically as she is blown away from her feeling of home and is emotionally in need of a rescue. Elizabeth knows that Tim has gone to some risk to save her, as he has no skill with the boat and motor, but together they are able to return to camp. Tim further builds a trusting relationship with Elizabeth by not telling the others of the danger she had put herself into. This leads Elizabeth to make her peace with Tim as she refers to herself as a "born-again stepdaughter" (68) and begins to appreciate his caring instead of thinking of him as an intruder.

Armed with a pamphlet for amateur archaeologists and a few tools, Lizzie finds subsequent trips to Rain Island to investigate an old mining camp more productive. She digs for her family roots in a square of sunken moss where she finds a blue kitchen table with yellow flowers. She immediately questions

whether such a decorative table could have ever belonged to a tough prospector. She also finds a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles, which, when she puts them on, give her the power to see back into the time of her great-grandmother. The sense of power and insight is accompanied by a feeling of tremendous pressure. Her findings lead her to ask many questions which, in turn, lead her to self-knowledge and connections to her own past.

Elizabeth watches her Great Grandmother, Frances Rain, as a young woman and prospector, when wearing the spectacles. She comes to know Frances as the mother of a weak and sickly thirteen-year-old who has been taken away from her by the girl's grandfather because of his embarrassment over her illegitimacy. Elizabeth shares the heartache of the separation of mother from daughter when the grandfather returns three months later to force the girl to leave at a time when her mother is not on the island. Back at camp in the present day, Elizabeth reflects that "A whole lot of people had been left behind, it seemed to me" (90). She relates this event from the past to her father's leaving in the present, but continues to ask why he did so. The only answer she has for herself at this point is a defensive one. She will not form relationships and therefore will not put herself in a situation where she might leave someone. She comments: "All I knew was that I'd live my life the way I wanted, too. And I wouldn't leave anyone behind. Because I wouldn't get married (92)."

While consciously avoiding relationships, she is unconsciously attracted to Alex who cares about her and tries to help. Filled with the knowledge of the "ghosts" on Rain Island, Elizabeth is desperate to share her secret with someone she can trust. The only person to whom she can talk is Alex, but she is worried he will laugh at her. Gradually, she tells Alex about Frances Rain. He helps her make the connections to the past by suggesting that she talk to Harvey, a long-time resident of the lake area. Alex slowly convinces Elizabeth that he does not think her "nutty," but instead is envious of her experience. Wanting to be a part of this experience, he encourages Elizabeth to return to the island and to retrieve the sketch book that belonged to the sickly girl. Elizabeth is determined to return alone, but she is unable to paddle against the wind. She knows that she cannot do it and reluctantly asks Alex to go with her. Realizing that she needs Alex is a turning point in her development. Together they discover that the girl is Teresa – Terry, Elizabeth's grandmother. The connection between the past and present is sealed when the grandmother gives Elizabeth the signet ring that she saw Frances Rain wearing in the past – a symbol of precious family unity.

Elizabeth's sense of self-identity becomes clearer as she forms relationships with Alex and Tim, just as her vision becomes clearer through the spectacles. But, there is one final threat to healthy relationships. Grandmother, strained by the family lack of harmony, has a heart attack. Symbolically, she is heartsick that her daughter has finally forced Tim to leave. With her new-found strength, Elizabeth is able to communicate with her mother and save the

family unity. She searches for her mother, thinking she would not "sit around waiting for something to happen" (145).

A symbolic storm is brewing as the tension of the story builds. Elizabeth talks with her mother as she never has before and convinces her to stop Tim from leaving. She now knows, as her wise Grandmother knows, that they all need him. As mother and daughter leave for the lodge to find Tim, the rain begins and relieves the pressure for the family.

But wisdom does not come easily or quickly to grandmothers, either. Terry knew what it was like to be left behind:

'I know how it is to feel left behind and left out. Being brought up by my grandparents was hard. They were too old to take on a young girl. Old-fashioned and strict. I felt all alone and angry. Sometimes it takes a while before you really know why people do things. Especially when they're your parents.' (44)

Terry thought that her mother, Frances Rain, had not wanted her and that she decided not to return to the island to get Terry. In the present, Elizabeth proved otherwise to Frances by showing her Teresa's sketch book and diary which told of Teresa's desire to remain on Rain Island resolving her grandmother's guilt over having left the island – the incident that had generated Frances Rain's restless spirit.

The connections Elizabeth made with the past as she dug for self-knowledge on the island and the relationships she built in the present allowed her to take charge of her own life and to risk future relationships. She knew of the possibility of being abandoned, but realized also that to trust those you love is worth the risk.

In *A handful of time* (Pearson 1987) Patricia is also parted from her family because of her parents' recent separation. Patricia is sent from Toronto to a lake in central Alberta to spend the summer with cousins she has never met. Aunt Ginnie, her mother's sister, is kind and nurturing, but is unable to convince her four children to accept this "little Easterner" who is unable to paddle a canoe and is afraid of the bloodsuckers and toads that are used to "test" her. Failing miserably the taunting tests of her cousins, she feels separated, inept, and hopeless – alienated by her family and the land. She feels that she is only known as the daughter of a television celebrity with no identity of her own.

Patricia is unwilling to share her voice: during her trip west she feels threatened by airplane seat mates when they continually asked her questions, and again she feels threatened when she arrives at the cabin:

As she wolfed down the comforting dinner, she was tempted to tell Aunt Ginnie about her own recipe for carrot cake. But then she'd have to speak; it was safer to remain silent. (14)

She takes refuge in caring for the baby, Rosemary, whom she views as non-threatening because Patricia doesn't have to speak to her. She not only wishes not to talk, she also wishes to disappear.

Patricia's cousins, led by Kelly, also thoughtlessly wish that Patricia would disappear. Aunt Ginnie tells her children that Patricia must be included in their adventures, so the children decide to leave together and then separate for the day, returning home as a group when the dinner bell rings. This fraud leaves Patricia on her own most of the day. She retreats to the tiny guest cabin called La Petite where she discovers a pocket watch that been given to her grandmother by her fiancé thirty-five years earlier. Winding the watch takes Patricia to the time when her own mother, Ruth, was twelve-years old. Patricia is able to observe her mother as well as the entire Reid family from the desirable position of being invisible and silent.

Through her visits to her mother's time, Patricia learns the reasons for her mother's defensive attitude and her need to be in control of situations. Patricia sees Ruth during her twelfth summer at the same cabin as an angry, isolated and unhappy girl. Over and over again, she sees Ruth punished by a bitter and unhappy mother. Both of Ruth's parents berate her because she is a girl, while the boy's mischief is thought of as "natural." When Ruth is finally able to take revenge, she does so by hiding her mother's only treasure, the pocket watch that was given to her by her dead fiancé. The same watch remains lost until Patricia finds it years later as she retreats to La Petite. Patricia grieves for her mother's situation and begins to understand that her present attitude has been shaped by a mother who either raged with anger or was impassive.

Patricia desperately would like to help young Ruth, but finds that from her position as a "ghost" she is not able to help:

> No wonder ghosts were sad; they were removed from living. It occurred to Patricia that not only was she a ghost in the past, she was like one in the present as well. There was no longer anywhere to escape to. (128)

Feeling helpless in the past and breaking the watch force Patricia to deal more directly and honestly with the present. But the present includes a visit from Nan, Ruth's mother, for whom Patricia has formed a strong dislike. The only thing Kelly and Patricia share is a dislike of their grandmother. Nan has not yet come to terms with the disappointments of her life; her wishing that time would stand still is metaphorically represented by the broken watch. As a result of her desire to live in the past, she makes everyone around her miserable. She thoughtlessly reveals the separation of Patricia's parents to the cousins.

The knowledge of Patricia's parents' separation leads the cousins to feel sorry for her, but this does not bring Patricia the respect she must gain if she is to form a positive identity. Sympathy does not lead to reciprocal relationships. Patricia, too, must begin to participate in family affairs.

When Bruce, a Reid cousin, injures his foot and must be rushed to the emergency room, Patricia is given the opportunity to quiet the upset Rosemary and to cook dinner for the family. These are skills with which she feels very confident. Everyone is impressed with her ability, and for the first time Patricia feels at home. She thinks, "This is my family.... This is a place where I belong" (153).

The reader follows this young girl on her journey of development from being called "Potty" to gaining respect and being called Patricia by Kelly who truly grows to care about her. Patricia grows from preferring to be alone to volunteering to help build a raft. The relationships with the family become meaningful. But Patricia still wants to mend the relationship between Ruth and Nan and the relationship between herself and her mother. Pearson represents these lost relationships with the lost watch:

> Patricia kept the watch concealed under her clothes and began to consider if she should give it back to her grandmother. It was no use to her anymore. Maybe doing so might somehow help make things better between Nan, her mother and her. (141)

Patricia realizes that the situation between Nan and Ruth is not her problem, and that her mother also must be part of the solution. On the other hand, Patricia is not better able to deal with her own mother. She has seen and understood the circumstances that developed her mother's defensive attitude. Patricia can begin to accept her mother as she is.

When Ruth does visit the lake at the end of the summer, she has no desire to remember the unhappy times of her childhood. Instead, she constantly talks about leaving. Patricia is able to see the unhappy child in her defensive mother and is finally able to reach out to her. Both mother and daughter have a tremendous need to be loved. Their impasse is finally overcome when Patricia is angered at being called "darling" instead of her real name. Not being called by her real name makes her think that her mother doesn't really know who she is, that she has no identity of her own. But Patricia does not want to repeat history. As with the other protagonists, we see a daughter gain her voice and use it to help her mother who is in need. Together they decide to return the watch to Nan, which they hope will mend the past and end the revenge. Mother and daughter decide to silence the past and live in the present together.

In *A handful of time* the nurturing caregiver is Aunt Ginnie. She helps to build relationships between her children and Patricia. She also helps to build the relationship between her niece, Patricia, and her sister, Ruth. As a role model, she is successful as Patricia declares that she, too, hopes to be a mother when she grows up.

Gilligan's and Lyons' research with adolescents tells us that caring, continuity, relationships, networking, and connections are all important to the healthy growth of adolescent girls. For Meg, Elizabeth and Patricia, making connections with the past in order to understand and cope with the present is

very important. Caring for others helps all three girls form relationships that define their roles and places in their families. Each girl cares for younger siblings. Then, as the girls mature, they are able to care for and understand their parents as well.

Lyons (1990) suggests "that seeing others in their own terms and contexts may be the cutting edge of growth and change" (62). Certainly, when Elizabeth begins to appreciate Tim's caring she begins to mature. Patricia also needs to understand her mother as a girl so that she can reach out to her with love that they both need to share.

Meg, Elizabeth and Patricia learn the importance of listening and talking and not shutting out with silence. Each of these girls learns to share her voice with her family in order to bridge severed relationships and to express her own needs. Thus, these fictional characters find a balance between the needs of others and their own needs. The girls became interdependent, not dependent or independent.

Through the narrative patterns of these three novels, the protagonists mature and learn to share their voices as a result of heightened awareness of their identities. Each book begins in the problem novel genre in which the protagonist is unwilling to face her difficulties. Time travel provides both a place and more ordered situations in which protagonists can mature. The girls are able to form relationships and make connections to their pasts through the spiritual healing that comes from the natural world as well as from personal connections. Although unable to achieve time travel, modern adolescents can be encouraged to understand their family history in order to strengthen their sense of belonging, and to balance their own needs with those of others to achieve a sense of identity. Forming relationships and connections is as important to adolescent readers as it is to the three protagonists. Fiction can serve as a mirror for modern Canadian readers to understand the importance of their history, their land, and the people with whom they belong. When adolescents connect their own lives with fictional lives, they may more ably cope with their own development.

WORKS CITED

Bond, N. *A string in the harp*. New York: Puffin Books, 1976.

Buffie, M. *Who is Frances Rain?* Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1987.

Egoff, S. *Worlds within: Children's fantasy from the middle ages to today*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1988.

Gilligan, C. *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Gilligan C., Lyons, N., & Hanmer, T.J. *Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Lyons, N. P. "Listening to voices we have not heard" in *Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, Ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Lunn, J. *The root cellar*. Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1981.

Mayne, W. *Earthfasts*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1966.
Nesbit, E. *House of Arden*. Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1908.
---. *Harding's luck*. Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1909.
Pearce, P. *Tom's midnight garden*. Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1958.
Pearson, K. *A handful of time*. Markham, Ont.: Puffin Books, 1987.
Sauer, J. *Fog magic*. New York: Viking Press, 1943.
Taylor, C. *The doll*. Saskatchewan, Sask.: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987.

Karen Day *has a Ph.D. in elementary education and teaches children's literature at the University of Alberta.*