CROSSING OVER: METONYMIC PROCESS AS AN ACT OF FAITH IN THE POETRY OF KAY SMITH

by

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Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts (English)

Acadia University
Fall Convocation 1997

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine the poetry of Kay Smith. In the first chapter I explore her use of metonymic process in "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer": a long religious poem published in her first book of poetry by the same title. In the second chapter I look at how this process is extended and used in a selection of non-religious poems from At the Bottom of the Dark and When a Girl Looks Down. Finally, in the third chapter I show how the metonymic process, used by Smith to make connections between words and ideas in her earlier poems, now helps her to build a connection between life and death in a selection of new poems published in The Bright Particulars.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for mentors. For David Lyle Jeffrey who inspired me to explore my faith through the study of literature. For Hilary Thompson who offered a timely word of encouragement and believed that I had something worthwhile to say. For David Baron who actually took the time to work with me. He showed me respect in concrete ways by reading and commenting on my work immediately and by allowing me to find my own conclusions in my own way with genuine and helpful guidance. For Kay Smith whose poetry and life deepens my commitment to faith as an open-ended journey.

I am grateful for friends. For Sue Beare who helped me out of a dark place so that I could write this thesis. For Monica Johnson and Debbie Kunkle who, quite simply, I love. For their partners Ryan Johnson and Joe Earles who always supported me with a welcoming heart. For Noah Johnson--the mystery he is and is becoming. For Jeff Biddenscombe who encouraged me greatly. For Jane Wills who never lets me lie to myself. For Tammy Gogol whose presence on this planet assures me that I am never alone. For Tony Tamburro whose support is never ending. For Holly who was my loving lap-cat friend as I wrote my thesis. For Jessie.

Introduction

Kay Smith was born in 1911 in Saint John, New Brunswick. Her ensuing journey was and is propelled by her never ending curiosity and her commensurate love for what lay beyond her self.

According to a chronology of her life found in a Cormorant issue dedicated to her, she began her teaching career in 1949 at Alma College in St. Thomas, Ontario, where she met A.J.M. Smith, Frank Scott, E.J. Pratt, and Earle Birney. A year later she returned to Saint John and taught at the Saint John Vocational School for thirty years. Her prize project was the annual Shakespeare play which she directed at the school. Also in the forties, Smith was a member of a group of artists and writers that included Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Ted Campbell, P.K. Page and Fred Ross. Her first book of poetry, Footnote to the Lord's Prayer, was published in 1951. Twenty years later, Fred Cogswell knocked on her door to ask if she had any poems. From this enquiry came her second book of poetry, At the Bottom of the Dark, published in 1972. In 1978, Fred Cogswell's Fiddlehead books published her third book of poetry, When a Girl Looks Down. Then, in 1987, she published a series of five poems in White Paper Face in the Window and her collection of poems, The Bright Particulars. In the meantime, she continued her learning journey by taking three Philosophy courses at the University of New Brunswick's Saint John Campus: Philosophy of Art and Literature in 1986, Philosophy of Religion in 1987, and Philosophies of the East in 1989. In 1990 she sailed on the Oceanos for a month long study-course in Italy and Greece, accompanied by friend and photographer, Eunice Willar. (Cormorant 9-14)

This account of Smith's life only recounts one aspect of her life-journey. However, I am primarily interested in Kay Smith as a Christian poet. In view of this, I held an interview with Kay Smith to hear the story of

her faith. This was a casual and preliminary interview and was, unfortunately, not properly recorded. I was able to transcribe parts of the cassette, however, and include them in this introduction with interjected ellipses in square brackets to mark where the recording is too faint.

Smith attended the Germain Baptist Church in Saint John's all of her life. The story of her faith begins with her memories of a young Sunday School teacher, Helen, when Smith herself was around fourteen:

> When I was a little girl in Grade nine we had in our church, Germain Street Baptist Church, a Sunday School teacher who was so truly spiritual that I can say it was really my contact with her[...]and I think I was very fortunate, now I am a Baptist, but our church was much broader than some of the other Baptist churches. We had a minister, Dr. Cole, for over 30 years and he had a great influence. That was the beginning[...]When I got to a certain age I questioned[...]but all in all I think my faith was still there.

In the telling of her faith story, Smith often speaks of the influence of the Dean of Women, Mary Hassel, during her English literature studies at Mount Allison University:

> She was a very interesting, talented and spiritual person who was also interested in the arts. And she was very interested in us. We were young[...]eager. She was English and had come to be head of the vocal department. But she was so effective and helpful in her contact with students that she was asked to become the Dean of Women. Anyway, she was very interested in people and once a week she'd invite a number of us to her room after dinner. At that age there were so many things we

> wanted to talk about. It was wonderful to have her guidance and opinions and she always asked the right questions. It was a very inspiring time. I was very fortunate.

Later in the interview, she connects the whole idea of stillness and its importance to this same woman:

> Learning to be still. The woman who had been Dean got me thinking about this. One day she invited me to her room. And see, I had no trouble getting to know everybody and I was so interested in what I was doing. I was just happy and excited all the time. And she said, "You know, you should learn to be quiet."

At this point in the interview Smith paused; she then smiled, looked at me and said, "Be still and know. Be still and know." "What?" I asked. "That I am God," she answered, referring to Psalm 46:10. The ability to be still was something that Smith considered extremely important. It was a spiritual practise that made writing poetry possible for her. She said:

> I don't always follow...practice this myself. But it means a great deal. If you're trying to write you need to do it. It's very enriching. It's almost as though the poem is in the process of being given to you.

For Smith, writing poetry demands that she be still enough to receive the poem. In this case, it is paramount that she practice stillness if she is to create poetry. Later in the interview, she brings the subject of stillness up again, saying:

> Being still. I really practice that, trying to be still[...]Yes, it's very hard in this noisy, noisy world, isn't it, to be still. So, out of this concern and interest that was encouraged by Mary

> Hassel, we made a room in the ladies' college that had been full of newspapers and we made a chapel. It was just a small room and somebody from town gave us a lovely table and someone gave us a cross. I remember when it was all finished. The winter. Just before Christmas. We called it the quiet room[...]I remember the first time and there was a small group assembled and we looked out the window and there was a moon and Mary Hassel sang[...]and I read from the New Testament. That was where I learned to be still. We used to call it the quiet room.

While quiet is something that Smith values, Smith does struggle with the kind of quiet that emerges from singleness:

> I am an unclaimed precious woman. There are all kinds of reasons. I've had a lot of good friends. I've had boyfriends too, but in every case it hasn't worked out. Seems strange doesn't it? I am not going to pretend for a moment that I wouldn't have wanted to be married. But I wasn't anxious for it as some young girls.

As Smith thinks of her attitude towards marriage she thinks back to her high school days.

> Now I have a memory of some of us in Grade 11. We were visiting a friend in Cheticamp. We were walking along the main road. And one said, "I want to be married [...]." But I didn't. I wanted to be an actress. That didn't work out. It would have but I couldn't go as far as I would have liked to in the theatre because there was a lack of money at that time. I guess I thought it was stupid. I don't know.

This memory of Smith's youth triggers another memory of when she was even younger.

> When I was four I had a little boyfriend. He had a red coat. Daniel and I would walk down the road and I would have all my dolls in the carriage. We looked like husband and wife. And everyone was amused. I had all my romance when I was four. I can remember Daniel demanding that [...] buy me a diamond ring. Of course she (sic) refused and this quite upset him. Children are wonderful.

When asked if she feels that being single has enriched her life, she says:

> I don't know. I suppose I have had opportunities I wouldn't otherwise have. Well I'm happy. I've had wonderful friends. And I've been free to do almost anything I've wanted. I wouldn't say it was a substitute for marriage. I wouldn't say it's better either--better than a good marriage anyway.

Regardless of where Smith has been along the journey of her life, her faith remains vital. She says:

> There was a period when I didn't go [to church]. I had questions that I couldn't answer. I may not have been able to say why for sure. But I recognized that it was so necessary for me to have a faith. But, you know, I am still in the choir. I know it's ridiculous at my age.

Smith's participation in the Germain Street Baptist Church choir is a telling testimony of her commitment to both her faith and the fullness of life.

As demonstrated by her life and her faith, Kay Smith's poetic journey is marked by commitment and openness. As she embarks on a journey, she trusts that it is worthwhile enough for her to remain open to the arising

process. I too engaged in a journey while writing this thesis. I began my thesis with an idea: I wanted to build a bridge between postmodern and Christian thought. When I went looking for a Christian poet who would do this for me I discovered Kay Smith, though I was not at all certain that she was a postmodern thinker. I did, however, recognize in her poetry a genuine and yet open-ended faith that appealed to me. Having met her I was further intrigued and equally uncertain. I read Christian literary theorist, David Lyle Jeffrey's People of the Book and began Jacques Derrida's Of Grammatology. Specifically, two ideas emerged for me from these theorists. On the one hand, Derrida says:

> Knowledge is not a systematic tracking down of truth that is hidden but may be found. It is rather the field of "freeplay," that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble. (Grammatology xix)

Jeffrey, however, indicates that:

> Christian literary theories are generally affirmative of an ultimate Truth or Logos, but also firm in their insistence on the limitations of human language more than dimly to refract that Logos. (Jeffrey 9)

Neither of these attitudes towards God or truth seemed effective to me. I was eager to find a middle ground: an approach to faith that was both cognizant of the problem incurred by assuming a central Logos and was, at the same time, faithful to the process of seeking knowledge with God. Having defined the goal, when I then went to Smith's poetry I was lost. I did not know how to fit her poetry into the middle of these two theories. I did not think it would be fair to try to make her say what I so wanted to hear. In

the end, I had to abandon the theories, although they continued to inform my reading, and focus on her poetry itself.

I discovered a poet who explores; she probes her world for mysterious interconnections as an act of faith. Not only does she find connections between disparate things in her world, but she also seems to be the kind of writer who builds meaning out of these connections. In his essay, "The metonymic and metaphoric poles," Roman Jakobson identifies the metaphoric and metonymic poles of language and theorizes about how different artists depend on different poles of language in their work. He explains that:

> The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. (57-8)

Kay Smith, it seems to me, is exemplary of the kind of writer who builds her poems not so much on similarities perceived between things as on points of contact between them. In Jakobson's terms she is primarily a metonymic writer--that is she links idea with idea, item with item, word with word, on the basis of contact, connection, contiguity.

David Lodge, in his book The Modes of Modern Writing, picks up on Jakobson's terminology and develops his ideas on metonymic process. He regards Wordsworth and Philip Larkin as typical, even representative, metonymic poets and examines metonymic process as it appears in both poets. He quotes Wordsworth, who was determined to "choose incidents and

situations from common life and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men" (118-9). Larkin, too, was concerned with the common life and believed

> that the task of the writer was to communicate as accurately as he can in words experience which is initially non-verbal; 'poetry is born of the tension between what [the poet] non-verbally feels and what can be got over in common word-usage to someone who hasn't had his experience or education or travel grant'. (214)

Both writers felt that there was something in the real world that was to be appropriated by poetry. The kind of poetry that evolved out of this belief was based on contiguities found in the world; the semantic expression of this attitude was metonymic poetry. Smith's poetry has not the realistic effect achieved by Larkin's or Wordsworth's poetry because she uses metonymy for somewhat different purposes. Yet her faith that the world has something to teach her is similar to theirs. In an interview with Kraglund she says, "The world is so beautiful. The world we were given is so beautiful. The world we have dominated is not always so." And so as Smith explores this world she tries to let it speak to her. Metonymic language is the semantic voice invoked for this purpose.

To be more specific, when I say that Smith is a metonymic poet, I am referring to her use of metonymic process. She uses both metonym and metaphor as tropes within her poetry in the creation of images. However, the process by which she does this is metonymic. She does not begin with an equivalence or a metaphor and then proceed to justify, explain, or elaborate upon it. She does not move from one idea to the next through intellectual judgments of similarity. One metaphor is not compared and contrasted with

another. She does not begin with a message that she must elucidate. This, in Jakobson's terms, would be poetry based on metaphoric process. Instead, she begins with a contiguous connection between two objects or words. She then builds a poem by developing further semantic connections between these words and others. The metonymic process is visually explorative and based on association rather than equivalence or similarity. I have not looked for the meaning of Smith's tropes, be they metonyms or metaphors. Because I focus so exclusively on Smith's metonymic process, it may give the impression that I am ignoring Smith's metaphors. This is not the case. I am simply not explaining the meaning of her tropes. I am more interested in process. And the process by which Smith makes connections and builds meaning out of the particulars that she observes is metonymic. Metonymic process is like a journey.

This journey begins in the first chapter of my thesis with "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," a complex religious poem that weaves a web of words while examining fragments of the Lord's prayer, one at a time. The verbal exploration is marked by layers of connections that are achieved metonymically. Smith does not offer a linear logical explication of her text, the Lord's Prayer, but rather she enters it and builds meaning out of associations between contiguous words. Because she uses metonymy more than metaphor, she is able to build new connections and open up the journey. This process empowers the words to take her somewhere yet unexplored. No metaphor is sufficient when speaking of God or the faith journey and subsequently she builds on the concept of God and faith by spreading the tentacles of meanings through her use of metonymy. She makes her way through the Lord's Prayer by opening herself up to its varied meanings. In so doing, she reveals both the depth of her faith and the power of such a

process to deepen one's faith. Smith dies to self, gives up preconditioned interpretations of the Lord's Prayer, connects death with life, and lets the contiguities of nature and words lead her onward and beyond into the mysterious presence of God.

When, in my second chapter, I turn to Smith's next two books of poetry, At the Bottom of the Dark and When a Girl Looks Down, the journey takes different twists and turns. (As a note to readers, all references to these poems can be found in her collection, The Bright Particulars.) Smith continues to explore; but instead of delving into religious themes and Christian motifs, she "break[s] from the shell of habit," ventures into the world, opens her eyes, and experiences God's mystery through her connection to what lies outside of her (Bright Particulars 12). She continues to connect contiguous words and objects in a way that extends the mysterious web of God. There are fewer connections than in "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer" as these poems are shorter. It seems as though she is more interested in engaging the varied voices of the natural world. The more threads she can pull together, the more mysteriously full her life will be. These connections are dependent on a willingness to suspend her sense of self and look beyond. They are also dependent on a kind of faith that is expectant. She approaches the world with openness because she has faith in its capacity to teach. The world is, admittedly, Smith's world, a world of natural and sometimes inanimate objects. She does not engage with people or their ideas very often in these poems. It is not that she is unconcerned with people. The testimonies of friends, acquaintances and students, found in the Cormorant issue dedicated to her, attest to Smith's love for people (27-74). But rather, she is not concerned with belief so much as the way of things and the natural world. She is interested in process. This is why metonymy is so crucial to

her poetry. It invites exploration through interconnectedness. As she seeks contact with nature, she enters its journey of death and rebirth with her eyes open to the connection of all things. Through metonymic process, she crosses over from the particularity of a vision to a mysterious sense of its connection to the web of God.

In my final chapter, I study Smith's new poems, again published in her collection, The Bright Particulars. In these poems, she is preoccupied with death and so rebirth takes on a more urgent quality as well. Metonymy is now used to build a relationship between death and rebirth itself. In this way the form and thematic concern are one and the same. She starts making connections between what was and what is through memory and openness to the present. She does not wade in memories for their own sake but rather as a means to reengage them for present-day living. She also uses memories to resurrect people with whom she can continue the conversation of life. People are brought to life through images, as in the paintings of her dead friend, Miller Brittain, in her poem, "Remembering Miller" (Bright Particulars 76). Such images are contiguous with both those who are dead and the poet who lives. She builds these connections, as she has done in the past, by using words in a specifically metonymic way. But even as death and rebirth are drawn together, the struggle involved in such a process proves daunting. Death seems so final. Its eventuality speaks with clarity when in one poem she waits for "death to slam the door in her face" (92). The way of life through death is not easy. It requires both openness and faith. Smith's openness is dependent on her faith that the journey is worthwhile, that there are things to learn, that there is always something beyond reach, that she can let go of habit and see things anew. The risks may take her to unknown depths but they will also enable her to cross over into the mysterious embrace

of God. Smith's use of metonymy is based on her faith, but metonymic process also serves to develop that faith. It reflects her openness and makes it possible for her to embark on a journey that she would not otherwise take. The connections that are made in this process build a faith of varied voices that in its complexity cannot be easily shattered.

I may have wanted to say that Smith builds a bridge between Christian and Postmodern thought. I may even believe that she does. That is not, however, what I have done in this thesis. Instead, I have journeyed with a woman whose life is marked by openness and faith and whose poetry reflects this attitude through her use of metonymic language.

Chapter I

Smith's poem, "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," published in her first book of poetry by the same title in 1951, is key to understanding how Smith uses metonymic process to reflect the way in which one journeys with God. Her poetic technique reveals both an open mind and an optimistic heart. As she works through the Lord's prayer, the words, from both the prayer and her own poem, carry her through several cycles of death and rebirth. This process is made possible by Smith's faith and her concomitant use of metonym. Smith always starts with small units and then builds a web. She lets the particulars of life and the contiguity of words help her cross over into the mysterious realm of God where all is interconnected. There is an element of faith involved in the use of this technique and certainly the content of this poem parallels the form.

Chapter 1 is significantly longer than those which follow because "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer" is Smith's most explicitly religious poem and as such it offers the greatest opportunity to establish how Smith's metonymic technique and Christian faith are intimately connected. In this poem she does not offer another creed of beliefs. Instead, she shares a vision of how we can journey with God through an ongoing process of death and rebirth. I argue that her use of metonymy, as she journeys through meanings, is in fact a technique based on her faith. Although her later poems are not explicitly religious, Smith continues to combine words as a way of exploring her world. Where her subject material is more varied her open-minded Christian faith remains evident through the technique that she uses.

In "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," Smith explores the prayer given by Jesus Christ to his disciples. The Lord's prayer is familiar to most people in the Western world and is central to the Christian faith. But Smith takes what is familiar and seemingly whole in itself and moves in it, lets it speak to her,

and rediscovers it through the process of writing about it. Smith writes ten segments of poetry based on her delineation of segments within the Lord's prayer. These segments are not unlike Roland Barthes' lexias used in his textual analysis of Poe's 'Valdemar'. A lexia is "a unit of reading" and according to Barthes it is chosen by the critic in a rather informal manner:

> All in all the fragmenting of the narrative into lexias is purely empirical, dictated by the concern of convenience; the lexia is an arbitrary product, it is simply a segment within which the distribution of meanings is observed; it is what surgeons would call an operating field: the useful lexia is one where only one, two or three meanings take place. (Barthes 173)

The reason for dividing up the text in this way is to explore meanings. Barthes adds, "Our aim is to manage to conceive, to imagine, to live the plurality of the text, the opening of its 'significance'" (173). By choosing segments of the Lord's prayer for exploration, Smith is in fact opening up the text.

Each poem segment is a unique exploration and acts as a footnote to that particular segment. The segments are made up of a different number of stanzas and within each segment the stanzas and the lines themselves are of varied length. Although each segment could stand alone, one is connected to the other with similar word or phrase repetitions and by the consistent death and rebirth momentum of the journey. As I explore each section, I address these two issues specifically. I reflect on Smith's use of metonymic process, what it says about her faith and how it articulates her faith. As well, I demonstrate how the theme of death and rebirth emerges as an affirmation that faith is more about process than belief. Each prayer segment thus leads

to a separate poem journey which is connected, nonetheless, to those which precede and follow it.

The prayer segment *OUR FATHER* forms the primary impetus for the poem segment that begins, "Our Father when morning walks on ocean." In this section the first line is followed by six repetitions of the construction, "Our Father when...," some of which are one line developments but others consist of up to three lines. The initial verse paragraph of nineteen regular-length lines is followed by thirty-three short lines which repeat some of the same ideas and images but do not continue the "Our Father when" construction. This is only one of two segments that is not titled, and this could indicate that this poem is about a journey that does not begin with the first line of the poem. It is connected to unknown or at least undeclared thoughts. This possibility is reinforced by the importance of the morning to this first poem segment. Clearly this is a morning of beauty and refreshment, but, like all mornings, evening precedes. Just as the morning does not mark the beginning of time, nor does this poem mark the beginning of the journey which it records.

If, then, this poetic segment is meant to explore the words *OUR FATHER*, it is a journey dependent on repetition and connections. The first stanza is a list of images which answer the repeated question implied in the phrase "our Father when." Each image points to the effect of the morning sunlight on nature or children. The connection between "Our Father" and "light" is more metonymic than metaphoric. It is based on the repetitive connection between these words, as in: "Our Father....when trees answer the light with birds in their speech,/ when light turns gull wings all but transparent" and "Our Father ....when grass points to creation's inwardness,/trembling with a million shining clues in the light." But it is

also meant to suggest that our Father's impact on nature is linked to the sun's impact on nature. Smith has built connections between God and light through association as well as likeness. This is important because she will later speak of God's involvement with the darkness and so to have described God with an exclusive metaphor would limit the God whom she is discovering. Nonetheless, the last line of the first stanza makes evident the connection between Our Father, the Son of God and light: "Our Father....in the featureless light around the heart, the cradle, /Son of light for the darkness in everyman." As well as reinforcing the association between "Our Father" and "light," it introduces the second stanza's emphasis on the impact of "Our Father" on the heart of humankind.

Building on the image of "Our Father" discovered in the first stanza, Smith develops semantic links between the Father, the morning, nature and the heart of humankind in the second. It is tempting to say that light is a metaphor for God, that man is darkness and God's light overcomes man's darkness. But Smith does not seem to limit meaning to straightforward metaphors; instead she repeats words in different syntagmatic units and then weaves the units together by virtue of their shared contiguity with a particular word or image. For example, "Our Father," "morning" and "the heart" of humankind are connected through the thrice repeated line "the heart is all covered with morning," of the second stanza and the thrice repeated phrase "Our Father when morning...." in the first. Not only does the morning tell us that "Our Father" is connected to the light, nature and children as the first stanza seems to indicate, but now it also connects the Father to the human heart and thus the human heart to nature and children. The key to this word web is "the morning;" for this is when it all happens.

Glory and praise

to the lightning eyes,
to the ruthless hands in cutting,
from womb of night
leaps the Light,
the heart is all covered with morning.
Dance, dance
of deliverance,
the mountain, the stone is singing;

When the morning light emerges, so too does the Father with "lightning eyes" to break the hard heart of humankind, "stern with his love." The morning brings the kind of deliverance that impacts on nature and the human heart. It is not as though one image follows the other in a linear fashion; the morning connects them one to the other. The effect is positive. The presence of the "Father" is as assured as the arrival of the morning; and, just as the physical effect of the sun on nature after an evening of darkness is positive, so too is the spiritual impact of the Son of light on hearts that have been immersed in dark sadness. While the first stanza colours an image of "Our Father" present in the creation of a beautiful morning nature scene, the second shows Him present in the making "whole what was broken" (in a bird, a flower and a man) in the morning. Together, the two stanzas reflect connections between sun and Son of God, between all of nature and humankind and "Our Father." The links between these words are established through the contiguous relationships between each of them with the "morning." This process of building meanings through word combinations is metonymic. It starts with a connection between "Our Father" and the "morning," and then develops into a rather large web of interdependent words.

As well as helping to make connections, and in lieu of these connections, it is possible to show that the morning offers rebirth to both the land and the heart in this section of the poem. The second stanza is introduced by the last sentence of the first by indicating that the light and the birth that morning offers to the day has its purpose in the healing needed from the darkness which it follows. The "Father" both breaks and heals in this stanza because in order to be healed the person must first be aware of his/her brokenness. He is "stern with his love/when shut out is his love," and with this sternness, God cuts through the darkness in the heart of humankind and "from womb of night leaps the light,/the heart is all covered with morning." Deliverance is the happy result of this emergence from the darkness as is a sense of God's love and grace. This is a love that belongs to all the creatures, for "the One who has taken whole what was broken" does so for a "wounded wing" and a "crumpled flower" as well as a "sad face." Smith is already integrating the death and rebirth cycle of nature with that of humans. Often she will show humans how to understand and receive the love of God by pointing them to nature. Again, this is Smith's way of starting with something particular and crossing over to something general.

The next section is Smith's shortest. *WHICH ART IN HEAVEN* is the title of a six-line verse made up of regular-length lines. Its brevity and the fact that it is followed by another separate section on heaven is indicative of the lack of success experienced on this particular metonymic journey.

This section is connected to the previous section by the "sun," which, like this heaven, is in the sky: "Heaven the words are birds are clouds/sun moon stars the words are flying." Smith has spoken of the power of the sun and its contiguity with God in the *OUR FATHER* segment and now she is listing it among several other things which are found in the sky. The two

sections are metonymically linked by the "sun," which in this section lacks the power to transform. Something is wrong. The feeling that nothing seems to have much power in this stanza arises out of the sun's lack of power. It is just one more thing propped up in the sky and listed in a syntagmatic chain of words.

There are several word combinations that reinforce the idea that in this exploration of heaven there is a high level of activity with few results. Heaven is connected to the nouns "words," "birds," "clouds," "stars," and the verbs which give momentum to these nouns are: "flying," "pointing," "leaping," and "harping." There seems to be some difficulty grasping heaven. Smith's use of the word "pointing" in the line "the crimson golden spires of the trees are crowds/pointing waves like acrobats leaping" clarifies this. Whether pointing describes the action of the "trees," "crowds," "waves" or all three, is difficult to discern because of the contiguous relation between them; however, it certainly connects them together so that the crowds are pointing like the trees or the acrobats are leaping in the same manner as the pointing waves. In this case, the metonymic relationship between the words makes way for a plurality of metaphors. Heaven becomes as unattainable as the word itself and despite the pointing and leaping it seems as though it is beyond reach.

And yet the last lines of this section may be building a bridge between heaven and earth through the wind's ascent and descent. The wind is found both in heaven and on earth: "up and through the mansions of air and harping/ wind on water in grass in leaves the music." First the "wind" is contiguous with "the mansions of air" which alludes to the heaven Jesus describes in the Gospel of John, "In my Father's house are many mansions," (John 14:2). And then the wind is found creating music with the grass and

water. The gap between heaven and earth is being bridged by the wind which is connected to both through syntagmatic proximity. Although there is not a specific death and rebirth scenario in this part of the poem, there is a sense of ascent and descent: a looking for heaven in the sky and a movement of heaven from sky to earth through the wind which moves through both realms.

The repetitive segment titled *HEAVEN WHICH ART IN HEAVEN OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN* introduces the longest and most technically complex sections in the poem. An introductory nineteen-line verse paragraph follows the momentum of the last section on heaven until cut short when a "heart topples." The second verse paragraph is made up of twenty-two lines of regular length and gives a vision of heaven from the perspective of "the bronze thatched boy." The third seventeen-line verse is made up of shorter lines and tells the story of the salesgirl's vision of heaven. This verse is followed by the question, "When will deliverance come?" and a subsequent short verse that repeats the construction "Go down..." seven times. This descent-focused verse is followed by the fifth stanza that repeats the construction "In the ..." ten times to show how shadow is present in several images of light. The sixth and last stanza of this section has eight lines of regular line length and though it continues to use the construction, "in the...," it is speaking of God's presence in many things. The last line of this section, "Hallowed be Thy name," is also the first line of the next.

Smith's exploration of heaven takes her through a very complex series of interconnected images that when harmonized can be understood as music. The title itself is musical and follows naturally from the last line of the previous section which ends in the word "music." It also repeats the word "Heaven" three times to indicate what the subject is. Smith will use

several contrasts and connections while exploring heaven in this, her longest poem segment.

First I will trace how Smith builds on the idea of heaven by connecting it to previous poem segments. For instance there is a link made by the two phrases "Heaven the words are birds are clouds sun moon stars the words are flying" in the short segment on heaven and "Heaven the heart somersaults in the air like a juggler repeats the words like circles shining" in the second. The "words" and the "heart" are linked by their contiguity with "Heaven" in each line. As the words and heart move through the air, there is a sense that Smith's exploration of heaven moves from a fascination with the word and its place beyond reach in the sky to something much closer to the human heart. In the sky and out of reach, the words are meaningless and the heart is exhausted. The heart, which is first linked with the flying words, simply cannot sustain the effort of trying to reach a sky-bound heaven and "topples with what has ceased to be light." The impact of the night on this "heart" reminds us of the heart that, at the beginning of the poem, was "all covered with morning." The heart, once broken and taken whole by the Father, has not arrived in heaven and is not at the end of its journey. Smith cannot seem to get very far with the image of heaven in the sky, which may explain why the previous section is so short. So she makes the transition of observing heaven in the sky to exploring heaven in the heart. The transition occurs through the rearrangement of syntagmatic units/phrases.

In fact there is much for the heart yet to learn on this journey with God. This segment contrasts two visions of heaven: one from a five year old boy and the second from a salesgirl. The two odysseys are connected by "Heaven," "mirror[s]," "s/Shadow" and the fact that they have third-person characters, namely a "bronze thatched boy" and a "salesgirl." Through the

connected journeys of these two people, Smith explores heaven as a place close to the human heart and, as such, a place of paradox.

First we see heaven through the eyes of a five year old boy who receives wind-swept messages "from topless sky." For this little boy, the sun has its power and as it "pours its richness on him," his "candid eyes" take everything in with "a clear and familiar joy." The problems that arise from reaching for heaven are not an issue for him; instead, the wind brings heaven to him:

> winds from topless sky bring messages of Heaven,
> curl them in a leaf around his pink whorled ear,
> whispering archly; with cool and grave delight
> on the island of the leaf his fingers travel lightly,

And so we see how the established link between heaven and wind continues and grows tentacles. Now the wind is connected to a leaf and the boy's fingers and by extension all those things which he touches or sees, because, "For him the far is but the edge of near." His way of relating to the world tells us something about heaven and we learn that "While he and the world exchange themselves like mirrors,/passers-by whose gaze is shaded by a shadow/see only a red-headed boy of five." We are reminded of Jesus' reported answer to the disciples who asked: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" According to the Gospel of Matthew, he said, "unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:1-4). Smith's little boy has the humility of one who receives God's gifts joyfully, without effort and without pride. The "wind" pervades his vision of heaven and the word reappears in connection with heaven, the boy, and those things which he touches and sees,

like the leaf. In this way, the wind is metonymically linked to several images and all that is connected to the wind becomes intertwined in the web of God begun in the *OUR FATHER* segment.

Just as the adult passers-by are shaded from seeing the reality of this boy's heaven, so too is the salesgirl blind to the meaning of heaven. While the boy's mirror was the world itself, "a mirror tempts the salesgirl with Heaven." Here there are connections being made with "Heaven," the "mirror" and "shadow." Shadow seems to be the result of a disconnection. The salesgirl who looks for heaven in the mirror's image of herself "catches the shadow in the curve of her glance," while the boy who looks out into the world finds his own reflection in what he sees. Though he does not know it consciously, he is aware that the world is a reflection of God. It is God's mirror. And in as much as he is connected to the earth, he too is a reflection of God. He has the humility of Jesus' child, in that he receives these heavenly messages as a gift that he has not earned and does not have to earn. The salesgirl is not so fortunate. While the boy sees heaven in the natural world, she looks for heaven in magic and the fantasy of a millionaire who will "fold her hand into his Heaven." She is like one of the acrobats of the previous section who is leaping for Heaven, "until stunned to gold." In the end, her heart topples with the question, "When, when will deliverance come?" It is not clear whether Smith takes Jesus' words to heart by looking to the child to gain an understanding of what heaven is or if she looks to the child and finds heaven in his gestures. Either way, what is clear is the way in which she uses the connections between mirror and shadow to say a little about what heaven is not. One does not find heaven by reaching, leaping or looking in the mirror--one finds exhaustion. But in the exhaustion there is hope.

The theme of death and rebirth is evident in this part of the poem. The salesgirl, who has been reaching for a fantasy-like heaven, realizes that it is not working. It is out of her brokenness that she will enter into the journey of death and rebirth. Smith does not answer her question, "when will deliverance come?" with a metaphor of God as light. Here Smith explores the God found in darkness and recommends Him to the salesgirl, saying:

> go down in the night to the water,
> go to the depths of your sorrow, go down, child,
> to the cold, stinging depths of your sorrow,
> go down when the moon burns like a wound,
> go down to the Shadow on the water.

The shadow which seemed to taint her self-image in the mirror is now the very image she is being led to embrace. Here "Shadow" is metonymically linked to the process of going "down." Furthermore, the first and last of the quoted lines in this descent indicate a strong connection between night and shadow. And yet we cannot say that "Shadow" is a metaphor for "going down" or "night," because Smith also alludes to shadow as product of light. The stanza which follows the salesgirl's descent lists several images of light:

> In the blind whiteness of surgery,
> in the drunkard's eyes on the curbstone,
> in the waxy white of breasts
> under the lips of lover,
> in the uncanny white of magnolias,

And in the end, Smith concludes that, "from light, lights, the light/streams forever the Shadow." Shadow, then is inescapable. It is not only associated with going down "to the depths of your sorrow" and the dark night, but it is also semantically related to the light. Shadow, therefore, connects light and

darkness, because of its physical and semantic contiguity with both. The salesgirl who sees a glimpse of her shadow in the mirror during the day seems to suppress it for the allure of magic and a magical heaven. She wants light without darkness and cannot accept their affiliation with one another. Eventually, however, the magic proves to be meaningless and she is left to deal with reality; a reality brought to bear on her through a poetic journey that takes the metonymic relationship between "night" and "Shadow" and that between "light" and "Shadow" to develop an association between all three.

The connections established between these words reveals the way in which the salesgirl's rebirth is foreshadowed. Because shadow is dependent on both light and darkness, it transcends the distinction between them and offers an image that represents a kind of paradox. In the last part of this prayer segment Smith builds on the idea of shadow as paradox by declaring God's presence in several seemingly opposing images; including "in our darkness, in our light." The rebirth of the salesgirl is not declared, but rather suggested. She does not emerge from the darkness; but instead, Smith connects light and darkness with God and the girl through shadow. The existence of light, as part of shadow, within the death-like experience foreshadows a rebirth. The declaration of God's presence in "the ashes of our sorrow, in our peace and in our terror" makes God available to the human heart in all its conditions and the awareness of God's presence, even in darkness, sheds light, gives hope and indicates a rebirth. Ironically, Smith's exploration of heaven and the human heart's desire for something better takes her through an exploration of what seems closer to hell. Shadow proves to be a recurring image which links light and darkness and speaks of the reality of paradox and God's presence within that paradox. To deny this

by searching for God only in the light will be destructive as it was with the salesgirl. One cannot have rebirth without death.

If light is foreshadowed through the paradox of shadow in the last section on heaven, then the presence of God in paradox is the answer offered by the untitled section that repeats the praise, "Thy Name be Hallowed." This section has the most uniform structure of the entire poem. "Thy name be Hallowed" is the opening line in three of the four stanzas, each of which is made up of eight short lines that repeat the construction "in the" to indicate God's presence in the many things declared (the second stanza begins with "Hallowed be Thy name"). This poem segment is not really differentiated from the last because it is so closely linked. Like the last section, it repeats the construction "in the" and uses opposing images to speak of God.

As the declarations, "Hallowed be thy name" or "Thy name be Hallowed," which introduce each stanza in this segment, indicate, the purpose of this poem segment is to praise God. This part of the poem praises God, "in the quiet pulse of darkness/ in the harpstrings of the light". Add to this sense of paradox the repetitive phrase "in the:"

> In the tall poise of the great
> in the comic solemnity
> of the grasshopper's gait,
> in the moment that trembles
> a molecule of joy,
> in the Grand Canyon hour
> of soul's immensity

And it is quite easy to get the impression that God can be praised in almost anything. This parallel structure is similar to that of the last two stanzas in the long segment on heaven. There the impression is that shadow is present

in all forms of light. "Shadow" is metonymically linked to "light" and "night" in a way that makes it represent paradox in the last section, and God is found present in paradox in this section, thereby making an association between God and "Shadow" and a host of other words that are already linked to these. Together, the stanzas are saying that where there is light there is also darkness; where there is life there is also God. God can be found in a multiplicity of ways, but do not expect to find a God of fantasy, for Smith's God is a God of paradox. God may be in all things, but so too is shadow.

We also learn something else about where God is hallowed. We get the impression that God is found in action and movement rather than the objects or subjects themselves. An example from each stanza shows God being hallowed in "walkers walking early," in the "folding of the hands" or the "moment that trembles." The last stanza makes this more explicit by speaking of God's presence in our actions: "in the working of our minds,/....in the building of our hands/in the speaking of our tongues." These statements, which repeat the connection between God and us through our actions, suggest that God is present within them and that we should act in such a way that God is hallowed through them. One might wonder about God's presence in our evil actions; however, Smith does not speak of these overtly. Instead she speaks of our shame, which assumes a recognition of sin as a positive feeling which anticipates something better. Even though God's presence is in all things, we are not left with a superficial God beyond approach, but rather a very real God in our heart's midst.

This portrait of God makes it possible for people, like the salesgirl, who find themselves in delusion to move beyond the fantasy. If God is in paradox, then those who find themselves in darkness also have the hope of

God's presence. The last phrase of this poem segment offers a great deal of hope to the salesgirl: "in the using of our shame/for the kneeling and the serving--/Hallowed be Thy name." The experience of sin repented through legitimate shame can invoke the humility required to love others. God is present in the movement of our hearts from shame to love, and this movement is not unlike a rebirth experience.

The section entitled *THY KINGDOM COME THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN* is divided into two parts separated by three dots: the first part is made up of a long thirty-one line verse paragraph followed by a shorter nine-line one. The second part is made up of four similar stanzas, each introduced by the phrase, "Thy Kingdom." I will look at Smith's metonymic use of the word "hands" in the first part while reflecting on her use of the death and rebirth theme in the second part of this segment.

To illustrate both the way that God and humankind are different yet able to connect, I will first look at Smith's repetitive use of the word "hands" in the first part. The first four lines set up the contrast:

> Our hands plough the soil centuries waiting,
> our hands drop the seed in the soil that is ready;
> in Thy hands is left the shaping of the miracle,
> in Thy hands the hope our hands cannot accomplish;

Even though humankind works with the soil to produce nourishment, it is not possible for the labour of "our hands" to achieve anything without the miracle of "Thy hands." The word "our" is not capitalized whereas "Thy" is. The two identities are separated by status as well as responsibilities. God's power does not preclude the necessity for humankind to work for the crop; nor does our work preclude the necessity of God's participation. "Thy"

and "our hands" are connected by repetitive proximity. They function together to accomplish the needed result, but they function as two separate entities. It is not until the second stanza of this part that we see how they intersect. After struggling and reaching for the God of "our dream," the line, "Our Father stretch out Thy hand," shows that we are connected to God by virtue of God's love for us as a father. Here we find contiguity between "our" and "Thy" through the "hand" of the "Father." The hand that "shape[es] the miracle" in the soil also stretches out to pull us from "our darkness." At first, the hand of God and the hand of humankind is both contrasted and associated metonymically and then the two are brought together in a syntagmatic phrase that allows God and humankind to join hands. The use of metonym moves the poet into a more and more complex web of interconnected words and, subsequently, moves her along with a more and more complex and diverse God.

Now, looking at the second part of this same section, humankind faces "Thy Kingdom" with a need that is reminiscent of the salesgirl's. There is a need for "Thy Kingdom" to help us let go of our delusions:

> Thy Kingdom all light the hands of our haste
> streak with darkness, our dream which Thy realness
> alone can redeem from our impotence.

For some reason, our dreams are "bent on magic" and in the end "we doff our hearts/to Let's Pretend." But, as was the case for the salesgirl, there is at a deeper level recognition that God and life just cannot measure up to the "glitter" promised by the magician. And it is through the recognition of this lie that we begin the journey of death which puts us on the brink of need.

> ...In the swirling depths
> of our minds, in the drowning depths of our darkness,

hear us lest we drown.

It is in this low place that we ask for help. And it is from this death that the hope of rebirth emerges. Rebirth is not an ascension into glory, but rather a realization that God is intimately connected with what is real, for it is "Thy Kingdom/ to guard in us what is real." Furthermore, the dream to live in "Thy Kingdom" which is connected to "Thy realness" is where we will "be finished at last with shadows." In God's kingdom there are no shadows, because paradox has been transcended and reality sees beyond the opposition between darkness and light. They exist in harmony. Rebirth is thus a death to fantasy in favor of reality.

It is a spiritual reality that Smith explores in *GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.* This section is rather short, comprising only three sentences, each five to seven lines in length. The first two are begun with the construction "Give us" while the third is opened with the line: "Each alone in the great crowd/let us...."

In the previous section the bridge built between humankind and God was established through the joining of hands. In this section the need for God's assistance is assumed and each prayer comes in the form of a request which ends in and is directed towards "Thee." In order to explore the lexia as it is titled, Smith keeps the construction of the request, "Give us" and explores the meaning of "our daily bread." The first thing that she establishes is what is not meant by the prayer. Our daily bread is "not transfigurations wrought by spirit's pride," while in the second construction we learn that it is "the bread and wine of Thy humility." The third part of the prayer-request maps out how we move from pride to humility and asks God to let us do so.

Smith's description of pride in the first sentence is not unlike previous descriptions of ineffective pursuits for God. She writes:

> Give us this day our daily bread
> not transfigurations wrought by spirit's pride
> till sight is hypnotized with flecks of light
> that die at last in darkest dark.

This description of light is similar to the "glitter of lights" which leads the magical Kingdom seeker "home to a cold hearth, ... eyes still dazzled with rockets" in the previous section. The salesgirl is referred to as "angel of brightness" before she is "stunned to gold" and told to "go down, proud daughter." Bright, glittery, flecks of light are, in each case, associated with pride. Pride within ourselves makes us seek the magical nature of bright lights instead of God's light. The verb "wrought" in this segment also suggests that this is an exhausting affair. God's light, however, is different. It always seems to emerge out of darkness. In the second construction, where she explores a positive image of what our daily bread could be, she writes:

> Give us instead the bread and wine of Thy humility
> that we would take as simply as the flowers take the light;
> give us that wholeness of appetite
> that craves the one good,
> growing our minds on Thee.

Here we are encouraged to take the light as it is given. We have already learned something about how the flower takes the light in the opening section of the poem which speaks of "Our Father" in the morning light. The flower is "terse with the wit of sky and earth in its root," and in this early hour, He "takes whole what was broken," and subsequently, "as before Him they bend/(the crumpled flower is standing)." When Smith provides this flower

simile for how we should respond to the light, we must remember that the flower is already metonymically connected to the wholeness of God, the death and rebirth of the flower, the night and morning sky, the sun and the earth and the humility of the flower which "bends" before God. The flower's humble way of receiving light is already established through a metonymic process in the first segment of the poem. When it is used here, the contiguity between the flower and humility is built into a metaphor.

In order for us to grow, we must continue the process of death and rebirth and the third sentence of this poem segment shows how the movement from pride to humility requires a kind of death:

> Each alone in the great crowd
> let us remove the running shoes of intellectual pride,
> throw down the divining rods
> of ideologies and ceasing to think
> through the handsome masks of logic
> kneel and drink with naked lips of Thee.

The introduction to this request makes it clear that despite our participation in the Lord's prayer together (as it is often read by a community of believers and is marked by inclusive pronouns) we are individually responsible for our choices. And the choice at hand is one that involves humility. There are five verbs and thus five actions that are articulated here. Because this section of the poetic segment forms a list of these actions, the phrases articulated can be paralleled and connected. The verbs "remove," "throw down" and "ceasing" each indicate a rejection of a particular way to truth. The phrases "Running shoes of intellectual pride," "divining rods of ideologies" and "handsome masks of logic" are the means to truth which are rejected in this section. Each of these images are interrelated by virtue of

their contiguity and their similar structure; as well, they each intimate that pride is a barrier between humanity and God. The negative force of these verbs indicate that death must occur before rebirth. The verb "kneel" suggests that, once again, it is from a place of humility that we can "drink" of the water that renews. This last line associates drinking with nakedness and God in the same way as found in the line "just that we be spurned who ourselves have turned/ from the naked living water..." which is found in *HEAVEN WHICH ART IN HEAVEN OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN* . Additionally, it might be valuable to remember that the salesgirl is sent "down in the night to the water." Rebirth requires that we be naked, that we be stripped of all pride and that we be in touch with what is real: the living water of God that nourishes, refreshes and helps us to grow. Each sentence ends with the word "Thee" and not surprisingly, then, "Thee" is the only end not rejected. Interestingly enough, because all ideologies are rejected in and of themselves, definitive notions of God may also be rejected. The process of death and rebirth thus brings us to our knees, where we must let go of our ideologies, and go to the living water, where we partake in the mystery of God, simultaneously.

The process continues in the next section about repentance. It is entitled *AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US* and is made up of two stanzas. The first has thirty-nine short lines and the second has twenty-two.

Every journey begins somewhere. Like most of the journeys taken through this poem, this one starts with great effort. Even though it begins with a recognition of sin, the idea of forgiveness requires explication. Smith begins the exploration of what it means to be forgiven by offering five similar

constructions, each of which begins with a verb and includes the possessive pronoun "our:"

feeling the warped
shape of our sinning
seeing our morning
litheness stripped
by the hungry vultures
of self-torture
widowed by the beauty
we thought our own,
deceived by lust
for our fair slight righteousness,
thinking we grieve
for the wrong we have done,
we fashion a halo
of many starry sorrow,
and enchant our souls
with a delicate tune
the recognition of what we are
with what has been.

Verbs like "feeling," "seeing," "widowed," "deceived," and "enchant" are used to try to understand "our sinning," "our morning," "our own beauty," "our fair slight righteousness," "our souls" and thus ourselves. This repetitive construct links these phrases which are contiguous with the pronoun "our" into an associated group of words. After this list of failed-attempts to understand our sin, Smith writes "no hypnosis of self can find Him." This line seems to describe the efforts being made through the

repetitive constructs which focus on attempts made by the persons signaled by the pronoun "our" to wallow in the sin being explored. This notion of "pain that makes a sinner a hero" is set up in contradistinction with the better way, introduced with the telling word "but," and described as a "merciless probing of innermost self." The difference between reveling in our sin and acknowledging it for the purposes of repentance is clarified in the next stanza. Again the stanza begins with a statement about what repentance is not before saying what it is. There is a "but" statement in this stanza as well:

> but Love must practice
> its own deliverance
> and build with hands
> a house not our own

This last line is a contrast to the first five declarations which repeat the pronoun "our." Instead of wallowing in our sin, it indicates that we need to act for purposes that are "not our own." When Smith uses this phrase, she is referring to the network of phrases, contiguous with "our," that are self-indulgently abusive. Repentance is linked to the act of love towards others, not to the act of berating ourselves.

There is another important association found in the stanza on love. Hands seem to play an important role in one's ability to extend love. In this section love, "builds with hands/ a house not our own." The hands that build in this segment are reminiscent of the "building of our hands" for which God's name is praised in the section, *HALLOWED BE THY NAME*. The metonymic relationship between "hands" that build has become almost a symbol: in Lodge's terms, a metonymic metaphor. In the large section on heaven, the contiguity between hands and God and hands and humankind

leads to a sense that God and humans are linked through an extension of hands. In each case hands serve as a positive image to connect individual action with God and others. Through a metonymic process, hands have come to symbolize the interdependence within this trinity.

And yet it is not possible to hold hands and act in Love without the experience of death and rebirth. As already mentioned, even the widely held concept of sin as something which brings pain and a kind of anti-heroic status is in need of revision. The only way to move from one understanding to a more mature appreciation of the subject is to recognize its futility, to let it die, to see the need for another way and ask for help. The futility of wallowing in our sin has already been established. In this section, Smith makes a direct link between the death-like experience and repentance itself.

> Repentance .....
> fits like a death mask
> the face of the actor,
> eating like acid
> into the bone,
> and when the I is sealed and delivered,
> commands----Immediate
> use of powers--
> as though illness had not been.

Repentance is dependent on a death that empowers. The sinner who truly confronts the "I" does not wallow in sin, but lets it lead to deeper self-understanding from which he/she can emerge healed and ready to Love. In other words, as the title suggests, forgiveness of self is intimately connected to loving others.

The next section looks specifically at the part of the lexia, *AS WE FORGIVE THEM.* Smith could not explore the repentance of our own sins without including a meditation on the forgiveness of others. However, she also sees that forgiveness of others is a subject worthy of its own exploration. This four sentence journey is developed in one stanza having twenty-four lines of regular length.

This meditation on forgiving others makes a distinction between the gesture and the act. As always, Smith's exploration of a theme begins with a refutation of an immature understanding of the subject. In this case, she does so by resurrecting the image of "hands" and uses the word three times:

> (Forgiveness the hand stretched over cliff edge
> with background the blue, and the trumpet-curved clouds)
> we see ourselves in the hand and the godly gesture
> but not in the face of the clinging, imperiled stranger--

Here we are reminded that it was God who stretched out His hand to us in need in the long section on heaven, and now as one who is forgiving there is a tendency to see oneself as god-like. "But," as Smith aptly reminds us, the hand that offers forgiveness must meet another hand, another person, a person not unlike ourselves. The gesture given by one who does not recognize his own or the other's humanity is not partaking in true forgiveness. However, when we are aware of our own humanity, we can forgive: "One who receives the blinding light for his healing/ will flow with hands of light toward brothers in the dark". The image of hands flowing suggests a kind of humility, where the gift is being given because it has been received and it will continue to move in this way through many persons. The person who is being forgiven is connected to the person forgiving, as is suggested by the noun "brothers," and the similarity of their struggle with

darkness. The hands offer a meeting place. Because Smith has used hands as a way of building a bridge between God and humanity in previous sections, and here she connects people, one to the other, through their hands, it is possible to see the interrelationship between God's relationship with humans and the relationship between humans themselves.

Forgiving others is dependent on our own journey through repentance. The death and rebirth cycle that emerges out of the previous section prepares us for the death and rebirth journey of this section. Smith's meditation on one prior to the other says as much about the relationship between them as do the words she chooses. Her words, "our birth waits a cold and grudging spring, for nothing is whole that has not been severed," show how crucial the journey of death and rebirth is for Smith. One of the results of this experience is humility and another is wholeness. If we think that we are doing some great act of kindness by forgiving someone, Smith suggests that we are missing the point. This notion, connected to pride, must be usurped so that "Humbly then is the gift given, no miracle/so lovely as when a man is being born." Humility follows and is associated with birth, just as pride precipitates and is connected to death. What emerges out of this cycle is "a wholeness that is human walking with Thee in the sun." This line parallels the image of God, "Our Father, Our Sun in the morning," who makes "whole what was broken" in the very first section of the poem, and the request, "give us the wholeness of appetite/ that craves the one good," prayed for in *GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.* Wholeness itself is consistently contiguous with God and our relationship with God. As we pursue a fuller understanding of God and ourselves, we are also pursuing wholeness. Wholeness is connected to walking on the journey with others, our humanity, "Thee," the "sun," the "Sun," and nature. Smith builds this web of

intersecting words by repeating the word, "wholeness" with similar phrases and then linking them one to the other. Eventually the connections become so vast that it is difficult to see what is not connected. In fact, the impression it leaves is that nothing lies outside the web of words and the signs which they represent, and that the distinction between the signs themselves is nebulous. Through this metonymic technique, Smith does not offer equalities, dualities or religious creeds; instead, she affirms a process and a way of relating to the world. She chooses to embrace the journey of life as it happens to her. She uses metonymy as a poetic technique because it enables her to articulate her faith and openness simultaneously. She can, at once, discover and move through the journey of life embracing brokenness and wholeness simultaneously because, like all things, they are connected in a mysterious way that speaks of God.

The idea of the journey to wholeness being dependent on a continuum of death and rebirth experiences can itself lead to futile play with temptation. The journey does in fact have value and there is a kind of faith implicit in taking it. The point, however, is not to dabble in darkness, for that kind of activity intimates a duality between light and darkness as well. The meditation *AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL* explores the difference between engaging in the journey and using the journey as an excuse to further one's self immolation. It is made up of two stanzas; the first one has thirteen lines and the second twenty-nine. Both have regular length lines and begin with the phrase: "Lead us not into temptation."

This section is strongly foreshadowed by previous sections. The second line, "Make our will strong but not to breaking," connects this section to the last which ends, "Something stirs/ that is clear in us, a need that can

grow strong in us,/toward a wholeness." Strength has something to do with both brokenness and wholeness and, as we have already learned from the last section as well, brokenness is a prerequisite for wholeness. This section expands on this coincidence in the second stanza, saying "knowing that when Thy breath is warm on our shoulder,/then is the time to test our wholeness of dying." The connection between wholeness and brokenness has something to do with our strength. Furthermore:

> ... when we ask for strength when weakness threatens,
> hear us not if we mean strength of iron,
> give us instead the flexible will of rhythm,
> of wind, water, the bird, the grass in motion,

Smith is showing how there is a need for balance, and by connecting the various words in a web of metonymic phrases she shows how our brokenness and our wholeness are interdependent, how our strength and weakness can work together, and how both dichotomies have a rhythm that is connected to nature.

The rhythm of these two stanzas is based on the repetitive flip-flop of the title. The two phrases "lead us not into temptation" and "deliver us from evil" are inverted statements: the first is a negative assertion of the second. Smith explores the idea of temptation and how we are to approach sin and darkness and evil by constantly making a positive statement and then conditioning it with a negative one. This rhythm creates an exploration that is apparently seeking balance and accommodation. For example, in the second stanza:

> And lead us not into temptation,
> yet shelter us not from its path

....

inviting not yet avoiding not all dangers,

...

let us go into our innermost wilderness,

bravely yet not with any presumptuous pride....

It is as though every statement needs further accommodation, exploration, meditation. Nothing is true in itself; we must "[accept] the tides that compel the spirit."

The tides have a rhythm of ascent and descent connected to the moon, while humans have a rhythm of death and rebirth connected to their movement from pride to humility. This movement is made most rhythmic by an appreciation of nature with whom we share life and made possible through "Our Father" who helps us to always move beyond ourselves. The cyclical and progressive nature of Smith's explorative journey is encapsulated in the line: "What is this second birth but a painful metamorphosis, a moment of dragonfly brightness inviting a darker death?" The journey is never to end. As we have seen earlier, wholeness is connected to brokenness is connected to God is connected to nature -- and now I wish to add to this list -- is connected to the experience of death and rebirth. For Smith, an exploration of the role of temptation in our lives does not lead to a list of creeds or sins but rather she delves into the "innermost journey" and concludes that "the real is only found in the body of its death." For Smith, even our notions of what temptation and sin is, are irrelevant compared to our experience of dying to ourselves.

It is out of this experience that one comes into the fullness of appreciation for the rest of the world: God, nature, and our neighbor. It is by looking beyond her self that Smith journeys. And so it is from this place of

death that Smith moves into the next and last section of the poem and prayer: *FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER AMEN.* This section is made up of five stanzas. The first two have ten short lines apiece and begin with the phrase, "All things...." These are followed by an intermediary couplet that essentially repeats the title. The last two are twelve and eleven lines long respectively and are made up of regular length lines. The section and poem concludes with the prayer closing, "Amen."

This section is an affirmation of God's presence in all things and of God's power to transform. Again, we are faced with the repetitive use of the word "hands" to show the relationship between humankind and God; but, additionally, to demonstrate the power of God's hand in the transformation of humans. Initially God's presence as a creating force in nature is assumed: "the seed that burgeons,/ [is] marked by Thy hand." In the third stanza, however, we get a fuller appreciation for the role of God in the lives of humans:

> In those who see and in those who are blind,
> forever it moves and watches its chance;
> in the hands that make, in the hands that break,
> is gathered the Power that one day will strike
> the temples hands build to all other gods.

Hands that make and break are syntagmatic units brought together metonymically by the "Power" of God. This is a Power that can also be exerted against temples built by godless hands. It seems an odd if not contradictory interconnection at work in these lines. If everything is interconnected, then what in fact are the "other gods" of which she speaks? This is the first time she has demonized the word "other." The only sin that

she has spoken against in the entire poem is our pride and subsequent unwillingness to drink of the living water of God. She has capitalized things like "Fortune" and "Let's Pretend" and "Merry-G-round" and "Shadow" in ways that insinuate that the "other god" is not a person, or a creed, but the pride-motivated pursuit of one's dream God. It is as though the Power of God is being praised for its ability to engage each person on a journey of life that leads to wholeness and is connected to reality. The Power of God breaks pride. "The single small Voice" is not about a singular belief about God. It is a voice that integrates us into a connected whole and leads us to death and through to rebirth so that "in what has been forever let us become." When Smith says "come home my soul, to God who waits," she herself crosses over the bridge that transcends the distinction between her humanity and God's love. It is a relationship that has been built metonymically through discovery and interaction. It is a relationship that has been strengthened by the process. It is only in these last lines that Smith identifies herself. She uses the personal pronoun "my" to describe her soul as something which she can now entrust to God. It leads to the celebrated conclusion: "Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory. Amen."

Smith's "Footnote to the Lord's prayer" is a journey through each part of the Lord's prayer. Although it is open-ended, it is dependent on her faith that the journey is worth engaging in and submitting to. The mode of language that comes naturally to Smith as an explorer is metonymic. Words, like "Our Father," "morning," "heart," "shadow," and "hands" are repeated in different syntagmatic phrases so that all the words contiguous with the repeated word are connected. She begins small; she begins, in this case, with one lexia at a time and one association at a time. It does not take long before the connections build into an intertwined web of meanings and she has

crossed over from finite observation to the realm of God where paradox is transcended and all is connected. In this way she demonstrates, rather than speaks, how it is possible to believe in a "single small voice" while validating the varied voices of God. As she engages in the Lord's Prayer, her faith is deepened. Concomitantly, the power of metonymic language to both articulate the dynamics of her ever-moving faith and to contribute to its growth is established. When Jakobson or Lodge speak of writers who lean towards the metonymic pole of language, they think primarily of realistic novelists and writers who provide a concrete view of the world. Smith's use of metonymic process, however, leads her beyond the limits of realism to a God in whom all is mysteriously interconnected. It is a process that Smith will continue to use in her later poetry though her subject material is rarely religious. She has already established an intimacy between God and the world, between her faith and her use of metonymy; and so, when she explores the world metonymically it is not without faith.

As well, by connecting each segment of the prayer by the common theme of death and rebirth, Smith shows how her vision of the faith journey is dependent on a death to self. In other words, the person engaged in the journey can never stand still basking in the certainty of his or her knowledge. Every time humans either fantasize about who God should be or think that they have apprehended God, they face a fall that can lead to another death of self. The point that is crucial here is that the way to God is neither teleological nor through intellectual apprehension, but rather by a process of letting go. This idea is consistent with both Christian belief that "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it" (Matt 16:25, Mk 8:35, Lk 9:24) and the postmodern idea that there is no central Truth. Postmoderns recognize that a belief in a central Truth puts the believer in the centre. Smith

says something similar in her exploration of the lexia, *LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.* After referring to "self" as the "dancing centre," she intimates that through the process of death to self one must come to realize that, "the dancing self is the fable." God is met, not in the centre, but through the mysterious interconnections found in everyday life. To cross over into the realm of mystery, Smith begins one link at a time.

Chapter II

In the first chapter, I established that Smith's use of metonymic process to engage in an open-ended journey was a reflection of her faith. Additionally, her willingness to proceed through several death and rebirth experiences demonstrated that she was concerned more with the process of living out her faith than etching out her beliefs. The form which she uses to articulate her most explicitly religious and longest poem is very useful in understanding the depth and open-ended nature of Smith's faith. She approaches "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer" as if on a journey. She does not begin this poem with a set message, but rather she begins with eyes open, looking for connections. She uses words in her poetry to build associations in such a way that she weaves a web of interdependent meanings. Through the discovery process she is often engaged in a death and rebirth process where the message is released through a death to self. Through this explorative approach she demonstrates faith in the process of living and as Fred Cogswell says in his introduction to a special issue of The Cormorant, "Kay Smith is a very special person with a very special "yes-saying" attitude to life" (15).

In this chapter I will explore poems published in At the Bottom of the Dark in 1972 and When a Girl Looks Down in 1978. In these poems, her use of metonymic technique and the death and rebirth motif persist despite her exploration of subjects that are not explicitly religious. Her faith is not articulated through words themselves but, rather, through the way in which she lays them side by side and lets them take her to the mystery that is God.

I decided to study these two books of poetry in the same chapter because of their similarity. They were both published by Fred Cogswell within a six-year period. Many of the poems published in the first are found in the second and the majority of the poems published in both books were

written in Grand Manaan. For these reasons it was difficult to discern a shift in her poetic thought between the two books of poetry being studied here.

Smith does, however, explore new vistas in these poems as compared to the religious theme in "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer." As she empties her self and lets the world confront her, her faith persists. Her subject material is different from that of "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," but her love of God with varied voices is evident through her poetic technique. Her use of metonym to cross over from the minutiae of life's treasures into the complexity of life's wonder still reflects an openness to new experience and insights. Although she continues to repeat words and build associations between similar syntagmatic units, her poems are much shorter and so the interconnections are less elaborate. The theme of death and rebirth is transformed into a consistent attempt on the part of the poet to see things anew. She is always speaking of the role of her eyes in making new revelations possible. As Fiddlehead reviewer Margaret Harry says of Smith's poems:

> the point of view here is directed outward, not inward. The subject of this poetry is frequently individual experience, full of specific personal detail, but the place of that experience within a wider pattern is always more important than the ego itself. (99)

And I would argue that what is found in her experience outside the ego is appropriated by the ego. What she sees on the outside is internalized so that she is in fact connected to the object of her vision. As she explains in the poem "Quiet," often this kind of penetrating gaze is dependent on stillness:

> All things that are finished
> and beautiful with use
> Quiet brings to me;

if I look long enough in her presence,
I unfold in them and they
in my blood and cells hoist poems of clear bells. (65)

It is as though Smith has to let go of her expectations and let her eyes take her to what is mysterious. She says, "It's much better to have questions that won't be answered... to feel the mystery" (deKluyver 13). In many ways, the role of eyes in Smith's poetry not only reflects her willingness to move through the experience of death to rebirth, but it is also consistent with her use of metonymy to explore new sights. Metonymic process is dependent on context and context is established through a semantic representation of what is visualized. In her poetry, she includes the process of discovery. She offers the scene and the context, what is contiguous in reality, and then what kind of associations can be made in lieu of the connections available. In this way she crosses over from the particularities of what she sees to the generalities that the connections imply. The intimacy between what is particular and general is part of the mysterious nature of God.

In this chapter, I will first examine four poems originally published in At the Bottom of the Dark and then four from When a Girl Looks Down. All of the poems studied, however, may be found in Smith's collection of poetry, The Bright Particulars, published in 1987. I will show how Smith continues to establish connections using the same metonymic process used in "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer." Most of the time a natural phenomena is linked to a human one and the mysterious overlap alludes to spiritual intimacy with God. As well, I will develop the argument that eyes play a pivotal role in these connections; not only as vehicles of seeing, but more importantly, the means by which the poet can, with an open attitude, see things anew.

This attitude prompts many poems in At the Bottom of the Dark and specifically "Night Sky" (14). Smith finds an intimacy between darkness and light in this single- stanza poem that affirms both her self and the mystery of which she is part.

The night sky, filled as it is with stars, is a place of mystery. For Smith:

> Stars burn in the midnight sky;
> They seem so near a hand outstretched
> From an upper window could pick them like fruit.

Smith is struck by the stars apparent proximity in spite of their obvious distance. At first she speaks of reaching out for them. But when she repeats the word "stars," initially associated with the sky, it is linked to the poet:

> The stars fall blazing through space,
> Down, down, down and are quenched in that nameless place
> Where I am faceless as the darkness, and all my limbs
> Dissolve in rhythms of that mystery
> On which the ark of my little life sails all night.

Smith implies that the stars that were first up in the sky are now in her midst. It is as though they fall from the sky into her being. Initially, there is a syntagmatic and physical proximity between stars and sky. But then there is a similar association made between the stars and the poet. The syntagmatic proximity alludes to a spiritual one. It is as though the stars are internalized by the poet who describes her life as an ark and, simultaneously, the stars hold her. They are so intimately connected that the stars and her body carry one another. The process by which Smith establishes this intimacy is metonymic; she does not make the stars a metaphor with a message, but rather she journeys with the stars and they take her to herself.

This connection is dependent upon Smith's eyes as described in the two lines which intersect the two star images: "The familiar has become strange./As I float behind my eyes." Smith offers a visual image of the stars which in turn connects her to the earth-bound apple tree and the subsequent "zebra-shaped bold shadows" and the feeling that all is strange. By seeing the night sky anew, the scene becomes strange and open for rediscovery. The eyes which located the images are then closed for the experience of integration. In this way, Smith does not simply see the stars, but rather she experiences them. However, her experience is dependent on a willingness to look at things anew, to see their strangeness and appreciate the vitality of all things in such a way as to feel intimately connected. The connection does not arise out of an internal image which looks for a replicate, but rather external images lead back to the self. In order for her to receive what the night sky has to offer she has to let go of her expectations, plunge into death and as she says, "be still and let whatever was there come out" (deKluyver 12).

Allowing the sights to speak as they are can bring many surprises. This they do for Smith in her poem, "Among the Ravages" (16). By the end of the third and last stanza, the external image of a pigeon connects her to love.

Through a metonymic process Smith surveys "this grey city" where she finds and forms a kind of relationship with a pigeon. Smith develops this relationship by repeating the place "this grey city" twice. Smith begins by painting a rather bleak picture of Saint John, NB, in the "tag-ends season" between Winter and Spring. She explains how in "this grey city" there is a "shabby street," a "starving cat" and "rotten porous snow." By the third stanza, however, she has found something of interest with which to connect:

Yet even here in this grey city,
among the ravages of time and weather
on my stone window ledge
a pigeon sprouting on her beak a white freckle
keeps her wary yellow eye on me
as she warms and shelters with her feathered body and
faith
the round fruits of her love.

The same grey city, which is "shabby," provides a home for both herself as she looks upon her "window ledge" and the pigeon. Smith's home provides shelter for herself; her window ledge provides shelter for the pigeon, and the pigeon provides shelter for her young. They are connected, in this way, not only by their city home but also by the shelter which they share. Their contiguity in the city is reinforced by their contiguity in the poem. They are brought together metonymically and ultimately Smith not only connects with them but with the love offered by the pigeon to her young.

Together, Smith and the pigeon are watchful in "this grey city" of theirs. Smith's description of the grey city is entirely visual and as she looks out upon it she remains open to, if not hopeful for, new perspectives. When she describes the pigeon, Smith is penetrated, not by the pigeon's beauty, but by the pigeon's wary gaze and the mark of the pigeon's love towards her young. Not only do they share a home, but they also share a capacity to see acutely. There is a sense that through this mutual attentiveness Smith shares in the love offered to the young bird(s). By indicating that the pigeon has faith, Smith humanizes her, and this seems to be a result of the connection she feels toward the bird. This internalized connection begins with a visual

discovery which in turn is made possible by Smith's capacity to pierce through dullness with eyes wide open.

In "Winter Afternoon" (64) the four-stanza journey is again visual, though in this case eyes are not actually mentioned. In the midst of the "winter woods," Smith finds an intimacy among all of its inhabitants.

Essentially, the trees of the first stanza are connected to the humans of the last, both sharing a home midst the "winter woods." The scene begins with the repeated article "the:"

> The smooth-skin, grey poplars,
> The brown curled leaves clinging to the beeches,
> The blazing wheel of the sun among the pine branches,
> The Mary blue of the sky between the pillars of the spruce trees,

and is followed by the inevitable surprise within the scenic silence:

> Motionless are the trees; soundless the winter woods
> Until the notes of a chickadee drop sweet and bright
> As berries into the crystal goblet of the air.

The scene now painted, the poet begins moving towards the human connection. In the second stanza she introduces the presence of humans in the woods with an image of hanging garments that look like "gigantic coloured birds in a fairy tale of ice" and in the third, children are skating and creating on the pond "The shape of a jagged leaf." Both images connect humans to their environment. The first image is a simile, which, according to Lodge, is the preferred metaphoric trope for metonymic writers, and the second builds the bridge between humans and nature metonymically; it is contextualized and leads to something beyond the syntagmatic sequence. Humans and nature are connected; they share the same home and they are contiguous in the world. Smith builds on this association poetically so that

by the time we get to the last stanza the link between humans and their environment is established. But Smith adds to this interplay by repeating the article "the" as she did in the first stanza. Here the farmhouses are scattered "among the naked trees" and they

> Contain a life that knows the same stillness as the winter woods,
> The same sun blazing in the tree of flesh,
> The same brief blossoming of music
> Before the night closes in and takes it to itself.

The connection is explicit. The article "the" is repeated but this time it is repeated as "the same" to indicate that the trees which are described in the first stanza are connected to the "tree of flesh" because they are impacted by the "winter woods" in "the same" way. As well, the last line suggests that all growing things are connected to each other by the impact of cyclical time. The poem is titled "Winter Afternoon" and ends with night. Humans are not treated differently from trees by afternoon or by night. We get the sense that the night has this kind of undiscriminating vitality from the last line when the night "takes it to itself." Humans are thus connected to their environment by the fact that they are impacted by the same things. Smith makes these connections by repeating structures, giving humans a "tree of flesh" instead of a body, and watching how a winter afternoon in the "winter woods" impacts all the inhabitants who by nightfall are all part of the singular, nameless "it" embraced by the darkness.

For Smith, even material objects can be animated into life and offer insight as is the case with her poem "The Chair" (31). The poem is made up of seven short stanzas that lead the poet to an intimate connection with a chair.

This poem makes an explicit connection between Smith and her chair through metonymy and word repetitions. The recurring words are: "chair," "mystery" and derivations of the word "speech." The personal pronoun "I" declares itself repeatedly as well. Smith suddenly feels strange "before the tensions and delicate balance/ that make the chair and make the mystery." The repeated phrase "make the" associates the chair with mystery. Furthermore the chair is given a voice. It is connected to the life of the tree from which it is made: "a tree with a million tongues" and now "its speech is itself/ its form and grain." Smith connects the chair and herself through speech, saying: "If I knew its language/ we might speak together." But this is not a literal connection; Smith "can only sit in the chair/ my mystery weighing on its mystery." The chair and Smith are contiguous contextually and semantically. Together their relationship is mysterious. Whether "weighing" means sitting or thinking or both, the syntagm suggests that the poet feels mysteriously interconnected with the chair. It is as though she has come to see it as a living object which can put her into contact with God's mystery.

The enigmatic connection begins when the two make eye contact: I look up from the page/ and there is the chair watching." Smith, as usual, sees the chair anew:

> In all the years
> it has lived in my house
> this is the first time
> I have known it speaks

Her ability to see familiar things as if for the first time makes it possible for her to make new connections and deepen her appreciation of life's mysteriousness. What she sees takes on a life of its own and is nurtured

within her imagination. When she says "its speech is itself/ its form and grain" she is also saying something about herself and about language. Language is very visual for Smith. What she sees speaks to her. Whatever she sees has its own voice, and repetitive language helps her to make connections between the voices. The fact that language is visual for Smith speaks of her preference for the metonymic pole of language. Like a novelist who uses realism or a motion film director who recreates a scene and story, Smith starts with a belief that what is present before one's eyes holds the key to what is beyond. In this case her encounter with a chair leads her to an eternal moment. And interconnectedness offers her the freedom to seek things anew while maintaining faith in a mysterious unity.

In her next book of poetry, When a Girl Looks Down, Smith uses much the same technique. As I have already mentioned, I have not really identified any significant shifts between these two books of poetry . The poems newly published in this her third book were not necessarily written in the six-year period following the last publication. If they were, I believe that they are still generated from a similar perspective on life. She continues to engage the world wide-eyed and to translate the concomitant journey metonymically.

The poem "That Something May Be Found" (12) is Smith's clearest evocation of why she writes poetry. There is repetition, this time for emphasis as well as connection, and Smith's "Eyes" take on God-like importance throughout the five stanzas.

In this poem, I will demonstrate two examples of her use of metonymic process. The line, "That something may be found I make a poem" introduces and concludes the poem. And in the third stanza, the phrase "That the secret may be found I become a hunter/ in a poem" is correlated to the first and last

line of the poem by its repetition of the words: "That...may be found I...." Here, again, she uses metonymy. By replacing a few words in the main phrase she connects the words that are different. In other words, "something" is linked to "the secret" and to "make a poem" is associated with "become[ing] a hunter." These connections give the impression that Smith feels that continuous exploration is a worthwhile endeavor. She looks for the insights, "the secret," through the process of writing. Because her most consistent writing technique is to make connections through word repetition, the role that writing plays in her search for secret meanings is to help her make yet unknown connections. As well, through her poetry, Smith is motivated to become a hunter who is always watching with eyes engaged.

The engagement can be riveting, as Smith's repetition of the word "half-moon" indicates. The fourth stanza reads:

> In the wood and in the waste places under
> a half-moon we are very wonderful,
> curved like a bow over being ourselves and alone,
> moving when we move like a half-moon.

The person who walks under the half-moon ends up moving like the half-moon. For Smith, the impact of being entirely present to her environment connects her to it. She crosses over from the observation of something finite to a connection with something that leads to an experience that feels infinite. And as her repetitive technique demonstrates, the process of writing seems to reinforce the connections.

The "Eyes" of this poem have incredible potential. The word is capitalized for emphasis and for increased stature, implying that eyes have God-like powers.

> Near the door Eyes compel so large and clear

a walking out that clothed simply in being

I try to deserve the white lashes of the daisy....

Eyes offer the ability to see beyond our selves, to "break from the shell of habit, my home,/ leaving fear, the old crone, nodding by the ashes." As Smith explores, her eyes are outward looking; she is not self-conscious but rather "clothed simply in being." She is aware only of the need to empty herself as she tries to "deserve the white lashes" and see them as they are. In order to explore so openly, Smith says she must leave habit, leave home, and leave fear behind. She must accept a kind of mini-death at every turn. There is an incredible openness in this breaking forth, but Smith's desire to venture on is based on faith. She does in fact believe that there is something to be found through the process of exploration. It is a worthwhile endeavor. There is rebirth. In this poem which explains why in fact she writes poetry, she validates the journey which she embraces by being a poet.

The next poem in the collection further validates her poetic technique. "The One Stem" (13) speaks of Smith's love of "bright particulars" for their capacity to offer insight. In these five stanzas she demonstrates how one can cross over from the observation of things particular to the engagement with something mysteriously general.

Ironically, this poem transcends the binary opposition between particulars and generalities by connecting them with the repeated phrase "You will never." Smith articulates how "Discovery begins/ with the single that is singular" and subsequently how these singularities, "Go hand in hand with generalities." These two connected thoughts are followed by a list of things that will never happen:

You will never be surprised,

you will never cross over

to the child dancing to herself

....

to the traveling star in the running stream

or the lucky clover

You will never reach that tall one

..., Your voice will never carry

to the old saint sweeping leaves and frost jewels in the autumn morning.

And yet the very fact that these descriptions are being articulated suggests a kind of connection. There is never a complete connection with what is singular and yet the poem lists several images of "bright particulars" that create a general impression of connectedness.

This process of making connections is dependent, once again, on open eyes. It is through a kind of visual odyssey that Smith encounters the realm outside her self. The singular with which one becomes connected is like "the one stem your eyes are suddenly unsealed to see,/ jointed with the latest, fragile, golden light." The eyes are not in control of the venture; they are themselves "unsealed" to see. The sunlight which played such a powerful role in her "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," contributes and is connected with one's capacity to see. In a sense, because eyes connect to the external as well as the internal, they bridge the gap between these two realms. Smith, however, uses her eyes in a particular way. She empties herself and engages in a journey with open and expectant eyes so that "the bright particulars" will not be lost amongst the "chorus of the grass". What is singular is connected to what is general to the point that Smith is simply connected. And yet the

journey is never complete, for "you will never reach the tall one." All is partial. The discovery is in motion. This momentum is at once limiting because the opposition between self and other is never completely transcended and unlimited because the journey is multi-faceted.

These journeys do not lead to a central truth either. In fact, as "Visitation at Noon" (22) indicates, contact with mystery can leave a person feeling a sense of emptiness. By the end of the seven triplets that make up this poem, one is left less certain rather than more certain.

In this poem Smith makes a connection between a girl, a cloud, a bird, and God. It begins by using simile to make a metaphoric link:

> Over the plain old slant-roof house
> face all hidden by fat green trees
> broods majesty in a cloud
>
> Like the white enormous bird
> of a legend stirs not, but is,
> as a god is, or the fact of a soul....

Smith, when writing metaphorically, tends to use simile. The metaphor is contextualized by the provision of scene. The cloud looks like a bird and this visual assimilation leads to a semantic one. But this image is not enough because the cloud "stirs not, but is." Its quality of being is god-like and so Smith journeys through a series of connections to create an image. Even when using metaphors, there is a sense that she is using metonymic process. By the fifth stanza of the poem, the cloud that was like a bird is now contiguous with it: "Oh, see it, the cloud, the bird/ with foot extended." The same can be deduced from the cloud that initially is "as a god is." By the last stanza it is inextricably linked:

Is it come, the god, to enter some
young girl, then leave her to herself
More a stranger than before?

The connection between "cloud," "bird," and "god" is fused through repetition and the effect is mysteriously conspicuous. This visitation cuts through to "enter" the girl but leaves her less certain of herself than before. The experience reflects a real-time event that leads to an eternal moment. For Smith, metonymic process is not simply about recreating a scene but about starting with something tangible and letting it bring her into relationship with the mysterious nature of God.

The visitation that begins in the form of a cloud becomes like that of a "god" through a trick of the eye. The cloud, which "slips over the eyelid or, say,/ as a snowflake falls," moves slowly but disappears without an intent watchful gaze. It is there, it is having an impact, but it is not being scrutinized. It "seems unchanging" and yet its subtle movement leaves the recipient of its vision subtly changed as well. The connection is not one made through precise examination. The process of connecting with the image seen continues with the passing of the cloud. The eyes do not stay riveted on the cloud. Already the clouds are taking Smith on another journey through the connected images of bird and god and young girl. Smith's eyes, even if they are attentive to what is present on the outside, search with a view to finding meanings which can be internalized. Sometimes what is found is a mysteriously filled emptiness.

And sometimes, as in "Again with Music" (24), images which seem dead can be utterly full. This poem, made up of four stanzas, is life affirming in the face of death. Smith meditates over a nature scene after "the rain is spent." In this scene there are "roses," "the sea," "grasses" and "a

stillness;" but what emerges as the focal point of this verbal photograph is "A dead apple tree with beauty in its bare bones,/ Never to put forth again a pink and white cloud of witnesses." Among all the living beauty, Smith cherishes what is dead. The tree is given "bare bones" as if she is humanizing it and connecting with its age. The "cloud of witnesses" is also a scriptural phrase from the Book of Hebrews, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb 12:1). The "cloud of witnesses" to which Paul refers is the myriad of people who have journeyed before him in their commitment to God. These people of the past are connected to and affirm those in the present by their faith journey. In Smith's poem, the "cloud of witnesses" refers not only to the visual image of a cloud of blossoms but the way in which they affirm the life of the tree. It does not look like the tree has much to offer; but then "Suddenly [the tree] blossoms with yellow birds in its grey limbs,/And is almost alive again with music." The hopeful part about a "cloud of witnesses" is that it offers life in death through remembrance and connection. When Smith then cries, "Love, O Love, let the birds happen to me." she is connecting with the birds, the cloud of witnesses which they become and the tree from which they emerge. In this poem, she connects the idea of rebirth within the journey of life through the suddenness of revelation to the idea of rebirth within the reality of death through love and remembrance.

The connection is made after the eye scans and sees something to which the heart feels connected. Before she narrows her focus to the tree, she paints the backdrop for her scene: "Far as the eye can reach the sea is pale as a pearl/ The air a pool of stillness." Smith's revelation often emerges

out of stillness and quiet. It is in this quiet that she can become attuned to the external world. This she does primarily through her eyes. In an interview with her, she told me that the words she values most are: "Be still and know that I am God" (Personal interview). It is in this state of quiet openness that she is able to let go of her expectations, see things anew and experience the mystery that is God.

In all of these poems Smith exercises a spiritual practice of letting go and allowing God's mystery to speak to her through the small details. This mystery is encountered through a process of making connections. She takes what is contiguous and builds associations that leave an impression that all is interconnected. Lodge, examining the use of metonymical devices in an article published in the Guardian about British Universities, says that "Parts stand for wholes in these formulations, and they do so with a certain affective thematic intent" (Modes 95). In a way, Smith's use of metonymy is similar. She starts with something small (a part) and it leads to something mysterious (the whole). The intent is to have contact with the whole, even though the whole is nebulous. She is always trying to "cross over" from the "bright particulars" to the "generalities," "that tall one," the mystery, God.

Her wide-eyed use of metonymy to lead her through the journey and to the mystery is consistent with both Christian and Postmodern thought. For instance, the Christian doctrine of the *via negativa* describes the "negative way" of theology. Its proponents refuse to identify God with any human concept of knowledge because God transcends all that can be known. Yet the term points to the possibility of union with God. In other words, God is mystery and no attempt to appropriate God in positive or metaphoric terms is possible. Instead, the surest way to God is through death to self. As Smith goes on her visual journeys, she lets go of her sense of self and ventures into

unknown territory. When she pursues the journey semantically, she lets the sequence of combined words take her through the poem so that "something may be found." The "something" which she finds is usually mystery. When Smith journeys through the Lord's prayer, she uses paradoxical images and locates God in the mysterious way in which all things are connected. God is understood through paradox -- as one who transcends distinctions, rather than one who can be described distinctively. In the poems in When a Girl Looks Down and At the Bottom of the Dark she rarely speaks of God or refers to the Bible. And yet the way in which she finds connections between humanity and nature alludes to a mysterious presence beyond description. She is always being surprised. Motion arises out of stillness suddenly and there is a sense that she is being given something to see which is beyond her self while at once connected to her self. What makes Smith most faithfully Christian, her willingness to suspend her self-consciousness in the pursuit of "secrets," also makes her most postmodern. Smith has said, "I don't think a person's faith is worth much if they don't have questions" (Personal interview). There is no central truth because what lies at the center is always mystery. And mystery is not really something which one can locate. In fact the mystery of God is experienced by Smith through the connections made between all things and words that are found to be contiguous.

Chapter III

As Smith faces old age she makes contact with life's mystery through death. She connects death with life in these poems, once again, through a metonymic process. What is significant is how the content and the form merge. All along she has engaged in the journey of life by letting go of herself to experience God in the presence of everyday life. Her interaction with this process of death and rebirth has enabled her to journey always onward. And her use of metonymic language has been the concomitant expression of this approach to life. This attitude remains even as she explores the more serious side of death in these, her later poems.

I have used the metaphors of death and rebirth to explain how Smith articulates a need to let go of the self in order to connect with the mystery of God and move beyond her present stance. In "Footnote to the Lord's Prayer," Smith attends to each lexia, allowing it to speak to and through her in such a way that it demands openness. This openness is achieved through a process which empowers words to lead her to new meanings and connections. It is also articulated by her willingness to die to self so that humility will give birth to a more mature revelation. This process does not bring her to centralized truth but rather a mysterious sense of interconnectedness that is God. When she moves on to explore the varied voices of God through the world of nature in At the Bottom of the Dark and When a Girl Looks Down, she uses the contiguity between objects and nature and humanity to build associations between all things. In these poems, the journey through death and rebirth is experienced through a visual odyssey where eyes are "unsealed" to see what is particular so that the poet can cross over into the realm of generalities and the mystery of God. However, as she gets older, she is more immersed in the meaning of death. It is more immediate and concrete, less philosophical; it is not about dying to self; it is

about the self dying. Consequently, the importance of rebirth is also heightened and she explores various ways of understanding this. In spite of the people surrounding her who die, and her own uncertain health, Smith searches for positive ways to express the process that connects death to life. Rebirth becomes affirmed through remembrance. Connections between words and phrases still play a role, but the vital connection is that which exists between death and rebirth itself. Death's meaning is dependent on faith in rebirth. Death is not the end even when the body enters the earth to rot. Sometimes new life is offered by the earth which nurtures a flower upon someone's death; sometimes it arises from a memory that resurrects a person dead; and sometimes an engagement with life evokes memories that allow an encounter with rebirth in the midst of a staid reality.

But, regardless of Smith's progressive attitude in the face of death and death-like experiences, she is not without fear. She seems to struggle most with the idea that death ends the possibilities for romantic love. In "Old Women and Love" (68), she breaks the stereotype of old women as passionless people living out a kind of death. She asserts her presence as a woman alive yet journeying through the ups and owns of death and rebirth. In this poem, her death is portrayed as a kind of "Drowning/no end to it" where love, the "hunter of undiscriminating tastes....closes its steel jaw on a foot of frail bones." It is as though Smith wants to prove that she is alive to herself and to a world which thinks that blood that is old is dead.

If we compare the last two stanzas with one another, we see a contiguity between morning and night, light and darkness, between memories and present day experience, and between death and rebirth. These associations are built around the connection between leaf and love. Smith,

who emerges from her passionate embrace with the dark night, is rejuvenated with a life-giving morning vision:

> when my eyes opened from the mercy of my own darkness
> the world came at me like a blow
> Its beauty burned gold in every resurrected leaf
> burned with a still flame. Spring never relents.

But in order to so arise she spends the night:

> ...on her narrow bed
> probing the dark with a stubborn mind
> demanding answers she knows she will not find
> tends with a fierce joy the unextinguished embers
> of a not so temperate love.

The night takes her to memories of loved ones, but it also takes her to the morning where darkness and light are contiguous. It is in this morning light that the "unextinguished embers" tended at night "[burn] with a still flame" in the golden leaf. Here Smith finds the love that she sought. She builds an association between lovers of the past and the beauty of the leaf in the present. Because embers and flame are contiguous in the material world, Smith is able to connect her feelings of loss with respect to past lovers and her narrow bed with feelings of empowerment with respect to nature. As well, lovers and leaves become one in that they share the flame of life and the heart of Smith. The death-like experience of drowning in one's memories at night leads to and is contiguous with the rebirth-like experience of waking to the beauty of the world. Rebirth is, in this sense, an echo and reverberation of memories which speak to the present. And likewise, through rebirth, which is an engagement with the present, memories are healed and a bridge between past and present is built.

As an older woman, Smith continues to journey rather than live out a kind of death. She follows her memories and drowns in them until Spring comes "like a blow" and leads her elsewhere. If memories take her to new depths, the depths then take her into greater intimacy with the mystery of God, the kind of mystery that can heal unrequited love through a golden leaf.

In the poem "The Old in One Another's Arms"(85), Smith's wistful remembrance of romantic love, once again, keeps her alive with its power to move her along the journey of death and rebirth. This poem is made up of ten stanzas which narrate the poet's encounter with a little boy who smiles at her and her subsequent thoughts about what she believes he sees in her and further what she sees in herself. The sixth, seventh and eighth stanzas are in quotations to indicate that they relate an imagined speech that she gives to the boy.

Smith is engaged in a memory of a lover, revived by the beauty of a dandelion gone to seed. The dandelion, or "ghostly flower" which the poet holds in her hand, leads her to memories of a flower that once grew between her and a lover. The dandelion thus serves as a metonymic link between past and present. It is this contiguously proximate object that invokes memory.

The journey begins when she sees the impact of her behavior on a little boy who smiles "with mild amusement/ almost indulgently." It is then that she realizes that she is holding a "dandelion gone to seed," and that he might consider it eccentric the way she "cherish[es]" it. She wants to tell him of the love for which she mourns:

> "Could you believe the sun
> dropped from the sky
> to root itself and blaze
> a giant flower in our flesh..."

Instead, she continues on her journey:

holding in a careful hand
this ghostly flower

globe of filaments spun finer
than any wheel could spin
studded with minuscule stars a
slight breeze or nudging finger
could crumble into air

The dandelion, as a "ghostly flower," is held both in her hand and her heart. Because it invokes a memory, it also resurrects something of the past. And in the same way she cherishes the "exquisite , fragile" dandelion, she cherishes the memory. They are intimately linked. When Smith speaks of the dandelion "crumbling," we are not to lose sight of the relationship established between Smith's love and the flower. The dying dandelion, like her love, is both awe inspiring and capable of new life. Rebirth is here experienced through memories resurrected by "the ghostly flower," a flower that connects Smith to her past through a memory of love and to her fragile future when she too will "crumble." Despite the fact that the memory leads her to mourning, it also leads to a feeling of connection. The memory leads back to the flower and the flower's ghostliness suggests that the flower leads beyond itself to mystery. Its seeds will bring new birth elsewhere. Smith cherishes this possibility. The contiguity between death and rebirth are no longer just thematically important. They are vitally so.

Smith dedicates three poems in this section to people who have died. In each case she reflects on their living presence. They receive a triple

resurrection: first through memory, then a vision which connects them to the present and then through her words which carry their life beyond the grave.

"A Death" (69), is written in memory of a "tired sailor," Doris Richardson. The poem's two stanzas connect the life and death of Doris through images of sailing and darkness.

Doris, who sailed through or in life, now sails "in [her] boat a bed" and "unrocked by a breath/ of a sea of silence." Death is only understood through living images and in a sense these images connect the living to the dead. Smith is connected to Doris through remembrance of her as a sailor in the same way that life is connected to death through images of sailing. Smith is also connected to Doris through their shared darkness; Smith is "clothed in [her] own darkness" while Doris is "deep as the darkness."

Together, Smith and Doris emerge when "a birth begins" and "the reddest of lilies blossoms." Smith is brought out of her darkness with the new life of the lily which is nurtured by the soil of Doris' grave. This living flower is found in close proximity to the grave site and in full view of Smith's eyes; its contiguity with death and life as well as its shared space with Doris and Smith establishes it as a metonym, one that builds a mysterious link between a woman alive and a woman dead.

In memory of her father, Smith writes "On a Death in Spring" (70). In this four stanza poem, "Death," "Spring" and "Bird" are words semantically associated with one another in such a way as to interconnect death and rebirth.

Smith's father dies in Spring, a season which the poet normally associates with newness of life and rebirth. Death, in this poem, is capitalized three out of four times, intimating its god-like presence: immanent in her heart as she mourns, transcendent in her life as it takes her father

beyond her grasp. Somehow she needs to integrate death and Spring as she reflects and mourns her father's death. She begins the poem, saying: "From Death's dark shoulder sings/ the bird of spring." She can hear the bird, but it is heard in connection to death. She describes the first part of Spring when there are still "Tatters of snow, soiled lace/cerements of winter rot." Winter's residual effects are within view as is the impact of her father's death. But, as Spring releases "terra cotta buds" and the voice of birds and as "Spring drips green/ foaming soon in bush and tree," so too "the image of a loved one's death grows." If Spring is a time of growth, it is also a time when memories can resurrect the life of someone we love and when continuing relationship can grow beyond the grave.

While Spring is connected to the growth of love and memories of a dead father, it is also connected to the sound of birds. The movement of the bird is, in the end, associated both with the death and rebirth of the poet's father:

> From the crest of this holy
> season the Bird of Death will
> rise, the heart left to heal of
> its own unreason.

"Bird" and "Death" are metonymically connected through proximity and the way in which they are both capitalized and semantically related. But the bird is also associated with Spring through the syntagmatic phrase: "bird of spring." The "bird of spring" that sat on "death's dark shoulder" in the first stanza is now "the Bird of Death" which flies away. In this way, Spring, the season of rebirth, is metonymically connected to death through the bird which, like her father, stays only for a time before flying off to another home. Additionally, the season of his departure is narrowed down to the "holy

season:" a time when new life is celebrated and found mysteriously dependent upon death. With bird and father gone, Smith is left with the pain of their absence: "the heart left to heal of/its own unreason." Smith uses the metonymic pole of language to build connections between life and death as well as the flight of a bird and the absence of her father. She knows that death's mystery is not to be reasoned with but rather embraced.

In "Remembering Miller" (76) she takes five stanzas to resurrect an old friend and fellow artist so that she can embrace him also. As Smith remembers Miller, she shares how his art makes him a man alive for all those who see his work. She too brings him to life through her memories and her words as she "reach[es] beyond" and speaks to him in this poem. Smith speaks of bones, the body and the "reaching beyond" as a way of making contact with Miller. He is the one she addresses. To the readers of the poem, Miller is as alive as the poet herself. They are both people connected to the reader through words.

Smith repeats the word "bones," sometimes associating it with death and other times with life in order to link the two realms metonymically. She begins by remembering a time when Miller told her "Never be afraid of growing old,/ you have such good bones." As an aging woman, she says "but the bones do not comfort me./ Yours matter even less...." His hollow bones, at this point in life, are a reminder of endings and death and yet Smith writes "Dear friend you do not need the bones." She goes on to connect the death of his body to the life of his body of work, his paintings. She says, "This life of yours/ glows before our eyes." Not only does his life reverberate through his paintings, but through this conversation Smith concludes, "I know you in my bones." Miller's life is felt in the life of the poet and as such it "reaches beyond" the grave, connecting death to life.

Smith also shares a bond with Miller as a fellow artist. I believe that as she reflects on her own mortality she speaks of Miller's. His life is eternally present through his paintings. His life was full

> in all its colours, cadences,
> it leapt and danced
> raged and wept,
> and more than this
> reached out beyond itself
> and will do so
> long after all of us lie where your body lies.

He reached beyond in his life, and his paintings continue to do so in the midst of his death. Also, "It was in the reaching beyond/ I knew you best." It is in his desire to live fully and reach beyond himself and his limits that Smith feels connected to him. This reaching beyond is an attitude of openness that looks beyond the self, beyond the bones and body to explore what is mysterious and new. Smith too has a body of work and as a fellow artist and friend she connects with Miller. They are brought together in this poem through the touch of his hand and her memory of it, through his paintings and her poem, through their bones and body of work and through their desire to reach beyond as artists of life. This reaching beyond is a beautiful image of rebirth; it connects death and life intimately. One who reaches beyond in life is apt to do so in death as well; in other words, one who lives fully leaves a legacy of work behind that speaks to people long after the person has died.

It is not, however, always possible to reach beyond. Sometimes there is nothing one can do but wait. In the waiting, however, there is deep frustration for Smith. The poem "It Seems I am always Waiting" (92) speaks

of Smith's inability to cope well with death as a stagnant state of being. This one-stanza poem offers a list of things which inevitably lead to death. Just as living fully is akin to living beyond the grave in "Remembering Miller," waiting through life is akin to death in this poem. Waiting is linked to death. This association is developed through a metonymic listing of things one waits for before dying. And in this sense, waiting is attributed to a death-like stance in the face of a life still being lived.

The poem speaks of the attitude of one who waits for something positive to happen. She waits

> for the last leaf to fall
> snow to cover a grave
> bud to open
> in too cold air
> pain to stop
> joy to begin
> ...
> for Death to slam the door in my face.

Each activity of waiting leads to the next. The snowball effect of this list is achieved through contiguous images until each is associated with the final thing one waits for: death. This is the only one of Smith's poems that speaks of death as an ending, a closed door. It follows quite naturally from the rest of the poem with its downhill effect. It is an encounter with death through an attitude of giving up and waiting. It is an encounter with the meaninglessness of everything, including the journey which ends with death. In a sense, it is a critique of her very own attitude towards living an open life. Here she explores her feelings of despair and finds that waiting inevitably

leads to death. Subsequently, death of the soul is connected to waiting which is connected to death of the body.

She also shares her utter frustration with waiting "for you to come/not to come/ never to come again." Her singleness is a source of pain. She can look out into her world and find great insights, she can find newness of life in death, but she cannot resurrect a man into her life. It is something which she has, in a sense, waited for all of her life and feels at odds with. If death is like not-living, then an aspect of life not lived is analogous to death in life. By waiting for something that never occurs, she is connected to death in life. Despite feeling open to life and affirming it through the various journeys of death and rebirth, Smith seems to feel that a journey anticipated but not taken is much like death itself.

Although Smith is articulating death as an end in this poem, the very rhythm of it intimates that something else is at work here. Because the list of images takes one metonymically to the slammed door, the rapid descent, the way in which the list connects waiting and waiting and more waiting to the finality of death's door leaves one wondering what will happen if that door is then opened. The abrupt end to this metonymic sequence cannot in a sense stop the unleashed semantic movement. Even if the words articulate inaction, the way in which they tumble from the poet's pen suggests rapid movement, movement that cannot be stopped.

Death, in fact, is never the end. In the two-stanza poem, "Images" (93), Smith is led to consider the impact of war memories on humanity (the second image and the second stanza) after observing the nonchalance of a cat who has killed for food (the first image and first stanza). Unlike the cat, "man" is left to struggle with the hostility transmitted through humanity's killings. She shows how making distinctions between us and them leads to a

perpetuation of such distinctions and subsequently to war itself. She does this by building an association between friend and foe through the impact of resurrected war memories. Smith writes about the impact of war history on its reader:

> looking out from every page of his history
> shattered wings
> splintered bones
> of his loves
> threaten the slayer
> with his own and their resurrection

Sometimes memories of those dead serve only to reinforce the power of fear; but if this is the case, it is so for all peoples. As men look through history books which, in effect, tell the story of wars and humankind's brutality, the brutality is reborn through hate. The history books serve not only to help future generations remember war but to inculcate in them the anger that generated the wars in the first place. To each people the history books chronicle a different story of suffering where the enemy killed their loved ones. This regeneration of anger threatens all who find themselves in a world which makes a distinction between "his own and their resurrection." Interestingly, Smith builds a correlation between "his" and "their" through their contiguity with "resurrection." This statement articulates a distinction between the two while simultaneously drawing a connection. She is showing how an attitude that draws a line between friend and foe perpetuates war and at the same time how both friend and foe are connected by the resurrection of war itself. Both will certainly be affected. The cat who kills does so for food and does not remember. It is not conscious of having killed or having

made a moral decision. It is not so simple for humans who suffer consciously, emotionally and morally in the killing.

In this poem, Smith shows how death and rebirth are not always servants of progress. She shows how memories of communities written in history books are agents of resurrection. They provide communal memory; a memory which is selective. Humans think of the sufferings incurred by their own people, not those of the "slayer." But, in the end, any distinction between "his" people and "their" people will be blurred, "in the black and bloody wood" where all will suffer together.

Smith arrives at this interconnection between peoples after observing a cat who has killed for food. One observation about killing leads metonymically to another. Once she is thinking of the humans who have suffered, she is led to think of the slayer who also is sufferer. She builds an association between cat, sufferer and slayer through their syntagmatic relationship to killing. Perhaps she is intimating that it would be better for humans to forget in the way the cat does. Perhaps she is reminding us that sufferer and slayer are one and the same. It is not absolutely clear. What is relevant is that they are drawn together in the poem and that this is made viable because of the process by which it is done. Metonymic exploration develops connections without needing to quantify the equality between the objects being integrated. Instead, this mode of language values exploration, process and the concomitant interconnectedness of all things.

Smith explores the interconnectedness between death and rebirth through Christ's resurrection in the poem "Fear of the Light" (94). This is one of her few explicitly religious poems. It is made up of one stanza followed by the separate line, "I fear the resurrection of the light." Here Smith is lead to a meditation on Christ's death and resurrection while

observing the trees sometime between the end of Winter and beginning of Spring. In the midst of death, it is hard to believe that rebirth is possible and yet by embracing death one is, in a sense, affirming the process that will also lead to rebirth.

As Smith looks upon the winter trees before Spring offers "the few green trees," she sees death; she sees that "Christ hangs from every naked tree." She hears "no sound from that drooping head" and wishes that he would "oblige and quietly descend,/he could be buried with propriety." Smith is making a metonymic link between the trees and the cross of Christ. They are contiguous in that the cross is made of wood. They are proximate in that observation of one leads to contemplation of the other. The transition from Winter to Spring is also associated with the death and resurrection of Christ on the wooden cross. These contextual interactions connect the biblical story to her present life. Its impact induces fear. After Christ's crucifixion, and according to the synoptic gospels, darkness overcomes the land from noon until 3 p.m. at which time Jesus dies and "the curtain of the temple was torn in two" (Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45). This event has various levels of dramatic response in the three synoptic gospels; but two things seem to happen in all three. The first is that the event induces an awe-like fear and the second is that a Roman centurion asserts belief that Jesus was "God's son" or "innocent" (Matt. 27:54, Mark 15:39, Luke 23:47-8). When Smith speaks of her fear of the light after "the sky goes black," she does so in connection to the story of Christ's death. The light is dependent on darkness and death. But at this point, the story of Jesus has been made metonymically present to her through the trees which surround her. It is not just Jesus' death which she fears; she fears her own. The light is connected with death through the story of Christ. The transition that the trees are presently moving

through is associated with the precipice of time between death and rebirth. In these two contiguous images, the oneness of death and rebirth is affirmed. If Smith fears the light, it is only because she knows that her faith will demand that she, like Jesus, lay down her life and embrace the darkness of death. She cannot have one without the other. She is intimately connected to the life of the trees and the life of Christ. The trees lead her to Christ who leads her back to herself. The journey is processed metonymically and the poem ends with anticipation rather than closure.

In an earlier poem, entitled "Fear" and published only in When a Girl Looks Down, Smith writes:

> Fear locks doors,
> Shutters windows,
> Dives into bed
> Covers head
> Against the lightning bolt. (117)

In this poem Smith sees fear as that which inhibits one to look, to grow, and to face the light. Smith has always acknowledged a need to face the darkness, but here she also explores the kind of fear which faces people who embrace the light. Christians who affirm the way Jesus lived realize that he faced death as a result of his insistence on living for the sake of truth and justice and love. In two of the three synoptic gospels , Jesus cries "My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me" and in all of the gospels the last words he utters are words of acceptance before he dies. As Winter moves into Spring, it is hard to believe that there is new life around the corner, even more so if its emergence is dependent on change that requires a death of some kind.

Smith's concern with death and rebirth is more immediate in these later poems. In "Footnotes to the Lord's Prayer," she is concerned with the spiritual role of death and rebirth; in When a Girl Looks Down and At the Bottom of the Dark her focus is on seeing things anew. However, in these, her later poems, she is concerned with the more pressing issue of rebirth in the face of physical death. Regardless of her concerns, she has approached life as a journey and in her poetry she has used the metonymic mode of language to articulate this attitude and move her along the journey. In these later poems she uses this technique to draw a connection between death and rebirth itself. The form and the thematic concern are one and the same, building an association between death and rebirth.

In "Old Women and Love" and "The Old in One Another's Arms" she resurrects memories of lovers as a means of embracing the journey of life in old age. These memories are contextually developed and arise out of visual catalysts. They revive what is dead and bring past events into the present. The present becomes interconnected with the past and the present offers healing to the past. The catalyst serves as the metonymic link between the past, present, death and rebirth of the poet.

In "A Death," "On Death in Spring" and "Remembering Miller" she resurrects people she loves through her memories of them and by connecting their death to an image of life. She resurrects Doris, tired sailor, through a blooming lily; her father through the bird of Spring which rises from the shoulder of death; and Miller Brittain through his body of work. In each case the connecting image is contiguous with both the poet and the one who is dead. This enables the poet to have a kind of contact with loved ones that are dead and further to integrate death and life itself.

She also faces the mystery of rebirth with a sense of fear. There is a realization that if she is going to integrate death and rebirth she has to accept death. In "It seems I am always Waiting" she waits for the "Death to slam/ the door in [her] face" and although this stark ending seems final, the metonymic process by which she arrives there intimates that an ending is not really possible. In "Images," she is led to contemplate the resurrection of hate amongst humans upon seeing an amoral cat who does not worry about his consumption of prey. She recognizes a compact between the living and the dead, the sufferer and the slayer. By connecting them through their association to war, she builds a bridge. And lastly, in "Fear of the Light" she explores the fear that one faces in the midst of death through a meditation on Christ that develops out of an encounter with trees. The trees are contiguous with both Jesus and the poet and they draw her into the drama that connects death and rebirth so intimately.

Smith's approach to life has not changed. She is still a woman on a journey. She still explores the fullness of life. Yet with death imminent she is more concerned with resurrection and rebirth. She does not bother with trite solutions or answers. Fears, doubts and questions remain even as she makes connections between death and rebirth that are helpful. Her search for associations between life and death help her to live fully and faithfully. She does not hold on to self-pity in the face of lost love but instead lets the memories renew her life; she neither denies nor remains in a state of mourning for friends or father but lets their death take her to their grave and their resurrection; she does not deny her fear but is critical of a fear that waits for life to happen or a fear that denies the need for the death of hate or a fear that will not face the death that leads to rebirth. Her attitude towards

death and rebirth is commensurate with her openness towards life and her faith that, as with all things, the two are intimately connected.

Smith's approach to life as articulated by and through her poetry speaks to the Christian as well as the postmodern. Christians are deeply concerned with the death and resurrection of Christ. Through baptism and baptismal vows they affirm the need to die to self in order to be reborn. Postmoderns do not hold on to any foundational or central beliefs; however, they do approach such beliefs with an attitude which is not unlike the way of death and rebirth. They are eager to see old foundations destroyed so that they can see things differently. Out of collapse comes something new, and integral to the postmodern way is the realization that they have foundations to let go of. The postmodern way allows for a kind of openness that is analogous to the way of death and rebirth familiar to Christians. It is here that Smith builds a network that embraces these seemingly opposing ideologies. She rarely deals with belief. Even in the face of death, she explores the way of the journey, not the destination. She crosses over from life to death and back again; never in the same place, she moves from one contiguous image to the next connecting with the mysterious web that is God.

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Having now traversed through life and death with and through the poetry of Kay Smith, it is apparent that the journey is not over. Smith's faith reaches out to embrace all that is mysteriously connected.

She herself begins by exploring the roots of her Christian faith, The Lord's Prayer. Metonymic process and a willingness to suspend judgment enables her to discover the multi-faceted nature of God's "single voice." As well, as I establish in my first chapter, her use of metonymic process is an act of faith in itself. Because she trusts that the prayer and the world that surrounds her have something to offer, she lets go and opens up. This death-like relinquishment to the journeying process takes her through to new discoveries. She allows the contiguities between natural objects in life and the associations that arise between words to lead her into the mysterious web of God.

With the connection between metonymic process and her faith established, Smith takes up her pen to explore new vistas in At the Bottom of the Dark and When a Girl Looks Down. She approaches the particularities offered by the world with the same sense of surrender as she did with each lexia of The Lord's Prayer. With eyes wide open, contiguities between numerous objects give way to a feeling of interconnectedness between all things. The web is woven metonymically in her poetry. It begins with one image or "bright particular" and ends with a mysteriously linked set of images and words that in their complex unity point to God.

This capacity for finding unity through interconnectedness is developed through Smith's practice of dying to self and letting the contiguities of word and world speak. And so it is metonymic process that enables her to see and articulate the connection between life and death in the face of old age in her later poems. As she simultaneously embraces these two

realms through images contiguous with both, she transcends their distinction and touches the mystery of God.

As I mentioned in my introduction, I began this thesis hoping to build a bridge between Christian and Postmodern thought. Instead I traced Smith's poetic journey to find that she is more concerned with building interconnections between all things. Her poetic technique is reminiscent of metonymy as outlined by Jakobson and later by Lodge. For Smith metonymy is used to explore her world as an act of faith. She opens her eyes, embraces the world as she sees it, carries the contiguities of life into her poetry and lets the associations between words themselves take her beyond her starting point. Rather than build a bridge, through a metonymic leap of faith, Smith crosses into the realm of mystery where such bridges are obsolete and the web of life and death connect all to God.

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