

VOICES FROM ALANIS: A CASE FOR POETIC DIALOGISM USING A
BAKHTINIAN MODEL

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BY
DONNA MARIE JARMA, B.A., M.A.

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ABSTRACT

DONNA MARIE JARMA

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As the title indicates, this study theorizes on the dialogism of poetry in contrast to Mikhail Bakhtin's insistence on its monologic nature. Seeking to render the study not only valid but also relevant in its modernity, the author uses the lyrics of Alanis Morissette, a popular, alternative musical artist, as her illustrative example. The study progresses setting background information and culminating with an examination of Morissette's body of work (four albums, fifty songs) from 1996 through 2003. The foundation includes a career and writing process sketch of the artist; a methodology section addressing Bakhtin's comments on poetry and dialogue, specifically from "Discourse in the Novel" where he outlines dialogic devices; and a chapter mapping out voice sources and the rhetorical tools used to construct and animate them. The methodology section also introduces, defines, and illustrates pivotal terminology.

Chapter Four traces elements of dialogism throughout Morissette's lyrics pointing out not only Bakhtinian devices and structures, but also intra, inter, and extra-lyric dialogicity as well as Morissette as a proponent of dialogue within and outside of her content. Including complete copies of the lyrics, helpful charts and diagrams, and

Internet sources offering musical clips, the study, in the Bakhtinian spirit, encourages the reader not only to consider its premise, but also to join the discourse. Drawing conclusions throughout, the study ends with a proclamation of at least the potential for poetic dialogism and presents possibilities for further study on this subject as well as others inspired by it.

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INTRODUCTION

“If I had a penny for every possibility I presented”

“My voice can mean, but only with others—at times in chorus, but at the best of times in dialogue” (Clark 12). Capturing the marrow, the essence, the heart of Mikhail Bakhtin’s philosophy of language, this quotation appropriately points to dialogue as the most effective, efficient, and even democratic vehicle for representing the voice in living conversation. Bakhtin’s enthusiasm for dialogue often stems from his mission to justify alternate critical criteria for his beloved novel since, in his opinion, the standard literary evaluative tools applied, by tradition and even privilege, to poetry alone. In his argument, dialogue serves as a clear line of demarcation, for while the structure of the novel best recreates the spirit of living discourse, incorporating the various, and sometimes conflicting, socio-ideological and socio-linguistic voices naturally at play, poetry strives for linguistic purity, a centralizing authority restricting outside influences and rendering the finished product essentially monologic. In short, the novelist *deliberately* employs dialogue as a tool of authentic expression, but the poet, to preserve artistic integrity and stylistic conformity, *deliberately* removes or, at least, stifles dialogue.

Though Bakhtin’s theory echoes historical and classical views of poetry, does it hold up in the light of modern circumstance and possibility? Following Bakhtin’s own prescription for dialogic structure, might an analysis of a modern poet uncover an

authentic and sustained poetic dialogism? Should this analysis prove viable, might this open the door to other applications of Bakhtin's theory and even retrospective evaluations of more classical, literarily regarded poets? An avid proponent of dialogue as a venue for the masses, surely Bakhtin would welcome such ongoing discussions and even variations of his theory.

Effectively illustrating poetic dialogism by Bakhtinian standards but from a modern point of view requires the careful selection of a test subject. Since Bakhtin often aligned the novel with pop culture and poetry with official culture, using the lyrics of a popular musical artist (a poet) seems provocatively fitting. Needless to say, such a lyricist must have consistently produced rhetorically rich, poetically sound, and artistically serious work. Alanis Morissette, a well-known, solidly established, and critically recognized alternative singer/songwriter, meets and exceeds this criteria. Considering her consecutive releases from 1996 to the present (2003) as a body of work and evaluating, on several levels, the dialogic features of that work, the study may place not only Morissette, but also her genre of poetry in a sort of Bakhtinian dialogic middle ground between epic poetry and the novel. For organizational clarity, the study should move progressively from biography to theory to structure to context, building along the way the foundations for both contemporary conclusions and future applications.

An accurate measure of Morissette's work demands a biographical sketch with particular focus on her creative progress and process; her developing style, structure, and content; and her relationship with her work, her audience, her world, and herself, all factors that impact the "living discourse" sustained in her body of work. Integral to the

dialogic triangle (speaker/listener/relationship), evidence of Morissette's abiding connection with and reaction to her fan base and critics, her poetic incorporation of real life experiences, her collaborative creative habits, and even her involvement in pertinent social issues provides the seed material from which Morissette's varied voices and their stories arise. The interaction of these voices and their impact on each other within each lyric, from lyric to lyric, from album to album, and even outside the realm of the work itself creates a literary tension vital to what Bakhtin considers dialogue.

Although Bakhtin comments on poetry intermittently throughout his theoretical work, a concentrated account, particularly useful to this study, appears in the essay "Discourse in the Novel." Here Bakhtin specifically outlines definitions, types and variations, and terms useful for detecting, evaluating, and discussing the features of authentic dialogue. By this point in the essay, he has already dismissed the possibility of poetic dialogism, but his own measuring tools applied, in this case, to Morissette's lyrics beg to differ with his conclusion. Armed with and clearly identifying such particulars as heteroglossia, centrifugal/centripetal force, hybridization, stylization, and pure dialogue yet granting Bakhtin certain fair-minded allowances of time and circumstance, this study will present a body of illustrative evidence to challenge the philosopher's narrow view of poetry as monologic.

Whether Morissette's lyrics meet Bakhtinian dialogic standards depends on the presence and interaction of ideologically and linguistically varied voices in conflict as well as concert with the artist's authorial center. By clearly identifying those voices and then mapping out their structure and functions within and across the spectrum of an entire

body of Morisette's work, the study may most effectively consider the preponderance of dialogic evidence. Tracing the development and interaction of voices chronologically allows the reader to recognize a pattern rather than isolated incidents of dialogism. Morisette not only incorporates heteroglossia, but she also employs traditional rhetorical devices and appeals (sometimes in non-traditional ways) as well as unique musical structures to enrich and electrify the facets of that heteroglossia. Further, she brings her discourse to life through a wide range of issues, many of which she revisits and even adjusts in obvious response to influences outside a particular lyric but within the sociological influences that affect the voices she portrays. This aspect of dialogism, this blending of seemingly silent yet conceptually speaking voices reflects concisely Bakhtinian strains of hybridization and stylization. The heart of this study (Chapters Three and Four) will translate terminology into application, application into illustration.

With argument, example, and documentation in place, readers may judge for themselves the validity of the study's basic claim: In some cases (perhaps in many cases and certainly in this case) poetry exhibits dialogic properties, even under Bakhtin's narrow scrutiny. Surely the philosopher himself would pause to consider at the very least the *potential*¹ of Morisette's work. Bakhtin always appreciated a lively exchange and certainly would have encouraged outside voices to engage in an intellectually valuable dialogue concerning one of his many open-ended, culturally sensitive hypotheses.

¹ Bakhtin feels dialogue results in the "creation of insights that neither side had separately; in other words, each side realizes the 'potentials' of the other in a way neither could have foreseen" (Morson 7)

CHAPTER ONE

MORISSETTE BACKGROUND

“How ‘bout that ever elusive kudo”

What makes Morissette an appropriate subject for a Bakhtinian-influenced theoretical study? Morissette’s journey to worldwide fame and recognition parallels her journey to self, to the discovery of her authentic voice. Both in her songs and interviews about them, she acknowledges the importance of connections, of the collaborative process, of tapping into and sharing her inner voice. That storyline in her career-oriented biography renders her a rich and illustrative example for arguing the dialogicity of modern poetry, specifically song lyrics. Prefacing the actual analysis of voices and dialogues within her work with a portrait of the artist as she matured and thereby discovered her voice establishes a foundation which doubles as a springboard to a serious theoretical discussion.

Morissette seems the proverbial “born artist,” for she always loved music and had not only written and performed her first song by age nine, she had also released that song on her own record label by age ten. By age fourteen she had signed a recording contract, starred in a TV series, and become a teenage pop sensation in her native Canada (Lewicki 1). As she would state in later interviews, she always knew this shallow, almost pandering style did not reflect her authentic self, but she enjoyed the entertainment aspects, and of course, her success offered her further opportunities.

After her teen idol stage ran its course, Morissette moved to Toronto to be on her own and write. After going through nearly one hundred prospective writing partners, she had all but given up on the collaborative process when she met Glen Ballard on a trip to Los Angeles (Ewing 56-60). The immediate connection with Ballard allowed Morissette to unlock the emotions and creativity stifled by fear, immaturity, denial, social strictures, and quite frankly her rather fluffy teenage reputation. Freed by the dialogue with Ballard, out stepped the authentic Morissette and along with her, a flood of powerful images, reverberating messages, raw revelations and indictments peppered with joyful celebrations of all aspects of life. The result, what she and many critics call her debut album, *Jagged Little Pill*, took form in record time. Of her writing process Morissette comments: "I had never written like this before. . .and now that I have, I'll never write in any other way. It was the most stream-of-consciousness writing that I've ever tapped into" (63). Finding her Emersonian iron string, her correspondent breeze awakened by the collaborative process, Morissette pledged herself to one level of dialogue, indeed invention through dialogue, a creative tool she has yet to abandon, a versatile tool equally useful and expansive as she began to share her work with the public.

During this frantic, creative period Morissette focused on three aspects of her music: very personal songs, the addition of guitar to her musical repertoire, and the power and range of her physical voice (64). Although incorporating her life experiences enabled her to make a vital connection with herself, her partner, and her audience and the guitar added another dimension on the musical front, the matter of voice weaves more directly into the aspect of Bakhtinian dialogics. Morissette intimates that she broke free of the

normal restrictive elements of style, not only as she composed her lyrics, but also as she performed them (64, 75). As Bakhtin often faults poetic style with discouraging or eliminating dialogue, Morissette leaves the dialogic door open, at least in the area of musical stylistics. Apparently the approach works for her, for she has remained true to it throughout her career.

Another facet of Morissette's writing playing into Bakhtinian theory lies in the technical purity of her songs. Approximately eighty percent of *Jagged Little Pill* consists of demo copies unedited, un-remixed, and recorded unceremoniously in a basement studio (65). Bakhtin posits that poets create on a scaffolding of dialogue but remove it for the final product. Morissette's raw presentation often preserves the dialogic structure vital not only to her meaning but also to her artistic integrity and completeness as well as the nurturing of her broad fan base, her listeners, her respondents. She even labels the entire album an answer rather than a statement: "It's a response to the way I was treated, the way I was brought up, the way I was taught to be" (69). Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* framed the songs as "tales of a young woman determined to make her own way, inventing herself as she leaves behind childhood indoctrination, manipulative lovers, sleazy business associates, and finally, her own self-doubt" (*Alanis* "Biography" 1).

In a 1995 interview Morissette expands on her creative process, the process that led to this debut album and to the discovery and development of her authentic voice. Of course, she credits the Ballard connection with unlocking her creative flow allowing her to feel safe, to be free to release repressed feelings. She had admired other artists who had written and performed with such visceral intensity and needed only to find her own

avenue of expression. Once the words began to flow, she filled journals and diaries with ideas and responses, a habit she continues to this day. She speaks of entering a “zone” as she and Ballard composed, a zone free of outside scrutiny, free of conventional boundaries, so free she wondered how the outside world would react (Ewing *Interview*).

Never hesitant to release the songs in their raw state, she reveled in fan response and connection calling it very satisfying and therapeutic, and she hoped to encourage others to tap into their inner dialogue. Her perceptive lyrics belied her tender age (20 at release date), earned her a broad-ranging fan base, and led observers to call her an “old soul,” something she understood and explained through her unique life experience. In her youth, she had two sets of friends, one from school and one (adults) from the business. Spending most of her time with the adults, she affected an adult exterior, mostly for self-preservation. Instead of writing about her own amazing life, she essentially played a part to please the adults, to please the entertainment machine. When her focus shifted from entertainment to intellectual expression, she identified the bridge between her two selves (Ewing 35-36).

With *Jagged Little Pill* enjoying immediate success, Morissette re-entered the world of public performance but this time with very personal material. Written in an insulated, safe atmosphere, the songs left her “naked,” as she put it. Here, another unusual twist layers into what will become her very recognizable performance style. Her managers had scheduled very small venues to facilitate incremental releases from the new album; however, this quickly evolved into a baptism by fire as the planned intimate, no-practice sessions turned into full concerts to overflow crowds (Ewing *Interview Disc*). The

connection nothing short of immediate, a year-and-a-half-long dialogue ensued, a dialogue initiated in a basement studio, expanded through reaction and response, and maintained through a year and a half of touring, personal appearances, and even access through the increasingly present Internet, something Morissette had first labeled the anti-Christ (*Alanis Slender*). At the core of everything, though, lay her artistic ability, both vocal and poetic.

Jagged Little Pill sold over twenty million copies and garnered several Grammy and Juno (Canadian) Awards, setting an almost impossible standard for Morissette's next effort, a standard that would follow her for the remainder of her career. The album also established the artist's ethos and pathos, her broad and varied fan base, her marketability, her potential, and most importantly, her authentic voice. Her public persona, built mostly on her scorned lover single, "You Oughta Know," announced an angry young woman not only lashing out, but also taking a stand as a voice for her generation. As other singles emerged from the album, the public noted a wry sense of humor and a philosophical reflection, and those who considered the entire album found a near mellowness, a semi-sweetness in some lyrics. Nonetheless, her loud, aggressive style, the bitterness in her initial offering, and her thunderous voice perpetuated the superficial dimension of this multi-layered talent, yet another hurdle on the path to her next production. No wonder irony laces its pinching thread throughout her poetic efforts.

Undaunted, indeed inspired, by both acclamation and criticism and relying on her own sense of artistic integrity, Morissette released *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* in 1998. Eighteen months of touring, collecting thoughts and reactions in her ever-

present journals, and remaining true to her free style, collaborative writing process, Morissette amassed a staggering seventeen tracks, each song building on themes established in the first album, comments from fans and critics, her own self search and epiphanies, and the invention process itself. Naturally, the dialogic nature of her work becomes more apparent with her second effort as opportunities for lyrical conversations and responses presented themselves. Sustaining and enriching her authentic voice now layered with personal, artistic, and professional growth and experience on a global scale, Morissette set about meeting her own expectations acknowledging the impossible standard of *Jagged Little Pill*'s success. Critics and fans alike stood poised, almost salivating, and when *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* debuted at number one on the charts, the dialogue splintered and intensified with crackling resonance.

Between comparisons to *Jagged Little Pill* and the more intellectual and introspective content, the new album entered the market to almost expected quelled enthusiasm. As fans warmed to the new material, critics parceled out mixed reviews, the positive outweighing the negative especially concerning Morissette's honesty, her beautifully developing physical voice and musical prowess, and her deepening spirituality. Calling Morissette a "bona fide cultural touchstone" (a weighty title for a 23-year-old) John Sakamoto, executive producer of *Jam! Showbiz*, pointed to *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* as both a reaction to the artist's status and her looking back, reevaluating, rethinking, and responding to the past with more spiritual eyes. Applauding Morissette's "more idiosyncratic use of rhythm" and the less glossy appearance than *Jagged Little Pill*, the critic took issue with what he dubbed "lazy craftsmanship,"

alluding to her use of repetition. The critic did concede, though, that this served to highlight the high quality songs that broke from the mold and deemed the album worth wading through roadblocks (1-2). In a similar, mixed-message review, Mike Ross of the *Edmonton Sun* described *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* as a study in “self-indulgence, self-examination, and self-absorption, a series of therapy sessions,” less accessible than *Jagged Little Pill* yet peopled with the artist’s stories and enlivened with music rich in variety, sonic texture, and clever, memorable melodies. Ross echoes praise for Morissette’s always growing, expansive voice and takes a gentle swipe at her dependence on listing, as he calls it (1).

Frequent Morissette critic Jane Stevenson of *The Toronto Sun* plays on the album’s title labeling the effort “not addictive”; nonetheless, she acknowledges Morissette’s trademark confessional style as well as her honesty and specificity with which she addresses difficult subject matter, a trait certain to satisfy her fan base. Ironically, the same lyrics Sakamoto saw as standouts, Stevenson points to as artistic failures (“Infatuation” 1-2). Common among Morissette critics, this sort of wild disagreement adds to the artist’s mystique and pathos. Finally, in a 1998 review posted on the official Alanis Website, Edna Gunderson of *USA Today* affirms: “Artistically, Alanis Morissette exceeds our highest hopes on her can’t-lose new album, *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*. The ambitious collection is her probing, shrewd, sensual, and fearlessly autobiographical exploration of being young and female in the 90s” (*Alanis* “Biography” 2). Hinting at the artist’s ever-developing gender and generational voices specifically, the critic validates Morissette’s awareness of the other influences affecting her words.

Morissette's next endeavor tested, measured, strengthened, and reaffirmed her intimate connection with and trust in her fans as well as her self-confidence and performance style. *MTV Unplugged* (1999) featured reworked previous releases and selected unreleased work, all performed and recorded live at New York's Brooklyn Academy of Music. The self-produced album focused on Morissette's "penetrating vocals and creative arrangements" and drew widespread praise as the artist rethought her work rather than just replaying it (2). One critic called the effort "natural and enjoyable" (Veitch "Unplugs" 1) while others pointed to the irony of its mellow style (Cantin "MTV" 1), but all marveled at the strength and naked power of her voice. Remaining to this day a fan favorite, this album served as a pacifier as Morissette prepared her next offering.

As Morissette continued her musical growth and production, indeed considering a completely solo venture to come, she also expanded other horizons she had already begun to explore. Directing several of her own videos, she dabbled in acting, playing God in the cult classic, *Dogma*, appearing in HBO's hit "Sex in the City," and testing the off-Broadway scene in *The Vagina Dialogues*. Aware of the power of her voice, she lent her name and support to universal causes such as world hunger, human rights, and even the victims of 9/11. Performing for Music Without Borders in Canada, at the Great Jubilee Concert for a Debt-Free World in Rome, and at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, she garnered the Patrick Lippert Award for her humanitarian work and the United Nation's Global Tolerance Award. Her involvement stems in some part from her extensive touring, especially to the Far East, Eastern Europe, and Africa. During these

visits, she not only performed and visited the usual tourist spots, but she also investigated historical, cultural, and political sites and observed human rights conditions (*Alanis "Biography"* 2-4). These experiences heightened her awareness, moved her to action, and wove rich new threads into the tapestry of her lyrics.

Exhausted yet enlightened by touring and itching to challenge her abilities further, Morissette penned thirty songs for her next album. Concerned with overwhelming both her fans and herself, she whittled her song list down to eleven and released the completely solo (written and produced) result, *Under Rug Swept* (2002). Of course, she already had a plan for her "leftovers," but that would come later in yet another unique format.

Critics and fans received *Under Rug Swept* with renewed interest and enthusiasm. Declaring Morissette's "melodic sense and expressive voice" as her "most impressive weapons," Paul Cantin of the *Ottawa Sun* tempered his praise characterizing Morissette's lyrics as "increasingly infatuated with the language of psychology" which, in his opinion, does not work on paper (Cantin "Under" 2). Here, his critique comes full circle, though, as he waxes poetic himself: "She makes what would seem to be unworkable lyrics work, by sneakily switching syllabic emphasis and letting her voice dance over dense-packed couplets of jargon and earnest-but-unadorned prose, forging melody out of lumps of lyrical coal" (3). Although he seems to attack her lyrical content at times, he redeems both his critique and her thematic steadfastness and authentic voice:

The first single, the buoyant, acoustic-based 'Hands Clean,' contains a lyrical confession that, by implication, makes the attention-grabbing revelation of 'You

Oughta Know' (from *Jagged Little Pill*) into little more than a lurid Penthouse Forum letter. 'That "Hands Clean's' message comes double-dipped in a frosting of sweet melody and head-nodding beats, makes it her most subversive work yet. (3)

Despite his various objections, Cantin cannot resist borrowing Morissette's quirky phrasing, ending his review with "*Under Rug Swept* is effort fine another" (4).

In an interview with Derek Tse of the *Toronto Sun*, Morissette discussed coming to terms with past events, the composite nature of the voices featured in her songs, and the therapeutic benefits of being "transparent and authentic" (1-2). These remarks further highlight the artist's poetic stylistics and validate the intentional layering of both language and meaning within her lyrics. Echoing other critics on many points, Jane Stevenson dubbed the album a reawakening, a re-emergence, a redefining for the artist and alludes specifically to Morissette's focus on an uneasy dynamic with her father, a gender-charged understanding of the male perspective on radical feminism, with characteristic irony, a scolding of women for in-fighting and thus weakening hard-earned strength and unity ("Morissette" 1-3). In an online interview, the artist characterized the album's central idea: "If there's any sort of theme that I noticed emerging throughout, not only the writing of it, but the performance of the songs, it would be just the desire to mend unions and bridge gaps. Whether it be between genders or between human beings, between spirits" (Van der Kooy 1). Clearly she has grown increasingly aware of the power and catharsis public discourse can offer. Morissette admits to the still looming ridiculous expectations set by *Jagged Little Pill*, but she has found satisfaction, peace,

and far more value in staying true to her authentic voice, despite (and sometimes almost inspired by) the critics.

With the tour promoting *Under Rug Swept (Our Unions Mended)* barely complete and with three million in sales recorded and continuing, Morissette chose to release *Feast on Scraps* (December 2002), a CD/DVD set which included unreleased tracks from the *Under Rug Swept* studio session, behind-the-scenes video and interviews, her entire set from the Rotterdam, Holland concert, and other touring footage (Kaufman 1). Often referred to as *Under Rug Swept Part Two*, the CD features the harder rock, lyrically more intense songs held back from the mellow Part One, although it concludes with a haunting acoustic version of “Hands Clean” (“Alanis to release”). The artist’s penchant for juxtaposition and paradox often serves to prop open the door to further dialogue.

At the time of this study, Morissette had promoted both (*Under Rug Swept* and *Feast On Scraps*) albums with a just completed (Summer 2003) European tour, an appearance on *The Today Show* (September 2003), and a South American tour beginning in Brazil. She earned a 2003 Juno Award (Canadian) for Best Producer of the Year, and during her *Today Show* performance, she introduced a new song, “Eight Easy Steps,” whetting her fans’ appetites for a new album in the works (“Alanis Rocks”). Pursuing her acting career, she will play an actress in Cole Porter’s life story, *Just One of Those Things*. As part of her role, she will perform the Porter song, “Let’s Do It, Let’s Fall in Love” (McQueen “Jazzed” 1). On the humanitarian front, she recently donated new band instruments to a high school in Canada (“Band” 1) and offers her time, energy, name, and money to various global causes. Morissette has made beneficial use of the opportunities

fame has afforded her, not only through good deeds, but also through the expanding venue of her lyrics. In a CNN interview she explained:

That if it [fame] gave me anything, it was truly fleeting and that if I wanted to have any of these things [peace, power, fulfillment], like inner peace, I would have to achieve them within myself and not with fame. Once that was delved into, I felt that fame was actually this really sweet opportunity to continue to express--and inspire or repulse people. (Freydkin 3)

A pertinent aspect and reflection of Morissette's ongoing success and popularity, her personal web site speaks to the artist's desire to remain as accessible to the public as possible. True to her performance style and content philosophy, she includes not only biographical and product information, but also sections for visitor feedback and sharing. With a link on the production company site (Maverick Records), the *AM* site opens with a selection of music clips from her most recent albums and a frequently updated message from the artist herself. For instance, her latest movement seeks to remove a government official with a conflict of interest. Page one of her web site sports a letter from Morissette explaining the situation and urging fans to send emails of protest. The Cherish section includes pictures taken by fans and a collection of links to other Morissette web sites (constructed by fans) while the Paintbox section provides a personal diary, an opportunity for fans to write, and many times personal pictures of the artist on tour and at home. Although the realities of a dangerous world restrict her connections, items like this web site testify to her concentrated attempts to stay grounded and therefore

respectful and appreciative of the grassroots groundswell that made possible her current quite powerful position.

Concrete evidence of Morissette's ongoing extra-lyric discourse occurred during Morissette's 2003 tour to South America. A fan reported she had bid "Goodnight Peru" (actually "Goodnight, bless you") at the end of a show in Brazil. The incident circulated the Internet and populated entertainment media headlines until Morissette put the matter to rest on her web site diary. Initially, she planned to ignore the erroneous report, but in the October 6, 2003 entry, she not only made corrections, but also saw a golden moment to ruminate: (Quoted verbatim)

It further affirms my thought that everything is perspective, including what I'm writing right now. It affirms that regardless of what I read or am exposed to that I have the ability, opportunity and some might say responsibility to be discriminating and discerning as I take it in. that questioning what the media portrays as real and irrefutable truth will continue to serve me well (whether it's about movie stars or murderers). And that ultimately there is no such thing as "objective truth" anyway. That it's the glasses through which we each look at life that defines what our individual truths are. (and here's to wishing that our individual truths align enough to take the human race and this planet safely into the next decade, let alone millennium!)

Finishing mixing the record over the next couple of weeks. Thinking it will come out in the new year (feb). I love it. And I look forward to sharing it in the

spirit that it was written, to define and get a quick snapshot of where I'm at in this particular era of my life. (*Alanis Slender*)

The entry reflects Morissette's youthful wisdom, her willingness to keep learning, her earnestness in communicating and sharing and even teaching through her own experience, her acceptance of responsibility as a celebrity and as a human being, and her keen appreciation for response, reaction, and interaction. Indeed, all of these elements contribute to the Bakhtinian dialogic richness of Morissette's lyrical endeavors.

Not surprisingly, Morissette often communicates with her public not only through her web site and personal appearances, but also through her lyrics where she sometimes performs self-checks on her humility as well her humanity. In "One" from *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*, she confesses: "I have abused my so-called power, forgive me." Moments like these endear her to her public and perpetuate her status as a poet of, and a spokesperson for, the people and make her lyrics a viable example for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

“All I need now is intellectual intercourse”

To launch a study on poetic dialogism using a Bakhtinian model and Morissette as an example, one must first qualify the discussion with several points in Bakhtin’s defense. First his comments on poetry come in connection with his novelistic theory. Bakhtin uses the epic as the poetry closest to the novel in form to make clear his points about dialogue and the need for an alternate literary criticism for the novel form. He does qualify his own comments in both areas by alluding to “lower” forms of poetry and by inserting the phrase “in the narrow sense” when he makes general comments, especially about the monologic nature of poetry.

Secondly, modern readers must consider Bakhtin’s milieu, his *Zeitgeist*, so to speak. As a philosopher and linguist in Stalinist Russia, Bakhtin suffered not only from governmental suppression, but also from the effects of filtered, propagandized information and global isolation, often separated from the pop culture he came to love. Though he survived and continued to write through 1975, he could not have imagined the impact of technology on the availability, the sharing, the exchange that modern poetry would enjoy. Neither could he have anticipated the exposure of past poets, both generally recognized and recovered, and the resulting potential of their works enjoying new and renewed universal discussion and response.

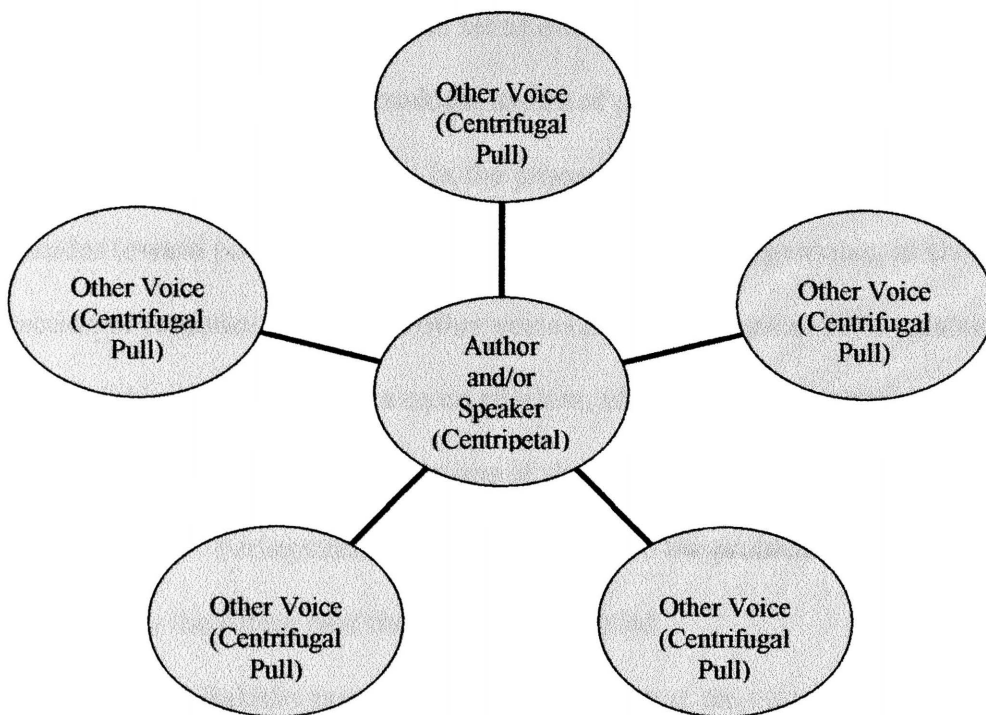
Finally, since Bakhtin's original work appeared in his native Russian and since some manuscripts remain in dispute as to authorship (Voloshinov's and Medvedev's works¹), translations and interpretations of his work continue to this day, a new edition due out in 2003. Just as his own work takes on new meaning, application of his various theories, especially his three major global concepts (prosaics, unfinalizability, dialogue) (Morson and Emerson 3) adjust and refract in the light of modern literary study and cultural fluctuation. Like the dialogues he held in such esteem, his work welcomes discussion and response, those other voices he knew, indeed he hoped, would always exert a centrifugal pull on his own center. Indeed, as Michael Holquist declares in his introduction to the 2001 edition of *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, "The conceptions for which Bakhtin is most renowned aren't really conceptions at all, but signs of problems unsolved" (23). Still, as Caryl Emerson, noted Bakhtin scholar, insists in her review of the Holquist edition, "Bakhtin continues to be a spectacular starting point for all sorts of cultural study, but as the essays in this revised anthology reveal, he no longer provides his best readers with any ready-made ends" (4). With a nod to both aforementioned critics, this study will endeavor to proceed from an intriguing starting point to explore an unsolved Bakhtinian problem.

To borrow from Emerson, this cultural study will find its starting point in Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, more specifically, as stated previously, in his insistence on the monologic nature of poetry. A fair study of this kind must consider Bakhtin's most basic statements concerning the dialogic nature of (1) language itself, the utterance in living

¹ Some critics believe that Bakhtin actually wrote the principal works of these two authors (Morson 2).

discourse; (2) prose, particularly the novel; and (3) poetry (poetic style). Although Bakhtin addresses each of these separately, through the core of his expansive dialogic theory runs the consistent thread of the centripetal/centrifugal relationship framed by the existence and influence of heteroglossia. In essence, the term centripetal refers to the powerful force pulling all things toward a center. In literature, then, that force draws all artistic language, no matter how varied it begins, toward a centralized, unitary source: the author, a single character, the dominant language of the work, the ideological message et cetera. In living conversation, this unitary source (the speaker) automatically experiences the sociological and socio-linguistic influences surrounding it and already part and parcel of it resulting in an open-ended progression of language sharing and creation. Bakhtin, and others, refer to these influences as heteroglossia, the many voices, the many languages which very naturally affect each other in living discourse. This heteroglossia imposes a centrifugal pull on the centripetal center thereby forcing that center to acknowledge, to react and respond to that pull from the center.

Bakhtin recognizes these forces in everyday language and insists that novelistic style embraces, welcomes, and employs heteroglossia to preserve and create dialogue while poetic style erases, eliminates, ignores, or at the very least, muffles heteroglossia and therefore closes door to dialogue. This basic understanding of terminology facilitates a more concise discussion of Bakhtin's remarks on each level: language, the novel, and poetry. The following diagram may aid the reader in understanding the concept of heteroglossia. Chapter Three will insert the voices in sample songs to illustrate the concept in action.



To grasp the concept of heteroglossia, the reader must imagine the outer circles rotating around the center exerting a pull *away from* the center, the voices making their impact known, leaving fragments of themselves in the resulting lines. According to Bakhtin, poets strive to eliminate this pull, silence the other voices, lifting the author's voice as the sole contributor or at least the sole filter of the message. In other words, poets submerge other voices into their own. However, in Morissette's lyrics, the listener may recognize, according to Bakhtin's own descriptions, the evidence of the other voices impacting the author's message. These other voices may come in the form of pure dialogue, stylizations, or hybridizations detectable in the final product.

Figure 1 – Basics of Heteroglossia (Creating dialogic potential)

Some of Bakhtin's most pointed remarks on poetry and dialogue appear in "Discourse and the Novel," the final of the four famous essays in *The Dialogic Imagination*. In his attempts to make his case for a new approach to literary criticism and the novel, he compares the nature of poetic style (specifically the epic) to the nature of novelistic style. In the course of this comparison, Bakhtin highlights the novel's more linguistically natural language process. This leads him to his major point of differentiation: dialogue. The novel by virtue of its more authentic portrayal of dialogue

(living language) requires a unique set of evaluative tools. As almost a sidelight to his discussion, he exposes the monologic nature of poetry by detailing its stylistics in opposition to those of the novel. In the process, he calls into service long-accepted attitudes toward poetry as privileged, elitist, narrow, and hegemonic, in short, closed to reaction or response, deaf to the other voices inherently present in its epistemology. Although his argument seeks a more efficient, effective, and appropriate critical standard for the novel, it also brings to light one of those unresolved problems to which Michael Holquist refers. Perhaps Bakhtin could not resolve the problem of dialogism and poetry because only the future held the key that he needed.

What does Bakhtin say about dialogue, language, the novel, and poetry? He begins with a very basic, foundational statement:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (276)

Very simply, in everyday conversational exchange, sociological forces automatically influence the meaning and the process of language; language has no choice as its very existence and significance depends on the outside forces that impact it. Bakhtin also points to a natural open-ended, invitational quality:

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in

the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue. (280)

This natural, answer-anticipating feature of language plays an integral part in Bakhtin's theories on artistically recreating authentic language within the various genres and his drawing the dialogic lines between poetry and prose. Indeed, Bakhtin enlists this feature to frame his idea of "creative understanding," the ability of dialogue to create new thought or at least the potential for it. Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson summarize: "As in all true dialogues, the result is likely to be the creation of insight that neither side had separately; in other words, each side realizes the 'potentials' of the other in a way neither could have foreseen" ("Bakhtin, M. M." 7). Authentic dialogism, operating as it does in living conversation, incorporates the ideas and ideals of both speaker and listener and therefore creates an atmosphere conducive to interaction with the heteroglossia which always surrounds it thereby leaving open a sort of living potential.

Bakhtin sets the behavior of living language in comparison with prose style and in contrast to poetic style. First, the prose writer opens his structure to interaction: "He (the prose writer) welcomes the heteroglossia and language diversity of the literary and extraliterary language into his own work not only not weakening them but even intensifying them (for he interacts with their particular self-consciousness)" (298). To put this heteroglossia to best use, he allows the variety of voices to work in concert, and rather than submerging all positions, he "allows the voice of the narrator to reside beside

the voices of the characters, bestowing no greater authority on that voice than on any of the other. Voices intersect and interact, mutually illuminating their ideological structures, potentialities, biases and limitations” (Brandist 8). Following the lead of living language, the prose writer allows those other voices not only to vie with, but also enrich the narrator’s voice thus attempting to recreate all facets of natural discourse. Of course, as much as Bakhtin (in all of his socio-linguistic fairness) would like to believe it, not all voices will register (sound-wise) equally. In his essay, “Bakhtin and the Reader,” David Shepherd clarifies: “Bakhtin’s work demonstrates an acute understanding of just how naively idealistic it would be to assume that in any dialogue, literary-critical or otherwise, all contributions carry equal weight. Some voices are louder than others, even if they are not the ones articulating the most elegantly convincing statements” (146).

Bakhtin then turns to the prose writer’s attentiveness to the listener:

Every discourse presupposes a special conception of the listener, of his ap-perceptive background and the degree of his responsiveness; it presupposes a specific distance. All this is very important for coming to grips with the historical life of discourse. Ignoring such aspects and nuances leads to a reification of the word (and to a muffling of the dialogism native to it). (346)

Authentic dialogue requires an author to factor in the prospective listener’s contribution to and/or representation within a particular language image. In her lecture on Bakhtin, Dr. Mary Klages of the University of Colorado at Boulder summarizes and expands on this idea:

The writer of prose is always attuned to his/her own language(s) and the alien languages (of listeners) and uses heteroglossia—employs a variety of languages—to always be entering into dialogue with readers. The fiction writer is always directing his/her ‘speech’ (writing) toward the possible responses of readers, and is always trying to find more things to say, more ways to say it, so that readers can understand the message(s). (5)

As the word in living language anticipates a future answer, prose discourse anticipates reader/listener response, carefully fashioned and refashioned with deference to the spectrum of heteroglossia available. This willingness to recognize, respect, and even incorporate outside influences renders the prose writer more effective than the poet at recreating authentic language, at representing a more democratic array of voices within a literary work, at opening the work to immediate as well as future response, reaction, and interaction. Bakhtin details methods used to accomplish this representation. (Included later in this chapter)

In almost diametric opposition to the very dialogic, open, inviting nature of living language and novelistic prose, Bakhtin sets the very monologic, closed, and autonomous nature of poetry. He posits that rather than fashioning itself toward an answer or in consideration of a reader/listener, the poetic word “is sufficient unto itself and does not presume alien utterances beyond its own boundaries. Poetic style is by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse, any allusion to alien discourse” (285). Later, he narrows even further: “The concept of many worlds of language, all equal in their ability to conceptualize and to be expressive, is organically

denied to poetic style” (286). As the Klages lecture notes, “Bakhtin argues that the sense of boundedness, historicity, and social determination found in dialogic notions of language is alien to poetic style” (5). Indeed by definition, by stylistic prescription, poetry disallows even the soil from which a dialogue, internal or external, might grow. Bakhtin portrays the poet as a sort of literary god lording over his product, controlling structure and content, deconstructing dialogue, and constructing a force field against the centrifugal pull of heteroglossia.

Bakhtin suggests that the poet’s obligatory quest for unitary language serves as a deterrent to dialogue: “In the majority of poetic genres (poetic in the narrow sense), as we have said, the internal dialogization of discourse is not put to artistic use, it does not enter into the work’s ‘aesthetic object,’ and is artificially extinguished in poetic discourse” (284). Since, as Bakhtin insists, every living utterance “cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads,” the poet must remove those threads to protect the purity of conventional poetic language. Later, Bakhtin specifically addresses the poet’s creative dilemma in this area:

But the trajectory of the poetic word toward its own object and toward the unity of language is a path along which the poetic word is continually encountering someone else’s word, and each takes new bearing from the other; the records of the passage remain in the slag of the creative process, which is then cleared away (as scaffolding is cleared away once construction is finished), so that the finished work may rise as unitary speech. (331)

The poet constructs and refines and arrives at a final product through the natural, unavoidable process of living language. According to Bakhtin, the poet must then remove the dialogic evidence, silence the echoes of other voices, other languages, other viewpoints, so the poet's voice might sound in god-like omnipotence. Poetic stylistics, in Bakhtin's opinion, demands this purifying process.

In the summary paragraphs of "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin brings into sharper focus poetry's relationship to authentic language and heteroglossia, its conventional creative process, and its lost dialogic potential:

Poetry also [as do novels] comes upon language as stratified, language in the process of uninterrupted ideological evolution, already fragmented into 'languages.' And poetry also sees its own language surrounded by other languages, surrounded by literary and extra-literary heteroglossia. But poetry, striving for maximal purity, works in its own language as if that language were unitary, the only language, as if there were no heteroglossia outside it. Poetry behaves as if it lived in the heartland of its own language territory, and does not approach too closely the borders of this language, where it would inevitably be brought into dialogic contact with heteroglossia; poetry chooses not to look beyond the boundaries of its own language. If during an epoch of language crises, the language of poetry does change, poetry immediately canonizes the new language as one that is unitary and singular, as if no other language existed.

(399)

Here Bakhtin imagines the poet operating in his own world, protecting his product from the impurities of outside influences, from the rogue, renegade voices inept, insignificant, even structurally dangerous in the poetic realm. Overtly interested only in a singular, unitary, monologic message, the poet skirts the edges of his own language, aware of the rich heteroglossia outside it, but careful not to cross the boundary himself or to allow those other voices to infiltrate his sheltered language world. Indeed, should the unthinkable happen, should another language break through, potent poetic stylistics manages to sanitize and canonize it, stripping away its dialogic potential. Craig Brandist, contributing writer for The Bakhtin Center, concludes: “Bakhtin’s *poet* is a hegemonic intellectual whose language relates in an authoritative fashion to the discourse of the masses, while the novelist aims to break and indeed reverse that hegemonic relationship. In Bakhtin’s formulation, the locus of critical forces of culture is *the people*, while the mythological forces of culture emerge from the official stratum” (12).

A synthesis of Bakhtin’s remarks on poetry and dialogue echoes an historical viewpoint of poetry and rhetoric (prose) in binary terms, something upon which Bakhtin builds without disparaging poetry but with more of an eye to the socio-linguistic and literary critical implications reflected in language in general and the novel in particular. Dialogicity serves Bakhtin as a pivotal differentiating feature, and conventional attitudes seem to bolster his argument. Magnified by Bakhtinian lines in the sands of dialogue, poetry and prose (the novel) fall predictably on respective sides of language, philosophy, and culture:

Poetry	Novel
Delight	Instruct
Unitary	Decentralizing (language)
Official	Pop (culture)
Seriousness	Laughter
Monologue of officialdom	Dialogue of the people
Centripetal (only)	Centripetal and centrifugal
Authority	Rebellion

Even Bakhtin, though, admits that the lines blur at times, so by arguing for poetic dialogism, this magic, elusive element, through the lines of a pop culture poet, so to speak, this study may address, not only its own purpose, but also the more universal perception of poetry as privileged. Perhaps in the essence of dialogue, in the common ground, the possibility for connectedness it offers, poetry will find a more amicable place in the literary canon. Perhaps this study can help shift the paradigm of literary and linguistic privileging. Ironically (and would he not love it) Bakhtin's own narrow view of poetry may lead to a broader, more culturally sensitive, more socio-ideologically tempered review of poetic stylistics in general. Perhaps, with appropriate irony in this case, the theories of the icon will fuel the efficacy of the unwitting iconoclast.

To challenge Bakhtin's portrayal of poetry as basically monologic, one must consider the methods by which the prose writer preserves dialogic structure and therefore recreates authentic, life-like language. Does poetry, then, successfully employ those

same methods? Bakhtin outlines the basic tools careful to label “theoretical” the clear-cut separation of categories:

All devices in the novel for creating the image of a language may be reduced to three basic categories: (1) hybridizations, (2) the dialogized interrelation of languages and (3) pure dialogues. These categories of devices can only theoretically be separated in this fashion since in reality they are always inextricably woven together into the unitary artistic fabric of the image.

(Bakhtin 358)

He goes on to define *hybridization* as “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the area of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (358), and more clearly and simply in his summary paragraph as “*an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language” (361).

Although this unique singular result of one language represented through the filter of another occurs naturally in living conversation, the prose writer uses it deliberately to create what Bakhtin calls “conscious artistic hybrid,” a type of intra-utterance dialogue. This construction features the consciousnesses of both the representing and represented language within a single utterance, but the represented language remains outside the utterance. A hybrid renders one language in the light of another (360).

Bakhtin labels as *stylization* “an internally dialogized mutual illumination of languages,” as “an artistic representation of another’s linguistic style, an artistic image of another’s language” (362). Whereas a hybrid does not directly mix languages, a stylization retains elements of both the stylized and stylizing language. Within this mixture of voices, the languages “mutually illuminate” each other, leaving in place fragments of both consciousness and style (362-63).

Bakhtin also identifies two deviations from pure stylization: *variation* and *parodic stylization*. A variation deliberately incorporates a contemporaneous element (word, phrase, form) that seems an anachronism, but a prose writer uses this as an artistic tool, another method of bringing one language in contact, in concert with another. The insertion of this outside element “creates a free image of another’s language, which expresses not only a stylized but also a stylizing language and art-intention” (363). A parodic stylization employs the “other’s” language as a satirical self-critique setting the two languages to “do battle on the field of the utterance” (364). A true parodic stylization, however, cannot appear as a shallow “destruction of the other language,” but rather it must allow the parody to speak in contrast to the author’s voice. As Bakhtin explains: “It must re-create the parodied language as an authentic whole, giving it its due as a language possessing its own internal logic and one capable of revealing its own world inextricably bound up with the parodied language” (364). In other words, the stylizer must handle the device with intelligence and respect for the inherent power of the stylized language.

Finally, bound to the dialogue of language, determined by socio-ideological evolution, anchored in open-ended images, and inexhaustible by nature, *pure dialogue* in novelistic prose, according to Bakhtin, subordinates all other aspects of the work (365). What most people think of when they hear the word, “dialogue,” this pure form basically labels itself with standard literary and grammatical markers. Nonetheless, its specific function and behavior varies from genre to genre. Bakhtin, obviously, focuses on the novel; however, the features he outlines apply in a general sense to other genres, including, as this study will illustrate, certain poetic formats. In fact, in his summary remarks on pure dialogue in the novel, Bakhtin himself opens the door to a broader application of his dialogic theories: “In a word, the novelist plot serves to represent speaking persons and their ideological worlds. What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own horizon within someone else’s horizon” (365). Building on this aspect of Bakhtinian dialogic theory alone, one can develop a fair and modern assessment of, at the very least, the potential for poetic dialogism, for the possibility that the poet, too, comes to know her own language as perceived in someone else’s language, her own horizon within someone else’s.

Clearly, Bakhtin’s tools for building and incorporating dialogue seize upon and call into palpable service heteroglossia and its catalytic centripetal/centrifugal relationship, the healthy language war that reflects the multi-voiced, multi-layered socio-ideological activity in everyday life. Since Bakhtin bases his theories on the dialogism of living language and sees the novelist as the most effective re-creator of an authentic language

image, he quite naturally sets the novel in contrast to poetry, highlighting poetry's apparent monologic nature. Nonetheless, although dialogue may function somewhat differently in the poetic arena, even if it exhibits only the basic traits as Bakhtin describes them, it certainly meets the philosopher's litmus test of *potential*. As the beginning of this chapter indicated, perhaps advancements in technology, literary research (especially on Bakhtin's works in translation and application), and the resulting modern re-evaluation of conventional views of both poetry and dialogue create fresh fertile ground for an informed exploration of that potential.

Notes on Structure and Application

To translate theory into application and practice, this study will follow a logically developing structure and will offer not only specific illustrative examples, but also tools for further consideration and evaluation of the comprehensive material detailed. This will avoid repetition yet leave open (as Bakhtin would have encouraged) the avenues of further enlightened discourse. Chapters Three (the voices) and Four (the lyrics) will explore, with an eye to dialogism, the raw material of Morissette's work and how that material works in concert to produce the target feature: poetic dialogism.

As the study proceeds, readers will note the dialogic flavor of Morissette's lyrics on at least three levels: First, and the methodological nugget at the heart of the study, by Bakhtinian devices: hybridization, stylization, and pure dialogue; Second, by intra/inter/extra lyric dialogicity (exchanges within, between, and outside each lyric); and Third, from the artist as an advocate of dialogue as a vehicle for literary, sociological, psychological, and even geopolitical expression as referenced in her content as well as in

her public statements. (See Charts 1 and 2 below) Furthermore, the study effectively alludes to and elaborates on these exchanges by using charts and figures as well as significant vocabulary (suggestive of dialogue) rather than “beating the reader over the head” with repetitions and obvious statements. This method allows a more comprehensive presentation of material and also affords the reader some latitude in witnessing the application of theory and thought.

Ultimately, the study hopes to lead the reader to some level of epiphany. At the very least, perhaps Morissette will emerge as more than just the hesitant poetic edge-walker, careful to avoid the heteroglot borders. Perhaps the reader will see her as one who crosses over and invites in for vocalization and involvement the wealth of opinionated voices impacting her own words. In the potential of that adjusted vision may rest the seeds of a new facet of Bakhtinian dialogue.

Device	Features
Hybridization	Two consciousnesses in a single utterance
Pure Stylization	Evidence of both stylized and stylizer
Variation	Contemporaneous element included and recognizable
Parodic stylization	Satirizes the stylized language without demeaning
Pure dialogue	Usually punctuated to indicated an exchange
Intra-lyric	Exchange within one song
Inter-lyric	Exchange between two or more songs
Extra-lyric	Exchange with fans, critics, and/or other outside elements
Artist as proponent	Encouraging exchange as approach or remedy

Chart 1 – Dialogic Devices

Device	Example
Hybridization	"If I am masculine, I will be taken more seriously." ("Would Not Come") "I am a man as a man I've been told/ Bacon is brought to the house in this mold." ("A Man")
Pure Stylization	"We best keep this to ourselves and not tell any members of our inner posse" ("Hands Clean") "Who are you younger generation to tell me I have unresolved problems." ("The Couch")
Variation	"and talked like women to women to women would / womyn to womyn. . ." ("Heart of the House")
Parodic stylization	"You take me out to wine, dine, 69 me you didn't hear a damn word I said." ("Right Through You") "In the name of the Father the Skeptic, and the Son" ("Forgiven")
Pure dialogue	"I said, 'Do you think we're fundamentally judgemental?'" "And you said, 'Yes.'" ("I Was Hoping")
Intra-lyric	"The Couch" "Front Row" "Sorry to Myself"
Inter-lyric	"Perfect" "That I Would Be Good" "Offer"
Extra-lyric	"I have abused my power, forgive me." ("One")
Artist as proponent	"Engage in dialogue" ("Utopia")

Chart 2 – Examples (Best applied in Chapter Four)²

² The examples appear out of context, of course, and many times the different levels (especially hybridization and stylization) overlap. Witnessing the lines within their respective songs provides the best illustration. See Appendix A for lyrics.

CHAPTER THREE

VOICES AND STRUCTURE

“You were my very own sympathetic character”

Voice Basics

Do Morissette’s lyrics meet the polyphony, the heteroglossia, the centripetal/centrifugal tension, and the language stratification required for Bakhtinian dialogue? By commonly accepted definition, a dialogue consists of three parts: the speaker, the listener or reader, and the relationship between the two. Viewing Morissette’s releases as an ongoing body of work, an observer may discern various voices at each of the levels. Further, Morissette maintains a fourth level, an echoing, whispering, almost constant strain connected with recurring themes and issues vocalized in allusions, catch phrases, and other recognizable wording. Casting Morissette’s lyrics in the role of Bakhtinian dialogue calls for an identification of these voices and then their animation within the various lyrics. As Chapter Two indicates, Bakhtin provides direction for the latter in the form of hybridization, stylization, and pure dialogue. This chapter will focus on the voices and construct the framework for application in Chapter Four.

As the dialogue within the lyrics will verify and illustrate, Morissette’s first level voice finds its root in Morissette, the person, but then stratifies into Morissette, the artist, performer, angry adult, guilty child and so on, each with its own defining phrases and animators. These voices, though originating with the author, cannot fully define themselves without their oppositional “others,” the second level voice, the listener or

reader. Levels one and two function within the level three structure, the relationship between the two. As the listener learns more about the speaker, she tunes into the fourth level, the resounding themes and issues given voice through continued dialogue. Indeed the four levels swirl in centrifugal/centripetal relationship creating a sort of spin-art splattering in threads and whips of color and design, the moving, morphing elements of living language.

Quite naturally a consistent influence on Morissette's lyrics comes from the multi-layered, changing yet remaining the same, straightforward yet enigmatic voice of Morissette, the person. The release of her first single, "You Oughta Know," established an ethos reflecting only one facet of that voice. Nonetheless, this loud, brash, angry lover struck a chord with the public and not only secured her popularity, but also encouraged listeners to seek out, to listen for, to read about other facets of this initial voice level. What attentive fans and critics discovered represents what Morissette will call her authentic voice, not a singular, monolithic entity, but rather an electric center around which kaleidoscopes of voices continually shift and shuffle and color themselves and each other. This heteroglot, this polyphony of voices rises not only from words and sentiments, but also through language and musical structure, all presented within an effective, rhetorically sound and continuing dialogic interaction.

A study of Morissette's dialogicity demands an ordered discussion of voice sources and creation as well as the array of construction tools employed by the artist. Adhering to and expanding on the levels of dialogue, the following chart will facilitate the voice identification and source portion of the discussion. Of course, the depth and richness and

full vocalization of the voices will become more apparent in the study's dialogue portion (Chapter Four). This chart sets forth the core lumber of Morisette's dialogic scaffolding:

Levels	Person(al)	Artist(ic)
One (Speaker)	Child, woman, friend, lover, humanitarian, life strategist	Poet, singer, musician, performer business woman, icon, iconoclast
Two (Listener)	Authority figures, women/men, family, friends, lovers	Other artists, business moguls, critics, fans
Three (Relationship)	Familial, romantic, friendly, feminist, generational, authoritative	Professional, performance, consumer, critical
Four (Themes)	Dogma, romance perfection, life strategies, abuse	Expectations, style, business practice, credits, obligations, global awareness, gender, generation

Chart 3 -- Voices

The chart outlines only the basics. At each level through interaction, the voice representations and their relationships further bifurcate into various strains and facets. At the first level, for instance, the child speaks as rebellious or submissive, secure or fearful, challenged or stifled, confident or guilty while the lover reverberates as spurned or spurning, bitter or joyful, fulfilled or tentative. Characteristic of Morisette's use of binaries, a single voice may balance the oppositional edge of both descriptors.

At times Morisette manipulates the level structure assuming the voice of the other, evoking images and borrowing phrases or statements to frame the identity she assumes. In "Perfect," Morisette fluctuates between feigned patience and screeching frustration as the demanding parent living vicariously and selfishly through the child. In surprising empathy the song, "A Man," finds the artist proclaiming "I am a man" and lashing out against radical, unreasonable, unforgiving feminism. "The Couch" features Morisette as

a different speaker in each stanza: the child, her own father, and the two blended and commiserating. In yet another creative twist, Morissette directly addresses herself, sometimes overtly as in “Sorry to Myself” or more covertly in the person/artist exchange of songs like “Front Row” or “UR.” Naturally, these characters materialize and further divide in a lyrical meiosis, in the scientific sense of the word, as they operate within the various dialogues. These voices and their structure will validate Morissette’s use of the Bakhtinian devices detailed in Chapter Two and applied in Chapter Four.

Inescapable and artistically fortunate for Morissette, her concert of voices and the centripetal/centrifugal tension catalyzing their division and layering results in an overlapping effect. Within a single set of lyrics, Morissette may represent the guilty child, the poet, the enraged woman, and the male perspective, all clearly traceable in phrases, questions, rhetorical or musical devices strategically placed and drawing on each other for definition and variation. This unified yet separate, this Trinity-like portrayal, this fractal harmony, extends through all levels of dialogue as the voices weave and differentiate within the content, the stories, the issues, the fertile soil of the lyrics themselves.

Though the level four voices often speak in almost subliminal tones, their pervasive, persistent presence from song to song, from album to album renders them powerful in meaning and influence. Like the other levels, they diverge into versions of themselves. Dogma may echo in spiritual, political, or social allusion or phraseology. Abuse may reference a battered woman, a neglected child, a disloyal friend. Perfection may involve personal success, business expectation, or a sense of obligation. These vocalized themes

whisper constantly in the background of many songs and step forward with a startling shout in others. All levels, but especially level four, often materialize through the Bakhtinian levels explained in Chapter Two.

The complete picture comes into focus and to life as the listener considers the body of Morissette's work, but to set the features of each voice and to place them in concert with each other, Morissette, aware or not, adheres to and employs sound rhetorical theory and practice including the five canons, the three appeals, and an impressive range of figures and tropes. This not only enables and enriches the dialogue she creates, but also testifies to her integrity as a poet.

Canons

Invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery, the famous five canons of rhetoric, fit into the pattern of Morissette's artistry. Her poetic, intellectually creative, authentic voice first emerged from her collaborative effort with Glen Ballard, the seminal event leading to her monumental popularity and into the global conversation she maintains to this day. The spontaneity with which she wrote, recorded, and prepared for release the contents of her debut album verifies its structural purity and integrity. Further, since Morissette continues to incorporate into her writing process response to and from fans and critics as well as shared life experiences, a sustained dialogic strain clearly lies at the very core of her epistemological method.

Arrangement, a vital factor in basic marketing practice, also impacts Morissette's musical artistry. From the construction of each song to its strategic play list and album placement, Morissette personally evaluates each choice for maximum effect and

expression. In addition, her unique, much cussed and discussed composition, presentation, and performance style forms the centerpiece, indeed the turbo engine that drives the constant, sometimes heated, interaction of Morissette with her audience, her characters, her issues, herself. This style, reflected in everything from intriguing lyrical word play to live, audience-impacted reinterpretation of her own material, both inspires and regulates Morissette's growth and metamorphosis, carefully preserving that which defines her and endears her to her public.

The final two canons, memory and delivery, have moved in and out of favor and focus throughout the history of rhetorical theory. Nonetheless, they visit Morissette's efforts with characteristic irony. Despite skewed (or what Emily Dickinson/Gerard Manley Hopkins fans might call slant or sprung) rhyme and rhythm, piecing together the often fragmented content and message entices listeners to master the lines and commit them to memory. Indeed with many of the more dense lyrics, memory offers the only avenue to joining, appreciating, and internalizing the discourse. Often embedded in improbable rhythms and musical strains, the altered syllabic, circular, stream-of-consciousness text challenges the listener's intellectual curiosity. This memory feature links inextricably to Morissette's delivery. The edgy, alternating voices in opposition that brought her fame and recognition bring her fans back with each new release and performance. The albums following *Jagged Little Pill*, the debut of her authentic voice, both suffer and benefit from her loyalty to and departure from her distinctive and established image. Every aspect of delivery from cover art and font choice to interviews on late night talk shows to official and unofficial Morissette web sites to the enormous

production intricacies of her global concerts contributes to the overall effect of Morissette's five-canon creative charge on the sometimes complacent, packaged musical front.

Appeals

The Aristotelian persuasive appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos play their obvious roles in Morissette's artistic and literary structure; however, within the singer's intricate pattern of voice and thematic invention, stratification, and interaction, they serve a dual purpose. As they move from thought to utterance to written form to musical performance, Morissette's words add texture and animation to the entertainer/audience relationship central to her commercial and poetic success. More than just a foundational staple especially for a performance artist, the appeals keep open-ended the conversation begun with *Jagged Little Pill*. Not always practicing word economy, Morissette remedies her sometimes dense lyrics by balancing and cultivating the logos/pathos/ethos interplay with an electrifying mix of musical and rhetorical device.

Rhetorical Devices

As the logos provides the tangible framework for voices in concert, for the materialization of the ethos/pathos exchange, the discernable vocal representations depend on the most specific strokes of the artist's brush, the rhetorical tropes and schemes that produce literary and musical devices. Unlike entertainment critics who rightfully evaluate in terms of marketing and popularity, a rhetorician notes the poet's use of structural tools to convey meanings. Morissette employs these as a weapon, a healing

balm, a demarcation, and very often an identifying prop for various speakers. In some cases, the devices themselves take on a strain of dialogue, as Chapter Four will illustrate.

Morissette's rhetorical choices fall (for the purpose of this study) into four categories: common (those most recognizable to the average listener), dominant (those used most often and intentionally by the artist), unique (those unusual and intricate), and structural (those that connect, activate, support, arrange). Again, to initiate and simplify the discussion, the following chart lays out the particulars:

Type	Examples
Common	Metaphor, simile, imagery, allusion, Personification, hyperbole, alliteration, symbol
Dominant	Binaries, paradox, juxtaposition, oxymoron, irony, satire, anaphora (and other repetition devices), rhetorical question, word play
Unique	Epenthesis, brachylogy, antimetabole, zeugma, chiasmus, antiphrasis
Structural	Actual dialogue, stream-of-consciousness, "jamming," various musical tools (instruments, volume, voice, rhythm), double meanings, epistolary and circular format

Chart 4 -- Devices

As the chart indicates, Morissette appreciates the power of rhetorical tropes and consistently incorporates a variety into each song. These tools not only perform their usual task of defining, describing, enlightening, and enlivening the text, but in Morissette's case, they often lend dimension and voice to her stratified characters. Some more complex and prevalent devices seem to speak in angry contradiction or insistent repetition. Although Morissette scatters a requisite share of common and unique devices throughout her lyrics and certainly diversifies her structure, those that dominate her lines

most reflect, sustain, and capitalize on the ethos/pathos relationship so pivotal to the dialogic process. As the tension of diametrically opposed binaries shaped Morissette's initial ethos, devices couched in those binaries begin to typify her style. For instance, a single song may feature paradox, juxtaposition, and irony intensified by anaphoric rhetorical questions and then blended with revised and reinvented cliché and word play. This layering of devices parallels and often enables the layering of voices; therefore, Morissette's familiar stylistic choices impact the dialogicity of her lyrics.

Examples

Sample lyrics from each of the four albums will serve to illustrate further Morissette's use of rhetorical devices and as a frame of reference for the more specific and detailed discussion in Chapter Four. On *Jagged Little Pill*, the song "Not the Doctor" explains:

I don't want to be the sweeper of the eggshells that you walk upon

I don't want to be your other half I believe that 1 and 1 make 2

I don't want to be your food or the light from the fridge
on your face at midnight

Hey what are you hungry for?

I don't want to be the glue that holds your pieces together

I don't want to be your idol

See this pedestal is high and I'm afraid of heights

I don't want to be lived through

A vicarious occasion

Please open the window

With anaphoric rhythm, this litany of often combined, extended, or fractured metaphoric expressions takes to task a relationship pitfall. Morissette delights in man-handling popular phrases subtly threading in feminist and/or generational barbs. Her images capture the discomfort of being trapped or measured by someone else's neediness or failures while leaving an avenue of escape in the final line of each stanza.

The circular, stream-of-consciousness lyrics of "Front Row" from *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* chase each other across the page:

...you never meant to be ungrateful nor be whipped or wept for certainly not
analyzed prodded at more ways than one apparently you've been misrepresented
dealing with the concept of arrows being slung towards your outrageous fortune
hey i'm not mad at you guardian i'm mad at myself for spending so much time
with your jeckyl and hydeness i'm glad i figuratively slapped you on the wrist
you laughed a wicked laugh and said 'come here let me clip your wings!'

Continuing to play with sound and structure, Morissette wields double-edged literary allusion as she chooses two characters known for their self-destructive duality. Although she names Stevenson's famous creation, she frames Shakespeare's tortured prince with a purposefully twisted version of his own words. She ends with the wickedly amused male smugly threatening the ranting female's freedom. The line begs for the bitter retribution that follows in later lines.

"Flinch" (*Under Rug Swept*) quite vividly recounts the lingering effects of a failed relationship:

What's it been over a decade?
It still smarts like it was four minutes ago
We only influenced each other totally
We only bruised each other even more so
What are you my blood? You touch me like you are my blood.
What are you my dad? You affect me like you are my dad.
How long can a girl be shackled to you
How long before my dignity is reclaimed
How long can a girl stay haunted by you
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name

Ending with a Frost-like line repetition and with much the same frustrated emotion, both the stanza and chorus featured here depend on response to rhetorical questions posed for thought but designed for answer. Into the mix, Morissette blends symbol, hyperbole, and even archaic expression, each device reflecting and refracting another facet of the heartache prism.

On Morissette's latest release, *Feast on Scraps*, the gender-driven "Sister Blister" ponders the irony of embattled sectors of feminism:

you and me we're cut from the same cloth
it seems to some we famously get along
but you and me are stranger to each other
cuz you and me: competitive to the bone

such a tragedy to trample on each other with how much we've endured
with the state this land is in
you and me feel joined by only gender
we are not all for one and one for all

Here Morissette juxtaposes the unifying phrase “you and me” with the polarizing concepts of estrangement, competition, and destruction. She ends this intra-gender disillusionment with the effectively diffused musketeer call-to-arms. Indeed, the oxymoronic “sister blister” of title and chorus adds another dimension to both male and female voices represented in the lyric. Morissette’s reverse psychology further empowers her lament and clarifies her magnanimous purpose, echoing the message, style, and structure of such literary heavyweights as James Russell Lowell (“Stanzas on Freedom”) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (“Song to the Men of England”).¹

These small clips illustrate rhetorical devices, but they also serve as both a hint of and a transition to Chapter Four where the voices begin to speak, alternate, interact, and carry on multiple layers of dialogue: artist to audience, album to album, song to song, and even line to line. In the literary arena, Morissette passes the acid test. From the correspondent breeze to the Byronic hero of Romantic tradition to the rarified rhymes and rhythms of the likes of Hopkins, Dickinson and Whitman to the stream-of-consciousness and circularity of Eliot and Yeats, Morissette borrows from and builds on rich poetic tradition. Moreover, she follows such giants as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Robert

¹ See Appendix C for copies. Essentially, both Lowell and Shelley wonder at the submissiveness of the laboring (and often oppressed) class and employ inflammatory rhetoric to inspire them to action.

Browning² whose early stunted and contrived verse transformed to art with the discovery of an authentic voice and its connection with the reading public.

Finally, the voices and structural elements detailed in this chapter may now move into action, into language representation through a comprehensive discussion of the lyrics wherein they operate. With an eye to the basic Bakhtinian dialogic model, Chapter Four will present a compelling argument for dialogism in Morissette's poetic efforts.

² Both Browning and Tennyson (and indeed Whitman) struggled with expression and recognition until they had an epiphany about the stiltedness of their work. Not until they turned outside themselves did they find their authentic voices and reader connection. Browning, in fact, embraced the dramatic monologue form for some of his most respected pieces.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIALOGUES/LYRICS

“We gather around all in a room fasten our belts engage in dialogue”

As a performance artist, Morissette had begun a dialogue with fans even before *Jagged Little Pill* hit the stores and slipped into CD players everywhere. Although American audiences had yet to experience her unique voice, they responded to free preview copies of “You Oughta Know” while Canadian fans waited curiously for more from this “new” Alanis. Even before the first word of the first song sounded publicly, the masses assumed their part of what would become an ongoing conversation. From “the intellectual intercourse” of *Jagged Little Pill* to the “I need to talk to somebody” of *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* to the “engage in dialogue” of *Under Rug Swept* to “for ignoring you, my highest voices” of *Feast on Scraps* Morissette exhibits her appreciation, her respect for the concept, the necessity of dialogue. Almost every song suspends a polyphony of voices, sometimes in unison, sometimes in harmony, and sometimes in disharmony, intersecting, colliding, creating, and dismantling. One need only listen with an informed and attuned ear to discern those voices. (Note Charts and Figures provided within chapters and in Appendix B)

An integral part of the synergy, the listener hears the voices move from background to foreground and back again, some more pronounced than others, some merely poised for inclusion, some as verbal, emotional baggage carried from song to song. Yes, at the core of each lay the poet’s voice, but not as a dictator to thought and expression, but

rather as the benevolent enabler/host inviting the “other” to enter and even capitalize the discussion. Morissette often poses as the “other,” characters stifled by fear, pain, anger, and other choking emotions and conditions or as the culprit against which she juxtaposes the victim. Her authentic voice often denies itself to nourish its authenticity, and so the paradox continues.

To accurately assess and fully appreciate the scope of Morissette’s dialogues, the reader/listener must consider the body of her work and the progress to its present state. Though chronologically young (all four albums released from age 20 to 28), Morissette has grown, expanded her world view, and cultivated her talent enough to lend credence to her poetic seriousness and substance to her text and context. Blossoming in the soil of collaboration, her authentic voice sounds, as Bakhtin might agree, “sometimes in chorus, but at the best of times in dialogue” (Clark 12). Evidence to support Morissette’s accord with the spirit of Bakhtin’s sentiment begins with *Jagged Little Pill*, her first “authentic voice” album.

Note to Readers: Lyrics to all four albums appear in Appendix A. Please note original punctuation (especially lack of capitalization), French influenced spellings, and other variances. Referring to the complete edition of each song throughout the ongoing discussion will aid in contextual understanding. Further, listening to the musical rendition when possible will validate comments on musical structure and enhancement. Several web sites listed on Works Cited provide clips so the reader may at least experience the flavor of the song.

Part I – *Jagged Little Pill*

1.	All I Really Want
2.	You Oughta Know
3.	Perfect
4.	Hand In My Pocket
5.	Right Through You
6.	Forgiven
7.	You Learn
8.	Head Over Feet
9.	Mary Jane
10.	Ironic
11.	Not The Doctor
12.	Wake Up
SCT.	Your House

“All I Really Want” fittingly begins with “Do I stress you out / My sweater is on backwards and inside out / And you say how appropriate.” In these first few lines, Morissette not only acknowledges and embraces her controversial persona, but she also sets structural and contextual precedents. The rhetorical question, descriptive image, and quoted response predict stylistic features and immediately open the lyric to the sound of other voices. Making connections with clichés and common allusions and winking in a recurring strain of Catholic Dogma (“slap me with a splintered ruler”), this initial song centers on the importance of outside validation, of her yearning for connection, ironically “a way to calm the angry voice.” Throughout the lyric she reiterates searching for a soul mate, a kindred, someone to catch the drift, common ground, and a wavelength declaring herself “consumed by the chill of solitary” and frustrated by general apathy. At one

point, Morissette specifically invites the listener to join her: “Enough about me, let’s talk about you for a minute / Enough about you, let’s talk about life for awhile / The conflicts, the craziness and the sound of pretenses / Falling all around. . . all around.” With music-enabled epenthesis, those Bakhtinian pretenses continue to fall as she adds a moment of abrupt, thought-provoking silence and lands on the pivotal line: “And all I need now is intellectual intercourse.” As she debuts her authentic voice, she earnestly abandons the supposed autotelic traditions of poetry and embarks on her epic journey not as the supreme Homeric speaker, but as the main chorus member who moves in and out of the foreground as she struggles toward “a way to get my hands untied.” Clearly, she sees dialogue as that way.

Strategically second on the play list, “You Oughta Know” had already pegged Morissette as the bitter, spurned lover whose lament galvanized a core following (both male and female) long before audiences could sample other songs. Within the lyric, Morissette hangs herself on the cross of rejection and takes both lover and hyperbolic language to task. Centering her sentiment on a common promissory phrase, she wails, “You told me you’d hold me / Until you died, ‘til you died / But you’re still alive.” With that veiled death wish, the moniker of Mr. Duplicity, and the wicked delight of a telemarketer, she “bugs [him] in the middle of dinner” simply to vulgarize his new relationship asking, “Are you thinking of me when you fuck her?” Though silent, the new woman suffers a sullied reputation, a sort of guilt by association, but Morissette keeps her focus on the offender when she prefaces her repeated accusation with “Does she know?”

Perhaps the most poignant connection with listeners comes not in her pain but rather in her righteous insistence: “It’s not fair to deny me / Of the cross I bear that you gave to me / You, you, you oughta know.” Again, rather than just complaining, she confronts, demands a response, and by giving voice to both pain and promise, she draws in the walking wounded quietly suffering, longing for angry release. Far from a whining victim, Morissette emerges the vindictive thorn, her song a rallying cry, not a simpering whimper:

Cause the joke that you laid in the bed that was me
And I’m not gonna fade
As soon as you close your eyes and you know it
And every time I scratch my nails down someone else’s back
I hope you feel it...well can you feel it?

By playing on her own chorus, she tweaks the indictment and leaves the theme open, open to further exploration, feedback, and exchange. Since resolution, accountability, and the very basic concept of embracing and learning from the entire spectrum of human emotion permeate Morissette’s lyrics, this enormously popular song effectively predicts a consistent and insistent fourth level voice, often depicted in Bakhtinian hybridization and stylization. The singularly feminist implications join forces, so to speak, with the very universal silent majority of the emotionally scarred. This unlikely harmony of disharmonies heightens the already fevered pitch of the song’s virulence and adds strength in unity to its defiant message.

Beginning soothingly atop the rancor of the previous song, “Perfect” finds Morissette speaking as a parent but in sweet, childlike tones that belie the actual sentiment yet reflect the frustration of both parent and child. Children often hear parental pep talks as demands for perfection, their parents seeking personal resolution for their own unfulfilled dreams and ambitions. Like a trendy candy, saccharine sweet tartness surrounding a torturously bitter center, the song builds to a screaming fit in which the truth rears its ugly head:

I'll live through you
I'll make you what I never was
If you're the best, then maybe so am I
Compared to him, compared to her
I'm doing this for your own damn good
You'll make up for what I blew
What's the problem...why are you crying

Self-righteously exhausted, much like the abusive mother of Robert Hayden's “The Whipping¹,” the parent returns to pseudo-sweet tones ending with the ultimate paradox: “We'll love you just the way you are if you're perfect.” Maintaining the child's inner dialogue through the parents' double-voiced, fluctuating intonations, volume, and alternating ranting and restraint, Morissette captures the ongoing psychological affliction of both child and parent in this unhealthy situation. Yes, her sympathy, even her empathy, lies with the child, but by speaking in the parent's voice, the artist in essence

¹ See Appendix C for a copy of this poem and a link to more information on Robert Hayden, a modern American poet.

expresses an understanding of both sides of the issue. Morissette points to this song as the turning point, the release button, the key opening her creative floodgate. For this parent and child as well as the spurned lover of “You Oughta Know” confronting demons frees the spirit from their choke hold. What facilitates the positive, cleansing, healing confrontation prescribed by psychoanalysts and other life strategists? Dialogue.

Morissette effectively represents the process here.

An easy hit due to its anaphoric structure, glinting wry humor, and contagious beat, “Hand in Pocket” springs from an almost purely binary framing of a Morissette life moment. One of her most overtly monologic lyrics, the song paints in short yet rich strokes the multifaceted joyous tumult of her inner conflicts:

I’m broke but I’m happy

I’m poor but I’m kind

I’m short but I’m healthy, yea

I’m high but I’m grounded

I’m sane but I’m overwhelmed

I’m lost but I’m hopeful baby

She goes on to reassure herself several times that “everything’s gonna be fine fine fine,” in a sort of “Methinks the lady doth protest too much” coded mixture of brimming confidence and paralyzing fear. As she keeps one hand in her pocket (guarded), the other hand (free and confident) gives a high five, flicks a cigarette, gives a peace sign, plays the piano, and hails a taxi. Arguably these five images might represent respectively celebratory success, feigned maturity, stock response and conformity, talent, and what

she would later call self-bolting. She consoles herself and involves her audience by portraying ordinary circumstances and unifying lines like “What it all boils down to / Is that no one’s really got it all figured out just yet.” Though structurally monologic for the most part, the lyric’s subject matter and the sing-along simplicity endear the author to her public and engage them in a mass “I’m okay; you’re okay” pep rally that allows everyone to move forward together on this epic journey.

On the heels of her own introspection, Morissette next holds up the mirror of self-evaluation to the music industry in “Right Through You.” Of course she does so by crafting their own words into sarcastic weapons exposing condescension, chauvinism, insensitivity, and an incredible transparency compounding it all. Each level of the song from the words to the vocal and instrumental music to its placement on the play list contributes to the power of its message: “I see right through you / I know right through you / I feel right through you / I walk right through you.” This chorus serves as both a bridge and a transport from one verse to the next, from one stage of a career to the next, from one stage of knowing to the next.

By virtue of industry and generational lingo and defining images, “Right Through You” layers in a variety of voices: the artist, the child, the woman, the mogul, the pretender, the star, all interacting in a type of intra-lyric discourse. The listener witnesses the shallow interview, the selfish sales pitch, the manipulation effort, the sexual innuendo, the demeaning attitude, and finally the triumphant “take that” victory dance: “Now that I’m Miss Thing / Now that I’m a zillionaire / You scan the credits for your name / And wonder why it’s not there.” Even though she flaunts her winnings, she

guards against haughtiness by staying tongue-in-cheek about her own success. She surely earns a resounding “Here, here” from her fans as well as other artists across genres. Further, the industry big wigs scurrying about trying to land on her coattails or jump on her bandwagon find themselves silenced and denied by their own words and actions. (See application diagram below)

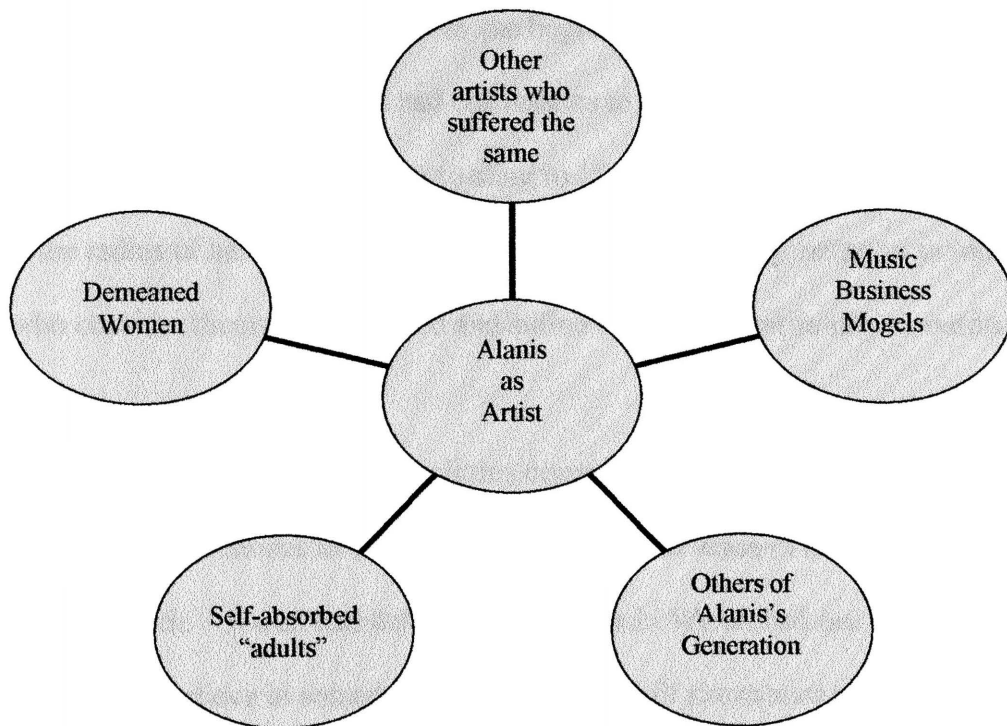


Figure 2 – Dialogic Potential in “Right Through You” (Centripetal/Centrifugal)²

“Forgiven,” steeped in specifically Catholic dogma yet broadly applicable to all organized spirituality (what will emerge as a persistent level four voice) and satirically structured in the trinity format (“In the name of the Father, the Skeptic, and the Son”), attacks not necessarily theology, but rather the human interpretation and application of

² Diagrams for other sample songs (at least one from each album) will appear in Appendix B as indicated by footnotes.

that theology. Morissette captures the overbearing, guilt-tripping, ironically superstitious “rules and regulations” sometimes used to keep human desires in check, especially during the formative years. In lines like “No fun with no guilt feelings” and “My brothers they never went blind for what they did / But I may as well have” she plays tag with her listeners inviting them to add their own complaints, experiences, and observations. In fact, her chorus shifts from “I” to “We” as she begrudgingly acknowledges the need for a fundamental belief system: “We all had our reasons to be there / We all had a thing or two to learn / We all needed something to cling to / So we did.” The pronoun shift expands the radius of heteroglossia to include Morissette’s entire generation as well as others who consider themselves tortured and stifled by skewed spirituality or outdated social mores.

As Morissette both validates and belittles dogmatic influences in “Forgiven,” she later revamps her own chorus to virtually discount any real value in the distorted religious lessons of her youth: “We all had delusions in our head / We all had our minds made up for us / We had to believe in something / So we did.” Still she cannot totally escape ingrained, internalized, now governing edicts that she may or may not renounce: “What I learned I rejected but I believe again / I will suffer the consequence of this inquisition / If I jump in this fountain, will I be forgiven.” This Job-like struggle with the angels of spiritualism will continue to whisper plaguing reminders, sometimes in solid utterances, sometimes in the turn of a phrase or an innocuous image. Also to foreground or background voices and their expression, Morissette manipulates the music, swelling it or stripping away to augment or diminish at climactic moments.

After sharpening some of the edges of life as a Jagged Little Pill, Morissette sweeps in with a surprisingly upbeat affirmation. “You Learn,” which contains the album’s title, delivers a common philosophy, but Morissette’s established ethos injects the lesson with a more potent credibility. She recommends “getting your heart trampled on” and “biting off more than you can chew” and “sticking your foot in your mouth,” all common phrases, common situations inviting the common person to life’s learning session. True to her style, she repackages and extends, “Throw it down (the caution blocks you from the wind) / Hold it up (to the rays) / You wait and see when the smoke clears.” In a Marvell³ moment she pens her own version of making the sun run, “Wear it out (like a three-year-old would do) / Melt it down (you’re gonna have to eventually anyway).” The combination of jaunty, rolling, light-hearted tune and rhythm with the especially casual direct address of the familiar “you” personalizes the lyric into an almost parent/child heart-to-heart. Morissette does more than draw conclusions or aloofly instruct; she sits down across the table from her fans and carries on a conversation. Moreover, this lyric throws out a life line, the thread of which weaves in retrospect to previous songs and in promise to future songs. “You live / You learn” joins a chorus of recurring themes that often set the monologues in dialogue with each other.

Through careful arrangement, Morissette has prepared her fans for the shock of their lives, the pure, unadulterated love song, “Head Over Feet.” Though she repeatedly qualifies her uncharacteristically smitten state with playfully satirical blame and head-

³ Andrew Marvell, an English Renaissance poet whose “To His Coy Mistress” concludes with the lines: “Thus, though we cannot make our sun / Stand still, yet we will make him run.”

shaking surrender, she credits a combination of actions and words for the victory over her heart and mind. Her warranted reluctance translates to a sheepish smile as she relents:

You've already won me over in spite of me
Don't be alarmed if I fall head over feet
Don't be surprised if I love you for all that you are
I couldn't help it
It's all your fault

This chorus addresses not only the subject of the song, but also Morissette's fans and critics. As she has already preached the sermon "live and learn," she here highlights the open heart, open mind policy. Within the song, she describes the lover as thoughtful, brave, insistent, patient (especially with her history) in unique phrasing and rare rhetoric: "Your love is thick and it swallowed me whole / You're so much braver than I give you credit for / That's not lip service" and "You are the bearer of unconditional things / You held your breath and the door for me / Thanks for your patience." Metaphor, personification, implied and reapplied cliché, and even zeugma litter the lines while thematics like feminism, suspicion, and fear of commitment murmur between the lines, muffled only by the song's prevailing exuberance.

Bookending the lines of "Head Over Feet" rests the omnipresent concept of verbal exchange. The first stanza "I have no choice but to hear you / You stated your case time and again / I thought about it" and the last "I've never felt this healthy before / I've never wanted something rational / I am aware now / I am aware now" reaffirms the significant, vital role of communication in successful relationships of any kind. The solitary voice

may deliver a message, delight, even instruct, but in active dialogue it can discover, create, enrich, and most importantly acknowledge others outside its limited scope. Skeptics might point to the frivolous nature of a pop culture love song as a theoretical example; however, many icons (Plato, Socrates) of classical rhetoric, language, and literature long ago canonized dialogue as epistemological, as heuristic. That Morissette's architectonics deserve any less evaluative respect than others in the poetic genre in general would certainly ruffle geo-political, socio-linguistic Bakhtinian feathers at the very least. Even this early in Morissette's creative offerings exists a type of heteroglossia activated and sustained by a centripetal/centrifugal tension within, between, even outside the various monologues (songs) inextricably connecting them with each other and with the listeners who doubtless play a part in bringing them to life, to existence, to reality.

Reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Mary Ann, Alice at the Mad Hatter's tea party, Morissette's darkly whimsical "Mary Jane" traces a particular woman's self-torture and ambivalence, yet in the process it details gender issues as well. As she rides the proverbial emotional roller coaster and derailed street car full-speed in the wrong direction, she also waits her turn, loses sleep and weight, and censors her tears. Morissette calls her "the sweet crusader" and "the last great innocent" perhaps referring to her willingness to believe in what the modern world might call a fairytale, an issue she will specifically address in "Precious Illusions" on *Under Rug Swept*. In a soft and seemingly envious voice, Morissette pampers this character urging her to be selfish, guard her freedom, and stay warm and dry. Mary Jane may represent that oft-shelved tenderness in Morissette's own personality. Whatever the case, the enigmatic song ends

with the question, “What’s the matter?” just before Morissette presents her litany of life’s little ironies in the next song.

A blockbuster single, “Ironic” initiated discussions on several levels as Morissette appears to bait listeners with a series of colorful, albeit questionable, ironic situations as well as her controversial “ten thousand spoon” line (a ridiculous irony itself⁴). As her images lightly brush the edges of true, literary irony, the entire gallery of hapless characters (along with the sympathizing public) learns:

Well life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
When you think everything’s okay and everything’s going right
And life has a funny way of helping you out when
You think everything’s gone wrong and everything blows up
In your face

Singing with a laugh in her throat, the artist personalizes the lyric with an emphatic rendering of her own encounter: “It’s meeting the man of my dreams / And then meeting his beautiful wife / And isn’t it ironic...don’t you think? / A little too ironic...yeah I really do think....” She ends the song with a whispered (more effective in juxtaposition with her famed explosive voice) purposeful rearrangement of her chorus: “Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you / Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out / Helping you out.” Leaving the emphasis on the positive, Morissette gradually softens her own rhetoric.

⁴ In the midst of discussions about what is or is not irony came the criticism that her “Ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife” is probably the worst line she has ever written. The artist speaks of the criticism with genuine amusement, simply pleased that people are paying attention.

Operating from her “You Learn” advice, Morissette extrapolates and delivers a balanced message, a message shaped more so by other people’s stories than by her own. Literary experts who might disparage the artist’s shaky portrayal of irony should consider two items. First, although she exhibits considerable skill with figurative language, she strives primarily to connect with her audience. Her examples reflect the general perception of irony; they capture the feeling of that moment when a person smirks at what has just happened. Second, by catering to this public perception, Morissette not only lauds and legitimizes common language and its speakers, but also sets the public to an intellectual discourse on rhetorical device.

Working from an ironic twist in her own life, in “Not the Doctor” Morissette drafts quite an impressive collection of metaphors to declare her independence from a dependent friend or lover. Weary of serving as a substitute for caretakers and comforters (both natural and synthetic), she challenges the friend, pointing to his clinical neediness in some unusual terms, not the least of which occurs in the chorus: “Visiting hours are 9 to 5 and if I show up at 10 past 6 / Well I already know that you’d find some way to sneak me in and oh / Mind the empty bottle with the holes along the bottom / You see it’s too much to ask for and I am not the doctor.” Those who have experienced this type of relationship understand the implication here. Friends so desperate to please go to ridiculous lengths, and in the end, no amount of nurturing can cure their need. In fact, they impose their psychotic emptiness on those who care the most. As the images mount to a surprisingly bouncy rhythm, the variety allows listeners to identify, connect, and

recall their own situations. The song foregrounds the eventually recurring thematic paradox of relationship and independence, of freedom and obligation.

The final official cut of the album (a hidden track follows) both reiterates and extends the sentiments of the first cut. “Wake Up” needles a Prufrock-like hesitating friend, and as the song continues, everyone missing out on life’s instructional moments, to come out of the fear-charged fog, notice people and opportunities, and participate in the universal dialogue called living. The repeated “it’s easier not to” recognizes but dismisses simplistic logic as the concluding words do anything but conclude:

get up get up get up off of it

get up get up get up off of it

get out get outta here enough already

get up get up get up off of it

Wake up

Appearing only as the abrupt, unaccompanied ending, “Wake up” stands as a reverberating invitation to begin, anew or again, to join in, to experience, to “get up off of” the sideline seats. Clearly, Morissette has come full circle from the first song and begs the start of a new intersecting circle, one completed only through cooperation with others on many levels.

Hidden beyond a chasm of silence “Your House” reveals, more than anything, the raw power of Morissette’s physical voice featured a capella, embellished only by an echo effect. The song details a “forbidden” visit to a lover’s home culminating in the fittingly ironic discovery of that lover’s dalliance in the quoted lines of a letter. Morissette often

uses the epistolary format, and this case she inserts the other woman's voice in a romantic, tryst-setting note. Raising this voice amplifies the tensions as well as the dramatic irony of the otherwise simply, though emotionally, reported event.

Morissette's physical voice often impacts the delivery and meaning of her words. Its purity, clarity, and sheer power add a dimension to both content and delivery. Whether accompanied by a full array of instruments or nakedly a capella, whether booming and abrasive or clear and sweet, her voice injects both melody and message with a musical adrenaline few other artists can replicate. Kevin Smith, director of the movie *Dogma*, capitalized on this widely recognized power when he cast Morissette in the role of God whose voice caused mortals' heads to explode but whose appearance and demeanor spoke simplicity, love, peace and humor. From a Bakhtinian perspective, Morissette's physical voice serves as yet another piston driving the rotating heteroglossia.

The first album established important elements concerning the study of Morissette's lyrics as a body of work, an epic journey, a literary entity, and a purveyor of dialogue. Identifying and developing the potential centrifugal pull of voices, themes, poetic and musical structural elements, interactions and responses as well as the pivotal centripetal centers of Morissette as author and the ethos/pathos relationship with listeners, *Jagged Little Pill* builds the scaffolding and hangs upon it a gallery of beginnings.

Part II – *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*

1. Front Row
2. Baba
3. Thank U
4. Are You Still Mad
5. Sympathetic Character
6. That I Would Be Good
7. The Couch
8. Can't Not
9. UR
10. I Was Hoping
11. One
12. Would Not Come
13. Unsent
14. So Pure
15. Joining You
16. Heart Of The House
17. Your Congratulations

Even the enigmatic title hints at the personal growth, the less acidic yet still probing edge, and the more informed sense of global awareness Morissette brings to this second installment of her authentic-voiced persona. Experimenting with rhetoric and style, testing the boundaries of stream-of-consciousness, prosaic density and psychoanalytic approach and vocabulary, Morissette blends in the soul-staggering spiritual and musical influence of her travel, especially to India. Despite changes, though, she protects the essence that connects her with the public. In fact, she reaches out to them, seeking to share, to guide, to enlighten, even to qualify some of her original bitterness. Her strength and enthusiasm intact yet tempered by natural growth, self-discovery, and those life

lessons she heralded in *Jagged Little Pill*, she literally unleashes the new album to an anxious audience. The album's more intellectual and introspective nature put off some fair-weather fans, but those who stayed to listen and think found a fascinating array of interacting characters, provocative topics, and impelling invitations to join the discourse.

The album begins with "Front Row," an ambitious foray into stream-of-consciousness writing set to music. Tightly-packed, loaded lyrics flow in amazing smoothness to an almost contradictory light-hearted melody and beat punctuated by a very catchy, simple chorus: "i'm in the front row, the front row with popcorn i get to see you, see you close up." Juxtaposing the simple with the complex in structure as well as content and juggling at least three different speakers, Morissette immediately captures the give-and-take, the vacillating fear of commitment yet need for belonging, and the general question and confusion of any human interaction. One senses the further complication of celebrity in phrases like "professional boundaries," "charmed life," not to mention the chorus which seems to make her both spectator and participant. She continues to bend common phrases to her own purpose, but at times the lyric resembles a page from a psychologist's notebook:

(I know he's blood but you can still turn him away you don't owe him anything)
'raise the roof' he yelled 'yeah raise the roof' I yelled back (Unfortunately
you needed a health scare to reprioritize.) No thanks to the soapbox. having me
rile against them won't make an ounce of difference...(Chorus) oh the things
I've done for you many a stitch a friend a man's been left behind for you the

tongues I've bitten for you man a new city for you many a risk taken for you
(not a single regret.)

This small excerpt contains two levels of inner dialogue, the mental professional's commentary, and as the last four words of the song, a parenthetical disclaimer diffusing or at least tempering previous complaints. In effect, Morissette restores the residual psychosis that plagues most relationships. This method of post scripting a subtle adjustment in meaning often serves Morissette's purposes and lends itself especially well to musical presentation. Here, it represents that insistent, reckless voice that simply refuses good sense the last word.

Aligned with the scathing invective on Catholic dogma in "Forgiven," the Eastern-flavored, stereotypical guru of "Baba" broadens Morissette's critical target to include most organized spirituality. With satirical precision, she chants her lay, allowing listeners to sense the dominating, over-bearing, mind-numbing control in contrast to the self-realization, inspiration, and freedom of personal spirituality:

I've seen men overlooking god in
their own essence
I've seen their upward glances
in hopes of instant salvation
I've seen their righteousness
mixed without loving compassion
I've watched you smile
as the students bow to kiss your feet

She weaves in suggestive terms like rituals, nirvana, altars, robes, and beads and mocks the superficial promise of “magical” healing: “How soon will I be holy? / How much will this cost guru? / How much longer till you completely absolve me?” Her mystic melody trails off with a hauntingly juxtaposed rendition of the very Christian anthem “Ave Maria.” This parodic blend of preacher, guru, televangelist testifies to Morissette’s ambivalence about the path to spirituality. In fact, many of her lyrics reflect a concentrated search for answers in the matter.

A direct response to and sharing of her experience in India, “Thank U” uniformly details revelations and the clarifying influence leading to them. With structure reflecting the paradoxically alternating teachers and lessons, the song poses human frailties as questions and spiritual instruction in an anaphoric thank you note. From drugs to eating disorders to unrealistic goals to self-denial to relationships to the very concept of “being,” Morissette covers a multitude of areas while in a four-line bridge, she confirms her own spiritual reckoning: “The moment I let go of it was / The moment I got more than I could handle / The moment jumped off of it was / The moment I touched down.” Finally, Morissette subtly adjust her repeated chorus to add layers to the centrifugal impact on her centripetal center: (original terms in parentheses)

thank you India

thank you Providence (terror)

thank you disillusionment

thank you nothingness (frailty)

thank you clarity (consequence)

thank you thank you silence

As she focuses on her personal epiphanies, she invites others to both introspection and discussion through sustained rhetorical question and more specifically by shifting from first to second person in the final stanza. A crowd favorite, the song benefits from its simplicity of purpose and message, common ground images, and a chorus conducive to memory. To emphasize her final verse, she strips away the musical accompaniment and reinserts it for a renewed effect on the expanded chorus. The song recalls and predicts her sustained inner dialogue on spirituality, magnanimity, and altruism and subsequent sharing of her tentative conclusions.

Her enlightened perspective in place, Morissette begins an informed re-evaluation of her past. In “Are You Still Mad?” she considers her role in failed relationships lending voice and validity to her partners’ complaints, both spoken and implied. With a reference to her “forty year old male friends” she renders the lyric personal, yet the litany of routine pitfalls allows the general public to relate. Since her most pronounced pathos stems from the vitriolic “You Oughta Know,” Morissette colors her “mea culpa” with a hint of sarcasm in the epenthetic resistance of her chorus: “Of cooouuuurrrse you are.” Die-hard fans of her anger and bitterness find some affirmation here as Morissette straddles the line between accepting responsibility and laying blame.

Packed in serpentine patterns and backed by menacing tympanic rhythms, the words of “Sympathetic Character” slither to their point capturing in frenetic terms the terrorizing, debilitating trap of abuse. Each verse adds dimension to an emerging composite, the once-trusted and re-trusted offender and the warped logic and

psychological dependence that keep one sleeping with the enemy. Although the two stanzas share some features, they basically divide along the lines of physical and mental abuse. In stanza one, the speaker fears punches, flying off the handle, and holes in walls while in stanza two the fear stems from verbal daggers, the calm before the storm, seduction, coercion, rejection, and intimidation. Here, Morissette employs a unique combination of content and phrasing to recreate a particularly frightening moment: “i was afraid of your icy silences / i was afraid of your volume i was afraid / manipulation I was afraid of your explosion.” In performance the lines come in the breathy staccato of exhausted sobbing and the final words of each stanza (testosterone and explosion) stretch out in metaplasmic insistence as if to underline their paralyzing power.

As the victim’s testimony sketches a vivid portrait, the chorus breaks the tremulous silence in an almost universal outcry:

I have as much rage as you have
I have as much pain as you do
I’ve lived as much hell as you have
and I’ve kept mine bubbling under for you
you were my best friend
you were my lover
you were my mentor
you were my brother
you were my partner
you were my teacher

you were my very own sympathetic character

The two-part structure addresses the abuser's excuses and the victim's sense of betrayal. Morissette ends the song with four additions (keeper, anchor, family, and saviour) and an affective caveat, "and therein lay the issue / and therein lay the problem." In a blend of cliché and reality, she brings the listener back to the heart of the matter and leaves open an invitation to public discourse. Considering Morissette's Catholic background and recent developments with priestly misdeeds, one need not stretch the meaning to apply in other areas. In fact, on the surface it suggests more than just spousal/relationship abuse.

"Sympathetic Character" exemplifies the heart of Bakhtinian dialogic theory.⁵ To grasp the totality of its content, the listener must hear all the voices playing off of and draining and drawing from each other. Particularly in this song, the characters rise from the page and move toward and pull away from the center creating a suspended tension, a dark electricity. At each point of the dialogic triangle, the listener finds a spark of recognition. Though Morissette defines the abused and abuser by her own experience and observation, her structure, detail, phrasing, and music allow other voices to erupt from her lines.

Perhaps with a nod to arrangement, Morissette moves from depressing complexity to painful simplicity in "That I Would Be Good." Contemplating her success, she questions the measure of her worth. What if she lost the material trappings, the superficial traits, her talent, her direction? Recalling the sentiments of "Perfect" and "Mary Jane," the song ponders standards and expectations both real and perceived. The underlying strains

⁵ See Appendix B for dialogic potential diagram of "Sympathetic Character"

of gender, generation, and celebrity broaden the song's appeal, and the thin, uncomplicated music capitalizes on the pure sincerity of Morissette's voice. Indeed, the song has become a live performance favorite. The final line, "That I would be good whether with or without you" poses a nagging paradox on several levels. In a narrow sense, she refers to a specific unhealthy relationship, one that made her feel dependent and powerless; nonetheless, she realizes the human need for interaction and acceptance. She must guard against allowing that need to define her self-image.

One of Morissette's most overtly dialogic lyrics, "The Couch" begins in the artist's voice, shifts to her father's, and ends with a blend of both. Written in the stream-of-consciousness, circular style of "Front Row," the song investigates several layers of the relationship from Morissette's first inklings to her father's emotional outpouring to a shared catharsis, all set in therapy session framework. The format as well as the musical construction allows for a conversational exchange charged with inter-generational misconceptions and frustrations. In lieu of a traditional chorus, the final stanza brings the voices, indeed the people, together in mutual admiration.

Speaking in first person throughout the "The Couch," Morissette powerfully illustrates her understanding: "who are you younger generation to tell me that I have unresolved problems / not many examples of fruits of this type of excruciating labour / how can you just throw words around like grieve and heal and mourn / I feel fine we may not have been born as awake as you were." In her father's voice, she expresses his *tu*

*quoque*⁶ feelings as well as her own generation's supposedly more informed sensitivity.

The lyric continues with a specific memory, the referenced voice and methods of the psychologist, and finally the move toward enlightenment: "so here we both are battling similar demons (not coincidentally) / You see in getting beyond knowing it solely intellectually you're not relinquishing / you are wise you are warm you are courageous you are big / and I love you more now than I every have in my whole life." Without narrative bridge or explanation, Morissette depends completely on dialogue to deliver the dual epiphany. Though not a toe-tapping fan favorite, the song connects with the devoted listener on a more personal level, a level immeasurable by entertainment standards. Again, Morissette functions as the touchstone center as other viewpoints pull, splinter, demand, and receive verbalization. This song echoes and predicts resounding contextual and thematic subject matter.

Built around the recurring fourth level strain of unattained independence, "Can't Not," laments and blames emotional relationships. Reflecting painful ambivalence, the song feels unfinished, trying desperately to explain the unexplainable, to discover the source, to uncover the resolution. The speaker's inner voice struggles with a common dilemma: "I might be proving you right with my silence or my retaliation / would I be letting you win in my non reaction?" Acknowledge with action or condone with silence, either way the slighted party suffers further humiliation. The lingering conflict uncovers childhood scars:

to all the unheard wisdom in the school yard

⁶ According to the Trail glossary, the rhetorical method of asking "What gives you the right?" to diffuse the opposition's argument. Latin for "You're another."

you think you're the right ones
you swear you're the charmed ones I'm sure
but how can you go on with such conviction?
who do you think you are when you question me?

At this point, Morissette shifts from first person singular to first person plural raising the issue from personal to generational. Her final lines come in repeated, rhetorical, reemphasizing questions indicating her (and her generation's) inability to escape the judgmental standards, whether actual or perceived, imposed by the privileged few: "why do you affect me? why do you affect me still?" As she struggles with the problem on behalf of herself and her generation, she leaves the matter open for discussion.

Whether Morissette knows it or not, naming her next song "UR" (You Are) hints at an obscure rhetorical concept. George Trail's glossary states: "When two items resemble each other but have no known area of contact, an 'ur' source is sometimes postulated" (217). Less severe than *Jagged Little Pill*'s "Right Through You," the song ponders her early dealings with the music business: her naiveté, their contradictory super-praising, and her surprising strength and clarity. The "ur" factor may apply to the gap between business and artistry. Morissette understood her motivation and business understood theirs, and even though both centered on her music, the motives bore no resemblance.

In any case, Morissette sets and maintains the tone of "UR" with alternating speakers defining their roles in each other's lives. She begins with an Orwellian flavor:

burn the books they've got too many names and psychoses

all this incriminating evidence would surely haunt me
if someone broke into my house
suits in the living room
do you realize guys I was born in 1974
we've got someone here to explain your publishing
we know how much you love to be in front of audiences

Featuring at least two voices, she refers possibly to her own lyric journals and points to the generation gap as part of communication problem. The central message of the song, though, lies in a series of adjectives, presumably applied to her and probably to other artists of her age and talent, conflicting adjectives such as naïve and driven, terrified and headstrong, ruthless and precious. The voices of family and friends also float through amazed at her resilience:

don't mind our staring
we're surprised you're not in a far-gone asylum
we're surprised you didn't crack up
lord knows that we would have
we would've liked to have been there
but you keep pushing us away

The song ends with a reassuring litany of positive praise, but the listener senses unresolved issues. Nonetheless, the music and lyrical lightness reinforce her willingness to laugh at herself.

Structurally similar to “Front Row” and “The Couch,” “I Was Hoping” involves the conversation of at least three people, hashing out issues from the superficiality of fame to facets of human nature. As the voices trade problems and viewpoints, Morissette presents two illustrative incidents: one of attitude adjustment and the other of judgmental attitudes. The give-and-take and concrete images accomplish more than could a simple cautionary tale, and the chorus suggests hope through human interaction. Perhaps the song’s most telling lines nod at Morissette’s own revelation: “i too thought that when proved wrong i lost somehow / i too once thought life was cruel / it’s a cycle really.” Clearly Morissette recognizes the power of allowing others to speak for themselves especially within the limited confines of verse. Here, she may efficiently insert a personal lesson drawing on previous and forthcoming images as well as the ethos/pathos relationship with her audience outside the song itself. Between the lines, she introduces the concept of power in forgiveness, of surrender without defeat, a fourth level voice that gains volume with time.

Careful to practice what she preaches, Morissette confesses her iniquities to and begs forgiveness from her public in “One.” She immediately frames herself, “I am the biggest hypocrite / I’ve been undeniably jealous / I have been loud and pretentious / I have been utterly threatened” and repeatedly seeks absolution and admits revelation, “I have abused my power forgive me / You mean we actually are all one.” With endearing, self-deprecating humor, she smirks at herself as “the sexy treadmill capitalist” coveting her “hard earned status / as fabulous freak of nature.” This habit of keeping her ego, her enthusiasm in check prefigures songs like “Sorry to Myself” and “Fear of Bliss.” Always

striving for that perfect balance between enjoying her success and having respectful humility, between total joy and wise caution, she concedes the fallibility of any human plan: “always looked good on paper / always sounded good in theory.” Almost lost in a sneaky yet characteristic caveat, the proverbial lines may escape the casual listener, but to the attentive, especially those who know to heed final whisperings, they provide a head-shaking point of agreement and humble self-awareness.

In a type of circumlocution, “Would Not Come” skirts the fulfillment issue. Always searching for that total contentment, that feeling of completeness, Morissette begins the song with an almost wicked laugh, something Bakhtin⁷ would appreciate. Enumerating her actions, her adjusted behavior, her bowing to society’s expectations and criticisms, she longs to “feel good in her skin,” an elusive goal depending more on inner peace than on outer trappings. To make clear this truth, Morissette repeats “it would not come” leaving “it” undefined. Emphasizing the “I” with musical elongation, she bounces society’s voice off her own: “if I am cultured my words will somehow garner respect” and “if I am masculine I will be taken more seriously” and “if I need assistance then I must be incapable” and “if I keep my mouth shut the boat will not have to be rocked.” Despite declarations of independence in the past, she continues to rate herself by other’s standards; however, this song strives to cleanse the negativism in a psychological face off with her people-pleaser demons. By broadening the range of those demons, she invites fellow sufferers to identify the true source of their particular “it.” The beat and the

⁷ Bakhtin discusses the element of laughter in his writings on the concept of carnival. See the Brandist entry in Works Cited for avenues to more information.

chorus' sing-along quality add a group therapy dimension while the guttural grin in her vocal rendering foregrounds a smirking irony.

In an epistolary retrospective of five failed relationships, "Unsent" explores personalities, circumstances, pitfalls, pleasures, and regrets. Though Morissette labels some of the men composites, she builds on actual experience and therefore captures not only her own situations, but also five common types of relationships and reasons for failure. In a later song ("Precious Illusions"), she will refer to "boys gone through like water," yet another vestige of her search for contentment and the obstacles to which she often contributes. By classifying the men into time periods and frames of mind, she acknowledges responsibility, growth, and a surprising mellow acceptance of lessons learned. The lines move in circular connection one to the other, much like the relationships themselves.

Reminiscent of "Head Over Feet," the very brief "So Pure" provides a bit of light-hearted relief between the introspection of "Unsent" and the heavy subject matter of "Joining You." Easily dismissed as insignificant, the lyric contains the album's title and insight into its meaning. Celebrating the subject as "luminous" and "unapologetically alive," Morissette stages a gender stereotype role reversal picturing *her* shooting three pointers and *him* waxing poetically. Clarifying the title's spirit, she embraces the thrill of infatuation instead of fearing its inevitable loss thereby reinforcing the Blake-like,⁸ "You Learn" philosophy of swallowing and savoring the Jagged Little Pills of life. In an outburst of emotional freedom, the song refocuses the listener on a (perhaps the) major

⁸ William Blake, English Romantic poet, often addressed the paradoxes of life and the lessons offered by all experience positive and negative.

theme of the album: grappling with all things human. Before fading out with the simple chorus, she encourages a unified, positive effort to relax, to listen to each other, and work together: “let’s grease the wheel over tea / let’s discuss things in confidence / let’s be unspoken let’s be ridiculous / let’s solve the world’s problem.” Once again, the solution lies in dialogue.

Working from the message of solving problems together, in “Joining You” Morissette relates her efforts to reason with a suicidal friend. In the process, she details the superficial definitions of self, those materialistic, societal measures having little to do with a person’s humanity. She characterizes her friend’s family as embarrassed rather than concerned, so she feels compelled not only to reassure but also to express an understanding and personal compassion. Snapshots from childhood and a shared inquisitive attitude highlight an intimate connection upon which Morissette consoles:

if we were our nametags
if we were our rejections
if we were our outcomes i’d be joining you
if we were our indignities
if we were our successes
if we were our emotions i’d be joining you

With an impressive list of these masquerading descriptors, the song assumes a universal relevance and concludes with a prescription: “we need reflection we need a really good memory feel free to call me a little more often.” Undeniably noble and generous, the open offer suffers the cliché warning of humanity’s tendency to backslide on caring for

each other. Though the lyric portrays a personal incident, the voices of judgment and shallowness reverberate in this formidable catalogue of society's value factors.

Attentive to her father in "The Couch," Morissette pens an anthem for her mother, for womanhood in "Heart of the House." In her thinnest womanly voice, she combines gender and generational language and images to applaud, to question, to put herself in league with her mother: "where was your ally your partner in feminine crime? / oh mother who's your buddy / oh mother who's got your back." Hailing her mother as "the original template," "the goddess," and "the heart of the house," she elevates their discussions to modern awareness as they speak as "womyn to womyn" would. Finally, she proudly lays claim to her unique inherited traits: "do you see yourself in my gypsy garage sale ways? / in my fits of laughter? / in my tinkerbelle tendencies? / in my lack of color coordination." Far more than a simple compliment or an obligatory recognition of sacrifice, the lyric delivers a very personal message, unashamed, unabashed, freely emotional, and, to use a Morissette favorite, precious. This prefigures a unique perspective on several facets of feminism. She appreciates the type of mother she enjoyed, but she also sees the unfairness in some standards of the time.

Morissette ends this rather complex album on very simple note, although the song "Your Congratulations" contains some powerful lines. To the background of a single piano strain, she declares her regret for holding back, for adjusting, for being intimidated and humbled, for hesitating out of fear, all for the approval outside herself. A demon she will continue to battle in future lyrics, this lack of inner peace, even in the face of

undeniable success, continues to plague her but ironically also serves as creative fuel.

The final words of the album serve to both scold and plead:

I would not have been so self deprecating
I wouldn't have cowered
for fear of having my eyes cut my comfort off
I wouldn't have feigned needlessness
I would not have discredited
every one of their compliments
it was your approval I wanted
your congratulations

In reality, perhaps she lacks only her own approval. The next two albums will continue the discourse.

Part III – *Under Rug Swept*

1. 21 Things I Want In a Lover
2. Narcissus
3. Hands Clean
4. Flinch
5. So Unsexy
6. Precious Illusions
7. That Particular Time
8. A Man
9. You Owe Me Nothing In Return
10. Surrendering
11. Utopia

Under Rug Swept marked a new era for Morissette. Not only had considerable time passed since her last effort, but she took over the production responsibilities along with writing both words and music for the entire album. From a Bakhtinian perspective, her centripetal center intensified, and yet interviews and performances suggested that Morissette had further broadened her altruistic horizons, and as the content of coming albums would prove, she had taken time to deepen the self-evaluation that had driven previous works. In short, her willingness to acknowledge and to give voice to the outside influences in her life and music permeated her creative efforts at every level from writing to production to presentation. True to her roots, to the persona that brought her success, she expanded on issues from the past, but she also ventured into new territory, all with her own hands setting to motion the heteroglot spin.

In the voice of experience, social values, and her own ideal, Morissette begins the collection with a twist on the popular personal ads, “21 Things I Want in a Lover.” Recalling disasters of the past and fashioning the list with an eye to reasonable perfection, she covers everything from the philosophy to philanthropy to sexuality. Framed by a characteristic tongue-in-cheek humor and a melody and rhythm fittingly alternating for a prioritized list, hybrid strains of gender awareness, political activism, fair play, and self-esteem step forward for a bow and a mention. Though Morissette appears to take ownership declaring she “has a choice in the matter,” she still qualifies with deference to her fierce independence: “I’m in no hurry I could wait forever / I’m in no rush cuz I like being solo / there are no worries and certainly no pressure / in the meantime I’ll live like there’s no tomorrow.” Between her well-developed inner voice and the threatening echoes of a skeptical public, she preserves her strength by embracing both sides of the issue. Rhetorical question, cliché, and sociological jargon open the very Morissette shopping list to the everyman/woman who deep inside would like to build the perfect match. The song warrants, even demands a second look for its true meaning and the familiar hard rock style affords it just that.

Following the impressive descriptors of the first song, “Narcissus” nods clearly to the canon of arrangement. The portrait calls up every stereotypical trait, not only of the spoiled, handsome, successful playboy, but also of the probably plain yet confident and intelligent girl who *supposedly* hated him, knew his true nature, and laughed at his weakness. The epistolary format and whining chorus effectively communicate sometimes gender stereotypical behavior (including the phrase “Momma’s boy”), but in

light of Morissette's ethos, they also parody the clinging, needy female and the insensitive, egocentric, non-committal male. Other voices chime in, though, adding both universal and personal dimension to the content. Counterculture insists, "People honor boys like you in this society," and Morissette admits, "Dear self centered boy I don't know why I still feel affected by you / I've never lasted very long with someone like you / I never did although I have to admit I wanted to." Ultimately, the tone leans to the comic side with a pinch of hyperbole, anaphora, and sometimes graphic imagery woven into a circular text and set to a calliope-like melody. This approach allows the various voices to both swing into the foreground and encircle the unflattered central figure.

"Hands Clean," the most commercially popular single of the album, grew from inter-lyric dialogicity and spawned much extra-lyric dialogicity. Further, generational awareness spins the content in unique directions, taking varying cues from incrementally informed listeners. According to both critics and the artist herself, the song rehashes, in more graphic terms, the subject of her premiere blockbuster, "You Oughta Know." More clearly outlining the young performer/older mentor type relationship, Morissette further scandalizes the situation with two-part chorus:

Ooh this could be messy
But you don't seem to mind
Ooh don't go telling everybody
And overlook this supposed crime
We'll fast forward to a few years later
And no one know except the both of us

And I have honored your request for silence

And you've washed your hands clean of this

Obvious gender issues, hinted criminality, and minimized responsibility hone the sharp edges even as the speaker revels in his/her conquest: "I know you sexualize me like a young thing would and I think I like it." Though many see Morissette as the young girl manipulated by an older man (certainly her history makes that very possible), but a gender-savvy or gender-progressive listener might see Morissette as the older woman applying some pressure to a novice. The proverbial double-edged sword cuts through the irony of the moment as equality reaps a negative harvest for the feminine. Both sides of the issue must credit Morissette with leaving the content open to interpretation by not assigning gender to either party. The bridge (so often a tweaking point) employs familiar phrases and frames the album's title in loaded context: "what part of our history's reinvented and under rug swept? / what part of your memory is selective and tends to forget? / what with this distance it seems so obvious?" The question form leaves unassigned the roles of perpetrator and victim and unfinished a provocative personal, yet too often universal dialogue. Morissette includes an acoustic version of "Hands Clean" on her next album. The subtle differences will prove interesting. Listeners might also note a pattern of arrangement as "21 Things" plus "Narcissus" could add up to the heart of "Hands Clean."

In "Flinch" Morissette captures the lingering sting of bitter heartache with hyperbole, lamentation, and impact symbolism and imagery. Again she enlists the repetition of both chorus and question to underline the paralyzing effect and to broaden the connection and

appeal of a particular circumstance. “What if” scenes on the street and in a restaurant raise to palpable the fear of confrontation, of dealing face-to-face, of admitting residual feelings. In this format, Morissette conducts an inner dialogue influenced by outside characters including the past lover, her brother, an informed stranger, and others who suffer her familiar fate. In a unique twist, the characteristic two-part chorus consumes the content and adjusts in a reflective confusion and desire for freedom repeating “What are you. . .?” and “How long. . .?” and insisting “Soon I’ll grow up and I won’t even flinch at your name.” She invokes the power of blood, air, god, and family to express not only the hold these feeling have on her, but also the frustration of her futile attempts to escape it. Her fiercely independent ethos, especially concerning relationships, renders this lyric strangely sympathetic, long-suffering lovers commiserating with the more touchable version of enraged woman. The music and jargon-like phrasing markedly affect not only this song’s tenor, but also its context and connection with listeners. Clearly, these and other oft-employed devices serve to incorporate dialogic strains in the Bakhtinian hybridization and stylization model. (Note definitions and examples cited on Charts 3 and 4 and discussion in Chapter Two)

“So Unsexy” builds on a consistent theme and a persistent paradox not only in Morissette’s psychology, but also in the gender/generational arena. Rejections and projections both complicate and magnify the double-voiced message and messenger. From an Oedipus complex to a forgotten phone call to self-sabotage, the central voice fractures into the every child, protégé, friend, or lover pressed to self-doubt by any unhealthy relationship. While the song echoes and converses with others like “Perfect,”

“Unforgiven,” “Sympathetic Character,” and “Your Congratulations,” it offers two avenues of interpretation by using the word “for” in the chorus: “I can feel so unsexy for someone so beautiful / So unlived for someone so fine / I can feel so boring for someone so interesting / So ignorant for someone of sound mind.” Is the speaker feeling unworthy of a partner or recognizing self-esteem issues? Other lines suggest the latter, but societal pressures, past experiences, and various manipulations certainly contribute loudly to the discussion which, despite negative spins, concludes: “Oh this little rejections how they disappear quickly / The moment I decide not to abandon me.”

Sporting a defining oxymoronic title and a parodic stylization of Chauvinistic rhetoric, “Precious Illusions” recalls generations of empty promises and fairytale expectations, but unlike other gender-social indictments, it incorporates the comfort zone and those who still cling to it. After clearly defusing the power of once-accepted roles, the song embraces the defunct visions: “these precious illusions in my head did not let me down when I was defenseless / and parting with them is like parting with invisible best friends.” Here Morissette introduces the survival/bliss binary, one she will purposefully repeat and reflect in future songs, one she prefigures in “Hand in Pocket.” In the multilingual voice of a diverse group on the verge of breaking free of self and society-imposed shackles, she declares independence, albeit incomplete: “but this won’t work now the way it once did / cuz I want you to choose between survival and bliss / and though I know whom I’m not I still don’t know who I am / but I know I won’t keep on playing the victim.” While the feminine voice dominates through Morissette’s ethos and gender-specific images, the chorus broadens its appeal by generalizing its philosophical

prescription and by adding a late yet significant bridge: “I’ve spent so long firmly looking outside me / I’ve spent so much time living in survival mode.” Though the message comes through as mildly feminist, the song heads down the rocky path to her harder rock, more serious and pointed version, “Sister Blister” of *Feast on Scraps*. Her inner dialogue on gender and other cultural and global responsibilities continues sometimes in plain sight, sometimes between the lines.

Among many exploratory lyrics, “That Particular Time” most intently studies the stages of and psychology behind a trouble relationship. Morissette devotees may call to mind the line, “Hold close and let go and know when to do which,” the ideal situation she will suggest in “Utopia” (*Feast On Scraps*). From the first sign of trouble to giving each other space to the break up, the song tags feelings and characterizes participants with crafty word choices (vanish, vacillate, investigate, marinate). Love personified challenges and encourages with difficult truths and sensible advice, but in the end, the speaker confirms the old adage “Hindsight is 20/20” admitting and regretting self-denial:

I always wanted for you what you’ve wanted for yourself
and yet I wanted to save us high water or hell
And I kept on ignoring the ambivalence you felt
and in the meantime I lost myself
in the meantime I lost myself
I’m sorry I lost myself...I am.

Morissette has parlayed this final line into a campaign, T-shirts and all, initiating and extending to an extra-lyric dialogue on avoiding loss of self. Increasingly aware of her

centripetal power to both harness and unleash a positive centrifugal movement, Morisette often operates inside and outside her lyrics crossing the heteroglot borders that Bakhtin insists poets tend to avoid. (See Chapter Two, p. 28)

Drawing on an irresistible irony and a somewhat convoluted injustice, Morisette assumes a masculine persona in “A Man.”⁹ Her sentiments aflame with the skewed impact of radical, heated, unforgiving feminism and further twisted by her own ethos (once the epitome of enraged woman), Morisette delivers a frustrated plea for a truce in the gender wars. Quite eloquently, the man makes his case using not only feminist standards, but also long-enduring societal messages:

I am a man as a man I've been told
Bacon is brought to the house in this mold
Born of your bellies I long for the chord
Years I have groveled repentance ignored
And I have been blamed
And I have repented
I'm working my way toward our union mended.

Appropriately, Morisette presses the final phrase into service as her tour title (Our Union Mended) expanding the gender-specific ideal to all conflicts. Indeed, even the focused message of the song speaks not only for the men weary of fighting, but also for women ready to make peace and move forward. Again, “Sister Blister” waits bubbling beneath the more aware Morisette surface and both sustaining and predicting the ongoing,

⁹ See dialogic potential diagram in Appendix B.

intellectual discourse. Most telling of her desire to universalize her message, she shifts pronouns (as she has at other significant moments) from “I” to “We” elevating the single voice to the representative, to the spokesperson.

Whereas “That Particular Time” and “A Man” take to task platitudes and some conventional wisdom, “You Owe Me Nothing In Return” attempts to defend the eternally debated concept of unconditional love. The speaker’s voice stratifies into at least three levels: lovers generous and accepting, lovers skeptical and even suspicious, and lovers errant and non-committal. The listener peruses the standard excuse list and hears the speaker insist in repeated chorus: “You owe me nothing for giving the love that I give / You owe me nothing for caring the way that I have / I give you thanks for receiving it’s my privilege / And you owe me nothing in return.” With connective symbolism, Morissette reads and speaks the listener’s (or object of affection’s) mind to quell understandable skepticism and with impeccable placement slips in the idealistic philosophy driving the lyric: “I bet you’re wondering when the next payback shoe will eventually drop / I bet you’re wondering when my conditional police will force you to cough up / I bet you wonder how far you have now danced your way back into debt / This is the only kind of love as I understand it that there really is.” The content clearly converses with Morissette’s original attitudes toward love. In light of the vituperative tongue-lashing of “You Oughta Know,” might the listener construe this lyric as sarcasm or does it reflect the sincere influence of lessons learned from experience, maturity, and her association with Eastern philosophy? In either case, the sound of voices within and outside of Morissette’s artistic realm testifies further to her poetic dialogism.

“Surrendering” celebrates emotional courage, the willingness to embrace, even relish vulnerability as an avenue to mutual contentment. Setting the two sides of the relationship in a spirited battlefield-like arena, Morissette congratulates the emotional risk-taker on his paradoxical victory: “and so you fell and you’re intact / so you dove in and you’re still breathing / so you jumped and you’re still flying if not shocked.” Reminiscent of “Hand in Pocket,” recalling a line from “Head Over Feet” (“You’re so much braver than I give you credit for”), and reinforcing the ultra-philosophic “Thank U,” the song reflects Morissette’s personal and professional growth as a result, not only of the natural life process, but also in reaction and response to outside elements. In the final, non-choral lines, the author angles a prismatic statement to shed a light of hope on all sides of the issue, another step toward that union mended: “surrendering a feat of unequalled measure / and I’m thrilled to let you in / overjoyed to be let in in kind.”

The final cut of *Under Rug Swept*, “Utopia,” bookends the dialogic essence of Morissette’s content and context. As she longed for “intellectual intercourse” in the first album, she ends the third with “engage in dialogue” as a facet of her perfect world. Overtly (and ironically) monologic in structure, the song proposes total inclusion, the hearing and seeing of each voice, each face through proactive involvement and honest exchange. Morissette weaves together with hybrid and stylized threads an intricate text tapestry inviting the listener into a gentle vortex of charged and circulating imagery, making best use yet of her characteristic listing (as entertainment critics label it). With each verse, she expands from single yet powerful verbs to complete vignettes initiated by

verbs, all to depict the perfect world where “we’d provide forums we’d all speak out we’d all be heard we’d all feel seen.”

With a delicately simple melody, “Utopia” appropriately concludes Morissette’s most obviously thematic collection (*Under Rug Swept*). From mapping out what she wants in a lover to what she wants in a world, Morissette has summarized years of living and learning and listening to herself and others and allowing all to interject both parallel and juxtaposed perspectives. A retrospective of her work to this point verifies her willingness to acknowledge and lend voice to as many views as possible.

Part IV – *Feast On Scraps*

1. Fear of Bliss
2. Bent for You
3. Sorry to Myself
4. Sister Blister
5. Offer
6. Unprodigal Daughter
7. Simple Together
8. Purgatorying
9. Hands Clean (Acoustic)

Though Morissette wrote all of the songs for both *Under Rug Swept* and *Feast On Scraps* before releasing either, she divided the albums along musical style lines. *Feast On Scraps* definitely leans to the hard rock side. Although each album deals with serious issues, the musical and rhythmical level of intensity always impacts the message. In the case of *Feast On Scraps*, that fact rings truer and clearer than at any point in Morissette's career. Some critics would even point to her coming full circle, back to her hard-rock roots. Nonetheless, both the lyrics and the music on this album represent far more than a mere return. The "full circle" might apply to some subject matter and even certain flashes of sound, but Morissette has moved forward as an artist, as a person, and on *Feast On Scraps* she not only steps forward for herself, but also as an articulate and passionate spokesperson for diverse causes. Most of the songs communicate with themes from the past yet manage to reflect growth and expansion. Many songs recall the rancor of the *Jagged Little Pill* artist yet reveal a developing edge-tempered mellowness and the control of maturity. The multi-faceted and sometimes conflicted voice at Morissette's

centripetal center contributes to the stratifying, centrifugal power mobilizing the heteroglossia portrayed in each lyric, certainly a Bakhtinian plus.

The first three songs form a self-investigative/evaluative trilogy, but Morissette so details the elements of the psychological pause-and-reflect, she calls into chorus a plethora of stylized voices. Revisiting her most stifling inner demons and repeatedly pledging to cleanse her spirit and reclaim her strength, she rallies the self-beaten and other-battered as she once did the betrayed allowing her to move toward the politically, society-charged “Sister Blister” with a more confident, less bedeviled persona. The artist also uses the opening trilogy to brace the listener for the harder rock style by alternating tones. “Fear of Bliss” announces the intensity with grating stanzas building to and retreating from and ending with a loud, insistent chorus. “Bent 4 U” and “Sorry to Myself,” though stringent in content, tone down the musical rhetoric, not only to match their sentiment, but also to construct an affective juxtaposition leading into the musically and rhetorically provocative “Sister Blister.” Morissette’s conscious and deliberate arrangement clearly impacts the messages as well as the voices that deliver them.

In “Fear of Bliss”¹⁰ Morissette faces her ongoing personal battle with guilt and responsibility and hints at a stubborn remnant of that Catholic dogma engrained through her formative years. Beginning with a familiar allusion, Morissette calls forward the tentative star, the jealous lover, the guilty child, the life strategist. As she ponders the ironies of her own hesitance, she measures in paradox her attempts to level her own playing field. Happy endings insist on preventing self-sabotage, glowing and shining

¹⁰ See dialogic potential diagram in Appendix B.

threaten boredom and isolation, and “talk of liberation” sends her under the covers with a terror of the unknown. The chorus repeats the diagnosis she has wrestled with through her sometimes overwhelming fame: “Fear of bliss and fear of joyitude / fear of bigness (and ensuing solitude?).” Morissette resorts to a neologism (joyitude) to effectively frame the psychologically paradoxical situation that drives the content. The “you” that instills the fear in this lyric could range from a lover to a business associate to society in general, even from the perspective of Morissette’s personal and professional life alone. Again, such features reconstruct the voices that otherwise silently inhabit the text’s creative scaffolding.

On the heels of questioned compromise comes “Bent 4 U,” a delineated retrospective of a beleaguered relationship and the resulting declaration. With satirical sharpness, Morissette lines up the obvious signals, blames herself for ignoring them, catalogues her own subservient behavior, and proclaims herself done with all types of “bending.” Still, a dash of hyperbole hints at past recidivism: “a million times in a million ways I will try to change you / a million months and a million days I’ll try to somehow convince you” and “several times in several ways I’ll try to squeeze love from you / several hours and several ways I’ll feast on scraps thrown from you.” Anyone who has tried to save a hopeless relationship will both identify with and wonder at the desperation. The double meaning of “feast on scraps” reveals itself here. As the title of the album, the phrase suggests delicious songs cultivated from the scraps of creativity, but in the framework of the song lyric, it connotes a weakness, an unfair compromise. Toward the end of the song, Morissette does draw one conclusion about the other’s motivation and problems:

“You’re afraid of every woman afraid of your inner workings / You cringe at the thought of being under the same roof as me god and everything.” Through the chorus, she speaks to and for and with all those who, at various levels and for various reasons, have “given themselves away” for so long, and together they declare, “I’m done.” With the help of the heteroglossia diagram (p. 22), the reader may witness in this song (as well as others) the centrifugal spinning off of voices from the centripetal center and then the return to center for the final statement delivered in a single line now empowered by multiple voices.

After analyzing (and hopefully overcoming) the “fear of bliss” and habitual back-bending, in “Sorry to Myself” Morissette carries on an internal dialogue with an understanding, identifying audience eavesdropping (and one can only imagine, nodding in agreement). As she describes each sin against self, she assumes the voice of persecuted and persecutor, but the inevitable “other” intrudes with realistic relativity: “for letting you decide if I indeed was desirable” and “for blaming myself for your unhappiness” and “expecting myself to be where you wanted me to be.” Raising the lyric from personal to universal, expectations and traditional niceties impose a powerful guilt-tripping force permeating entire lives with constant and sometimes debilitating second-guessing. Finally, she comes to terms with the sad irony of placing other ahead of self: “well, I wonder which crime is the biggest? / forgetting you for forgetting myself? / had I heeded the wisdom of the latter / I would have naturally loved the former.” Painfully simple and clear in retrospect, the truth rises from the cathartic exchange of inner and outer dialogue.

As the opening trilogy closes, Morissette has attempted to strip away another layer of emotional baggage preparing herself to assume the role of standard bearer for some potent social causes. Though her lyrics continue to deal with personal issues on a personal level, the dialogic structure broadens her appeal and allows her to step outside the personal, to wield her expanding ethos as a righteous weapon at times. Indeed, the authentic voice that led her into the spotlight has matured, defined, and redefined itself enough to warrant a modicum of reverence and respect. As this study has traced that development, it has also acknowledged the rhetorical underpinning that enabled it. As *Feast On Scraps* moves forward so does Morissette's journey to total authenticity.

The oxymoronic titled "Sister Blister" first encircles the listener with a quadraphonic, eerie, willowing echo, inserts the first rhythmically underlined words, "You and me," and finally bursts into a finger-pointing, strangely unifying, take-responsibility chorus: "Sister Blister we fight to please the brother / We think their acceptance is how we win / They're happy we're climbing over each other / To beg the club of boys to let us in." Including herself as a contributor to disunity, she alludes to nondescript factions and levels of feminism often canceling out each other's power and thereby diminishing women as a whole.¹¹

Of course Morissette's entertainment persona aims most pointedly at other female artists, but "Sister Blister" both specifies and generalizes woman to woman "trampling, disavowing, and dishonoring." With diplomatic flare and rhetorical wisdom, she defuses disagreements: "We may not have priorities same / We may not even like each other /

¹¹ Readers may recall references to Lowell and Shelley in Chapter Three.

We may not be hugely anti-men / But such a cost to dishonor a sister.” Familiar phrases like “cut from the same cloth,” “all for one and one for all,” “club of boys,” and “on this pendulum together” further communicate the idea of sisterhood. Finally, by adding musical and vocal intensity to each repetition of the chorus and by culminating with an abrupt, silent pause before a crashing finish, Morissette leaves the call to arms ringing in the listener’s ear. In fact, the wordless yet obviously tortured humming that closes the song speaks volumes about what silence has cost any oppressed group. Again, the trained ear hears the voices that trail off even in their muffled restraint.

After bellowing out a firm stand for and with a reasonable feminism, Morissette tackles another of her demons, a battle that easily transfers to a large public group (celebrities) and into the psyche of conflicted people everywhere. The melancholy music of “Offer” delivers its plaintive questions with simple sincerity and an innocence that draws the listener to melody and message, the chorus at once summarizing and initiating: “is it my calling to keep on when i’m unable? / is it my job to be selfless extraordinaire? / and my generosity has me disabled by this / my sense of duty of offer.” Throughout the song, she struggles with responsibility and expectations, especially those often imposed on wealthy public figures; however, by using first person and alluding to her own situation, Morissette essentially universalizes the sentiment. Whether a successful celebrity or a caring family member or friend (and Morissette fits in all categories), does a person have the right to set limits on giving or to feel sad or incomplete despite an apparently abundant life?

In “Offer” the powerfully silent voices of Christian and Eastern dogma as well as those of fans and critics, kith and kin wrench from the centripetal center tributaries of influence. Evident in each line, much of Morissette’s *inner* torture emanates from *outer* sources pricking her sensitive social skin. Stylized into lines like “me who’s seen life as an oyster” and “how dare I rest on my laurels / how dare I ignore an outstretched hand,” the affective heteroglossia comes in recognizable phrases that transmit both signal and receiver. Beginning and ending with “Who? Who am I to be blue?” Morissette opens and leaves open the discourse on herself and within a broadening circle of those who identify with her. The song reiterates the concept of “over-functioning” from “Sorry to Myself” and borrows intentional structure from “Flinch.” This jargon-charged phrasing of questions (Who do you think you are?) layers in additional potential voices.

By the time the listener arrives at “Unprodigal Daughter,” the song appears chronologically misplaced. Nonetheless, it fits perfectly into the increasingly clear theme of the *Under Rug Swept/Feast On Scraps* collection: uncovering and confronting lingering issues. As the feast-on-scraps paradox indicates dealing with seemingly minor items often reaps major benefits, especially from a psychological standpoint. Her unique biblical allusion leading the way, Morissette loudly, the volume a reverberating punctuation mark, declares her independence, once and for all. Definitely on the hard rock list, the song employs not only the obvious child/parent exchange but also others like industry/artist, past/present, and generally the oppressed/oppressor. Juxtaposing images of previously stifling situations and the rush of adventurous freedom, Morissette abandons the bitterness of the past and embraces with a contagious joy this finally

realized independence: “Unprodigal daughter and I’m heading for the west / Disenchanted daughter and this plane cannot fly fast enough / Unencumbered daughter hit the ground running at last! / I’d invite you but I’m busy being unoppressed.” In one of her most poetically rich lyrics, she not only captures the words, but also outlines the faces of those who marginalized her creativity and ambition: “When I’d speak of artistry you would roll your eyes skyward / When I’d speak of spirituality you would label me absurd / When I spoke of possibility you would frown and shake your head / If I had stayed much longer I’d have surely imploded.” She cancels out each skeptic with a defiant “This is *my* life...*my* voice. . .*my* words. . .of which you’ve had no part of.” Actually, Morissette brings to apparent fruition what the opening trilogy struggled to unleash, her unencumbered, most authentic voice.

The vocal style in “Unprodigal Daughter” further reflects the content and adds, in a very palpable manner, another voice. The harmony throughout blends and defines Morissette’s characteristically deeper tones with a thin, almost negligible child-like thread that appears and disappears intermittently, most noticeably and effectively in the chorus and the bridge. Of course, Morissette’s consistent psychology leads her to temper her declarations in that bridge: “One day I’ll saddle back and speak of foreign adventures / One day I’ll double back and tell you about these unfettered years / One day I’ll look back and feel something other than relieved / Glad that I left when I did before your dear, you can’t got the best of me.” Jamming this last line with a full quotation used as a single noun (“dear, you can’t”), Morissette pinpoints a pivotal moment reminiscent of “Right Through You,” the moment when people finally decide to stand on their own two feet, as

the saying goes. Again, the artist shares her wisdom through common experience, not through preaching. She has matured since the invectives of *Jagged Little Pill*, but that has enriched, sharpened, and informed her edginess.

As the last teeth-rattling vibrations of “Unprodigal Daughter” linger, in sweeps “Simple Together,” Morissette’s most touching love song fitting into the album’s theme with its heart-rending realistic images. By focusing on the relationship’s positive aspects and expectations, by humanizing and sensitizing each facet, by portraying the ruins through the emotional architecture that built the relationship, the song casts the listener as the faithful, comforting friend. Each stanza begins with a melancholy reflection and continues with rueful ironies and disillusionment inspired by blind optimism, all serving to deepen the ultimate disappointment. The adjusting chorus completes the juxtaposition and its purpose:

I thought we’d be simple together
I thought we’d be happy together
Thought we’d be limitless together
I thought we’d be precious together
But I was sadly mistaken

Each adjustment (sexy, evolving, healing, growing and so on) adds to the hopes dashed by the final line, the anaphoric structure mimicking a jilted lover’s head-shaking review of those hopes. Morissette dusts off and refreshes some stock metaphors to represent the unbearable pain: “This grief overwhelms me / It burns in my stomach” and “This loss is numbing me / It pierces my chest,” but she also invents a new twist of the dagger in the

heart in her always tweaking bridge: “If I had a bill for all the philosophies I’ve shared / If I had a penny for every possibility I presented / If I had a dime for every hand thrown up in the air / My wealth would render this no less severe.” Again, she opens the lyric to public commiseration with common phrases pressed to service in a new cause and in the process foregrounds another empathic voice.

The title, “Simple Together,” countenances more than the lost relationship. Morissette captures poignant, rarely spoken truths intimately evident to those involved. The song begins “You’ve been my golden best friend” and continues “You’ve been my soul mate and then some.” Using these descriptions, Morissette points to a double loss: “Can’t go to you for consolation / Cause we’re off limits during this transition.” Sensing and expressing the traumatizing repercussions of a break up, Morissette brings to the uncomplicated melody a magnetic understanding. Injecting the sweet moan of violins at just the right moment, the song gently encourages listeners to relate and even join in the made-easy chorus. Whether they have suffered the same fate or sympathize with the speaker, they connect, human to human, simple together. Morissette’s historical ethos adds a particular power to the simplicity and tenderness of this song. From the petulant, pejorative screams of “You Oughta Know” to the almost angelic rendition of “Simple Together,” Morissette has learned much about nuance and empathy and about the healing balm of sharing the pain. No longer does she see that sharing as vulnerability but rather as strength tapped through living discourse.

Morissette ends *Feast On Scraps* with an acoustic version of “Hands Clean,” but aside from the softer version, the focus on her voice, and one interesting deleted word,

the version differs little from the original appearing on *Under Rug Swept*. As she repeats the chorus on the first version, the listener hears a subtle “dude” mention. Now, as lingo used generally on both male and female, in this song, the term could impact the entire direction of its message. Does Morissette speak as the older, imposing figure or does she recall a past incident? Most critics (and Morissette chimes in here) agree on the latter, but the lyrical moment presents fodder for discussion and certainly merits mention as the study turns to the final original cut of the album.

The enigmatic “Purgatorying” combines a Christian concept with Eastern-flavored music, that very combination a reflection of the title. Most readers will recognize Purgatory as that torturous waiting room between Heaven and Hell, a place designed for sinners to burn off minor sins and at last make their way to Heaven. Although souls in Purgatory suffer the torments of Hell, they enjoy the hope that Hell does not offer, an element on which John Milton constructed his famous image of Hell in *Paradise Lost*. Morissette does not pretend to speak in Miltonic tones or address Miltonic principles, but she does know the torture of the middle ground.

The words of “Purgatorying” drift into the music, in the initial guise of an entertainer seeking mindless entertainment. The lyric moves deeper, though, as the traits of a professional absorbed with work and numbed by the spiritually bankrupting pressures rise from the page and present the true quandary of the song: abandoning the comfort zone and heading one direction or the other. Morissette’s biography indicates times when the artist suffered from over-functioning and perhaps spent time idling, trying to recharge batteries. Ironically, those times sent her inside herself to dig through the rubble and find

inspiration for some of her most memorable lyrics. Perhaps ending the album, the collection with this song places Morissette on that creatively fertile plane once again. In fact, as this study closes (2003), Morissette prepares yet another album for release (February 2004).

Deviating structurally from Morissette's style, "Purgatorying," though it repeats certain lines, does not have a chorus per se. The final stanza does personalize the meaning:

I've held you up like a deity like you're the

sole owner of wings

This unrequited tunnel vision and I wonder why

I've not been writing.

.....

This love is more than I had bargained for

I'll be damned if I'm to wake

This is far more than I'm equipped for

The word "love" does not appear in previous stanzas and so colors the true cause of her hesitance. Of course that could range from an actual lover to her popularity to some other overwhelming relationship issue. Either way, it seems to reiterate the "fear of bliss" issue so often keeping her from personal fulfillment. The reference to "wake" offers another inter-monlogic intersection as it loops the entire enterprise back to the final cut of *Jagged Little Pill*, "Wake Up." The songs not only speak to each other, but also to the artist in her own words: "get out get outta here enough already."

Final Reflection

Through fifty songs framed in four albums, Morissette has more than spoken her own mind. She has consistently allowed others to speak as well and along the way has encouraged all to speak. Growing and maturing and learning, she has expanded her horizons and expressed herself as an entertainer with responsibility to her fans, her art, and of course, her own agenda. As this study has brought to light the dialogic and other rhetorical features of her work, it does not claim her awareness of those features. Just as Bakhtin uncovered dialogic devices existing in the novel and framed them into a theoretical format, so may the reader use them to uncover the same in Morissette's lyrics. Although artists of all genres at times purposefully employ various structural tools, most occur naturally as an outgrowth of that elusive touch of the Muse called talent. In short, Morissette's poetic dialogism needed only Bakhtinian instruction to help it materialize, to guide the reader/listener to find it nestled in content and structure. This detailed journey through *Jagged Little Pill*, *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*, *Under Rug Swept*, and *Feast on Scraps* has unearthed a hidden passage between Morissette and Bakhtin, between poetry and prose, between pop culture and social culture.¹²

¹² Readers may want to consider Figures 6 – 9 in Appendix B at this point. They offer additional illustrations of the workings of heteroglossia in Morissette's lyrics.

CONCLUSION

“You and me in alignment until the end”

To the uninformed (or unacquainted), Mikhail Bakhtin and Alanis Morissette in the same study, much less the same sentence may define the term “strange bedfellows.” Nonetheless, the two share more than just dialogism, although that discussion would require an entire separate work. For the purpose of this study, however, the match provides an ideal centripetal/centrifugal tension of its own, an intriguing blend and collision of old and new, of philosophy and pop culture, of theory and application, and not necessarily divided along what would appear an unwavering line in rhetorical sands. Each author offers elements on both sides of that line.

As the study illustrates, Morissette’s career, her writing style, and the development of her authentic voice serve as a foundation; however, the study has acknowledged that Bakhtin worked within his time and its technological, philosophical, and rhetorical tradition. Using Morissette’s work as an illustrative example yet keeping this reality in check transports Bakhtin’s theory to a fair, modern application. Though the study may disagree with Bakhtin’s insistence on the monologic nature of poetry, it agrees and even applies his definition of structure, of dialogic device, to recreate living language. In a manner, Bakhtin and Morissette enter into a dialogue of their own, Bakhtin with his honorable reputation and well-respected, much-pondered theory and Morissette with her familiar, powerful, controversial yet maturing voice and tested popularity. The two in concert, each bringing his/her own heteroglossia to bear, spin into being a new strain of

theoretical discourse: a unique avenue to poetic dialogism. Further, and most appropriate, the discussion herein invites reader response and involvement.

Aside from its central argument, the study brings to light other thought-provoking points. First, Morissette as an example lends instant relevance and in turn elevates an element of pop culture proving it durable under the rigorous scrutiny of serious rhetorical theory. In fact, Morissette and Bakhtin share that pop culture flare and flavor as Bakhtin addressed the novel as more of a grassroots genre of the masses. In reality, the novel's novice (in literary circles) status drove Bakhtin's dialogic theory. Further, the process of mapping out both voices and dialogues (lyrics) reveals rhetoric in practical use, not Bakhtinian theory alone, but also standard features such as canons, appeals, and figurative language. With this linguistic and literary richness highlighted, the study also lifts a voice for poetry, not only its dialogism, but also its realistic value as a vehicle for expression, emotional *and* sociopolitical, as well as a platform for discourse and ongoing dialogue within and outside of a body of work. Finally, the content offers a vital lesson on listening, on recovering, on "hearing" below and around the surface, all voices on a universal, circular rather than an individual, linear spectrum.

Any well-developed study poses and answers its own questions, but it also suggests possibilities to alert, informed, and interested readers. Appropriate to a study on dialogism, the content encourages reader involvement and further discussion and research as well as providing potential for expansion and extension of its own point as well as others generated by the polyphony it frames and sets to motion. Possibilities divide into

basically three areas: the arts and pop culture, theory and philosophy, and the authors as individuals.

Since the bulk of the study concerns Alanis Morissette and since her work withstands theoretical scrutiny and measure, perhaps other ventures into the borderlands of pop culture may meet with less resistance and more consideration and respect. With this and other studies offering well-illustrated examples and methodology for intelligently incorporating various “voices of the masses,” the door may open on a unique library of rich and relevant texts. Easily extended to other artists, other arts, and more particularly, other genres of poetry and music, the analyses of process, content, structure, and presentation provide at least one model for rendering elements of pop culture valid for serious investigation and illustration.

The familiarity factor (particularly in the case of song lyrics) may also serve a pedagogical purpose as an instructor’s avenue to demonstrating the practicality of rhetoric. Working with a personally comfortable and intelligible content, the sometimes resistant student may come to recognize rhetoric as more than just cerebral, psycholinguistic, literary-elitist babble. The subject matter alone furnishes provocative ideas for discussion, composition, and research as well as literary studies of theme, device, method and other core elements. After all, rhetoricians everywhere should want to bring their discipline to the masses, to argue its application and value across social and academic lines. In a review of John Docker’s *Postmodernism and Pop Culture*, McKensie Wark hones in on Docker’s main argument: “The task is to reinvent ways of

valuing culture, and also reinvent ways of sharing and negotiation about cultural value with all kinds of people. This means learning from popular practices as much as presuming to have anything to teach them” (Wark 1). Surely the combination of Bakhtin and Morisette takes a giant step toward Docker’s suggested reinvention and extends to students of language and society a tantalizing challenge to expand on the idea.

For those seeking more traditional endeavors, the study offers seeds of theory and philosophy from and concerning both Bakhtin and Morisette. The identification, application, and discussion of devices and other literary tools, specifically Bakhtinian and generally rhetorical, provide a basic archeology for raising from the ruins of the poetic creative process the structural evidence of dialogue. Beyond an acknowledgement of Bakhtinian theory and Morisette application, this recognition of dialogue has more to do with listening and hearing *all* voices involved in any language representation. Those voices, uncovered through the Bakhtinian model and gleaned from Morisette’s lyrics, themselves present socio-linguistic, socio-ideological, and even geopolitical implications, fertile soil for studies in a variety of disciplines.

Finally, the strange bedfellows, Bakhtin and Morisette, have co-existed on the page illuminating and complimenting each other’s work and lending dimension, color, and texture to this study. Perhaps this attention will inspire additional reading and research on each writer individually, Morisette in the realm of music and poetry and Bakhtin in the realm of social, linguistic, and rhetorical philosophy. Needless to say, each of those areas stratifies into many others. Perhaps, too, creative and adventurous students will seek out other theorists and artists, even another likely or unlikely combination of two

disparate times, cultures, philosophies, and approaches to reveal not-so-disparate features.

Indeed, filtered through the lens of modern thought and circumstance, the light of Bakhtinian theory lifts from obscurity the dialogic structure not missing but rather hidden by layers of literary isolation, unchallenged tradition, and narrow perspective. A slight adjustment of magnifying power and shift of prismatic refraction bring into clear view, into hearing distance the always whispering voices exerting that centrifugal pull on the poetic centripetal center. Alanis Morissette's lyrics serve as but one example. If this modern poetic form can meet Bakhtin's stringent parameters even on a restricted scale, what possibilities does this suggest for entire traditional canon?

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APPENDIX A

Jagged Little Pill¹

1. ALL I REALLY WANT

Do I stress you out
My sweater is on backwards and inside out
And you say how appropriate
I don't want to dissect everything today
I don't mean to pick you apart you see
But I can't help it
There I go jumping before the gunshot has gone off
Slap me with a splintered ruler
And it would knock me to the floor if I wasn't there already
If only I could hunt the hunter

And all I really want is some patience
A way to calm the angry voice
And all I really want is deliverance

Do I wear you out
You must wonder why I'm relentless and all strung out
I'm consumed by the chill of solitary
I'm like Estella
I like to reel it in and then spit it out
I'm frustrated by your apathy
And I am frightened by the corrupted ways of this land
If only I could meet the Maker
And I am fascinated by the spiritual man
I am humbled by his humble nature

What I wouldn't give to find a soulmate
Someone else to catch this drift
And what I wouldn't give to meet a kindred

¹ All lyrics, including the title charts that appear in the text of Chapter Four, taken from the *Definitely Alanis* site listed in Works Cited. Some lyrics from *Feast on Scraps* and some corrections to other lyrics came directly from the CD jackets of each respective album.

Enough about me, let's talk about you for a minute
Enough about you, let's talk about life for a while
The conflicts, the craziness and the sound of pretenses
Falling all around...all around
Why are you so petrified of silence
Here can you handle this
Did you think about your bills, your ex, your deadlines
Or when you think you're gonna die
Or did you long for the next distraction
And all I need now is intellectual intercourse
A soul to dig the hole much deeper
And I have no concept of time other than it is flying
If only I could kill the killer

All I really want is some peace man
A place to find a common ground
And all I really want is a wavelength
All I really want is some comfort
A way to get my hands untied
And all I really want is some justice...

2. YOU OUGHTA KNOW

I want you to know that I'm happy for you
I wish nothing but the best for you both
An older version of me
Is she perverted like me
Would she go down on you in a theater
Does she speak eloquently
And would she have your baby
I'm sure she'd make a really excellent mother

'Cause the love that you gave that we made
wasn't able to make it enough for you to be open wide, no
And every time you speak her name
Does she know how you told me you'd hold me
Until you died, 'til you died
But you're still alive

CHORUS:

And I'm here to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It's not fair to deny me

Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

You seem very well, things look peaceful
I'm not quite as well, I thought you should know
Did you forget about me Mr. Duplicity
I hate to bug you in the middle of dinner
It was a slap in the face how quickly I was replaced
Are you thinking of me when you fuck her

'Cause the love that you gave that we made
wasn't able to make it enough for you to be open wide, no
And every time you speak her name
Does she know how you told me you'd hold me
Until you died, 'til you died
But you're still alive

REPEAT CHORUS

'Cause the joke that you laid in the bed that was me
And I'm not gonna fade
As soon as you close your eyes and you know it
And every time I scratch my nails down someone else's back
I hope you feel it...well can you feel it

REPEAT CHORUS

3. PERFECT

Sometimes is never quite enough
If you're flawless, then you'll win my love
Don't forget to win first place
Don't forget to keep that smile on your face

Be a good boy
Try a little harder
You've got to measure up
And make me prouder

How long before you screw it up
How many times do I have to tell you to hurry up
With everything I do for you
The least you can do is keep quiet
Be a good girl

You've gotta try a little harder
That simply wasn't good enough
To make us proud

I'll live through you
I'll make you what I never was
If you're the best, then maybe so am I
Compared to him compared to her
I'm doing this for your own damn good
You'll make up for what I blew
What's the problem...why are you crying

Be a good boy
Push a little farther now
That wasn't fast enough
To make us happy
We'll love you just the way you are if you're perfect

4. HAND IN MY POCKET

I'm broke but I'm happy
I'm poor but I'm kind
I'm shore but I'm healthy, yeah
I'm high but I'm grounded
I'm sane but I'm overwhelmed
I'm lost but I'm hopeful baby
What it all comes down to
Is that everything's gonna be fine fine fine
I've got one hand in my pocked
And the other one is giving a high five
I feel drunk but I'm sober
I'm young and I'm underpaid
I'm tired but I'm working, yeah
I care but I'm restless
I'm here but I'm really gone
I'm wrong and I'm sorry baby
What it all comes down to
Is that everything's gonna be quite alright
I've got one hand in my pocket
And the other one is flicking a cigarette
What it all comes down to
Is that I haven't got it all figured out just yet
I've got one hand in my pocket

And the other one is giving the peace sign
I'm free but I'm focused
I'm green but I'm wise
I'm hard but I'm friendly baby
I'm sad but I'm laughing
I'm brave but I'm chicken shit
I'm sick but I'm pretty baby
What it all boils down to
Is that no one's really got it figured out just yet
I've got one hand in my pocket
And the other one is playing the piano
What it all comes down to my friends
Is that everything's just fine fine fine
I've got one hand in my pocket
And the other one is hailing a taxi cab...

5. RIGHT THROUGH YOU

Wait a minute man
You mispronounced my name
You didn't wait for all the information
Before you turned me away
Wait a minute sir
You kind of hurt my feelings
You see me as a sweet back-loaded puppet
And you've got a meal ticket taste

CHORUS:

I see right through you
I know right through you
I feel right through you
I walk right through you

You took me for a joke
You took me for a child
You took a long hard look at my ass
And then played golf for a while
Your shake is like a fish
You pat me on the head
You took me out to wine dine 69 me
But didn't hear a damn word I said

REPEAT CHORUS

Hello Mr. Man
You didn't think I'd come back
You didn't think I'd show up with my army
And this ammunition on my back
Now that I'm Miss Thing
Now that I'm a zillionaire
You scan the credits for your name
And wonder why it's not there

REPEAT CHORUS

6. FORGIVEN

You know how us Catholic girls can be
We make up for so much time a little too late
I never forgot it, confusing as it was
No fun with no guilt feelings
The sinners, the saviors, the loverless priests
I'll see you next Sunday

CHORUS:

We all had our reasons to be there
We all had a thing or two to learn
We all needed something to cling to
So we did

I sang Alleluia in the choir
I confessed my darkest deeds to an envious man
My brothers they never went blind for what they did
But I may as well have
In the name of the Father, the Skeptic and the Son
I had one more stupid question

REPEAT CHORUS

What I learned I rejected but I believe again
I will suffer the consequence of this inquisition
If I jump in this fountain, will I be forgiven

REPEAT CHORUS

We all had delusions in our head
We all had our minds made up for us

We had to believe in something
So we did

7. YOU LEARN

I recommend getting your heart trampled on to anyone
I recommend walking around naked in your living room
Swallow it down (what a jagged little pill)
It feels so good (swimming in your stomach)
Wait until the dust settles

CHORUS:

You live you learn
You love you learn
You cry you learn
You lose you learn
You bleed you learn
You scream you learn

I recommend biting off more than you can chew to anyone
I certainly do
I recommend sticking your foot in your mouth at any time
Feel free
Throw it down (the caution blocks you from the wind)
Hold it up (to the rays)
You wait and see when the smoke clears

REPEAT CHORUS

Wear it out (the way a three-year-old would do)
Melt it down (you're gonna have to eventually anyway)
The fire trucks are coming up around the bend

REPEAT CHORUS

You grieve you learn
You choke you learn
You laugh you learn
You choose you learn
You pray you learn
You ask you learn
You live you learn

8. HEAD OVER FEET

I had no choice but to hear you
You stated your case time and again
I thought about it

You treat me like I'm a princess
I'm not used to liking that
You ask how my day was

CHORUS:

You've already won me over in spite of me
Don't be alarmed if I fall head over feet
Don't be surprised if I love you for all that you are
I couldn't help it
It's all your fault

Your love is thick and it swallowed me whole
You're so much braver than I gave you credit for
That's not lip service

REPEAT CHORUS

You are the bearer of unconditional things
You held your breath and the door for me
Thanks for your patience

You're the best listener that I've ever met
You're my best friend
Best friend with benefits
What took me so long

I've never felt this healthy before
I've never wanted something rational
I am aware now
I am aware now

REPEAT CHORUS

9. MARY JANE

What's the matter Mary Jane, you had a hard day
As you place the don't disturb sign on the door
You lost your place in line again, what a pity

You never seem to want to dance anymore

It's a long way down
On this roller coaster
The last chance streetcar
Went off the track
And you're on it

I hear you're counting sheep again Mary Jane
What's the point of tryin' to dream anymore
I hear you're losing weight again Mary Jane
Do you ever wonder who you're losing it for

Well it's full speed baby
In the wrong direction
There's a few more bruises
If that's the way
You insist on heading

Please be honest Mary Jane
Are you happy
Please don't censor your tears

You're the sweet crusader
And you're on your way
You're the last great innocent
And that's why I love you

So take this moment Mary Jane and be selfish
Worry not about the cars that go by
All that matters Mary Jane I your freedom
Keep warm my dear, keep dry

Tell me
Tell me
What's the matter Mary Jane

10. IRONIC

An old man turned ninety-eight
He won the lottery and died the next day
It's a black fly in your Chardonnay
It's a death row pardon two minutes too late
Isn't it ironic... don't you think

CHORUS:

It's like rain on your wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid
It's the good advice that you just didn't take
Who would've thought... it figures

Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly
He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids good-bye
He waited his whole damn life to take that flight
And as the plane crashed down he thought
"Well isn't this nice..."
And isn't it ironic... don't you think

REPEAT CHORUS

Well life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
When you think everything's okay and everything's going right
And life has a funny way of helping you out when
You think everything's gone wrong and everything blows up
In your face

A traffic jam when you're already late
A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break
It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife
It's meeting the man of my dreams
And then meeting his beautiful wife
And isn't it ironic... don't you think
A little too ironic... and yeah I really do think...

REPEAT CHORUS

Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out
Helping you out

11. NOT THE DOCTOR

I don't want to be the filler if the void is solely yours
I don't want to be your glass of single malt whiskey
Hidden in the bottom drawer
I don't want to be a bandage if the wound is not mine
Lend me some fresh air

I don't want to be adored for what I merely represent to you
I don't want to be your babysitter
You're a very big boy now
I don't want to be your mother
I didn't carry you in my womb for nine months
Show me the back door

CHORUS:

Visiting hours are 9 to 5 and if I show up at 10 past 6
Well I already know that you'd find some way to sneak me in and oh
Mind the empty bottle with the holes along the bottom
You see it's too much to ask for and I am not the doctor

I don't want to be the sweeper of the eggshells that you walk upon
I don't want to be your other half I believe that 1 and 1 make 2
I don't want to be your food or the light from the fridge
on your face at midnight
Hey what are you hungry for
I don't want to be the glue that holds your pieces together
I don't want to be your idol
See this pedestal is high and I'm afraid of heights
I don't want to be lived through
A vicarious occasion
Please open the window

REPEAT CHORUS

I don't want to live on someday when my motto is last week
I don't want to be responsible for your fractured hear
and its wounded beat
I don't want to be a substitute for the smoke you've been inhaling
What do you thank me
What do you thank me for

REPEAT CHORUS

12. WAKE UP

You like snow but only if it's warm
You like rain but only if it's dry
No sentimental value to the rose that fell on your floor
No fundamental excuse for the granted I'm taken for

'Cause it's easy not to
So much easier not to
And what goes around never comes around to you

You like pain but only if it doesn't hurt too much
You sit... and you wait... to receive
There's an obvious attraction
To the path of least resistance in your life
There's an obvious aversion no amount of my insistence
could make you try tonight

'Cause it's easy not to
So much easier not to
And what goes around never comes around to you
To you to you to you to you to you...
There's no love no money no thrill anymore

There's an apprehensive naked little trembling boy
With his head in his hands
There's an underestimated and impatient little girl
Raising her hand

But it's easy not to
So much easier not to
And what goes around never comes around to you
To you, to you

get up get up get up off of it
get up get up get up off of it
get out get outta here enough already
get up get up get up off of it
wake up

13. YOUR HOUSE

I went to your house
I walked up the stairs
And I opened your door without the ringing the bell
Walked down the hall
Into your room where I could smell you

And I shouldn't be here without permission
Shouldn't be here

CHORUS:

Would you forgive me love
If I dance in your shower
Would you forgive me love
If I laid in your bed
Would you forgive me love
If I stay all afternoon

I took off my clothes
I put on your robe
and I went through your drawers
And I found your cologne
Went down to the den
Found your CD's
And I played your Joni

And I shouldn't stay long you might be home soon
I shouldn't stay long

REPEAT CHORUS

I burn your incense
I ran a bath and I noticed a letter
That sat on your desk
It said "hello love"
"I love you so, love"
"Meet me at midnight"

And no it wasn't my writing I better go soon
It wasn't my writing

CHORUS:

So forgive me love
If I cry in your shower
So forgive me love
For the salt in your bed
So forgive me love
If I cry all afternoon

Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie

1. FRONT ROW

Do you go to the dungeon to find out how to make peace with your days in the dungeon writing a letter To you didn't make me feel anymore peaceful than how I felt when we weren't speaking because I didn't cop to what I did. I can't love you because we're supposed to have professional boundaries i'd like you to be schooled and in awe as though you were kissed by god full on the lips. i'm in the front row the front row with popcorn I get to see you see you close up **i'm too tired to recount the unpleasantries one by one one minute I want to banish the next I want to be on a deserted island with you alone with my three favourite cd's ambivalent yet in your bed we've yet to acknowledge what really happened**

slid into the ditch I have this overwhelming loss of ambition we said lets name thirty good reasons why we shouldn't be together I started by saying things like "you smoke" "you live in new jersey (too far)" you started saying things like "you belong to the world" all of which could have been easily refuted but the conversation was hypothetical I am totally short of breath for you why can't you shut you're stuff off....i'm in the front row, the front row with popcorn I get to see you see you close up

and I laughed until my lungs hurt i love how you bust my chops you don't always feel seen sometimes you feel erasable unfortunately i cannot reciprocate in my current state i think we should be careful of how much time we spend together

...for a while while i'm speaking you know how much you hate to be interrupted maybe spend some time alone fill up your proverbial cup so that it doesn't always have to be about you i've been wanting your undivided attention I like the fact that you're nothing like me are you not burdened by the lack of perspective people have of your charmed life (seemingly?) i'm in the front row the front row with popcorn i get to see you see you close up **you never meant to be ungrateful nor held up to be whipped or wept for certainly not analysed prodded at more ways than one apparently you've been misrepresented dealing with the concept of arrows being slung towards your outrageous fortune**

hey i'm not mad at you guardian i'm mad at myself for spending so much time with you and your jeckly and hydeness i'm glad i figuratively slapped you on the wrist you laughed a wicked laugh and said "come here let me clip your wings!" (i know he's blood but you can still turn him away you don't owe him anything) "raise the roof" he yelled "yeah raise the roof!" I yelled back. (Unfortunately you needed a health scare to reprioritize.) No thanks to the soap box. having me rile against them won't make an ounce of difference....i'm in the front row the front row with popcorn. i get to see you see you close up **oh the things i've done for you many a sitch a friend a man's been left for you all the books i've read for you the tongues i've bitten for you many a new city for you many a risk taken for you (not a single regret)**
(n.b lyrics in bold are spoken in the background over the chorus)

2. BABA

i've seen them kneel
with baited breath for the ritual
i've watched this experience raise
them to pseudo higher levels
i've watched them leave their families
in pursuit of your nirvana
i've seen them coming to line up
from switzerland and america

how long will this take baba
how long have we been sleeping
do you see me hanging on to
every word you say
how soon will i be holy
how much will this cost guru
how much longer 'til you
completely absolve me

i've seen them give their drugs up
in place of makeshift alters
i've heard them chanting
kali kali frantically
i've heard them rotely repeats your
teachings with elitism
i've seen them boasting robes and
foreign sandalwood beads
i've seen them overlooking god in
their own essence
i've seen their upward glances
in hopes of instant salvation
i've seen their righteousness
mixed without loving compassion
i've watched you smile as
the students bow to kiss your feet

give me strength all knowing one
how long 'til enlightenment
how much longer 'til you
completely absolve me

3. THANK U

how 'bout getting off of these antibiotics
how 'bout stopping eating when I'm full up
how 'bout them transparent dangling carrots
how 'bout that ever elusive kudo

thank you India
thank you terror
thank you disillusionment
thank you frailty
thank you consequence
thank you thank you silence

how 'bout me not blaming you for everything
how 'bout me enjoying the moment for once
how 'bout how good it feels to finally forgive you
how 'bout grieving it all one at a time

thank you India
thank you terror
thank you disillusionment
thank you frailty
thank you consequence
thank you thank you silence

the moment I let go of it was the moment
I got more than I could handle
the moment I jumped off of it
was moment I touched down

how 'bout no longer being masochistic
how 'bout remembering your divinity
how 'bout unabashedly bawling your eyes out
how 'bout not equating death with stopping

thank you India
thank you providence
thank you disillusionment
thank you nothingness
thank you clarity
thank you thank you silence

4. ARE YOU STILL MAD

are you still mad I kicked you out of bed?
are you still mad I gave you ultimatums?
are you still mad I compared you to all
my forty year old male friends?
are you still mad I shared our problems
with everybody?

are you still mad I had an emotional affair?
are you still mad I tried to mold you into
who I wanted you to be?
are you still mad I didn't trust your intentions?
of course you are
of course you are

are you still mad that I flirted wildly?
are you still mad I had a tendency to mother you?
are you still mad that I had one foot out the door?
are you still mad that we slept together even after
we had ended it?
of course you are
of course you are

are you still mad I wore the pants most of the time?
are you still mad that I seemed to focus
only on your potential?
are you still mad that I threw in the towel?
are you still mad that I gave up long before you did?
of course you are
of course you are

5. SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER

I was afraid you'd hit me if I'd spoken up I was
afraid of your physical strength I was afraid
you'd hit me below the belt I was afraid of your
sucker punch I was afraid of your reducing me
I was afraid of your alcohol breath I was afraid
of your complete disregard for me I was afraid
of your temper I was afraid of handles being
flown off of I was afraid of holes being punched
into walls I was afraid of your testosterone

I have as much rage as you have
I have as much pain as you do
I've lived as much hell as you have
and i've kept mine bubbling under for you

you were my best friend
you were my lover
you were my mentor
you were my brother
you were my partner
you were my teacher
you were my very own sympathetic character

I was afraid of verbal daggers I was afraid of the
calm before the storm I was afraid for my own
bones I was afraid of your seduction I was afraid
of your coercion I was afraid of your rejection
I was afraid of your intimidation I was afraid of
your punishment I was afraid of your icy silences
I was afraid of your volume I was afraid of your
manipulation I was afraid of your explosions

I have as much rage as you have
I have as much pain as you do
I've lived as much hell as you have
and i've kept mine bubbling under for you

chorus*chorus
you were my keeper
you were my anchor
you were my family
you were my saviour
and therein lay the issue
and therein lay the problem

6. THAT I WOULD BE GOOD

that I would be good even if i did nothing
that I would be good even if i got the thumbs down
that I would be good if i got and stayed sick
that I would be good even if I gained ten pounds

that I would be fine even if I went bankrupt
that I would be good if I lost my hair and my youth
that I would be great if I was no longer Queen
that I would be grand if I was not all knowing

that I would be loved even when I numb myself
that I would be good even when I am overwhelmed
that I would be loved even when i was fuming
that I would be good even if I was clingy

that I would be good even if I lost sanity
that I would be good
whether with or without you

7. THE COUCH

you hadn't seen your father in such a long time
he died in the arms of his lover how dare he
your mother never left the house
she never married anyone else you took it upon yourself to console her

you reminded her so much of your father
so you were banished and you wonder why you're so hypersensitive
and why you can't trust anyone but us
but then how can I begin to forgive her under so many bridges with dirty water
she was foolish and selfish and cowardly if you ask me

I don't know where to begin in all of my 50 odd years
I have been silently suffering and adapting perpetuating and enduring
who are you younger generation to tell me that I have unresolved problems
not many examples of fruits of this type of excruciating labour

how can you just throw words around like grieve and heal and mourn
I feel fine we may not have been born as awake as you were
it was much harder in those days we had paper routes up hill both ways
we went from school to a job to a wife to instant parenthood

I walked into his office I felt so self conscious on the couch
he was sitting down across from me he was writing down his hypothesis I don't know
I've got a loving supportive wife who doesn't know how involved she should get
you say his interjecting was him just calling me on my shit?
just the other day my sweet daughter I was driving past 203 I walked up the stairs in my
mind's eye

I remember how they would creak loudly
she was only responsive with a drink she was only responsive by photo
I was only trying to be the best big brother I could

i've walked sometimes confused sometimes ready to crack open wide
sometimes indignant sometimes raw
can you imagine I pay him 75 dollars an hour sometimes
it feels like highway robbery
and sometimes its peanuts
I wish it could last a couple more hours

so here we both are battling similar demons (not coincidentally)
you see in getting beyond knowing its solely intellectually you're not relinquishing your
majesty
you are wise you are warm you are courageous you are big
and I love you more now than I ever have in my whole life

8. CAN'T NOT

I'd be lying if I said I was completely unscathed
I might be proving you right with my silence or my retaliation
Would I be letting you win my non reaction?
how would I explain
How would I explain this to my children if I had them?
because I can't not
because I can't not
because I can't afford to be misread one more time
would I be whining if I said I needed a hug?
would you feel slighted if I said your love's not enough?
how can I complain?
how can I complain when I'm the one who reaches for it?
because I can't not
because I can't not
because I cannot walk without my crutches
because I can't not
because I can't not
because I can't help wonder why you ask me
to all the unheard wisdom in the school yard
you think you're the right ones
you think you're the charmed ones I'm sure
how can you go on with such conviction?
and who do you think you are why do you question me?
because we can't not

because we can't not
because we can't help laugh at underestimations
because we can't not
because we can't not
because we can't afford to be misled one more time
because we can't not
because we can't not
because we cannot help without your willingness
why do you affect me? why do you affect me still?
why do you hinder me? why do you hinder me still?
why do you unnerve me? why do you unnerve me still?
why do you trigger me? why do you trigger me still?

9. UR

burn the books they've got too many names and psychoses
all this incriminating evidence would surely haunt me
if someone broke into my house
suits in the living room
do you realise guys I was born in 1974
we've got someone here to explain your publishing
we know how much you love to be in front of audiences
hopeful you are
schoolbound you are
naive you are
driven you are
take a trip to new york with your guardian
and your fake identification
when they said "is there something anything
you'd like to know young lady?"
you said "yes I'd like to know what kind of people
i'll be dealing with"
precocious you are
headstrong you are
terrified you are
ahead of your time you are
don't mind our staring but
we're surprised you're not in a far-gone asylum
we're surprised you didn't crack up
lord knows that we would've
we would've liked to have been there
but you keep pushing us away
resilient you are

big time you are
ruthless you are
precious you are

10. I WAS HOPING

as we were talking outside it was cold we were shivering yet warmed by the subject
matter
my wife is in the next room we've been having troubles please don't tell her or anyone
but I need to talk to somebody
you said " wouldn't it be a shame if I knew how great I was five minutes before I'd died
I'd be filled
with such regret before I took my last breath" and I said "you're willing to tell me this
now
and you're not going to die anytime soon"
and I said I haven't been eating chicken or meat or anything and you said yes
but you've been wearing leather and laughed and said we're at the top of the food chain
and yes you're still a fine woman and I cringed
I was hoping I was hoping we could heal each other
I was hoping I was hoping we could be raw together
we left the restaurant where the head waiter (in his 60's) said "goodbye sir thank you for
your business sir you're
successful and established sir and we like the frequency with which you dine here sir
and your money" and when i walked by they said "thank you too dear" I was all pigtails
and cords
and tehre was a day when I would've said something like "hey dude I could buy and sell
this place so kiss it"
I too once thought I was owed something
I was hoping I was hoping we could challenge each other
I was hoping I was hoping we could crack each other up
I too thought that when proved wrong I lost somehow
I too once thought life was cruel
it's a cycle really you think i'm withdrawing and guilt tripping you I think you're
insensitive
and I don't feel heard and I said do you believe we are fundamentally judgmental?
fundamentally evil?
and you said yes I said I don't believe in revenge in right or wrong good or bad you said
"well what about the man that I saw handcuffed in the emergency room bleeding after
beating his kid
and she threw a shoe at his head
I think what he did was wrong and I would've had a hard time feeling compassion for
him"
I had to watch my tone for fear of having you feel judged.

I was hoping I was hoping we could dance together
I was hoping I was hoping we could be creamy together

11. ONE

I am the biggest hypocrite
I've been undeniably jealous
I have been loud and pretentious
I have been utterly threatened
I've gotten candy for my self-interest
the sexy treadmill capitalist
heaven forbid I be criticized
heaven forbid I be ignored

I have abused my power forgive me
you mean we actually all are one
one one one one one one one
I've been out of reach and separatist
heaven forbid average (whatever average means)
I have compensated for my days
of powerlessness

I have abused my so-called power forgive me
you mean we actually all are one
one one one one one one one

did you just call her amazing?
surely we both can't be amazing!
and give up my hard earned status
as a fabulous freak of nature?

I have abused my power forgive me
you mean we actually all are one
one one one one one one one
always looked good on paper
sounded good in theory

12. WOULD NOT COME

if I make a lot of tinsel then people will want to
if I am hardened no fear of further abandonment
if I am famous then maybe i'll feel good in this skin

if I am cultured my words will somehow garner respect
i would throw a party still it would not come
i would bike run swim and still it would not come
i'd go traveling and still it would not come
I would starve myself and still it would not come
if I'm masculine I will be taken more seriously
if I take a break it would make me irresponsible
if I'm elusive I will surely be sought after often
if I need assistance then I must be incapable
i'd be filthy rich and still
it would not come
I would seduce them and still
it would not come
I would drink vodka and still
it would not come
i'd have an orgasm still
it would'nt come
if I accumulate knowledge
i'll be impenetrable
if I am aloof no one will know
when they strike a nerve
if I keep my mouth shut the boat
will not have to be rocked
if I am vulnerable I will be
trampled upon
i would go shopping and still
it would not come
i'd leave the country and still
it would not come
i would scream and rebel still
it would not come
i would stuff my face and still
it would not come
i'd be productive and still it would not come
i'd be celebrated and still it would not come
i'd be the hero and still it would not come
i'd renunciate and still it would not come

13. UNSENT

dear matthew I like you alot I realise you're in a relationship with someone right now and
I respect
that I would like you to know that if you're ever single in the future and you want to come
visit me in california

I would be open to spending time with you and finding out how old you were when you wrote your first song
dear jonathan I like you too much I used to be attracted to boys who would lie to me and think solely about themselves and
you were plenty self-destructive for my taste at the time I used to say the more tragic the better the truth is
whenever I think about the early 90's your face comes up with a vengeance like it was yesterday
dear terrance I love you muchly you've been nothing but open hearted and emotionally available and supportive
and nurturing and consummately there for me I kept drawing you in and pushing you away I remember
how beautiful it was to fall asleep on your couch and cry in front of you for the first time you were the best platform from
which to jump beyond myself what was wrong with me
dear marcus you rocked my world you had a charismatic way about you with the women and you got me
seriously thinking about spirituality and you wouldn't let me get away with kicking my own ass but I could never really feel
relaxed and looked out for around you though and that stopped us from going any further than we did
and it's kinda too bad because we could've had much more fun
dear lou we learned so much I realise we won't be able to talk for some time and I understand that as I do you
the long distance thing was the hardest and we did as well as we could we were together during a very tumultuous time
in our lives I will always have your back and be curious about you and your career and your whereabouts

14. SO PURE

you from new york you are so relevant
you reduce me to cosmic tears
luminous more so than most anyone
unapologetically alive knot in my stomach
and lump in my throat
I love you when you dance when you freestyle in trance
so pure such an expression
supposed former infatuation junkie
I sink three pointers and you wax poetically
I love you when you dance when you freestyle in trance
so pure such an expression
let's grease the wheel over tea

let's discuss things in confidence
let's be outspoken let's be ridiculous
let's solve the world's problems
I love you when you dance when you freestyle in trance
so pure such an expression

15. JOINING YOU

dear dar(lin') your mom (my friend) left a message on my machine she was frantic
saying you were talking crazy that you wanted to do away with yourself
I guess she thought i'd be a perfect resort because we've had this inexplicable connection
since our youth and
yes they're in shock they are panicked you and your chronic them and their drama
you this embarrassment us in the middle of this delusion
if we were our bodies
if we were our futures
if we were our defenses i'd be joining you
if we were our culture
if we were our leaders
if we were our denials i'd be joining you
I remember vividly a day years ago we were camping you knew more than you thought
you should know
you said "I don't ever want to be brainwashed" and you were mind boggling you were
intense
you were uncomfortable in your own skin you were thirsty but mostly you were beautiful
if we were our nametags
if we were our rejections
if we were our outcomes i'd be joining you
if we were our indignities
if we were our successes
if we were our emotions i'd be joining you
you and I we're like 4 year olds we want to know why and how come about everything
we want to reveal ourselves at will and speak our minds and never talk small and be
intuitive
and question mightily and find god my tortured beacon
we need to find like-minded companions
if we were their condemnations
if we were their projections
if we were our paranoias i'd be joining you
if we were our incomes
if we were our obsessions
if we were our afflictions i'd be joining you
we need reflection we need a really good memory feel free to call me a little more often

16. HEART OF THE HOUSE

you are the original template
you are the original exemplary
how seen were you actually?
how revered were you (honestly) at the time?
why pleased with your low maintenance?
you loved us more than we could've loved you back
where was your ally your partner in feminine crime?
oh mother who's your buddy?
oh mother who's got your back?
the heart of the house
the heart of the house
all hail the goddess!
you were "good ol"
you were "count on 'her 'til four am"
you saw me run from the house
in the snow melodramatically
oh mother who's your sister?
oh mother who's your friend?
the heart of the house
the heart of that house
all hail the goddess!
we left the men and we went for a walk in the gatineaus
and talked like women like women to women would
womyn to womyn "where did you get that from?
must've been your father your dad"
I got it from you I got it from you
do you see yourself in my gypsy garage sale ways?
in my fits of laughter?
in my tinkerbelle tendencies?
in my lack of colour coordination?

17. YOUR CONGRATULATIONS

I wouldn't have compromised as much
so much of myself for fear of
having you hating me
I would've sung so loudly
it would've cracked myself!
I became self conscious

of anything exuberant
I would'nt have sold myself short
I would've kept my eyes
glued to the ground
if I had've known my invisibility
would not make a difference
I would've run around screaming proudly
at the top of my voice
I wouldn't have said it was in fact luck
i'm talking idealism here
I would not have been so self deprecating
I wouldn't have cowered
for fear of having my eyes scratched out!
I wouldn't have cut my comfort off
I wouldn't have feigned needlessness
I would not have discredited
every one of their compliments
it was your approval I wanted
your congratulations

Under Rug Swept

21 Things I Want in a Lover

do you derive joy when someone else succeeds? do you not play dirty when engaged in competition? do you have a big intellectual capacity but know that it alone does not equate wisdom?

do you see everything as an illusion? but enjoy it even though you are not of it?
are you both masculine and feminine? politically aware? and don't believe in capital punishment?

these are 21 things that I want in a lover
not necessarily needs but qualities that I prefer

do you derive joy from diving in and seeing that loving someone can actually feel like freedom? are you funny? à la self-deprecating? like adventure? and have many formed opinions?

these are 21 things that I want in a lover
not necessarily needs but qualities that I prefer
I figure I can describe it since I have a choice in the matter
these are 21 things I choose to choose in a lover

I'm in no hurry I could wait forever
I'm in no rush cuz I like being solo
there are no worries and certainly no pressure
in the meantime I'll live like there's no tomorrow

are you uninhibited in bed? more than three times a week? up for being experimental?
are you athletic? are you thriving in a job that helps your brother? are you not addicted?

...curious and communicative...

Narcissus

Dear momma's boy I know you've had your butt licked by your mother
I know you've enjoyed all that attention from her
And every woman graced with your presence after
Dear narcissus boy I know you've never really apologized for anything
I know you've never really taken responsibility
I know you've never really listened to a woman

Dear me-show boy I know you're not really into conflict resolution
Or seeing both sides of every equation
Or having an uninterrupted conversation

And any talk of healthiness
And any talk of connectedness
And any talk of resolving this
Leaves you running for the door

(why why do I try to love you
Try to love you when you really don't want me
To)

Dear egotist boy you've never really had to suffer any consequence
You've never stayed with anyone longer than ten minutes
You'd never understand anyone showing resistance
Dear popular boy I know you're used to getting everything so easily
A stranger to the concept of reciprocity
People honor boys like you in this society

And any talk of selflessness
And any talk of working at this
And any talk of being of service
Leaves you running for the door

(why why do I try to help you try to help you
When you really don't want me to)

You go back to the women who will dance the dance
You go back to your friends who will lick your ass
You go back to ignoring all the rest of us
You go back to the center of your universe

Dear self centered boy I don't know why I still feel affected by you
I've never lasted very long with someone like you
I never did although I have to admit I wanted to
Dear magnetic boy you've never been with anyone who doesn't take your shit
You've never been with anyone who's dared to call you on it
I wonder how you'd be if someone were to call you on it

And any talk of willingness
And any talk of both feet in
And any talk of commitment
Leaves you running for the door

(why why do I try to change you try to
Try to change you when you really don't
Want me to)

You go back to the women who will dance the dance
You go back to your friends who will lick your ass
You go back to being so oblivious
You go back to the center of the universe

Hands Clean

If it weren't for your maturity none of this would have happened
If you weren't so wise beyond your years I would've been able to control myself
If it weren't for my attention you wouldn't have been successful and
If it weren't for me you would never have amounted to very much

Ooh this could be messy
But you don't seem to mind
Ooh don't go telling everybody
And overlook this supposed crime

We'll fast forward to a few years later
And no one knows except the both of us
And I have honored your request for silence
And you've washed your hands clean of this

You're essentially an employee and I like you having to depend on me
You're kind of my protégé and one day you'll say you learned all you know from me
I know you depend on me like a young thing would to a guardian
I know you sexualize me like a young thing would and I think I like it

Ooh this could get messy
But you don't seem to mind
Ooh don't go telling everybody
And overlook this supposed crime

We'll fast forward to a few years later
And no one knows except the both of us
And I have honored your request for silence
And you've washed your hands clean of this

what part of our history's reinvented and under rug swept?
what part of your memory is selective and tends to forget?
what with this distance it seems so obvious?

Just make sure you don't tell on me especially to members of your family
We best keep this to ourselves and not tell any members of our inner posse
I wish I could tell the world cuz you're such a pretty thing when you're done up properly
I might want to marry you one day if you watch that weight and keep your firm body

Ooh this could be messy and
Ooh I don't seem to mind
Ooh don't go telling everybody
And overlook this supposed crime

Flinch

What's it been over a decade?
It still smarts like it was four minutes ago
We only influenced each other totally
We only bruised each other even more so

What are you my blood? You touch me like you are my blood
What are you my dad? You affect me like you are my dad

How long can a girl be shackled to you
How long before my dignity is reclaimed
How long can a girl stay haunted by you
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name

Where've you been? I heard you moved to my city
My brother saw you somewhere downtown
I'd be paralyzed if I ran into you
My tongue would seize up if we were to meet again

What are you my god? You touch me like you are my god
What are you my twin? You affect me like you are my twin

How long can a girl be tortured by you?
How long before my dignity is reclaimed
And how long can a girl be haunted by you
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name
Soon I'll grow up and I won't even flinch at your name

So here I am one room away from where I know you're standing
A well-intentioned man told me you just walked in
This man knows not of how this information has affected me
But he knows the colour of the car I just drove away in

What are you my kin? You touch me like you are my kin
What are you my air? You affect me like you are my air

So Unsexy

Oh these little rejections how they add up quickly
One small sideways look and I feel so ungood
Somewhere along the way I think I gave you the power to make
Me feel the way I thought only my father could

Oh these little rejections how they seem so real to me
One forgotten birthday I'm all but cooked
How these little abandonments seem to sting so easily
I'm 13 again am I 13 for good?

I can feel so unsexy for someone so beautiful
So unloved for someone so fine
I can feel so boring for someone so interesting
So ignorant for someone of sound mind

Oh these little protections how they fail to serve me
One forgotten phone call and I'm deflated
Oh these little defenses how they fail to comfort me
Your hand pulling away and I'm devastated

When will you stop leaving baby?
When will I stop deserting baby?
When will I start staying with myself?

Oh these little projections how they keep springing from me
I jump my ship as I take it personally
Oh these little rejections how they disappear quickly
The moment I decide not to abandon me

Precious Illusions

you'll rescue me right? in the exact same way they never did..
I'll be happy right? when your healing powers kick in

you'll complete me right? then my life can finally begin
I'll be worthy right? only when you realize the gem I am?

but this won't work now the way it once did
and I won't keep it up even though I would love to

once I know who I'm not then I'll know who I am
but I know I won't keep on playing the victim

these precious illusions in my head did not let me down when I was defenseless
and parting with them is like parting with invisible best friends

this ring will me yet as will you knight in shining armor
this pill will help me yet as will these boys gone through like water

but this won't work as well as the way it once did
cuz I want to decide between survival and bliss
and though I know who I'm not I still don't know who I am
but I know I won't keep on playing the victim

these precious illusions in my head did not let me down when I was a kid
and parting with them is like parting with a childhood best friend

I've spent so long firmly looking outside me
I've spent so much time living in survival mode

That Particular Time

my foundation was rocked my tried and true way to deal was to vanish
my departures were old I stood in the room shaking in my boots
at that particular time love had challenged me to stay
at that particular moment I knew not to run away again
that particular month I was ready to investigate with you
at that particular time

we thought a break would be good for four months we sat and vacillated
we thought a small time apart would clear up the doubts that were abounding
at that particular time love encouraged me to wait
at that particular moment it helped me to be patient
that particular month we needed time to marinate in what "us" meant

I've always wanted for you what you've wanted for yourself
and yet I wanted to save us high water or hell
and I kept on ignoring the ambivalence you felt
and in the meantime I lost myself
in the meantime I lost myself
I'm sorry I lost myself...i am

you knew you needed more time time spent alone with no distraction
you felt you needed to fly solo and high to define what you wanted

at that particular love encouraged me to leave
at that particular moment I knew staying with you meant deserting me
that particular month was harder than you'd believe but I still left
at that particular time

A Man

I am a man as a man I've been told
Bacon is brought to the house in this mold
Born of your bellies I yearn for the cord
Years I have groveled repentance ignored

And I have been blamed
And I have repented
I'm working my way toward our union mended

I am man who has grown from a son
Been crucified by enraged women
I am son who was raised by such men
I'm often reminded of the fools I'm among

And I have been shamed
And I have relented
I'm working my way toward our union mended
And I have been shamed
And I have repented
I'm working my way toward our union mended

we don't fare well with endless reprimands
we don't do well with a life served as a sentence
this won't work well if you're hell bent on your offence
I am a man who understands your resistance

I am a man who still does what he can
to dispel our archaic reputation
I am a man who has heard all he can
cuz I don't fare well with endless punishment

Cuz I have been blamed and I have repented
I'm working my way toward our union mended
And we have been blamed and we have repented
I'm working my way toward our union mended

You Owe Me Nothing In Return

i'll give you countless amounts of outright acceptance if you want it
i will give you encouragement to choose the path that you want if you need it
you can speak of anger and doubts your fears and freak outs and i'll hold it
you can share your so-called shame-filled accounts of times in your life and i wont judge
it
and there are no strings attached to it

you owe me nothing for giving the love that i give
you owe me nothing for caring the way that i have
i give you thanks for receiving it's my privilege
and you owe me nothing in return

you can ask for space for yourself and only yourself and i'll grant it
you can ask for freedom as well or time to travel and you'll have it
you can ask to live by yourself or love someone else and i'll support it
you can ask for anything you want anything at all and i'll understand it
and there are no strings attached to it

i bet you're wondering when the next payback shoe will eventually drop
i bet you're wondering when my conditional police will force you to cough up
i bet you're wondering how far you have now danced your way back into debt
this is the only kind of love as i understand it that there really is

you can express your deepest of truths even if it means i'll lose you and i'll hear if
you can fall into the abyss on your way to your bliss i'll empathize with
you can say that you have to skip town to chase your passion and i'll hear it
you can even hit rock bottom have a midlife crisis and i'll hold it
and there are no strings attached to it

Surrendering

you were full and fully capable
you were self sufficient and needless
your house was fully decorated in that sense

you were taken with me to a point
a case of careful what you wish for
but what you knew was enough to begin

and so you called and courted fiercely
so you reached out, entirely fearless
and yet you knew of reservation and how it serves

and I salute you for your courage
and I applaud your perseverance
and I embrace you for your faith in the face of adversarial forces
that I represent

so you were in but not entirely
you were up for this but not totally
you knew how arms length-ing can maintain doubt

and so you fell and you're intact
so you dove in and you're still breathing
so you jumped and you're still flying if not shocked

and I support you in your trusting
and I commend you for your wisdom
and I'm amazed by your surrender in the face of threatening forces
that I represent

you found creative ways to distance
you hid away from much through humor
your choice of armor was your intellect

and so you felt and you're still here
and so you died and you're still standing
and so you softened and you're still safely in command

self protection was in times of true danger
your best defense to mistrust and be wary
surrendering a feat of unequalled measure
and I'm thrilled to let you in
overjoyed to be let in in kind

Utopia

we'd gather around all in a room fasten our belts engage in dialogue
we'd all slow down rest without guilt not lie without fear disagree sans judgment

we would stay and respond and expand and include and allow and forgive and
enjoy and evolve and discern and inquire and accept and admit and divulge and
open and reach out and speak up

This is utopia this is my utopia
This is my ideal my end in sight
Utopia this is my utopia

This is my nirvana
My ultimate

we'd open our arms we'd all jump in we'd all coast down into safety nets

we would share and listen and support and welcome be propelled by passion not
invest in outcomes we would breathe and be charmed and amused by difference
be gentle and make room for every emotion

we'd provide forums we'd all speak out we'd all be heard we'd all feel seen

we'd rise post-obstacle more defined more grateful we would heal be humbled
and be unstoppable we'd hold close and let go and know when to do which we'd
release and disarm and stand up and feel safe

this is utopia this is my utopia
this is my ideal my end in sight
utopia this is my utopia
this is my nirvana

Feast On Scraps

Fear of Bliss

my misery has enjoyed company
and although I have ached
I don't threaten anybody
sometimes I feel more bigness than I've shared with you
sometimes I wonder why I quell when I'm not required to

I've tried to be small I've tried to be stunted
I've tried roadblocks and all
my happy endings prevented

sometimes I feel it's all just too big to be true
I sabotage myself for fear of what my bigness could do

fear of bliss and fear of joyitude
fear of bigness (and ensuing solitude?)

I could be golden I could be glowing I could be freedom
but that could be boring

sometimes I feel this is too scary to be true
I sabotage myself for fear of losing you

this talk of liberation makes me want to go lie down
under the covers till the terror of the unknown is gone

I could be full I could be thriving I could be shining
sounds isolating

sometimes I feel this is too good to be true
I sabotage myself for fear of what my joy could do

Bent 4 U

you're unsure and you're not ready so that must mean I want you
you're unavailable and disinterested and to you I look for comfort

a million times in a million ways I will try to change you
a million months and a million days I'll try to somehow convince you

I have waited for you and adjusted for you and I'm done
I have deferred to you and enabled you and I'm done

you're too young or you're too old or you're simply not inclined
you're asleep or you're withholding be that my cue to crave you

several times in several ways I'll try to squeeze love from you
several hours and several ways I'll feast on scraps thrown from you

I have bent for you and I've deprived for you and I'm done
I have depressed for you and contorted for you and I'm done
I have stifled for you and I've compromised for you and I'm done
I have silenced for you and sacrificed for you and I'm done

it won't be long before I am reclaimed
it won't take long and I'll be on path again
it won't be easy for us to disengage
I'm at the end of self deprivation stage

you're afraid of every woman afraid of your inner workings
you cringe at the thought of living under the same roof as me god and everything

a million times and a million ways I've tried to alter to match you
several times every several days I've tried to uncrush on you

Sorry To Myself

for hearing all my doubts so selectively
for continuing my numbing relentlessly
for helping you and myself, not even considering
for beating myself up and over functioning

to whom do I owe the biggest apology?
no one's been crueller than I've been to me

for letting you decide if I indeed was desirable
for myself love being so embarrassingly conditional
for denying myself to somehow make us compatible
for trying to fit a rectangle into a hole

to whom do I owe the biggest apology?
no one's been crueller than I've been to me

CHORUS

I'm sorry to myself
my apologies begin here before everybody else
I'm sorry to myself
for treating me worse than I would anybody else

for blaming myself for your unhappiness
for my impatience when I was perfect where I was
ignoring all the signs that I was not ready and
expecting myself to be where you wanted me to be

to whom do I owe the first apology?
no one's been crueller than I've been to me

CHORUS

well, I wonder which crime is the biggest?
forgetting you or forgetting myself?
had I heeded the wisdom of the latter
I would've naturally loved the former

for ignoring you, my highest voices
for smiling when my strife was all too obvious
for being so disassociated from my body
and for not letting go when it would've been the kindest thing

to whom do I owe the biggest apology?
no one's been crueller than I've been to me
CHORUS (2x)

Sister Blister

you and me we're cut from the same cloth
it seems to some we famously get along
but you and me are strangers to each other
cuz you and me competitive to the bone

such tragedy to trample on each other with how much we've endured
with the state this land is in

you and me feel joined by only gender
we are not all for one and one for all

sister blister we fight to please the brothers
we think their acceptance is how we win

they're happy we're climbing over each other
to beg the club of boys to let us in

you and me estranged from the mother
you and me have felt impotent in our skin
you and me have taken it out on each other
you and me disloyal to the feminine

such a pity to disavow each other with how far we've come
with how strong we've been

you and me are on this pendulum together
you and me with scarcity still fueling

sister blister we fight to please the brothers
we think their acceptance is how we win
they're happy we're climbing over each other
to beg the club of boys to let us in

we may not have priorities same
we may not even like each other
we may not be hugely anti-men
but such a cost to dishonor a sister

you and me have made it harder for the other
we forget how hard separatism has been
you and me we can help change their minds together
you and me in alignment until the end

sister blister we fight to please the brothers
we think their acceptance is how we win
they're happy we're climbing over each other
to beg the club of boys to let us in

Offer

who? who am I to be blue?
look at my family and fortune
look at my friends and my house

who? who am I to feel dead and who am I to feel
spent?
look at my health and my money

and where? where do I go to feel good?
why do i still look outside me when clearly i see it
won't work?

is it my calling to keep on when i'm unable?
is it my job to be selfless extraordinaire?
and my generosity has me disabled by this
my sense of duty to offer

and why? why do i feel so ungrateful?
me who is far beyond survival
me who's seen life as an oyster

is it my calling to keep on when i'm unable?
is it my job to be selfless extraordinaire?
and my generosity has me disabled by this
my sense of duty to offer

and how? how dare i rest on my laurels?
how dare I ignore an outstretched hand?
how dare I ignore a third world country?

is it my calling to keep on when i'm unable?
is it my job to be selfless extraordinaire?
and my generosity has me disabled by this
my sense of duty to offer

who? who am I to be blue?

Unprodigal Daughter

I had disengaged to avoid being totaled
I would run away and say good riddance soon enough
I had grown disgusted by your small-minded ceiling
To imagining myself bolting had not been difficult

Soon be my life
Soon be my pace
Soon be my choice of which you'll have no part of

CHORUS:

Unprodigal Daughter and I'm heading for the west
Disenchanted daughter and this plane cannot fly fast enough
Unencumbered daughter hit the ground running at last!

I'd invite you but I'm busy being unoppressed

I hit the ground running although I know not what toward
I hit the town reeling forgetting all that came before
I felt primed and ready once surrounded by the palms
I felt culture shocked, but dissuaded, I was not

This is my town
This is my voice
This is my taste of what you've have no part of

CHORUS

One day I'll saddle back and speak foreign adventures
One day I'll double back and tell you about these unfettered years
One day I'll look back and feel something other than relieved
Glad that I left when I did before your dear, you can't got the best of me

When I'd speak of artistry you would roll your eyes skyward
When I'd speak of spirituality you label me absurd
When I spoke of impossibility you would frown and shake your head
If I had stayed much longer I'd have surely imploded

These are my words
This is my house
These are my friends of which you've had no part of

CHORUS(2x)

Simple Together

You've been my golden best friend
And now with post demise at hand
I can't go to you for consolation
Cause we're off limits during this transition
This grief overwhelms me
It burns in my stomach
And I can't stop running into things

I thought we'd be simple together
I thought we'd be happy together
Thought we'd be limitless together
I thought we'd be precious together
But I was sadly mistaken

You've been my soul mate and then some
I remembered you the moment I met you
With you I knew God's face was handsome
With you I saw fun and expansion
This loss is numbing me
It pierces my chest
And I can't stop dropping everything

I thought we'd be sexy together
Thought we'd be evolving together
I thought we'd have children together
I thought we'd be family together
But I was sadly mistaken

If I had a bill for all the philosophies I've shared
If I had a penny for every possibility I presented
If I had a dime for every hand thrown up in the air
My wealth would render this no less severe

I thought we'd be genius together
I thought we'd be healing together
I thought we'd be growing together
Thought we'd adventurous together
But I was sadly mistaken

Thought we'd be exploring
Thought we'd inspired together
I thought we'd be flying together
Thought we'd be on fire together
But I was sadly mistaken

Purgatorying

Entertain me for the tenth hour in a row again
Anesthetize me with your gossip and any random anecdotes and
Fill every hour with activity or ear candy
Drop me off at intersections in any city metropolitan
And keep me in the state
And keep me purgatorying
And sing me back to sleep
This is far more than I had bargained for

Start every week with a break neck urgent design
And end every speed day with my briefcase representing free time
Spending my fruit as my purchases become my lifeline
Please give my love to my family
I'll doubtfully be home at Christmas time
Don't disturb me in this state
Please leave me purgatorying
I'll be damned if I'm to wake
This is far more than I am equipped for

I've held you up like a deity like you're the
sole owner of my wings
This unrequited tunnel vision and I wonder why
I've not been writing
Please keep me in this state
Please keep me purgatorying
Please rock me back to sleep
This love is more than I had bargained for
I'll be damned if I'm to wake
This is far more than I'm equipped for

Hands Clean (acoustic)

Same words with slight variance

APPENDIX B

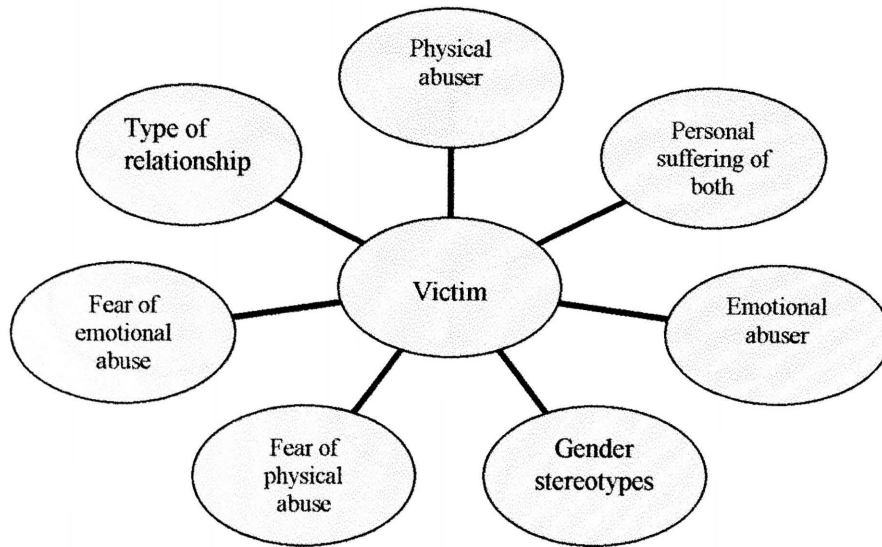


Figure 3 – Dialogic Potential for “Sympathetic Character”

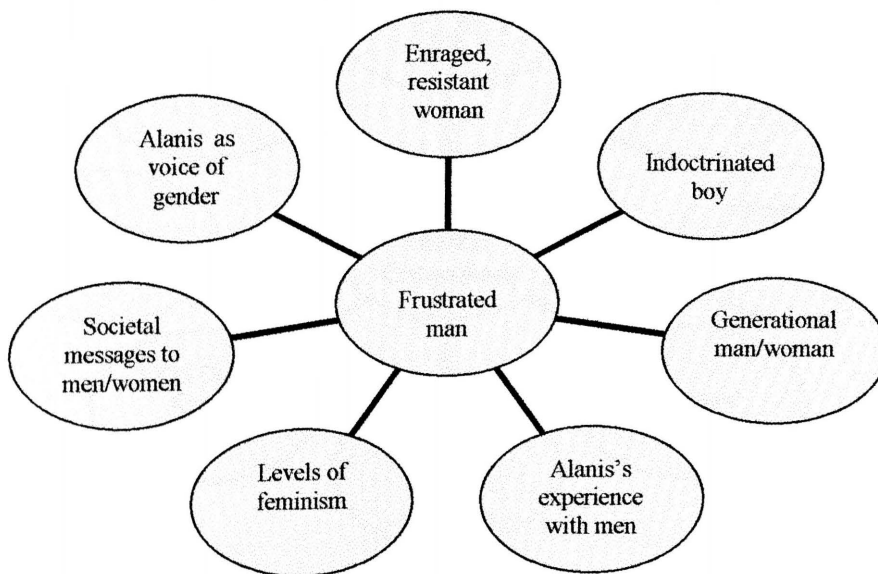


Figure 4 – Dialogic Potential for “A Man”

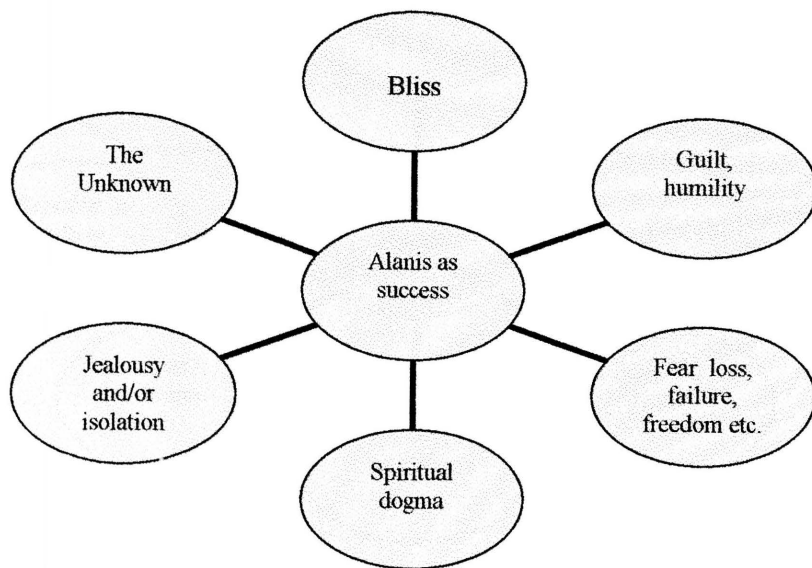


Figure 5 – Dialogic Potential for “Fear of Bliss”

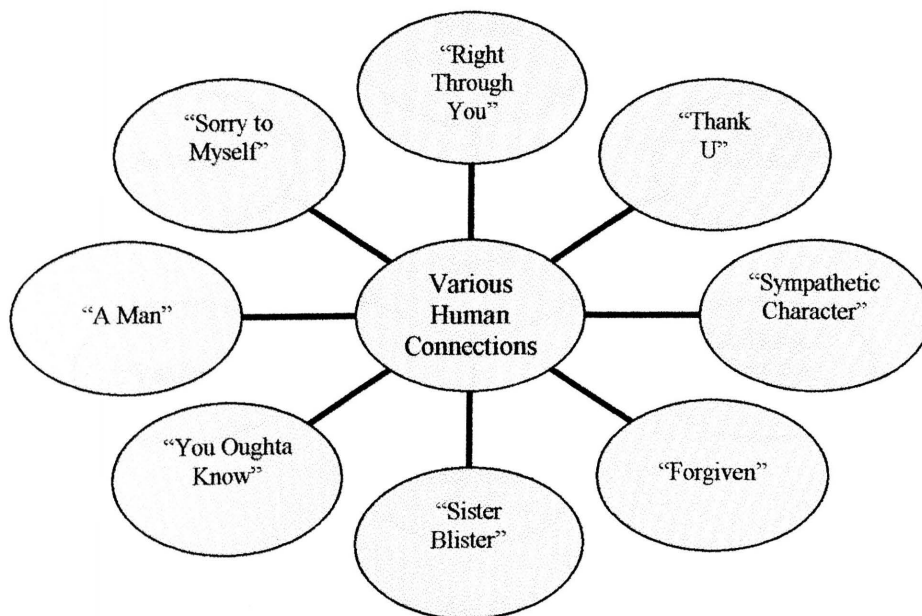


Figure 6 – Dialogic Potential for Thematic Inter-lyric Dialogicity
(See next page for themes)

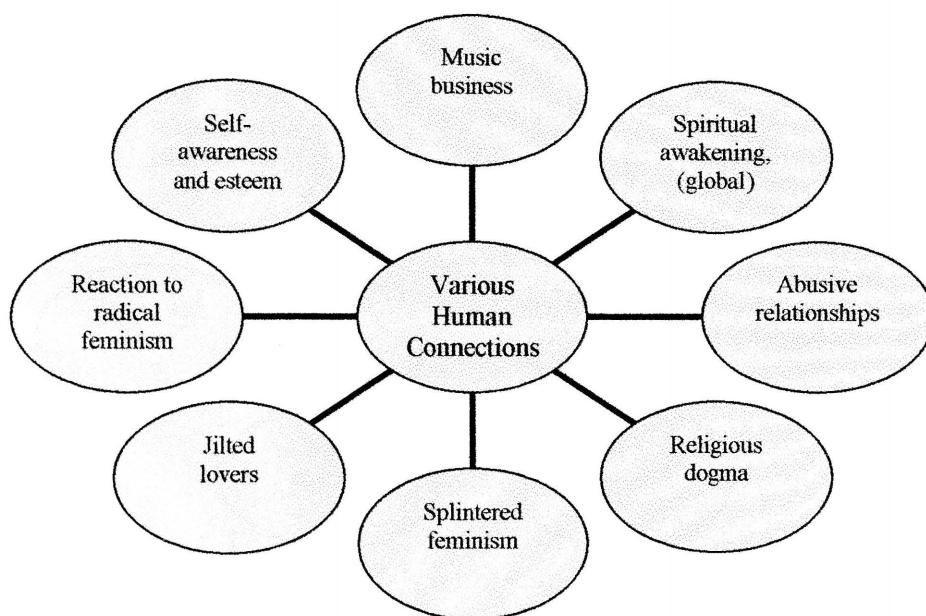


Figure 6a – Themes

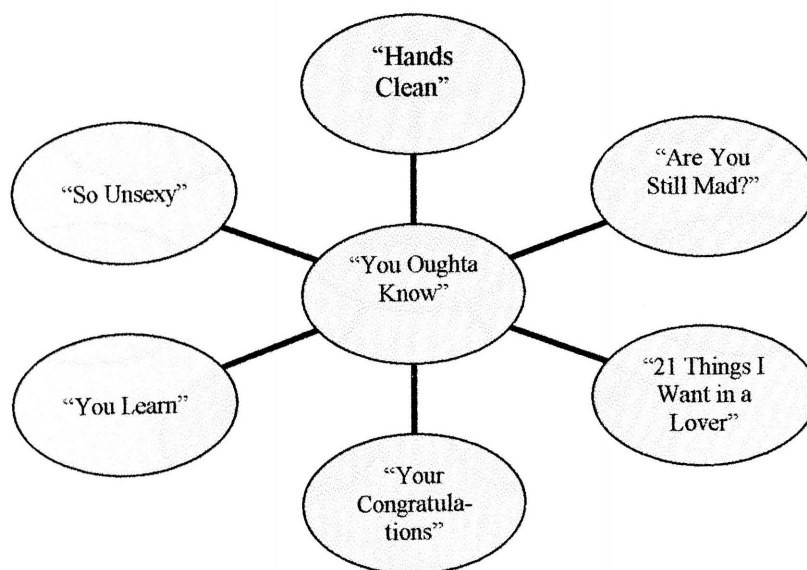


Figure 7 – Dialogic Potential for Content Inter-lyric Dialogicity
 (See lyric discussions in Chapter Four and complete songs in Appendix A)

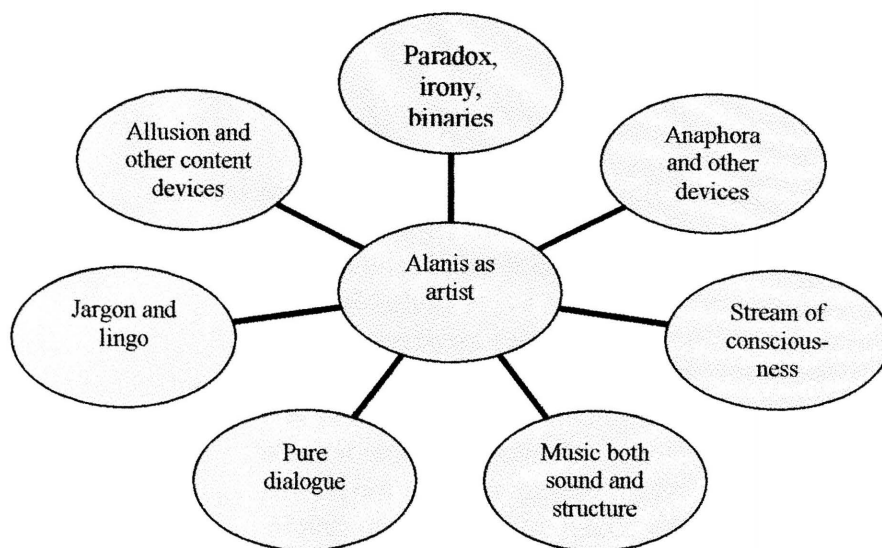


Figure 8 – Structural Dialogic Potential (Appearing in various lyrics)

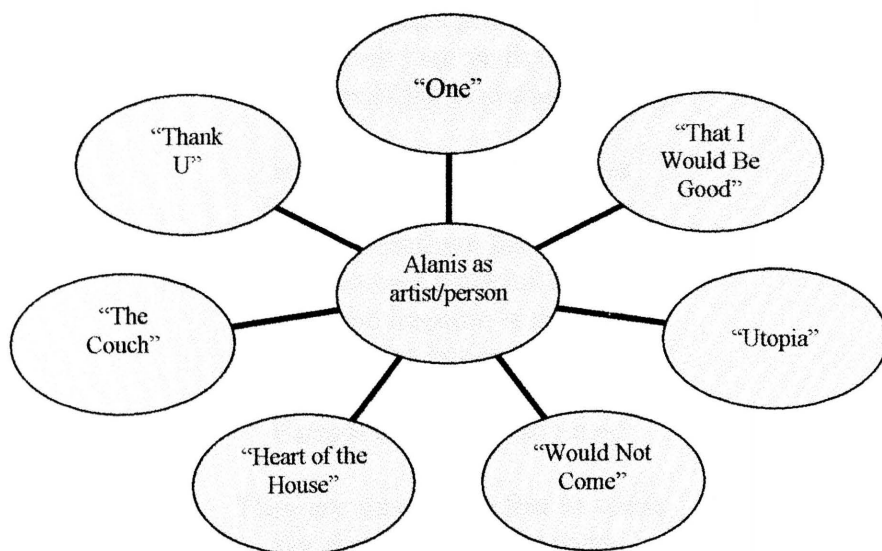


Figure 9 – Dialogic Potential for Extra-lyric Dialogicity
(See lyric discussions in Chapter Four and complete songs in Appendix A)

APPENDIX C

Stanzas on Freedom by James Russell Lowell

Men! whose boast it is that ye
Come of fathers brave and free;
If there breathe on earth a slave,
Are ye truly free and brave?
If ye do not feel the chain,
When it works a brother's pain,
Are ye not base slaves indeed,
Slaves unworthy to be freed?

Women! who shall one day bear
Sons to breathe New England air,
If ye hear, without a blush,
Deeds to make the roused blood rush
Like red lava through your veins,
For your sisters now in chains--
Answer! are ye fit to be
Mothers of the brave and free?

Is true Freedom but to break
Fetters for our own dear sake,
And, with leathern hearts, forget
That we owe mankind a debt?
No! true freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And, with heart and hand, to be
Earnest to make others free!

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink,
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

<http://www.freewebs.com/heritageofliberty/stanzasonfreedom.html>

Song-To the Men of England by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat -nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave another wears;
The arms ye forge another bears.

Sow seed, -but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, -let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, -let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre!

(The Literature Network <http://www.online-literature.com/shelley_percy/673/>)

The Whipping by Robert Hayden

The old woman across the way
is whipping the boy again
and shouting to the neighborhood
her goodness and his wrongs.

Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,
pleads in dusty zinnias,
while she in spite of crippling fat
pursues and corners him.

She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling
boy till the stick breaks
in her hand. His tears are rainy weather
to woundlike memories:

My head gripped in bony vise
of knees, the writhing struggle
to wrench free, the blows, the fear
worse than blows that hateful

Words could bring, the face that I
no longer knew or loved . . .
Well, it is over now, it is over,
and the boy sobs in his room,

And the woman leans muttering against
a tree, exhausted, purged--
avenged in part for lifelong hidings
she has had to bear.

(Selected Poems <<http://www.eiu.edu/~eng1002/authors/hayden2/poems.html>>)