

# "ROSE AND JANET"

## *Alice Munro's Metafiction*

Helen Hoy

"*That Rose you write about? Is that supposed to be you?*"<sup>1</sup>

### I. *The Genesis of Who Do You Think You Are?*

Before Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* appeared in the fall of 1978, her anticipated new collection of stories was announced as *Rose and Janet*.<sup>2</sup> The first reviews, although about a book entitled *Who Do You Think You Are?*, described a collection unlike the one soon available in bookstores, the one we know. In *Books in Canada*, for example, Wayne Grady discussed the mirror stories of twin heroines, "Rose, who grows up in West Hanratty, Ont., the child of a defeated father and a powerless but compassionate stepmother named Flo; and Janet, who is from Dagleish [*sic*], Ont., the child of an equally ineffectual father and a somewhat non-existent mother."<sup>3</sup>

This was what sent me, in early 1979, to the offices of Macmillan and Company where, with Alice Munro's permission, I was able to examine the final draft and the page proofs of the "Rose and Janet" manuscript. (Munro subsequently dismantled the proofs in order to revise some of the discarded stories further for her next collection, *The Moons of Jupiter*, so that the "Rose and Janet" page proofs no longer exist as an intact manuscript in the University of Calgary collection of Munro's papers.) Doug Gibson, Munro's editor, explained Munro's sudden decision to revise the book when she realized that Rose and Janet were the same person, a decision which meant literally stopping the presses one Monday morning in mid-September while Munro, who stayed in Toronto overnight, revised, copy-editors proofread, the press rewrote the flap copy,<sup>4</sup> and the printers ordered more paper. *Who Do You Think You Are?*, as we know it, with ten third-person stories about Rose, was off to press two days later, in time for its November 18 publication deadline. The decision cost Munro \$1,864, about \$550 less than expected.<sup>5</sup> "Even if it

had cost me twice as much I would have done it," Munro said later. "You see, I knew all along the book wasn't right."<sup>6</sup> To Carole Gerson, she explained, "Having two sets of linked stories in one book would just frustrate the reader."<sup>7</sup>

"Rose and Janet" contained six third-person stories about Rose, all retained in the published collection, and six first-person stories about Janet, three of which — "Connection," "The Stone in the Field," and "The Moons of Jupiter" — were deleted and published in *The Moons of Jupiter*.<sup>8</sup> It did not include "Simon's Luck."

"Rose and Janet"

*Who Do You Think You Are?*

Rose

"Royal Beatings"

"Privilege"

"Half a Grapefruit"

"Wild Swans"

"The Beggar Maid"

"Spelling"

Janet

"Connection"

"The Stone in the Field"

"Mischief"

"Providence"

"The Moons of Jupiter"

"Who Do You Think You Are?"

"Royal Beatings"

"Privilege"

"Half a Grapefruit"

"Wild Swans"

"The Beggar Maid"

"Mischief"

"Providence"

"Simon's Luck"

"Spelling"

"Who Do You Think You Are?"

In her most lengthy discussion about the changes, in an interview with Tim Struthers, Munro indicated the existence of an earlier arrangement:

there were some of the Janet stories in which . . . I *had* originally used a Rose heroine. The point is that we couldn't do a book with two-thirds of the stories about one heroine and one-third about another. So I very foolishly decided to do half and half, meaning that I had to change Rose into Janet for half of the book. . . .

And then, suddenly, in September, with the book already in galleys, I saw that I could do two new Rose stories. "Who Do You Think You Are?" and "Simon's Luck" just came like that. And then I had enough for a book of Rose stories. So then we could jettison the stories that obviously weren't about Rose at all. And the stories that I had changed from Rose into Janet could be changed back to Rose — "Mischief" being one of them, "Providence" being another, and probably "The Beggar Maid." I'm not sure.<sup>9</sup>

When Struthers suggested here that "The Beggar Maid" had always been a Rose story, Munro agreed that this was possible.

The correspondence and manuscripts in the Alice Munro Papers at the University of Calgary reveal an even more complicated editorial history for this collection, within the outlines just sketched. The tension between a Rose version of the material and a "Rose and other stories" arrangement, which almost culminated

in two independent Norton and Macmillan publications, manifested itself time and again during the editing process.

Two early manuscripts, one in first-person narration, the other in first- altered to third-person, provide partial collections indicating one early direction for the book. Both are comprised solely of Rose stories, including those which eventually appear, in the same order, as the first seven stories in *Who Do You Think You Are?* In the first-person draft, "Spelling" precedes these stories;<sup>10</sup> more intriguingly, in the third-person draft, the segments of "Spelling" form interludes between each of the stories, creating a secondary narrative concentrated on Flo, connecting and supplementing the central narrative.<sup>11</sup> So, "Privilege," say, on Rose's adaptation to public school, is followed by the episode of the senile woman spelling, in the County Home where Flo is institutionalized; and the collection concludes, after the final story "Providence," with Rose's beguiling visions of solicitous patience, during Flo's decline. In subsequent revisions of the latter draft, after Munro deleted the "Spelling" material and consolidated it into a separate, reorganized typescript,<sup>12</sup> she seems to begin the process of dividing the collection in two by renaming the characters of the last few stories, not, initially, Janet and Richard as suggested in the Struthers interview, but Laura and Patrick in "The Beggar Maid," Frieda and Richard (and daughter Margaret) in "Mischief," and Claire and Dennis in "Providence."<sup>13</sup> The manuscripts are difficult to date, though internal evidence establishes them as prior to other collection manuscripts in the archives. Disconcerting as it is to find such early evidence of a well-advanced Rose collection, when much subsequent arranging took quite different directions, they bear out Munro's contention of a predominance of Rose stories sometime early in the collection's history.

In the first dated discussion of the book's organization, a letter dated 7 October 1977, Munro's agent Virginia Barber suggested two sections, the first composed of five "Flo and Rose stories," including all the Rose stories in "Rose and Janet" except "The Beggar Maid," the second composed of apparently unrelated stories including "The Beggar Maid," "Mischief," and "Providence."<sup>14</sup> Barber even raised the possibility, half-heartedly, of excluding the Flo and Rose stories from this collection, on the grounds that there might be more on these characters later. She did not allude to the status of the three last-mentioned stories as originally or potentially Rose stories.<sup>15</sup> Barber's letter also included the only reference to "Mr. Black," among the miscellaneous stories, possibly an early title for "The Stone in the Field." And it listed the original three-part version of "Simon's Luck," whose first part, entitled "Emily," would not be perceived as potential Rose material and part of the solution to Munro's problem until later.

A phone call from Munro to Ginger Barber, two months later, on 12 December 1977, held out the promise, instead, of a united volume, of ten Rose stories in a collection to be entitled "The Beggar Maid." Perhaps this was when Munro

experimented with the Rose collections just described. The anticipated stories included a Rose version of “Simon’s Luck” — “. . . I’m sure she’s bound to meet Simon — that’s Rose’s luck,” wrote Barber in her response to the phone call — and, tantalizingly, an otherwise unmentioned story “Sisters.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, despite these very early glimmers of the final collection, the first manuscripts received by Macmillan and by Norton, in the late spring of 1978, are closer to the arrangement proposed in Barber’s 7 October letter above. An incomplete consecutively paginated draft of one such version of the collection, expanded at this point by two more stories, can be pieced together in the Munro papers. It is labelled by the Calgary library archivists “Macmillan Mss.”<sup>17</sup> but corresponds also to a Table of Contents with annotations in the handwriting of Sherry Huber, Munro’s Norton editor.<sup>18</sup> (Munro was released from her contract with Norton on 1 December 1978, after Huber’s departure to another firm, and she eventually published in the United States with Knopf under the title *The Beggar Maid*.<sup>19</sup>) On the basis of which stories are noted to be forthcoming and which already have a publication source and date added beside them, the Norton Table of Contents can be tentatively dated April/May 1978.

“Royal Beatings”  
 “Privilege”  
 “Half a Grapefruit”  
 “Characters”  
 “Wild Swans”  
 “Accident”  
 “Simon’s Luck”  
 “Chaddeleys and Flemings”  
 “The Moons of Jupiter”  
 “Spelling”  
 “Mischief”  
 “Providence”  
 “The Beggar Maid”

The first five stories, including the uncollected “Characters” (*Ploughshares*, Summer 1978) focusing on Flo’s prickly relationship with Rose’s tiresome high-school teacher Mr. Cleaver, are Flo and Rose stories in the third person (with handwritten changes into first person). Five of the stories — if we count as two stories “Chaddeleys and Flemings,” later divided into the linked stories “Connection” and “The Stone in the Field” — did not ultimately appear in the collection, four being eventually published in *The Moons of Jupiter*. While the impetus for a single-heroine collection was present, these four, plus “Simon’s Luck” with its three separate protagonists, resisted incorporation into an homogenous collection.

At about this time, on 28 April 1978, Doug Gibson of Macmillan wrote welcoming Munro to Macmillan’s, proposing the title “True Lies” for the collection (“The Beggar Maid” struck him as too “Hans Christian Anderson-ish” [*sic*]) and suggest-

ing the division of “Chaddeleys and Flemings” in two, the omission of “Characters” on the grounds that it duplicated material on Mr. Cleaver in other stories, and the placing of the “Rose” stories last in the volume to avoid disappointing the reader. He also argued against “anonymizing” some of the Rose stories: “The heroine of *The Beggar Maid*, for example, is clearly Rose; I suggest that you should think twice before plucking too many Roses.”<sup>20</sup> At this stage, then, only the first stories in the collection were confirmed as Rose stories. Although the last four stories in the “Macmillan Mss.” described here employ Rose as heroine (in third-person narration, revised to first, as in the first stories),<sup>21</sup> Gibson’s letter suggests that the publishers first worked with the possibility of Frieda, Claire, and Laura versions and that the substitution of Rose, seen in this manuscript, the rounding off of the collection with a return to the protagonist of the opening stories, took place slightly later.<sup>22</sup> The problem of too few or too many “Roses” was making itself felt.

Within weeks, Munro was formulating the “Rose and Janet” solution, and her correspondence with Sherry Huber at Norton captures her thinking as it evolved. Indeed, we have two separate letters from Munro to Huber written 19 May 1978, with her ideas changing within and between letters.

Oddly enough, Munro seems to have come close to the final version of *Who Do You Think You Are?* here, and to be arguing against it. All the pieces of her final arrangement were present, including a Rose version of “Simon’s Luck” and — eventually — the newly composed “Who Do You Think You Are?” but the fit was not right. Having tried all the stories in the first person, Munro found that “The idea of connections did not work. It would make the book seem like a failed, fallen-apart novel.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, she identified a group of Rose stories as flowing together naturally and being obviously about one person. “Then — something happens,” she argued, “the character in *Mischief* and *Providence* is not Rose. What’s wrong, too, is that these later stories are repetitive of certain tones of *Beggar Maid* & the latter part of the book, including the revision of *Simon’s Luck*, just would trail off making the same pale points leaving a sense of dissatisfaction. Also, *Simon* works far better in its original three-part form.”<sup>24</sup>

The arrangement Munro suggested, then, one already worked out with Macmillan, involved a tripartite structure, with the Rose and Janet sections separated by “Accident.” The latter story, “which Doug Gibson likes a lot,” was clearly unsuited for assimilation into either narrative because of its focus on a turn of fate altering the entire direction of the protagonist’s life. “Simon’s Luck” was omitted. “The Beggar Maid” was now — and in all subsequent arrangements — perceived as a Rose story, making the position of “Spelling” “a bit of a problem.” Munro shifted it from before to after “The Beggar Maid” between her two letters. And “Who Do You Think You Are?,” “a story I’m just finishing,” was not yet seen as the capstone to the volume, being placed early in the Janet section. Here is Munro’s arrangement in her second letter:

*Rose*

Royal Beatings	}	3rd person
Privilege		
Grapefruit		
Characters(?)		
Swans		
Beggar Maid		
Spelling		

Accident

*Janet*

1st person	}	Chaddeleys & Flemings
		Who do you think you are?
		Mischief
		Providence
		Moons of Jupiter <sup>25</sup>

The extent of Munro's uncertainty can be seen in her treatment of "Simon's Luck" and of the general question of narrative perspective. After finding the revisions of "Simon's Luck" unsatisfactory and excluding it from the collection in her first letter, Munro added a postscript: "I think I'll send you 'Simon' rewritten in one woman's story form. I meant it to be Rose; I think it could be Janet if the acting was changed to writing. You might want that instead of *Accident*?"<sup>26</sup> The second letter was sent to accompany a new draft of the story:

I also sent along [with the first letter] the version of *Simon's Luck* that I had put into 1st person, suggesting that with some fixing it might be a Janet story.

No sooner had I sent it than I thought no, its a Rose story, and I went through & did it all in 3rd with Rose and I happen to think it works that way. It could go after Beggar Maid & Spelling or — flash! — instead of Accident. Thats if we need more adult stories & I think we do.<sup>27</sup>

As we have seen, neither first-person nor third-person version, neither Janet nor Rose version of "Simon's Luck" eventually made its way into "Rose and Janet."

The original three-part version of "Simon's Luck," which Munro initially found superior to her single-heroine draft and from which she would finally sculpt the story in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, juxtaposes, in incremental sequence, stories of three women's pain over Simon.<sup>28</sup> Part One, "Emily," is Rose's story much as we have it in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, except that, in the earlier version, Emily experiences, rather than merely anticipating, Simon's apparent abandonment. The section ends with Emily's flight to the west coast and sturdy resilience. (This is the

only part of “Simon’s Luck” to be published in story form, appearing in *Viva* in August 1978.) Part Two, “Sheila,” narrates a camping trip of Sheila and Simon’s and their encounter with some neighbouring children, focusing on Sheila’s absolute and disquieting susceptibility to Simon’s alternating moods of distaste and benevolence, her memory of a frantic purchase of make-up in response to a casual remark of his, her ill-conceived hiding of his wallet in a playful gesture which threatens to re-awaken his hostility. Uncertainty is the prevailing mood: Simon could “delight, as if there were no other people in the world and no other place for him, then just drop everything and go away and never come back.”<sup>29</sup> The closing lines of the section dwell on Sheila’s inability to risk the truth about the wallet and her determination that Simon suffer at least some “scratch, a bit of a jag in the memory” about this day, if only his mistaken suspicion of “those children holding out on him, having designs of their own.”<sup>30</sup> Part Three, “Angela,” tells of a visit to Simon’s rich, sophisticated friends the Callenders, in which Angela, a young bookstore clerk and former student of Simon’s, is baited by Caroline Callender. In the conclusion, she flees to a train (and Winnipeg, rather than her original destination of Parry Sound) taking Caroline’s wallet and Simon’s car keys, after discovering that Simon is in bed with Caroline.

The last pages of the three-part version juxtapose postscripts to each of the three stories.<sup>31</sup> Emily, meeting a former acquaintance while being filmed on a B.C. ferry, faces the disconcerting news, not of Simon’s death, as in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, but of his heartbroken response to her departure. Sheila, training to be a speech therapist in Montreal, attempts to exorcise Simon by telling her women’s group the story of the make-up, though not of the wallet. And Angela, running into Keith Callender in Ottawa, hears of Simon’s alarmingly eccentric behaviour in London, evidence of a breakdown or perhaps simply of one of his adventures. The final lines of the entire story are non-committal: “She did not doubt that Simon would put on socks, and give up eating hard-boiled eggs, and come back, and tell stories. Or one time, he wouldn’t.”<sup>32</sup> The cumulative effect of three stories of Simon’s loves is to reinforce a sense of female vulnerability and of Simon’s insouciance — or worse. (Emily’s desperate phone call to Simon’s Classics department, intercepted by Sheila, the department secretary, who presumes the unknown woman to be “the wife of his friend in Ottawa, with whom he had been having a long-term, sporadic, indolent, affair” — Caroline Callender, in other words — reveals the three stories to be concurrent and so underlines the disparity between Simon’s and his lovers’ need for one another.<sup>33</sup>) This is quite different from the final use to which Munro puts the story in *Who Do You Think You Are?* There, the focus is more on Rose’s own ambivalence, her flight from love’s transformation, which “removes the world for you, and just as surely when it’s going well as when it’s going badly,” and her responsibility for a problematic decision.<sup>34</sup>

The manuscripts include a draft of “Simon’s Luck” amalgamating Emily, Sheila,

and Angela into a single, first-person heroine (with handwritten changes into third-person narration featuring Rose as protagonist and with references to Flo and Anna), presumably the draft Munro discusses with Huber.<sup>35</sup> Of necessity, it deletes the flight — and indeed everything after Rose’s delighted anticipation of the change Simon brings — from “Emily.” Perhaps to counteract the imbalance in sympathy created by having Rose endure both Sheila’s anxious pain and Angela’s betrayal, Munro makes her final decampment more equivocal:

I left Simon because he slept with his friend Caroline . . .

I left Simon because leaving is easier, and I like leaving.<sup>36</sup>

Rose receives Emily and Angela’s communiques, about Simon’s broken heart and his bizarre behaviour, and is left puzzling over which ending to anticipate, Simon’s return home to tell stories or Simon’s deterioration in the park: “. . . she had never got the pieces of Simon to fall together to give her a revelation, plain as a buzzard or a flower. If that had happened, Simon would be coming home . . .” — and here the last paragraph launches into an extended, lyrical, and wry finale, swelling into “. . . declaring that from now on everything would be wine and oysters, warm beds, styrofoam insulation, apple-wood[,] sheep manure; and deep spring nights with the frogs singing.”<sup>37</sup>

Munro’s indecisiveness about this version and her final decision to omit it from “Rose and Janet” are understandable. The juxtaposition of parallel entanglements was the source of the originality of the initial story. Some of the ironies and reverberations thus created are lost here, along with that rueful awareness of the larger picture provided by the reader’s privileged access to all three lives. On the other hand, the succession of betrayals in the three-part version might have invited too pat a reading of Simon as villain. Emily’s, Sheila’s, and Angela’s stories do provide Rose’s story with its own (perhaps too predictable) structure: the ecstatic beginnings, muddled middle, and impetuous ending of a single love affair. The painful ironies created by the repeated, abrupt transitions between hope and humiliation, ending with yet another devious manifestation of hope, provide a different but still striking illumination of love’s imperiousness. And Munro is beginning, in this draft, to explore the appeal of flight, “an addiction like love itself, but with love you feel you’re on top of something, borne up, floating and sipping, and with this other you feel you’re right down on the hard rock, everything clea[n?] and sane and silent; what a relief,” in a passage anticipating Rose’s grateful, convalescent contemplation of ice-cream dishes in *Who Do You Think You Are?*<sup>38</sup> Despite revisions regarding Rose’s need to escape love and the concentration on just one woman, however, the single-heroine version does not yet achieve that focus on her inner life (rather than on the mystery of Simon) which gives the story in *Who Do You Think You Are?* its power — and also makes it suitable for inclusion in a story sequence devoted to a single heroine.



Even after the publication of “Simon’s Luck” in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, omitting the Sheila and Angela material, Munro continued to redraft the story for the American edition, although the final Knopf version remained very close to the Macmillan version.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, she introduced parts of “Angela” into “Hard-Luck Stories” in *The Moons of Jupiter*, in the narrator’s account of her visit with her lover to Keith and Caroline’s. And in a 1982 interview with Geoff Hancock, she expressed a lingering interest in redoing “Simon’s Luck,” because it belonged to a vein of open-ended stories she was still working.<sup>40</sup>

At the time of her 19 May 1978 letter to Sherry Huber, as Munro moved towards a “Rose and Janet” arrangement of her stories, narrative perspective also remained a vexed question. “Now, the problem of first or third person,” she wrote. “The Janet stories have to be in first person. (I no sooner wrote that than I thought why? — maybe they could be done third.) And if the Janet stories are in first person, then the Rose stories can’t be, because the voices are too similar, so we’ll probably have to go for a third/first, with nagging possibilities of a third/third *or* a first/third.”<sup>41</sup> Huber circled “first/third,” as apparently her choice, but Munro’s initial suggestion prevailed for Macmillan’s “Rose and Janet.” And the third-person/first-person perspective chosen does seem the best choice, promoting the verisimilitude of the portrait of a writer, Janet, speaking at some remove from her fictional creation, Rose, and more personally about her own life.

Between May and August of 1978, Munro decided on the final shape of the Macmillan “Rose and Janet,” with the deletion of “Characters” and division of “Chaddeleys and Flemings,” as Doug Gibson had proposed, but also the deletion of the obtrusive “Accident” and the shifting of “Who Do You Think You Are?” to final position in the volume. The result was the brief-lived, two-part *Who Do You Think You Are?*, for which page proofs appeared 11 August<sup>42</sup> and advance reviews in October.

Norton was moving in another direction, making earnest attempts to turn the same material into a novel. As early as 20 June 1978, when the Norton and Macmillan contracts were signed, the editors were assuming the publication of two quite different collections, with Sherry Huber resolute about excluding material extraneous to Rose’s story.<sup>43</sup> Her letter of 12 September proposed a table of contents corresponding to a consecutively paginated typescript in the Alice Munro Papers:

#### THE BEGGAR MAID by Alice Munro

##### {Chapters}

- One: Royal Beatings
- Two: Privilege
- Three: Half a Grapefruit
- Four: Characters
- Five: Nerve

Six: The Beggar Maid  
 Seven: Mischief  
 Eight: Providence  
 Nine: True Enemies  
 Ten: Simon's Luck  
 Eleven: Spelling<sup>44</sup>

Although this may look rather different from the eventual *Who Do You Think You Are?*, it is not, in fact, apart from the inclusion of "Characters" and the omission of "Who Do You Think You Are?," written four months previously. "Nerve" is simply Huber's preferred title for "Wild Swans"; she liked the progression from privilege to nerve to providence and luck in Rose's perception of life. "True Enemies" is the last, three-page section of "The Beggar Maid," depicting the aftermath of Rose's decision to renew her engagement to Patrick. It was moved after "Providence" in the interests of chronology. The tidying up of chronology is consistent with other changes Huber recommended in her letter and in the typescripts, such as the deletion of the last sections of "Privilege" and "Half a Grapefruit," describing changes to the school after the war and Rose's return to a school reunion as an adult.<sup>45</sup> Uncomfortable with narrative gaps and discontinuities, Huber also suggested conventional transitions. Between Rose's first glimpses of Simon at a party and their later conversation in bed, in "Simon's Luck," for example, she inserted the blue-pencilled addition, "That night Simon told me that . . ."<sup>46</sup> As this quotation suggests, the entire novel is in first person.

Norton's never-published novel "The Beggar Maid" — its conventional structure deservedly abandoned — was the catalyst for Munro's sudden decision to stop the presses at Macmillan. Here, for the first time, we have the final version of "Simon's Luck" (giving Emily's story to Rose) and the omission of "Connection," "The Stone in the Field," and "The Moons of Jupiter," usually assumed to be part of the collection. We also have "Providence" and "Mischief" as Rose stories. Yet, despite these resemblances to Macmillan's final, published *Who Do You Think You Are?*, plans for Norton's novel, focusing on a single character, Rose, actually preceded the printing of "Rose and Janet."<sup>47</sup> Munro has indicated that the more urgent publication deadline was Macmillan's.<sup>48</sup> (At the same time, Doug Gibson has stressed that Macmillan — unlike Norton, apparently — was scrupulous not to pressure her to produce that more marketable commodity, a novel.) Having created the "Rose and Janet" arrangement to meet the exigencies of deadlines, Munro was propelled towards her dramatic revision of the collection by her more leisurely mulling over of the single-heroine version she was working on for Norton.

The 18 August version of "Simon's Luck,"<sup>49</sup> using only Emily material, was pivotal. "After you said you liked *Simon's Luck*," Munro wrote Sherry Huber on 19 September, from Macmillan's office where she was scrambling at the eleventh hour to revise the Macmillan proofs, "I got more and more convinced that the

series of Rose stories was the only way to do this book & that the Macmillan book was a dreadful awkward waste of good material and I *couldn't* let them do it. (I couldn't have reached this decision any earlier because I didn't have *Simon's Luck*). Upshot of this was I came down here and put my case."<sup>50</sup> Although Munro had used Rose as narrator in the Norton draft, third-person perspective was constrained, in the Macmillan revision, by the need to conserve the opening stories as already typeset. "Who Do You Think You Are?" was not originally part of Munro's proposal to Macmillan — the revised collection was to end simply with "Spelling" — but, since the book's dust jacket was already designed and in production, she agreed to rewrite the title story as a Rose story, working overnight, and was pleased with the result.

The evolution of *Who Do You Think You Are?* had been tortuous. From Barber's proposal for a Flo-and-Rose sequence followed by miscellaneous stories, from the "Macmillan Mss." of miscellaneous stories framed by Rose stories, and from the Rose/"Accident"/Janet arrangement, all culminating in the Macmillan "Rose and Janet" page proofs, from an early plan for ten Rose stories and from a partial, interleaved Rose-and-Flo manuscript, culminating in Norton's novel-in-progress "The Beggar Maid," Munro had finally created the arrangement she felt to be artistically right. It was chance — the unexpected opportunity to get back to work on "Simon's Luck" earlier in August than anticipated<sup>51</sup> — which had allowed her to forestall at the last moment the publication of two substantially different books, one of which she ultimately judged to be misconceived. Understandably, she resolved, "Never again will I write two versions of anything."<sup>52</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from the extremely complicated publishing history, involving one agent and three editors and publishing companies, which produced *Who Do You Think You Are?* (The Macmillan edition can be accepted as definitive, since the 1979 Knopf edition, *The Beggar Maid*, despite considerable attempted revision of "Simon's Luck," contains mainly editorial changes, some of them, like the title itself, concessions to an American audience.<sup>53</sup>) Clearly, the collecting of short stories which even hint at connections one with another can entail extensive creative effort by the author, long after the stories themselves have been completed. In some cases, a story artistically successful in its own right, such as the three-part version of "Simon's Luck" here, must be dramatically altered in order to fill its new function within the collection. Even where no revision is necessary, the sequencing of the stories and their consequent interrelationships necessitate difficult artistic decisions. Chronology may provide some assistance, as with the first four Rose stories which maintain the same order over more than a year of editorial rearranging. But multiple time-frames and dislocation of chronology are familiar narrative strategies in Munro's fiction: of the four stories just mentioned, only "Wild Swans" does not end with a flashforward. The overlapping and intersecting time frames make decisions less inevitable, as with the alternating order of "The

Beggar Maid” and “Spelling,” portraying Rose’s courtship (but with a jump forward to an episode after her divorce) and her visits home to Flo, respectively. Over the course of the editing process, at least four stories — “The Beggar Maid,” “The Moons of Jupiter,” “Who Do You Think You Are?” and “Spelling” — were seen as possible conclusions for the volume, each with quite different final effects. And fortuitous factors extraneous to the individual, completed stories — the need for variety in narrative point of view; the presence, early on in the collection’s planning, of a handful of stories about the same heroine; the inclinations of editors — may influence the direction of artistic revision and experimentation.

Most intriguingly, the manuscripts cast a different light on the author’s subjective experience of an abrupt and thoroughgoing flash of insight, the bathwater-displacing Eureka moment of revelation. “And then, suddenly,” she says, “in September, with the book already in galleys, I saw that I could do two new Rose stories.” With hindsight, we can see Munro edging close to this solution as much as four months earlier. One of the two stories, “Simon’s Luck,” written for well over a year,<sup>54</sup> had been proposed as a Rose story in December of 1977 and rewritten as such, though with all three parts, by May. In its final truncated version, it appeared as part of the Norton novel in mid-August, and here all that was missing was “Who Do You Think You Are?” And that story, the other “new” Rose story, had been written since May, though days too late, apparently, to be part of Munro’s experiment then with a first-person, single-heroine collection. In December, in the following May, and in late summer, then, we see Munro attempt the hurdle several times, each time acquiring new resources. As with the overabundance of evidence which Thomas Kuhn argues must precede a paradigm shift in the sciences, the moment of insight here is overdetermined. Hence, no doubt, the conviction, sense of inevitability, and facility of the final creative leap.

## II. “Turning Dalglish into Hanratty”

I felt very odd about being identified as a writer in the midst of what was, so to speak, my material. I was conscious of having done things that were high-handed and thoughtless, turning Dalglish into Hanratty, easing out certain complications and commonplaces, though I had not meant to do anything of the kind. It seemed to me very strange and somehow unfair that people in Dalglish should have read things I had written; it was confusing, as if they had escaped from Hanratty and turned around and read about themselves; I was embarrassed.<sup>55</sup>

So reads an early draft of “Who Do You Think You Are?,” the first draft to link the Rose and Janet short stories. The device, of making one character the fictional creator of the other, is not new; Audrey Thomas, Munro’s friend, uses it in *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* (1971), to cite only one, Canadian example. But it gives “Rose and Janet” an organic structure and a richness of implication not

suggested by Munro's repudiation of the arrangement. Indeed, "Rose and Janet" has an artistic coherence which compels and repays examination of the collection as a finished work in its own right.<sup>56</sup>

Janet, whose significance as author of the Rose short stories emerges unexpectedly in the last pages of "Rose and Janet," transforming all that has gone before, shares features with her fictional creation. As a child, Janet lives at the end of the road in Dalglish; Rose, over the bridge in West Hanratty. In the first Janet story, we learn of the worsening arthritis, and ultimate early death, of her mother, just as, in the first pages of the Rose section, we learn of Rose's father's early death, and, thereafter, of his lung problems, his cancer. Janet marries Richard, a company lawyer for B.C. Electric, who deplores her Huron County background and snubs her Cousin Iris, while Rose marries Patrick Blatchford, heir to a British Columbia department-store chain, who is equally appalled by his visit to Dalglish. Both heroines divorce, and leave British Columbia for Ontario, Janet for a place in the country, Rose for Toronto. And both achieve some national prominence as a writer and an actress respectively, eking out a living and a career meantime, Janet writing for newspapers and television, Rose touring with a small company and acting as a television interviewer. Despite a sister Peggy (married, with three little Sams), as an adult Janet faces alone her father's final hospitalization with a deteriorating heart, just as Rose, despite a half-brother Brian (married, with four daughters), bears the responsibility for finding a nursing home for her senile stepmother, Flo.

The two sections differ, however, not only in perspective — the immediacy of Janet's first-person voice, the distancing of Rose's third-person — but also in their emphasis and atmosphere. Janet we see as an adult, despite considerable attention to her childhood memories of her mother's cousins and father's sisters in the first two stories.<sup>57</sup> Although all stories in the collection are in past tense and all advert to subsequent revelations, the preponderance of childhood and youthful experiences in Rose's section gives shifts to later periods the effect of flashforwards, compared with the flashbacks of the Janet section. (Only the second Janet story, "The Stone in the Field," has a similar weighting towards early life.) Apart from brief glimpses of future developments — Hat Nettleton interviewed at 102, changes to the public school during the war, the high school reunion, Patrick's hate years after the divorce — only "Spelling," on Flo's deterioration in old age, explores the mature Rose. Perhaps as a result, only one, passing reference is made to Rose's having any children, whereas we observe Janet's concerns about her daughters Nichola and Judith even into their own adulthood.<sup>58</sup> Janet's sexuality is a mature one — the attempted adultery of "Mischief," the thwarted rendezvous of "Providence"; Rose's a developing one — the abusive sexuality of the schoolyard and neighbourhood, the schoolgirl crush of "Half a Grapefruit," the wandering fingers encountered on her first independent train trip, Patrick's bewildering courtship.

The structure of the book, as with Munro's other story sequences, is discontinu-

ous, composed of connected fragments, with leaps ahead and backtracking and provocative gaps within and between stories; but there is something else here. Each of the two sections is circular, and yet somehow incomplete. The opening of Rose's section, "Royal Beatings," jumps to Flo's final state, mute and defiant in her crib at the Wawanash County Home, and so anticipates and completes the final Rose story, "Spelling," just as the second Janet story, "The Stone in the Field," gives glimpses of her father's hospitalization and death, the subject of the penultimate "Moons of Jupiter." (The final story, "Who Do You Think You Are?," though something of an epilogue, also returns us, through Milton Homer, to the gratified childhood vantage point of the first Janet stories.) Nevertheless, the telling silences about Rose's life before and after divorce leave something wanting. As a narrative, Janet's section is even more scanty and scatty: vignettes of Janet's mother's high-spirited cousins and of a marital quarrel, of Janet's retiring paternal aunts, of an extra-marital affair and its belated consummation, of an attempted romance as a single parent, of final visits with her father, of a childhood eccentric and his mimic. Chronology is less consistent, principles of selection less evident. Taken together, however, the two sections interlock, making one complete narrative, some in the original key, some modulated into fiction. Suddenly, connections — to use a recurring Munro word here — are everywhere. Janet's section, in particular, gains a new coherence as the foundation for, adjunct to, extension of the Rose stories. Janet's rich family history, for instance, counterbalances Rose's deficiency there; her drama of adult life picks up where Rose's account leaves off. (The complementary nature of vignettes and lacunae, tenon and mortise, is, of course, underlined by the readiness with which much of the material dovetails into a single narrative in *Who Do You Think You Are?*)

"Rose and Janet" is a more writerly collection than *Who Do You Think You Are?*, requiring more engagement in deciphering the silences. Much of what happens takes place between the stories — both in the gap between and in the interaction between one story and another. Particularly suggestive is the relationship between the two sections, the tacit transmutation of Janet's experiences into Rose's, of Dalgleish into Hanratty. "Who do you think you are?," the challenge of public-school teacher Hattie Milton to Janet's intellectual complacency, becomes Flo's infuriated attack on Rose's supercilious insubordination. Janet's father's ambivalence about her success — "Fame must be striven for, then apologized for"<sup>59</sup> — is transformed and developed, over several pages in "Half a Grapefruit," into Rose's father's perverse humility, gratified and appalled by her gaudy ambitions. Janet's nervousness about Richard's unfriendly superiority towards her father in "Who Do You Think You Are?" becomes Rose's strangled shame at the collision of Patrick and Flo. The County Home to which Janet learns Milton Homer has been consigned turns into the Wawanash County Home in which Rose must deposit Flo. The violence of Janet's marriage — razor-blade scars, night-time tearing up of

handfuls of grass — becomes the violence of Rose's — the beating of her head against the bedpost, the smashing of a gravy boat through a dining-room window.

In the epilogue to *Lives of Girls & Women*, Munro describes ironically Del Jordan's plans to turn Jubilee into "black fable": "It became an older, darker, more decaying town . . . People in it were very thin, like Caroline, or fat as bubbles. . . . their platitudes crackled with madness. The season was always the height of summer — white, brutal heat, dogs lying as if dead on the side-walks . . ." <sup>60</sup> In less ironic and exaggerated fashion, Rose's story is a darker, more fantastic version of Janet's. (And, like Del's gothic novel, it raises questions about the process of fictionalizing, about "the whole mysterious and as it turned out unreliable structure rising from . . . a few poor facts, and everything that was not told." <sup>61</sup>)

Although Janet's father works in a factory and her mother's antique dealing is unsuccessful, their world is almost genteel beside the poverty, bad taste, ignorance, meanness of Rose's working-class environs. Public school for Janet means Miss Hattie Milton, memory work, lantern slide shows; for Rose, it means the teacher barricaded in the school during recess, "lunchpail robbing or coat-slashing or pulling down pants," <sup>62</sup> Shortie McGill fucking Franny McGill in the entryway of the Boys' Toilet. The eccentrics of Dalglish — Janet's pathologically shy aunts; queer Poppy Cullender with his lisp, stammer, and rolling eyes; leering, bullying, clownish Milton Homer — are tame beside the grotesques of Hanratty — dwarfish Becky Tyde, with her big head and twisted neck, rumoured victim of child beating and incest, her father horse-whipped to death; squinting, sluttish Ruby Carruthers, duped into accepting a second sexual partner under the veranda; snuffling, drooling, battered Franny McGill, sexually abused from an early age and repeatedly impregnated. Even Flo, wiry, caustic, irrepressible, has an intensity absent in the low-key Janet section. We see Janet, as a child, enjoy family visits; Rose, stagy family beatings. Familial differences express themselves in Janet's father's belated and understated reproof regarding her divorce — "I never said anything when you left Richard. . . . But that doesn't mean I was pleased" <sup>63</sup>; in Flo's unrestrained outrage, invoking shame and Rose's dead father, over Rose's television appearance as a bare-breasted Trojan woman. Janet's father adopts a scoffing tone to excuse his quoting of poetry; the same enjoyment and self-consciousness appear in heightened form in Rose's father's private vice, the bizarre fragments of Shakespeare and strings of nonsense words — "Macaroni, pepperoni, Botticelli, beans—" <sup>64</sup> — issuing from his hideaway in the back shed. Janet and Richard amicably negotiate the custody of their children; Patrick, by contrast, defies the conventions of civilized behaviour, making a public face at Rose nine years after their divorce, "a truly hateful, savagely warning, face; infantile, self-indulgent, yet calculated . . . a timed explosion of disgust and loathing." <sup>65</sup>

A postscript to "Privilege," describing the difference between West Hanratty during the war years and before, could equally define the difference in spirit be-

tween the Janet and Rose sections: "it was as if an entirely different lighting had been used, or as if it was all on film and the film had been printed in a different way, so that on the one hand things looked clean-edged and decent and limited and ordinary, and on the other, dark, grainy, jumbled, and disturbing."<sup>66</sup> (These are relative differences, only. As inevitably in Munro, Janet's world contains its own dark corners of estrangement, marital tension, sexual mischief, and unanchored misery.) In the later *Who Do You Think You Are?*, not only does Rose's story lack the heightening created by juxtaposition with the more subdued Janet stories, but the incorporation of some of these stories into Rose's narrative tones down its overall effect. As with Munro's paradoxical vision elsewhere, the decent and disturbing become part of a single life. Patrick, for example, is both reasonable and savage; he both negotiates custody *and* makes a hateful face. In "Rose and Janet," on the other hand, the daylight of Janet's section and the shadows of Rose's oppose and highlight each other.

"A thought I've had — what do you think of using *Who Do You Think You Are?* for a title, rather than *Rose & Janet*. In which case this story, which is slight but important, could come at the very end. What do you think of its revelation that Janet has written the Rose stories? If we used that, the mirror & slight edge of reflected as well as real woman in Pratt's picture would be good," wrote Munro to Doug Gibson, referring presumably to the Christopher Pratt painting "Young Woman with a Slip" used eventually, instead, as a dust jacket for *The Moons of Jupiter*.<sup>67</sup> The recognition of the connection between the Janet and Rose sections, the clean-edged and the grainy stories, as that of face and mirror image, positive and negative of the same photograph, came well into the arranging of "Rose and Janet." In this, "Who Do You Think You Are?" resembles the epilogue to *Lives of Girls & Women*, which was added when that book was in galleys and which metamorphoses the earlier details of Del Jordan's development. In Munro's words, "Up until now [*Lives of Girls & Women*] was not the story of the artist as a young girl. It was just the story of a young girl. And this introduced a whole new element, which I felt hadn't been sufficiently prepared for. And yet, I found eventually that the book didn't mean anything to me without it."<sup>68</sup> Just as the epilogue transforms *Lives of Girls & Women* into a *künstlerroman*, foregrounding what was previously inconsequential, so "Who Do You Think You Are?" belatedly transforms the parallel stories of Rose and Janet into metafiction.

As Munro readers know, the question of authorship has long preoccupied her, inspiring profound uneasiness. "I sometimes feel just *tormented* by the inadequacy and impossibility," she has said.<sup>69</sup> The stories which she considers most successful in *Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You* — "The Ottawa Valley," "Material," and "Winter Wind" — all investigate the task of the writer.<sup>70</sup> The scruples of the narrator of "Winter Wind," about tricking out and altering the lives of the people around her to suit her own purposes, about actually knowing what she claims



to know, like the impotence of the narrator of "The Ottawa Valley," for all her literary skill, to capture and so exorcize her mother in fiction, reappear in more disquieted form in "Who Do You Think You Are?" The uncollected short story "Home," published four years earlier, perhaps comes closest to "Rose and Janet," laying side by side a fiction and its author's reflections on the artificiality and inadequacy of her attempt to do justice to reality. "*I would like you to see through this parody, self-parody [of country dialects], to something that is not lovable, not delightful. I can't get it, I can't quite bring it out,*" she confesses, and later, "*And something happened which I did not put in the story. I was ashamed. . . .*"<sup>71</sup> Like "Rose and Janet," "Home" conveys both the worth and limitations of writing. The narrator rejects a contemplated conclusion which contrasts favourably a step-sister's practical ability with her own retreat into words. She dismisses this as too easy and not honest, as seeming "*to value what I am doing now less than I must really value it.*"<sup>72</sup> The speculative "*must*" in the previous line, though, renders the affirmation tentative. And the final lines are uncertain and self-conscious, apprehensive:

*You can see this scene, can't you, you can see it quietly made, that magic and prosaic safety [of an early childhood memory] briefly held for us, the camera moving out and out, that spot shrinking, darkness. Yes. That is effective.*

*I don't want any more effects, I tell you, lying. I don't know what I want. I want to do this with honour, if I possibly can.*<sup>73</sup>

The pursuit of the honest and honourable in art is a *leit-motiv* running through Munro's fiction and interviews. It is no coincidence that "Home" is dedicated to John Metcalf, whom Munro characterizes elsewhere as "one person who can tell where the soft spots are, what's shoddy, what's an evasion, maybe even mark the place where a loss of faith hit you, not momentarily like an avalanche but drearily like a dry trickle of clods and stones."<sup>74</sup> The ineluctable, concomitant awareness of the artifice of art expresses itself in the recurring word "tricks," most notably in Munro's often-quoted characterization of good writing, in "Material," as "[l]ovely tricks, honest tricks."<sup>75</sup> Faith, and tricks. The desolated note, sounded lightly in the last lines of "Home," breaks out more urgently in "Who Do You Think You Are?" regarding this unlikely alliance, regarding Janet's disheartened sense of failure as a writer.

Early drafts of "Who Do You Think You Are?" do not deal with writing (the emphasis is more on identity and assumed identity, leading up to the climactic question posed in the story's title), but they do involve audiences, performances, imitations, and notoriety.<sup>76</sup> Along with Milton Homer, the buffoon, and Ralph Gillespie, storyteller<sup>77</sup> and mimic (and even Janet's father, imitating Ralph imitating Milton), they introduce an exuberant, elderly, female<sup>78</sup> Mongoloid named Jean, resident of the County Home, who communicates through a farcical pantomime — as a mechanical doll, a dancer, a seductress. "Who is she imitating, where

are her models?" Janet asks. "More important, where is her audience?"<sup>79</sup> While recognizing the benefits of the Home's protective cocoon, Janet nevertheless expresses an empathy about Jean's restricted opportunities: "There is just a question left as to whether anybody might miss the loneliness and the notoriety that is possible outside; the audience to entertain and outrage and sometimes to bully; the whole world — that is, the whole town, — to bash against; what Milton Homer had."<sup>80</sup> (In the final draft of "Rose and Janet," the sentiment is applied to Milton Homer himself, now a resident in the Home.<sup>81</sup>) Janet similarly senses an uncomfortable likeness in Ralph Gillespie, both as a schoolchild — "it wasn't just the forgetfulness, the sloppiness, the improvidence; it was something touchy and secret, a bit of flamboyance, restlessness, unwillingness to take things as they are, hard to describe but easy to recognize if you have it yourself . . ."<sup>82</sup> — and as an adult — "I don't mean that I think I might fall downstairs at the legion Hall, drunk, on a Saturday night; but a life spent working on an imitation — more & more an obsession, a ritual, a necessary mistake — I can always understand."<sup>83</sup>

Unexpectedly enough, these mavericks share something else along with their single-mindedness, their flamboyance, something else linking them with the writer: power. Milton Homer, whose reputed indecent exposure can be read symbolically, is described in one early draft as performing a service in Dalgleish, forcing the finest ladies "to acknowledge, every time they crossed the street to miss him, something they pretended never to think about." His correct and subdued behaviour in the presence of his aunts — "Milton would behave like the rather dull young nephew they would normally have had . . . as if he had put down his *powers*, far far down out of sight, out of mind" — is presented as a comedown.<sup>84</sup> Watching Ralph's first attempts as a comedian, Janet feels nervousness, relief, and elation.<sup>85</sup> By the time of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, this has become, more explicitly, Rose's apprehension over Ralph's early Milton Homer impressions and "a shaky sort of longing. . . . She wanted to fill up in that magical, releasing way, transform herself; she wanted the courage and the power."<sup>86</sup> Through her Rose stories, of course, Janet achieves just such a magical transformation — and the power, like Milton Homer, to confront Dalgleish with itself. Given this perception of the natural fraternity of clowns, mimics, and writers (actresses, too, for that matter) — shared temperament, audience, material, power — it is not surprising that Munro's revisions of the story led her to introduce and put increasing emphasis upon Janet's condition as a writer.

The central passage in "Who Do You Think You Are?," quoted earlier in another version, concentrates in its final form less on the social awkwardness of being a writer and more on Janet's tormented sense of literary malaise:

My father introduced me to the wife of one of his friends . . . and she said, "Oh! You're the writer!" I was not very comfortable about being identified as a writer in the midst of what was, so to speak, my material. I was aware of having done things

that must seem high-handed, pulling fictions up like rabbits out of hats; skinned rabbits, raw and startling, out of such familiar old hats. I knew that some of my inventions, my oblique, still humiliating, explanations, must be seen as puzzling and indecent. Whenever I came back I had to put what I had written out of mind, else I would be ashamed to see how I had eased out certain complications and commonplaces, though I had not meant to do anything of the kind. It seemed to me, sitting in the Legion, that there was a tone, a density, a truth, I ached to and could not get, that all I had got, really, was the antics.<sup>87</sup>

The final sentence is a last-minute revision to the page proofs, replacing “I would see how badly I had done by the place, in quite a different way than the people there might think.” The phrases “my oblique, still humiliating, explanations” and “be ashamed to” are also belated additions, underscoring Janet’s unease.

The same enervating, amorphous shame is also inspired, in “Rose and Janet,” by social charm — indeed the two sources of discomfiture are sometimes linked — and the comparison is instructive. Promoting plays on local television, leading into her anecdotes in a “puzzled, diffident way . . . as if she was just now remembering, had not told them a hundred times already,” Rose is “deeply, unaccountably ashamed,” and, back in her hotel room, shivers and moans feverishly.<sup>88</sup> She is unable to remember the people with whom, on her tours, she has shared intimate revelations. (Although not in “Rose and Janet,” “Simon’s Luck” explores the same phenomenon, in the disarmingly quizzical and indulgent expression Rose “puts on” when confronted at a party and in her solicitous and charming warmth towards students whose names and conversations she then cannot recall.<sup>89</sup>) This disjunction appears more dramatically in “The Beggar Maid,” where, for all her “good will, her smiling confession of exhaustion, her air of diffident faith in civilized overtures,” Rose remains Patrick’s true enemy.<sup>90</sup>

Rose’s suspect charm corresponds to Janet’s in “Who Do You Think You Are?,” where “what elsewhere might have been considered an amusing, slightly confidential, recognizable and even reassuring style” falls flat with Ralph Gillespie.<sup>91</sup> The scene follows that of Janet’s chagrin as a writer and comments on it. As Janet explains why communication is impeded — “by my social conversation with its habitual meaningless edge of flirtation, by his reticence, and by the very nature of our feelings, now and in the past” — we begin to see the parallel with writing: “It seems as if there are feelings that have to be translated into a next-door language, which might blow them up and burst them altogether; or else they have to be let alone. The truth about them is always suspected, never verified, the light catches but doesn’t define them, any more than it does the memory of lantern slides, and Milton Homer, diabolically happy on the swing.”<sup>92</sup> The social exchange not only shares with writing a dangerous ability to beguile with false candour, but also, like writing, exposes the gulf between apprehension and expression. Truth remains elusive, antics all too ready a substitute.

The “Rose and Janet” version of “Who Do You Think You Are?” lacks the

equivalent of the passage in *Who Do You Think You Are?* in which Rose remembers a wave of unspoken sympathy and forgiveness from Ralph Gillespie which eases her chronic shame about her acting and her life. In its place, we have simply the less explicit reflection on Janet and Ralph's unsatisfactory conversation, on feelings too sensitive to be spoken: "Yet there is the feeling — I have the feeling — that at some level these things open; fragments, moments, suggestions, open, full of *power*."<sup>93</sup> This attestation (itself another last-minute addition to the page proofs), partial and tentative though it is, displaces not only the shame of social insincerity but also the more daunting fear of literary futility. Like the affirmation in "Winter Wind" — "Without any proof I believe it [the narrator's perception of her grandmother], and so I must believe that we get messages another way, that we have connections that cannot be investigated, but have to be relied on"<sup>94</sup> — it is an act of faith in personal communication and, beyond that, in the writer's undertaking. The final lines in the story, on Janet and Ralph's special affinity, on his life "close, closer than the lives of men I'd loved; one slot over from my own,"<sup>95</sup> ratify this rare and revitalizing glimmer of shared understanding. Ralph's remoteness in Janet's life and the image of separate slots, though, like the nebulousness and hesitancy of Janet's perception itself, make the affirmation less substantial than that, say, in "Winter Wind." Temporarily assuaged, an aching disquietude about writing, new in its intensity and pervasiveness, remains the focus of this story, encapsulated in the challenge of its title.

Quite apart from its transformative, metafictional effects on the other stories in the collection, the "Rose and Janet" version of "Who Do You Think You Are?" is a strong story, as strong as the final version published in *Who Do You Think You Are?* (The greater kinship between Ralph's mimicry and Rose's acting is, admittedly, a virtue of the latter version.) And "Rose and Janet" is a provocative and complex arrangement, with an entire subtext, enacting the writer's transmutation of life into art, which is necessarily absent from the final single-heroine arrangement. Implicitly, too, the intricate system of correspondences and divergences between Janet's world and Rose's conjures up, in Chinese-box fashion, the figure of yet another writer at work upon her material, raising and answering the question, "That Janet you write about? Is that supposed to be you?" Why, then, did Munro choose to discard this sophisticated text?

Munro described the "Rose and Janet" arrangement as the kind of deliberate cleverness to be eschewed, as "just too fancy." "I liked the idea," she said. "But it was one of my ideas from the top down and I eventually rejected it. . . . It was a little bit pretentious or precious . . ."<sup>96</sup> Increasingly, she has favoured the artless or, rather, the seemingly artless in her work. Reconsidering the structure of her early short story "The Office," for example, she commented, "I'd like it more open, less pointed, even less contrived; I would like it to seem all artless and accidental . . ."<sup>97</sup> What impressed her in James Agee's *A Death in the Family* was the "transparent"

technique, “the long scenes where nothing much seems to be happening,” just as what she admired in Agee and Evans’ *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was the appearance of simply having taken pictures of people, of not imposing a point of view or a message.<sup>98</sup> In her own work, she said, “what I most admire is where the fictionalizing is as unobtrusive as possible.”<sup>99</sup> Here, as in her commentary on “The Office” where she identified her desire for greater naturalness as “another fashion,” she hastened to acknowledge the artifice of such artlessness, adding, “But I’m not so naïve as to suppose that even this, of course, is not trickery.” In keeping with Munro’s sense of life’s haphazardness,<sup>100</sup> though, the trickery must be transparent, the artist consciously shaping the appearance of shapelessness. However random-seeming its component fragments, the hinged structure of “Rose and Janet,” with its mirrored portrait, was too deliberate for Munro’s aesthetic of indirection.

In the second place, “Rose and Janet” may have seemed to oversimplify the distinction between fiction and reality. Much of Munro’s fiction is directed to an increasingly complex investigation of the elusive nature of reality, painstakingly differentiated, through contradictions, retractions, and provisional reformulations, from various plausible illusions, including those of convention, fantasy, and art. It is a fiction of incompleteness and tentativeness, more confident in its withdrawal of authority from particular perceptions — “So she thought” recurs, in various forms — than in its positing of alternative realities. In “Rose and Janet,” with the unexpected revelation of the Rose section as a fictional construct, the previously equal ontological status of the two sections gives way to a hierarchy of artifice and “real-life” source. Yet as her use of the phrase “true lies” suggests,<sup>101</sup> Munro resists any simple dichotomy between reality and illusion, truth and fiction. The risk of seeming to relegate the dark emotions and extremes of Rose’s section to the realm of fiction, to the status of Del Jordan’s gothic fable, may have been one factor in her decision to rework “Rose and Janet.”

And, finally, Munro has shown a growing impatience with overt metafictional strategies. Of her “farewell to writing” in “The Ottawa Valley,” she reported recently that “now I think I’m disillusioned with the disillusionment,” and, of “Home,” that she would like to rewrite it deleting the self-reflexive commentary, which was a great relief at the time but now strikes her as a tired device. Acknowledging in this interview that a distrust of writing is still with her, she added, “but I think if you’re going to go on doing it you should just shut up and go on doing it.”<sup>102</sup> In the collections after *Who Do You Think You Are?*, metafictional self-consciousness is less frequent and more buried; Munro looks less at the literal fictions to be made out of our lives and more at the extent to which lives are themselves already self-created fictions.

In November 1978, then, the collection which appeared on bookstore shelves presented a single heroine, rather than Rose and Janet, and raised questions about the writer’s enterprise only indirectly, through Rose’s apprehensiveness about a fail-

ure of perception in her acting. What we were not privileged to read was an equally interesting arrangement in which Munro displayed not only the startling, skinned rabbits produced by the writer/magician, but also the ordinary, old hats out of which such rabbits might be conjured.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," Alice Munro Papers, Special Collections Division, University of Calgary Library, MsC 38.4.11.f13. Quotations from Munro's papers are printed with the permission of Alice Munro and the Special Collections Division, University of Calgary Library.
- <sup>2</sup> *Globe and Mail Weekend Magazine*, 17 June 1978, p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Wayne Grady, "Alice through a Glass Darkly," *Books in Canada*, 7, No. 8 (Oct. 1978), 15; see also Sheila Robinson Fallis, rev. of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Quill & Quire*, 44, No. 14 (Oct. 1978), 43; Jocelyn Laurence, "Munro, Exploring Disguises," *Chatelaine*, 51, No. 11 (Nov. 1978), 116.
- <sup>4</sup> "In the final story, 'Who Do You Think You Are?', Janet binds the entire collection together in a sudden and surprising way," read the original flap.
- <sup>5</sup> R. J. Stuart, Vice President Trade Division, Macmillan, to Alice Munro, 10 Nov. 1978, MsC 38.1.75.5a; Howarth and Smith invoice, MsC 38.1.75.5b.
- <sup>6</sup> Martin Knelman, "The Past, the Present, and Alice Munro," *Saturday Night*, Nov. 1979, p. 16.
- <sup>7</sup> Carole Gerson, "Who Do You Think You Are? Review-Interview with Alice Munro," *Room of One's Own*, 4, No. 4 ([Winter] 1979), 3.
- <sup>8</sup> The collection title "Rose and Janet" was changed to "Who Do You Think You Are?" in the summer of 1978, at Munro's suggestion, but, for clarity, I will refer to it as "Rose and Janet" throughout. Alice Munro to Doug Gibson, n.d., Alice Munro file, Macmillan of Canada archives.
- <sup>9</sup> J. R. (Tim) Struthers, "The Real Material: An Interview with Alice Munro," in *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts*, ed. Louis K. MacKendrick (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1983), pp. 30-31.
- <sup>10</sup> Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 37.12.29 and "Providence," 37.12.30. Munro subsequently experimented with deleting story titles and, as in MsC 37.12.24-37.12.25, interweaving episodes from "Spelling" (including additional, never-published material on Flo's relationship with the adult Rose) with the stories in this typescript but abandoned the effort halfway through. Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 37.13.1-37.13.4.
- <sup>11</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 37.12.24 and "Spelling," 37.12.25.
- <sup>12</sup> Munro, "Spelling," MsC 37.12.25.
- <sup>13</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 37.12.24. The changes might be assumed to have been made for periodical publication — some of these names appeared in the *Viva* (April 1978) version of "Mischief" and the *Redbook* (Aug. 1977) version of "Providence" — but a note attached to clean copies of the revised stories elsewhere in the archives suggests that they were intended for a short story collection. (Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 38.4.1.) Other revisions made to "Providence" in MsC 37.12.24 do not appear in *Redbook*.
- <sup>14</sup> Ginger Barber to Alice Munro, 7 Oct. 1977, MsC 37.2.47.18. Files of further correspondence between Munro and Ginger Barber, which are now housed at the Virginia Barber Literary Agency in New York and which might clarify the process of

- compilation, are unfortunately closed to researchers, although they will become part of the Munro archives some time in the future.
- <sup>15</sup> "The Beggar Maid" had already appeared with Rose as protagonist (*The New Yorker*, 27 June 1977), but had provided her with a different background, with an aunt and uncle in place of Flo and Billy Pope.
- <sup>16</sup> Ginger Barber to Alice Munro, 12 Dec. 1977, MsC 38.2.63.9a.
- <sup>17</sup> Munro, MsC 38.4.2-38.4.5.
- <sup>18</sup> "Table of Contents," MsC 38.2.64.1.
- <sup>19</sup> Donald S. Lamm (Norton) to Virginia Barber, 1 Dec. 1978, MsC 38.2.64.12; Sherry Huber, conversation with Helen Hoy, 22 Feb. 1988.
- <sup>20</sup> Doug Gibson to Alice Munro, 28 April 1978, MsC 37.2.20.7a-7b. Printed courtesy of Douglas Gibson.
- <sup>21</sup> Presumably this is true of "Mischief," for which no collection typescript exists here.
- <sup>22</sup> In "Providence," the name "Rose" is typed into spaces originally created by a six-syllable name (presumably "Claire"); a similar procedure takes place in "The Beggar Maid," with the name "Laura" overlooked on the last page and replaced later. MsC 38.4.5.f1-f24, f25-f68.
- <sup>23</sup> Alice Munro to Sherry Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.4a. It is tempting to identify this attempt at connected stories with the undated and abandoned Rose manuscripts discussed above. What complicates matters is that the Rose manuscripts provide earlier drafts of the stories than the "Macmillan Mss." which is itself superseded by proposals in this 19 May letter. Quotations from this correspondence are printed courtesy of Sherry Huber.
- <sup>24</sup> Munro to Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.4a-4b.
- <sup>25</sup> Alice Munro to Sherry Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.5a.
- <sup>26</sup> Munro to Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.4f.
- <sup>27</sup> Munro to Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.5a-5b.
- <sup>28</sup> Alice Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.4.1.4.f1-f40; see also "Sheila," MsC 37.11.23, pp. 1-11.
- <sup>29</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.4.1.4.f27.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> For periodical publication, Munro experimented with creating three separate, linked stories, with each postscript appended immediately after its respective story: Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.4.3.f1-f61; Charles McGrath (*The New Yorker*) to Alice Munro, 5 Dec. 1977, MsC 38.2.63.9b; Ginger Barber to Alice Munro, 7 Oct. 1977, MsC 37.2.47.18.
- <sup>32</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.4.1.4.f40.
- <sup>33</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.4.1.4.f23.
- <sup>34</sup> Alice Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), p. 170.
- <sup>35</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.3.16.f1-f31.
- <sup>36</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.3.16.f28. These lines are crossed out, in the revisions into third-person narration.
- <sup>37</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.3.16.f31.
- <sup>38</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.3.16.f28. One word runs off the page.
- <sup>39</sup> See correspondence with Ann Close of Knopf, 13 Nov. 1978-27 April 1979, MsC 38.1.3.5, 38.1.3.6a-6b, 38.1.3.7, 38.1.3.9.
- <sup>40</sup> Geoff Hancock, "An Interview with Alice Munro," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No. 43 (1982), 84.

- <sup>41</sup> Munro to Huber, 19 May 1978, MsC 38.2.64.4d.
- <sup>42</sup> "Who Do You Think You Are?" collection, MsC 38.4.9-11, printer's dating.
- <sup>43</sup> Ginger Barber to Alice Munro, 20 June 1978, MsC 38.2.63.12b; Sherry Huber, conversation with Helen Hoy, 22 Feb. 1988.
- <sup>44</sup> Munro, "The Beggar Maid" collection, MsC 38.5.4.f5. Cf. Sherry Huber to Alice Munro, 12 Sept. 1978, MsC 38.2.64.10a.
- <sup>45</sup> Huber to Munro, 12 Sept. 1978, MsC 38.2.64.10b; Munro, "Privilege," MsC 38.5.1.f33, f52-f54; "Half a Grapefruit," MsC 38.5.1.f78.
- <sup>46</sup> Munro, "Simon's Luck," MsC 38.5.5.f19.
- <sup>47</sup> The draft of "Providence" used in the "Rose and Janet" typescript, for example, bears the original pagination of the Norton typescript, pp. 212-38, superseded by its own pagination, pp. 273-300, and contains, but in clean copy (p. 301), Munro's handwritten revisions to the Norton ending. Munro, "Providence," MsC 38.5.3.f1-f27, 38.4.7.f100-f128.
- <sup>48</sup> Gerson, p. 2; Struthers, p. 30.
- <sup>49</sup> Alice Munro to Sherry Huber, 18 Aug. 1978, Alice Munro file, W. W. Norton and Company.
- <sup>50</sup> Alice Munro to Sherry Huber, 19 Sept. 1978, Alice Munro file, W. W. Norton and Company.
- <sup>51</sup> Munro to Huber, 18 Aug. 1978, Alice Munro file, W. W. Norton and Company.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Munro, "The Beggar Maid" collection, MsC 38.6.1-3; Ann Close to Alice Munro, 19 Jan. 1979, MsC 38.1.3.6.f1; Struthers, p. 29.
- <sup>54</sup> The first reference to "Simon's Luck" in the archives is in a letter from *The New Yorker*: Charles McGrath to Alice Munro, 3 Aug. 1977, MsC 37.2.30.4.
- <sup>55</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 37.12.11.f3 verso.
- <sup>56</sup> The only sustained attention to this manuscript is in the appendix to an M.A. thesis: Linda Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," M.A. Guelph 1980, pp. 150-71.
- <sup>57</sup> The final section of "Connection" in *The Moons of Jupiter*, returning us to Janet and her sister as children, regaled with the cousins' singing, is absent from "Rose and Janet," which concludes with Cousin Iris's impact on Janet's marriage. Alice Munro, "Connection," MsC 38.4.7.f23.
- <sup>58</sup> Janet's daughter Judith becomes Rose's Anna when "Mischiefs" and "Providence" revert to Rose stories in Macmillan's *Who Do You Think You Are?*
- <sup>59</sup> Alice Munro, *The Moons of Jupiter* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982), p. 219. Where the manuscript of "Rose and Janet" does not differ substantially from the published text in *Who Do You Think You Are?* or *The Moons of Jupiter*, I will quote from the latter sources, for greater accessibility.
- <sup>60</sup> Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls & Women* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971), pp. 247-48.
- <sup>61</sup> Munro, *Lives of Girls & Women*, p. 251.
- <sup>62</sup> Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, p. 28.
- <sup>63</sup> Munro, *The Moons of Jupiter*, p. 228.
- <sup>64</sup> Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, p. 4.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 96.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>67</sup> Munro to Doug Gibson, n.d., Alice Munro files, Macmillan of Canada archives.



- <sup>68</sup> Struthers, p. 25.
- <sup>69</sup> Struthers, p. 28.
- <sup>70</sup> Struthers, p. 27.
- <sup>71</sup> Alice Munro, "Home," in *74: New Canadian Stories*, ed. David Helwig and Joan Harcourt ([Ottawa]: Oberon, 1974), pp. 142, 150.
- <sup>72</sup> Munro, "Home," p. 152.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- <sup>74</sup> Alice Munro, "On John Metcalf: Taking Writing Seriously," *Malahat Review*, 70 (March 1985), 7. See also Hancock, pp. 78, 97.
- <sup>75</sup> Alice Munro, *Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 43. See also Munro, *Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You*, pp. 124, 246; Alice Munro, "The Colonel's Hash Resettled," in *The Narrative Voice*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 182; Struthers, p. 6.
- <sup>76</sup> See, for example, Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 37.12.8.f1-f15.
- <sup>77</sup> In adding "*Another thing, [Ralph's] a prime story-teller. He's got all the characters in town in his head*" to her text, Munro explained to Doug Gibson, "I think that is needed to balance Janet's story telling." Alice Munro to Doug Gibson, 10 June 1978, Alice Munro file, Macmillan of Canada archives.
- <sup>78</sup> In very early drafts, the Mongoloid is male. Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 37.12.8.f11-f12.
- <sup>79</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 37.12.10.f13.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 37.12.11.f4.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 38.4.11.f16.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 37.12.10.f9.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 37.12.9.2.f4.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 37.12.8.f14, f15; italics added.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 37.12.11.f1 verso.
- <sup>86</sup> Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, p. 200.
- <sup>87</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 38.4.11.f13.
- <sup>88</sup> Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, p. 177.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 157.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- <sup>91</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 38.4.11.f14-f15.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 38.4.11.f15.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, MsC 38.4.11.f15; italics added.
- <sup>94</sup> Munro, *Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You*, p. 201.
- <sup>95</sup> Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?," MsC 38.4.11.f16.
- <sup>96</sup> Hancock, p. 88.
- <sup>97</sup> Alice Munro, "On Writing 'The Office,'" in *Transitions II: Short Fiction*, ed. Edward Peck (Vancouver: CommCept, 1978), p. 261.
- <sup>98</sup> Struthers, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>99</sup> Struthers, p. 6.
- <sup>100</sup> Hancock, pp. 89-90, 102.
- <sup>101</sup> Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, p. 133.
- <sup>102</sup> Douglas Freake *et al.*, "Alice Munro," *what*, No. 6 (September/October 1986), 8.