



Across the Bridge

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

“Across the Bridge” begins with the narrator, Sylvie, walking across a bridge in Paris with her mother, who carries the invitations to her wedding in a leather shopping bag. When Sylvie tells her mother that she does not love the man her parents have chosen for her to marry, her mother says that loving a man takes “patience,” like practicing scales. When Sylvie says she has thoughts of throwing herself off the bridge if she is forced to marry the family choice, Arnaud, and not allowed to marry her own choice, Bernard, her mother dumps the invitations off the bridge. The rest of the story is an ironic and comic treatment of the family's efforts to match Sylvie up with Bernard, who, it turns out, in spite of Sylvie's romantic idealizations, has no interest in her at all.

The story ends with Sylvie falling in love with her family's original choice after all. The key scene in the story is a dinner engagement Sylvie has with Arnaud in which their future life together is presaged. When Sylvie cannot eat the flan because the restaurant has mistaken it for a piece of quiche and put parsley on it, Arnaud scrapes off the parsley and begins to eat the flan for her—a gesture that convinces Sylvie that he must love her. The story ends in romantic poignancy as Sylvie takes the long way home after seeing Arnaud board his train, for she thinks it unfair to arrive home before he does. She says she will never tell anyone about this, that it will remain a small and insignificant secret that belongs to the “true life” she is almost ready to enter. This is the bridge crossing reflected by the title of the story, for these small and seemingly insignificant secrets are what give Gallant's stories life.

Bibliography

Canadian Fiction Magazine 28 (1978). Special issue on Mavis Gallant.

Essays in Canadian Writing 42 (Winter, 1990). Special issue on Mavis Gallant.

Gadpaille, Michelle. “Mavis Gallant.” In *The Canadian Short Story*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Grant, Judith Skleton. “Mavis Gallant.” In *Canadian Writers and Their Works*, edited by Robert Lecker, Jack David, and Ellen Quigley. Toronto: ECW Press, 1989.

Keith, William John. “Mavis Gallant.” In *A Sense of Style: Studies in the Art of Fiction in English-Speaking Canada*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1988.

Kulyk Keefer, Janice. *Reading Mavis Gallant*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Schaub, Danielle. *Mavis Gallant*. New York: Twayne, 1998.

Simmons, Diane. “Remittance Men: Exile and Identity in the Short Stories of Mavis Gallant.” In *Canadian Women Writing Fiction*, edited by Mickey Pearlman. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993.

Smythe, Karen. *Gallant, Munro, and the Poetics of Elegy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.

Copyright Notice

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/across-bridge-salem>