

THE FUGITIVE FEMININE IN EARLY CANADIAN WRITING:
VISION, PERFORMANCE AND MASQUERADE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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VISION, PERFORMANCE AND MASQUERADE

by

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DEDICATION

To my very dear and well-loved son, Theo

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a
seal upon thine arm: for love is strong
as death."

Song of Solomon

and to Ronald

"and when you have gone to the earth I
will let my hair grow long for your
sake, I will wander through the
wilderness in the skin of a lion."

Epic of Gilgamesh

ABSTRACT

Reading backward from the twentieth-century fictions of Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Sheila Watson and Ethel Wilson to nineteenth-century writers like Rosanna Leprohon, Anna Jameson, and Lily Dougall, it becomes evident that from the beginning of letters in Canada to the present time, our literature is densely populated with a host of oracles, diviners, magicians, and seers. Although they often occupy auxiliary roles, at least in early nineteenth-century texts, they perform, in these works, significant functions -- they are ancestral shades, cartographers, mediators, healers, harbingers, guides, hysterics, magicians, and holy women. Disrupting the dominant discourse of the narratives, they mutter and malign, gesture and prophesize. When their voices are suppressed or ignored, chaos and loss abound.

As this study will show, the oracle that appears so frequently in our literature respects no boundaries. Appearing in works written by men and women, the figure can be either male or female. She is minor and major character, central and peripheral. She is young and old, innocent and experienced. Most importantly, she is powerful. She voices her warnings, utters her prophecies in a number of ways:

orally (through verbal articulation); through signs (i.e. natural phenomena); through dreams, fantasies, memories, epiphanies; and through ancestral shades, ghosts or apparitions.

Curious as to where this visionary figure originated in Canadian literature, I decided to start at the beginning -- in the journals and diaries of the early explorers and fur-traders, and in the letters and sketches of women pioneers. Restricted to the years prior to 1900, this survey focuses on the movement of these sibylline figures who are so closely linked with their ancient foremothers. They are active, though often subversive agents; their messages, covert and palimpsest, are revealed in strange dreams and through mystical experiences -- messages that are presented in enigmatic forms that require deciphering, divining. These figures are capable of strangeness and transformation; they are associated with naming as a means of knowing; they are visionaries who possess a mysterious second sense. Invariably they are connected to the cyclical world of nature, to a pastoral world as well as to an unruly world of darkness and despair. Just as often, they are found within settlements where they are perceived by the populace as models of virtue and morality. By examining the textual positions of these figures, and the context and the nature of their [m]utterances, it is possible to see how prophecy, heeded or ignored, contributes to the shaping of a Canadian

literary tradition. Going back to the seventeenth century, to the beginning of letters in Canada, I discovered what a few critics have tentatively observed -- that what has evolved in Canada is a distinctly feminine tradition of writing, a tradition which, I suggest, is intimately linked to this pervasive prophetic presence.

Most of the characters examined in this study are feminine. I have deliberately decided to treat them as active agents who possess "middle voices" -- that is, as characters in which subject and object positions are often the same. Occupying shifting spaces, these characters disrupt the harmony of conventional binary systems; they act as destabilizing as well as stabilizing agents; they challenge fundamental assumptions, undermine established authorities, often while under the explicit threat of silencing or exclusion. Others, through private ceremonies or rituals, create the illusion of conformity and stability. Assuming postures and positions which suggest openings rather than closure, these conservative/radical figures create fissures, ruptures and raptures, and magnificent transformations. Moving erratically and elusively between confinement and freedom, they cross borders, violate cultural codes, transmit treasonous messages, instigate revolution, create spectacles, and institute change.

This analysis of what I call the "fugitive feminine" in early Canadian writing will demonstrate that the actions of

these unruly figures belie the notion that Canadian literature is essentially conservative. It will also negate the myth of the Canadian as either strictly law-abiding or victimized by a profound fear of chaos or wilderness. Janus-like, these figures rebel while pretending to uphold the law. Often perceived by the status quo as models of morality, they secretly transgress, defy, and revolt. Their covert actions necessarily require some form of subterfuge or masquerade. Like spies, moles, voyeurs, they perform their duplicitous acts from within shadowy spheres as well as in open spaces. When their performances are censured by a restrictive and regulating social order, they wilfully become ex-centric, alien, and anomalous.

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First I would like to thank Dr. Patrick O'Flaherty whose timely telephone call, what now seems a life-time ago, brought me back to Memorial University. I would also like to express thanks to Dr. Terry Goldie for leading me into the labyrinthine world of a Ph.D. dissertation and then leaving me there. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Noreen Golfman, my supervisor who assured me that, in time, I would emerge from the maze. To Cathy Murphy, my patient typist, no thank-you could ever suffice.

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PREFACE

"... culturally Canada has always been feminine ... our literature ... stress[es] the feminine."¹

Lorna Irvine, "Surfacing, Surviving, Surpassing: Canada's Women Writers"

"... it seems entirely appropriate that Atwood should choose a woman as subject for her poetic meditation on the Canadian psyche.... It might be argued that women's stories could provide models for the story of Canada's national identity."²

Coral Ann Howells, Private and Fictional Words

"The feminine gift is a distinct endowment -- it is the gift of grace, insight and a noble subjectivity."³

Thomas O'Hagan, "Canadian Women Writers"

"Females in fragments on the page / silent and slipped between parentheses."⁴

Louky Bersianik, "Women's Work"

"When Canadians figure their country to themselves, they call up no cypher of population, no symbol of territory, no statistic of trade, but the image of a woman, young and fair, with flush of sunrise on her face."⁵

Archibald MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature

"Our heroic men are women."⁶

Adele Wiseman, "Word Power: Women
and Prose in Canada Today"

"... perhaps the fact that so many major
Canadian writers are women (and so much
of their work devoted to studies of
female characters) implies a cultural
tolerance for women's perspectives."⁷

Lorna Irvine, "A Psychological Journey:
Mothers and Daughters in
English-Canadian Fiction"

"... in a masculine world of the assertive
will and the cutting edge of the intellect, a
certain Canadian tendency to the amorphous
permissive feminine principle of openness and
toleration and acceptance offers the
possibility of healing."⁸

William Kilbourn, Canada: A Guide to
the Peaceable Kingdom

"If meaningful interaction can be achieved
between these two historical problems then
perhaps some more precise image of Canada --
a bisexual Canada -- will finally emerge."⁹

Veronica Strong-Boag,
"Cousin Cinderella"

"In America,
there are many roads
and women can stride along with men."¹⁰

Cathy Song, "Lost Sister"

"If we turn to the work of women novelists,
we find not victims, not just survivors, but
heroines ... the denouement is not death, but
birth."¹¹

Elizabeth Waterson, "Women in
Canadian Fiction"

"The true voice of Canada is a mutter."¹²

Anonymous

"Canadian literature is a deterritorialized literature. At the centre of its concerns is the Other -- women, natives and immigrants -- to produce a hybrid."¹³

Barbara Godard, "Structuralism/
Post-Structuralism: Language,
Reality and Canadian Literature"

"I've been screaming rape about foreign domination of Canadian culture for years. But the trouble is there's something feminine in the Canadian mentality."¹⁴

Hugh MacLennan, "Sees Canada
as 'Feminine'"

"It has been acknowledged that Canada's strongest fiction writers are women."¹⁵

Aritha van Herk, "Mythology of Our Own"

"The language we await is feminine. It is not pure logos, but muthos-logos, or mythological. It is an evocative language...."¹⁶

Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin

"The figure of woman as strong and competent is central to the Canadian tradition."¹⁷

Lorraine McMullen, "Images of Women in
Canadian Literature: Woman as Hero"

"She is pieces. He is order. She is absence. He abstract."¹⁸

Madeleine Gagnon, "My Body
in Writing"

"[The Canadian literary] tradition is profoundly marked by the inability to repress in some unifying manner the other language, whatever it is called... Had Jacques Cartier only been a woman it would be easier to read what is being said."¹⁹

E.D. Blodgett, "After Pierre Berton What?
In Search of a Canadian Literature"

INTRODUCTION: INTERROGATING TEXTS

"... in order to know who we are, we must find out where we have been."

Rota Herzberg Lister, "Erika Ritter and the Comedy of Self-Actualization."

"Our repeated desire as critics of Canadian literature has been to de/sire, to discover our own identity."

Paul Hjærtarson, "The Fiction of Progress: Notes on the Composition of The Master of the Mill."

As a student beginning to read Canadian literature, I became immediately aware of an emphasis on the feminine within many Canadian works. There is an unusual number of women writers who are central to our literary tradition; woman is the subject of many texts; female experiences, female traditions are described; feminine forms are used (i.e. diaries, letters, journals, romance, sentimental fictions); writers, both male and female, employ spatial imagery which traditionally is associated with women (i.e. gardens, convents, houses, forests, towers, lakes and rivers); and many works address a specific female audience.

There also seems to be a pervasive presence of one particular fictional figure that manifests itself in any number of forms -- this is a character that possesses a prophetic or sibylline voice.¹

¹In John Richardson's Wacousta; or, The Prophecy (1832), Ellen ("the light") Halloway, Oucanasta, and Madeline De Haldimar share the role of visionary: Ellen is the mad prophetic; Oucanasta, the Indian guide and savior; and Madeline represents the release of intuition and divination within the garrison. In Ralph Connor's The Man from Glengarry (1901), Mrs. Murray possesses insight into religion and the hearts of the people. Her capacity for love and forgiveness distinguishes her from Reverend Murray who preaches a rational Christianity. In Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), Advena Murchison (whose name recalls the mid-century Adventists, religious groups who believed in the second coming of Christ and who were divided on Ellen Gould White's prophecies) is a modern-day woman who does not sacrifice feeling for intellect. In Frederick Philip Grove's prairie novels, women, who are often bridal slaves to myopic men, learn to become true diviners. In Settlers of the Marsh (1925) Ellen Amundsen, a woman with "sky-blue eyes" (56) is associated with insight. Both Neils Lindstedt and Ellen deny their visions until the end of the novel. In Fruits of the Earth (1933) there is the crone, Mrs. Grappentin, a prophetic of foreboding and evil. In Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925) another Ellen represents a woman who refuses to see, perhaps because this gift has been crushed within Amelia, her mother, by Caleb Gare, a brutally oppressive father. Hence the transition of knowledge from mother to daughter has not occurred. Here the true oracle figure is Mrs. Bjarnasson, the grandmother who "spins" and foretells the future. In Ethel Wilson's Hetty Dorval (1947) Frankie Burnaby learns to divine during her initiation into womanhood. In Wilson's Swamp Angel (1954) Mrs. Severance is the sibylline voice. In Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley (1952), again it is an Ellen, David Canaan's grandmother, who weaves the past and the present of the family in the form of a rug and in the stories she tells. In W.O. Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind (1947), Mrs. MacMurray, another grandmother, is also the repository of tales and signifies the continuity of life and the shaping of destiny. Throughout Shelia Watson's The Double Hook (1959) Mrs. Potter, "the old lady" (19) is seen fishing with the double hook that catches both "the darkness" and "the glory" (15). Margaret Laurence in The Diviners (1974) explores the nature of divining, "the gift, or portion of grace" (452). She equates divining with the creation of the poet or storyteller. The female artist reconstructs stories from fragments of the past. However, she is never sure whether the

Reading backward from the twentieth-century fictions of Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Sheila Watson and Ethel Wilson to nineteenth-century writers like Rosanna Leprohon, Anna Jameson, and Lily Dougall, it becomes evident that from the beginning of letters in Canada to the present time, our literature is densely populated with a host of oracles, diviners, magicians, and seers. Although they often occupy auxiliary roles, at least in early nineteenth-century texts,² they perform, in these works, significant

final product is truth or illusion. In Robertson Davies' Fifth Business (1970) Mary Dempster possesses "clarity of vision" (52) while Liesl is an agent of restoration. Margaret Atwood's works contain a myriad of oracle figures. Their powers fall into four categories: oral (the voice); signs (i.e. automatic handwriting); dreams; and ghosts or ancestral shades. Jack Hodgins' ladies are nearly all magical and many possess oracular names: i.e. Phemie Porter, Crystal and Mrs. Starbuck in Spit Delaney's Island (1976). In contrast, his male characters are either maimed or blind. In Timothy Findley's The Wars (1977) Mrs. Ross is the central diviner with "Delphic concentration" (27) while women like Juliet d'Orsey and Marian Turner also play prophetic roles. In Robert Kroetsch's Badlands (1975) prophetesses abound: Anna Yellowbird, America, the blonde prophetess who turns into the "Scarlet Lady" (83), "the woman in green" (76), and eventually Anna Dawe.

²There is a change in their textual status from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In the early fictions, generally they are minor characters, peripheral figures who perform as disruptive agents. The truths they represent are not always immediately acknowledged; instead their messages are perceived as madness, intuition, magic or mysticism. However, the endings of these narratives affirm the validity of their utterances. There appears to be some initial reluctance on the part of early writers to foreground these figures. By the twentieth-century, this reluctance disappears and the oracle assumes the role of a central character, or an important secondary character who is closely linked to the identity of the protagonist.

functions -- they are ancestral shades, cartographers, mediators, healers, harbingers, guides, hysterics, magicians, and holy women. Disrupting the dominant discourse of the narratives, they mutter and malign, gesture and prophesize.³ When their voices are suppressed or ignored, chaos and loss abound.

When this dissertation began, it was tentatively titled "The Voice of Cassandra in Duplicitous Fictions: Oracles, [M]utterings, Mad Prophecies." I began by tracing the

³See M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). Bakhtin writes: "Literary language is not represented in the novel as a unitary, completely finished-off and indisputable language -- it is represented precisely as a living mix of varied and opposing voices, developing and renewing itself (49)." He describes single-voiced discourse as the dream of the poet, and double-voiced discourse, the realm of the novel. In Rabelais and His World, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), Bakhtin identifies the carnival as a transgressive discourse which challenges the official rules of linguistic codes, laws, and social morality. He associates laughter, a dominant aspect of carnival, with the populace and the marketplace. It functions to create "another world" outside church, state, and social order. Through ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, curses, oaths, popular blazons, play, comic imagery, and parody, the carnival mocks, derides, asserts, denies, buries and revives. In Canadian literature prophets and diviners are often associated with carnivalistic moments within texts. For an application of Bakhtin's theory in Canadian literature, see Sherrill Grace, "'Listen to the Voice': Dialogism and the Canadian Novel," Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature, ed. and introd. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987) 117-136. Grace suggests that "politically, geographically, and linguistically Canada ... constitutes the perfect dialogic space ... we believe that we lack a truly unifying mythology; we behave as if politically decentred, and we try to allow for (or actualize) ethnic and linguistic diversity" (131).

oracle figure through a number of twentieth-century texts, beginning with Ralph Connor's The Man from Glengarry (1901) and continuing to include contemporary works by Timothy Findley, Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood. The oracle respected no boundaries. Appearing in works written by men and women, the figure was male, she was female. She was minor and major character, central and peripheral. She was young and old, innocent and experienced. Most importantly, she was powerful. She voiced her warnings, uttered her prophecies in a number of ways: orally (through verbal articulation); through signs (i.e. natural phenonema); through dreams, fantasies, memories, epiphanies; and through ancestral shades, ghosts or apparitions. My initial title recalled a polemic tract by Florence Nightingale entitled "Cassandra," a work which warned against the nineteenth-century feminization of women.⁴ Yet my study intended to celebrate rather than lament the feminine power of prophecy associated with the virgin-priestess of Apollo. Combining the classical figure of Cassandra, dishonored prophetsess with sibyl, the Delphic

⁴Florence Nightingale's "Cassandra" was originally part of a work entitled Suggestions for Thought to Searchers after Religious Truth, written c. 1851 and 1852. This three-volume book has never been printed publicly. However "Cassandra" was included in Ray Strachey's The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (1928), and excerpts are included in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English, eds. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1985) 804-813.

oracle, I arrived at a Canadian figure which embodied an ambivalent response to subjective knowledge, and a reluctance to rely solely on "truth wrapped in obscurity."⁵

Curious as to where this visionary figure originated in Canadian literature, I decided to start at the beginning -- in the journals and diaries of the early explorers and fur-traders, and in the letters and sketches of women pioneers.⁶ Restricted to the years prior to 1900, this survey focuses on the movement of these sibylline figures who are so closely linked with their ancient foremothers. They are active, though often subversive agents; their messages,

⁵Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. W.F. Jackson Knight (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970) 150.

⁶In the first written accounts in the new world, the sibylline figure is associated with the wilderness, often in the form of an Indian woman or a holy man. The wilderness was not immediately perceived by the newcomers as an omphalos, a potential site for revelation or self-discovery. Instead, it was often described as a maze or labyrinth, a place dangerous and formless. To control the anxiety created by the alien environment, the European tried to impose his notions of order on it. He built garrisons to separate himself from the wilderness; he encouraged the wandering tribes of Indians to create permanent dwelling places; and he tried to replace a complex native mythology with Catholicism. When the Jesuit fathers encouraged the Hurons to abandon their nomadic way of life and their religious belief system, religious woman Marie de l'Incarnation astutely observed the futility of such actions. By late nineteenth-century, the wilderness began to be openly acknowledged as a site of healing and restoration, a fact observed earlier by many women pioneers who settled in Canada. In Lily Dougall's The Madonna of a Day (1895), the wilderness is the site of Mary Howard's naturalistic epiphany. This scene is anticipated by the works of earlier writers in Canada, those like Pierre Esprit Radisson and Catharine Parr Traill who celebrate rather than deny the powerful lure of the land.

covert and palimpsest, are revealed in strange dreams and through mystical experiences -- messages that are presented in enigmatic forms that require deciphering, divining. These figures are capable of strangeness and transformation; they are associated with naming as a means of knowing; they are visionaries who possess a mysterious second sense. Invariably they are connected to the cyclical world of nature, to an unruly world of darkness and despair. Just as often, they are found within settlements where they are perceived by the populace as models of virtue and morality. By examining the textual positions of these figures, and the context and the nature of their [m]utterances,⁷ it is possible to see how prophecy, heeded or ignored, contributes to the shaping of a Canadian literary tradition. Going back

⁷Bakhtin uses utterance to refer to a speech act (*parole* versus *langue*, the written) which is specifically social, historical, concrete, and dialogized. I am also recalling an epigraph from Stanley Fogel's *A Tale of Two Countries*, that "the true voice of Canada is a mutter." Sometimes, in Canadian literature, utterance becomes silence, performance, even extralinguistic. Some early explorers and pioneers accompany their written texts with drawings, charts, maps, sketches, and watercolors, as if aware of the limitations of language. Sometimes secular as well as religious men and women use ritual and ceremony as alternate forms of expression (see Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades"). When members of different cultures collide, silence and gesture are employed (see Chapter III "Female Savior or Redemptrix"). Other characters resort to prophecy, curses, and spectacles of the body (see Chapter IV "'A Torn Presence': Madwomen in the Wilderness); magical spells (see Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power"); and the power of the gaze, subversive codes, and paradox (see Chapter VI "Spiritual Fortress Inviolable: Falling into [W]holiness").

to the seventeenth century, to the beginning of letters in Canada, I discovered what a few critics have tentatively observed -- that what has evolved in Canada is a distinctly feminine tradition of writing,⁸ a tradition which, I suggest, is intimately linked to this pervasive prophetic presence.

This study examines the origins of the oracular figure foregrounded in contemporary fiction by thinking back through historical and literary texts written from the seventeenth through to the end of the nineteenth century. It adopts what Catherine Belsey, referring to texts, calls an interrogative stance⁹ as well as a revisionist approach.¹⁰

⁸See the preface for a number of comments regarding Canada's feminine nature: Lorna Irvine, "Surfacing, Surviving, Surpassing: Canada's Women Writers" and "A Psychological Journey: Mothers and Daughters in English-Canadian Fiction"; E.D. Blodgett, "After Pierre Berton What? In Search of Canadian Literature"; William Kilbourn, Introduction, Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom; and Coral Ann Howells, Private and Fictional Words. In A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing (Alberta: Longspoon/Newest, 1986) Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli edit a collection of articles which "reread our literary tradition in the context of contemporary feminist criticism" (ix), and which perceive our writers, male and female, as "femininely speaking" (x).

⁹See Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1980) 85-102. Drawing on Emile Benveniste's Problems in General Linguistics (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971) which identifies three fundamental functions of discourse, Belsey suggests three kinds of texts: **declarative**, **imperative** and **interrogative**. A **declarative** text "imparts knowledge to a reader whose position is thereby stabilized, through a privileged discourse which is to varying degrees invisible" (91). An **imperative** text, "giving orders to its readers, is what is commonly thought of as 'propaganda'" (91). See also Louise H. Forsyth, "Feminist Criticism as Creative Process," In the Feminine: Women and Words, eds. et al. Ann Dybikowski (Alberta:

An interrogative text, suggests Belsey, "disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of enunciation. The position of the 'author'

Longspoon Press, 1985) 87-94. Forsyth suggests that it is "the role of the critic to be, above all [a] serious and appreciative reader. In order to play this role, the critic must actively participate in the text; she must enjoy and vibrate with its creative power; she must celebrate its strength and put herself into the place from which the text emerges, even though that place may not be seen as legitimate by the dominant culture.... The feminist critic receives the creative text actively, and she is, in turn, a writer. She produces her own text" (87).

¹⁰See Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision," College English 34.1 (October 1972); rpt. in On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978 (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1979) 33-49. Rich compares women writing today to "sleepwalkers [who] are coming awake, and for the first time this awakening has a collective reality" (35). She defines revision as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction -- [this] is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (35). See also Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) for discussions regarding the need to resist the sexist designs of a text: "the first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us" (xxii). "Feminist criticism represents the discovery/recovery of a voice, a unique and uniquely powerful voice carable of cancelling out those other voices..." (xxiii). This revisionist approach is evident in A Mazing Space, eds. Neuman and Kamboureli, and Gynocritics/La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoise Women, ed. Barbara Godard (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987). Canadian historians are also involved in this process. See Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), a collection of essays which "reflect a shared view of Canadian women as actors rather than merely as the acted-upon" (5). While recognizing the subordinate status of women in Canadian life, they tend to shift away from "the woman as victim" (5-6) motif popular in the 1960s and 70s.

inscribed in the text, if it can be located at all, is seen as questioning or as literally contradictory."¹¹ What emerges from this interrogation of nineteenth-century texts is a fugitive figure which occludes definition, a figure characterized by multiplicity, ambivalence and contradiction. An elusive web connects her to powerful ancestral shades, both historical and literary, who initiated the mapping of uniquely feminine spaces in Canadian literature, and who continue to contribute to the literary shaping of this country.

In the past, thematic criticism in Canada searched for coherence in what seemed to be fixed patterns of images and ideas.¹² Recently, contemporary critics, beginning with Frank Davey and Russell Brown, emphasize the need to re-read Canadian literature for contradiction rather than cohesion, and to shift the critical focus from meaning to form.¹³ By

¹¹Belsey 91.

¹²See Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972); John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971); D.J. Jones, Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

¹³See Frank Davey, "Surviving the Paraphrase," Canadian Literature 70 (Autumn 1976): 5-13. Davey discusses the reluctance of Canadian literary critics to focus on "matters of form, language, style, structure, and consciousness as these arise from the work as a unique construct" (5). He accuses thematic critics of being overly concerned with what literary works "say" about Canadians, while ignoring what literary works

focusing on variations of the sibylline or oracular figure as cartographer, gossip, ancestral shade, mediatrix, redemptrix, hysteric, sorceress, mother and magician, this study proposes to combine thematics and form.¹⁴ While attracted to the largely language-based theory of many French feminist critics,¹⁵ I do not reject the importance

"mean" (6). Some of the weaknesses of thematic criticism that he identifies are a humanistic bias, a disregard for literary history, a tendency toward sociology -- usually bad sociology, an attempt at "culture-fixing," and literary determinism. As alternatives to this restrictive approach, Davey suggests historical, analytical, genre, phenomenological and archetypal criticism. See also Russell Brown, "Critic, Culture, Text: Beyond Thematics," Essays on Canadian Writing 11 (Summer 1978): 151-183, John Moss, "Bushed in the Sacred Garden," The Human Element Second Series, ed. David Helwig (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1981) 161-178, and Heather Murray, "Reading for Contradiction in the Literature of Colonial Space," Future Indicative 71-84.

¹⁴See Terry Goldie, "Signs of the Themes: The Value of a Politically Grounded Semiotics," Future Indicative 85-93. In examining the images of native peoples in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand literatures, Goldie proposes a need "to continue to look for meaning but as the context of everything that occurred" (86). In the image of the indigene, he looks "for meaning in as many aspects of context" (87) as possible, a process he calls, quoting Annette Kolodny, "turning the lens" (90). See Annette Kolodny, "Turning the Lens on the 'Panther Captivity': A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism," Critical Inquiry 8 (1981): 329-45.

¹⁵See Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) and Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985); Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., New French Feminisms: An Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, 1981); Nicole Brossard, These Our Mothers, or, the Disintegrating

of the experiences behind the text or the significance of the author behind the work. Although devoted to a specific image, each chapter examines how that particular image refuses to remain fixed in a number of literary works. Each chapter also examines which connections, if any, exist between real-life figures and these literary constructs. In some cases, connections between various literary texts reveal how and why a feminine tradition in Canada evolved.

Through a re-reading of both mainstream and peripheral texts,¹⁶ works written by women and men, this study also endeavors to create new points of entry into the texts, to produce 'other' texts out of the framework of first texts.¹⁷

Chapter, trans. Barbara Godard (Toronto: Coach House, 1983) and The Aerial Letter, trans. Marlene Wildeman (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1988).

¹⁶Examples of peripheral texts are included in the primary bibliography. For instance in Chapter I "Other Cartographers," section iii, "Rambling Epistles," I use Anna Leveridge's letters and Henriette Dessaulles' journals to provide an alternative view of life in Canada other than those views usually provided by Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill. Others include Frances Monk, My Canadian Leaves: An Account of a Visit to Canada in 1864-1865 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1891); James De Mille, The Lady of the Ice (New York: D. Appleton, 1870); Lily Dougall, The Madonna of a Day (New York: D. Appleton, 1895); Agnes C. Laut, Lords of the North (Toronto: Ryerson, 1900); and Maria Monk, Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal (1836; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1977).

¹⁷Barthes, Roland, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975). Barthes proposes an "erotics of reading": the text desires a reader, it seduces a reader (6). Pleasure is derived when breaks or collisions occur, when antipathetic codes come into contact, when language is redistributed. He defines a text of pleasure as one "that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from

In doing so, it returns to circulation forgotten, ignored, or deliberately excluded works that can increase our understanding of Canadian literature, and, in fact, which may challenge traditional assumptions regarding our literary heritage. An excellent example is Abraham Holmes' Belinda, or, The Rivals (1843), a text which was deliberately excluded from our canon, and Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1896), a novel which has received little critical attention. Both of these texts contain unusual female characters that disprove Margaret Atwood's confident assertion that "no Canadian writer has seen fit -- or found it imaginable -- to produce a Venus in Canada."¹⁸ In John

culture and does not break with it, [one that] is linked to a comfortable practice of reading" (14). In contrast, a text of bliss "imposes a state of loss,... discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (14). Barthes rejects the notion of text as "a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth)." Instead he translates text as tissue, "the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue -- this texture -- the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web" (64). Nancy K. Miller, "Arachnologies: The Woman, the Text, and the Critic," The Poetics of Gender, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 270-295 takes exception to Barthes' erasure of the productive agent. Miller proposes, in the place of Barthes' hypohology (64), a model of feminist poetics termed "arachnology" which emphasizes woman's role as spider artist, the weaver of texts.

¹⁸Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 119-120.

Richardson's Wacousta (1832), Madeline De Haldimar, "the Medicean Venus",¹⁹ is as erotic a love goddess as Parker's Alixe Duvarney or Holmes' Belinda, a young woman of questionable behavior.

The unearthing of journals and diaries by previously unknown writers also provides a re-examination of the relationship between women and wilderness.²⁰ The captivity narratives written by Pierre Esprit Radisson and Mary Jemison describe a wilderness which does not necessarily evoke terror, or make a man or a woman feel "as helpless as a trapped mink and as lonely as a loon."²¹ Certainly Anna Leveridge's letters home to Europe, written from an isolated pioneer farm, reveal a more realistic portrayal of the experiences of ordinary women in Canada than the accounts

¹⁹John Richardson, Wacousta; or, The Prophecy; a Tale of the Canadas, ed. Douglas Cronk (1832; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987) 295.

²⁰In "Travelers' tales: showing and telling, slamming and questing," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Alberta: Longspoon/Newest, 1986) 51-60, Marni L. Stanley examines the opening up of once restricted genres such as travel literature to include forgotten or overlooked works. She also identifies the diaries and letters written and published by women who travelled through Canada during the nineteenth-century. Many of these accounts are now available in archives but need to be reissued. For example, the diaries of Elizabeth Smith, A Woman with a Purpose: The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith 1872-1884 have been edited by Veronica Strong-Boag and issued by University of Toronto, 1980.

²¹Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) 138.

provided by either Susanna Moodie or Catharine Parr Traill. By including the works of marginal writers and marginal genres, we are forced to redraw and to widen the circle which, in the past, constituted our literary canon. In so doing, we reshape our literary history so that it includes works and writers which, during the time of publication, may have been considered more important than they now are.²²

It is also the intent of this study to concentrate on secondary characters who have not been highlighted by literary critics who tend to focus on central characters, male characters, or who read central and secondary female characters in traditional ways.²³ A survey of literary

²²See Thomas O'Hagan, "Canadian Women Writers," Canadian Essays: Critical and Historical, ed. Thomas O'Hagan (Toronto: William Briggs, 1901) 54-103. O'Hagan testifies to the important contribution of women writers to Canadian letters in the areas of poetry, fiction, history, biography, science and art. He discusses briefly the works of over ninety women writers who were read and well-known in the nineteenth century but who have been forgotten in the twentieth century. He mentions Sarah Anne Curzon's "virility of style," her "clear and robust mind" (62); Isabella Valancy Crawford's "originality" and "genius" (57-58); Frances Harrison's "dainty and distinct style" (63); Marshall Saunder's Beautiful Joe (1894) which was so popular, it "reached the enormous sale of fifty thousand in eighteen months" and was translated into Swedish, German and Japanese (64); Agnes C. Laut's Lords of the North (1900) which enjoyed "unqualified success" (67); the "most gifted" (87) Sara Jeannette Duncan; Lily Dougall; and Kathleen Blake Coleman.

²³In some cases the motivation for a chapter has been a provocative and brief comment by a critic, regarding the role of a secondary character, which generated a reassessment of that character. For instance, a comment by Dennis Duffy, Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) generated a response which produced Chapter III, "Female Savior or Redemptrix." He writes, regarding Richardson's Wacousta

figures also suggests that in many nineteenth-century Canadian works there is no central character but instead there is collective or communal characterization. Group dynamics are emphasized more than solitary feats or actions. By affirming the importance of peripheral textual characters and by examining their functions, this study shows how these literary figures often act subversively to undermine a myopic central intelligence.

Rereading male and female texts from a feminist stance serves to reassess power relations and to investigate how feminine characters are inscribed by Canadian writers. Chapter II "Female Savior or Receptrix" and Chapter IV "'A Torn Presence': Madwomen in the Wilderness" foreground Oucanasta and Ellen Halloway, two marginalized figures in John Richardson's Wacousta (1832) who are characterized respectively by silence and hysteria. Despite De Haldimar's attempts to negate the powerful presence of these two women, indigene and madwoman, and despite the fact that Richardson assigns both women auxiliary textual status, they erupt within the narrative to undermine the authority of central male characters. At the end, De Haldimar and Wacousta are silent and absent, whereas Oucanasta and Ellen survive the upheaval generated by the duplicity of these

(1832): "The novel's 'fifth business,' an Indian woman whose love for the hero is exploited by the whites, appears as a warrior as often as she wears normal dress..." (48).

men. The Indian woman within the gates of the garrison and the madwoman in the wilderness remain to transmit stories which will shape future generations -- generations that they will give birth to. Whether they occupy primary or auxiliary positions (and in most instances they move unregulated from centre to margin, and from margin to centre), feminine figures like Oucanasta and Ellen Halloway are characterized by activity and mobility, defiance and disguise, epiphany and power, ritual and laughter, inscription and transgression.

Most of the characters examined in this study are feminine.²⁴ I have deliberately decided to treat them as active agents who possess "middle voices"²⁵ -- that is, as

²⁴See Hélène Cixous, "voice i," Boundary 2 21.2 (Winter 1984): 51-67. Cixous speaks of "a decipherable libidinal femininity which can be located in a writing that can have been produced by a male or a female.... It is something which can be defined from the body, as the movement of a pulsion toward an object and which is part of the discoveries that may be defined as the Freudian discoveries **par excellence**. It allows us to know what in other times had been analyzed as the treaty of passions" (51-52). In Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1962), Leslie Fiedler suggests that the novel, through duplicity and subversion, marks the entry of the libido in literature.

²⁵Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Referring to his concept of 'différance,' which implies both difference and deferral, Derrida explains that "the ending **-ance** is undecided **between** active and passive ... that which lets itself be designated by **différance** is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like the middle voice, saying an operation which is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor

characters in which subject and object positions are often the same. Occupying shifting spaces, these characters disrupt the structure of conventional binary systems; they act as destabilizing as well as stabilizing agents; they challenge fundamental assumptions, undermine established authorities, often while under the explicit threat of silencing or exclusion. Others, through private ceremonies or rituals, create the illusion of conformity and stability. Assuming postures and positions which suggest openings rather than closure, these conservative/radical figures create fissures, ruptures and raptures, and magnificent transformations. Moving erratically and elusively between confinement and freedom, they cross borders, violate cultural codes, transmit treasonous messages, instigate revolution, create spectacles, and institute change.

The actions of these unruly figures belie the notion of Canadian literature as essentially conservative, and negate the myth of Canadian character as either law-abiding or victimized by a profound fear of chaos or wilderness. Janus-like, they rebel while pretending to uphold the law. Often perceived by the status quo as models of morality, they secretly transgress, defy, and revolt. Their covert

moving toward any of these terms. For the middle voice, a certain nontransitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outset, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by means of this repression" (9).

actions necessarily require some form of disguise or subterfuge. Like spies, moles, voyeurs,²⁶ they perform their duplicitous acts from within shadowy spheres as well as in open spaces. When their actions are censured by a restrictive and regulating social order, they wilfully become ex-centric, alien, and anomalous.²⁷ They go Indian.

²⁶See Hélène Cixous, The Newly Born Woman. Cixous, like Adrienne Rich, proposes a process of revisionism, a reawakening: "We are living in an age when the conceptual foundation of an ancient culture is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole (Topoi, ground mines) never known before" (65). Revolution and subversive tactics are also proposed by Aritha van Herk, "Women Writers and the Prairie: Spies in an Indifferent Landscape," Kunapipi 6.2 (1984): 120-130. van Herk describes how male writers have masculinized a land which is instinctively female: "The fabric of this living breathing landscape has been masculinized in art, descriptive passages of a land instinctively female perceived by a jaundiced male eye. Description, description and more description, an over-looking. Prudence, caution. They are afraid to enter the landscape. They describe it instead" (122). In the past, female characters, even women writers, have been inscribed by the male writer who selects, arranges, and orders. van Herk, like Cixous, advocates that women and women writers don disguises, arm themselves with surprise weapons, develop strategies of resistance to male reading and writing of the female, and find "passwords that will enable us to gain access, entrance. Look out" (124).

²⁷See Barbara Godard, "Ex-centricques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literatures of Canada," Tessera [Room of One's Own] 8.4 (January 1984): 57-75. Godard uses the term ex-centric, which implies exclusion, oddness, and marginalization, to refer to the unusual position of Canadian women writers; they are both mainstream and peripheral. It is woman's de-centred position, suggests Godard, which ensures that her gestures, her language, and her writing will be experimental. As examples of experimentation with form, Godard mentions a focus on the epiphany which she relates to the feminine; linguistic subversion such as the extensive use of puns and paradox; the invention of new words and opposing languages; and the championing of the unconscious and the irrational. See also Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: "The novel is that literary art form most indebted to *czudost* (otherness)" (423). Generally it is woman who is perceived as other, as alien: exotic,

In Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1896), Alixe Duvarney, daughter of a prominent French-Canadian family, is forced to don the disguise of an infamous exiled Parisian dancer and to perform an erotic dance in a banquet hall for the powerful French Intendant and his male guests. Before telling Moray of how she danced to prevent the Intendant from carrying out his plan to present Moray (who had been accused of spying) to this drunken mob, Alixe re-enacts her seductive performance in the privacy of Moray's cell: "she began to dance softly, her feet seeming hardly to touch the ground, her body swaying like a tall flower in the wind, her face all light and fire."²⁸ This private pantomime is a prelude to the story she tells of how her erotic masquerade delivered him from a death he was not even aware of. As she ends her tale of daring and deliverance, the "clear light of afternoon"²⁹ enters the cell, bringing with it the greenness of the world outside. Recalling a verse which echoes the lush imagery of Song of Solomon, Moray becomes suddenly painfully aware of the jeopardy Alixe risked by appearing so defenselessly before these "base and

strange, estranged.

²⁸Gilbert Parker, The Seats of the Mighty (1896; rpt. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1902) 220-221.

²⁹Parker 233.

abandoned men."³⁰ It is, however, Alixe's own wild abandonment and her ability to anticipate the moves of these men which eventually enable her to undermine authoritative men like Bigot and Doltaire. Alixe epitomizes the fugitive feminine figure in Canadian literature. She shares with Matilde (madwoman, prophetess, and scarlet lady) the role of redemptrix; she moves from centre to margin; she is conservative as well as radical; she is law-abiding and law-breaking; she uses subterfuge to disenfranchise powerful men; she is storyteller as well as the source of the narrative; and the very images that men employ to regulate women, Alixe uses to deconstruct their notions of woman.

Parker's The Seats of the Mighty, the memoirs of Robert Moray, perhaps best exemplifies a nineteenth-century Canadian feminine text. Blurring fact and fiction, it professes to be the autobiography of a British spy who was captured and imprisoned by the French during the months prior to the English conquest of New France. The narrative consists of letters, fragments of poems, memories, allegory, liturgical text, and a segment of a written history of Moray's life, which doubles as a personal correspondence to Alixe. It also includes an embedded female text -- a letter written by Alixe years earlier, when she copied it into a book as a permanent record of her youthful feelings for

³⁰Parker 228.

Moray. This personal epistle is later "discovered" and read by the narrator, Moray. Alixe's diary also refers to girlish confidences exchanged with a childhood friend, songs sung at school, and popular tunes of the time.

This fragmentation of form is also related to character and narrative voice. Although Moray initially describes Alixe in conventional terms as his muse, "the benign maid whose life and deeds alone can make this story worth telling,"³¹ it soon becomes apparent that she, to a large extent, controls his narrative. In chapter one, Moray is led off to prison where he remains immobilized for most of the narrative. Without pen or paper, he is forced to "compose the story, and learn it by heart, sentence by sentence."³² Beginning with his initial memory of life, Moray attempts to "see it from first to last in a sort of whole and with a kind of measurement."³³ However he soon abandons all hope of such an ordering process: "when I began to dwell upon my childhood, one little thing gave birth to another swiftly, as you may see one flicker in the

³¹Parker 2.

³²Parker 58.

³³Parker.

heaven multiply and break upon the mystery of the dark."³⁴ The first images he constructs emerge from the memory of a voice which comes to him in his cell "all on a sudden in this silence, as if another self of me were speaking from far spaces."³⁵ This mysterious beckoning which generates his text to Alixe is the voice of his mother. It is this continual return to the mother, this steady movement toward woman that characterizes much of Canadian writing.

The feminine is the other language that disturbs the text; it is the lawless presence that emerges from the wilderness and erupts within the settlement. Dennis Lee refers to this other voice as "cadence," "the energy of infinite process," and that which is experienced "both as goad and as grace."³⁶ It is what Daphne Marlatt and John

³⁴Parker.

³⁵Parker 61.

³⁶See Dennis Lee, "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in a Colonial Space," Boundary 2 3.1 (Fall 1974) 153. Lee suggests that "to explore the obstructions to cadence is, for the Canadian, to explore the nature of colonial space" (154). He describes his own sense of paralysis and dislocation as a writer who experienced civil alienation. Through the words of George Grant ("Canadian Fate and Imperialism"), Lee receives his own "first gift of speech." "To find one's tongue-tied sense of civil loss and bafflement given words at last, to hear one's own most inarticulate hunches out loud, because most immediate in the bloodstream -- and not prettied up, and in prose like a fastidious ground well -- was to stand erect at last in one's own space" (161). In describing this "surge of release and exhilaration" (161), Lee echoes Hélène Cixous' description of feminine writing, or écriture féminine. See Hélène Cixous, "voice i . . .," Boundary 2 12.2 (Winter 1984): 51-67. See also Heather Murray, "Reading for Contradiction in the Literature of

Galt's Urseline in Bogle Corbet (1831) call "mothertongue."³⁷ Contemporary feminist critics identify this energy using more expansive terms such as multiplicity and playfulness as well as duplicity.³⁸ In describing Canada's divided heritage, W.H. New observes that the many different voices and viewpoints in our literary works do not tend to create consensus and unity but rather a babel of voices, and "dreams of speech and violence."³⁹ In his study of short fiction, New traces these violent disturbances which oppose a unified subject to the genesis of community in Canada. As with other colonial beginnings, Canada began as fragments of a particular European culture,⁴⁰ an event

Colonial Space," Future Indicative 71-84.

³⁷Daphne Marlatt, "Musing with Mothertongue," Gynocritics 223-226 and John Galt, Bogle Corbet (1831; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 191.

³⁸See Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language; Hélène Cixous, The Newly Born Woman; Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., New French Feminisms: An Anthology.

³⁹W.H. New, Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). See also Sherrill Grace, "'Listen to the Voice': Dialogism and the Canadian Novel," Future Indicative 117-136. Applying Bakhtin's concept of dialogism to Canadian literature, Grace suggests that "politically, geographically, and linguistically Canada, unlike the United States, constitutes the perfect dialogistic space" (131).

⁴⁰Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1964). See also W.L. Morton, "The Historical Phenomenon of Minorities: The Canadian Experience," Canadian Ethnic Studies 13.3 (1981): 1-39. Morton briefly

which implies separation, in this case a willing rather than wilful separation, from the motherland. The evolution of the country was affected by the time of separation and formation, by its reasons for coming into being, by its geographical demands and cultural mixes, and by pressures exerted on the new society as it began to take shape. Positioned precariously between the United States and Britain, Canada in the nineteenth century is subsequently marked by a split response -- a desire for egalitarian independence versus imperial identification.

In Surrender or Revolution Robin Mathews refers to life in the colonies as "a resistance movement."⁴¹ Situated

outlines the four modes of formation that led to Canada's existence as a country and a nation: "The first was by pre-historic migration, the process by which the territory now comprised in the Canadian state, received its aboriginal peoples from Asia, the Amerinds and the Inuit. The second was by peaceful settlement in what at least seemed to the new-comers to be unpossessed, if not vacant land... The third was the explicit conquest of Acadia in 1713 and of New France in 1763. British settlement then followed, although accompanied by the 'purchase' of aboriginal rights. The fourth process was immigration, that is permitted, often invited, entrance to lands held by a pre-existing society" (4). See also Gilles Paquet and Jean Pierre Wallot, "Nouvelle-France/Québec/Canada: A World of Limited Identities," Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World 1500-1800, eds. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 95-114. Paquet and Wallot also explore the forces which contributed to the development of Canada as a fragmented society. Because of the frequent intrusions that Canada endured, the inhabitants "never developed anything but a weak sense of belonging to a larger corporate entity" (95).

⁴¹Robin Mathews, Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution (Ottawa: Steel Rail, 1978) 1. This struggle between passive acceptance and active resistance is reflected in the two types of characters that Mathews identifies in Canadian literature: the destroyer who "is essentially an individualist,

somewhere between these two opposing responses, one passive and the other openly combatant, is the fugitive feminine who employs subversive tactics in order to instigate change, to incite revolution. The fugitive figures in nineteenth-century Canadian literature, those who live both within as well as outside the law, make important contributions to the model of community that has originated in Canada. By insisting that the law be subject to change, they ensure that the community remains pluralistic and open to 'others'. This plurality of Canadian society is implied by W.L. Morton when he writes "the political practice of Canada is to seek accommodation, social and political, in anticipation of the action of the state. The state rather registers accommodation than imposes order."⁴² The country was entered, explored, and named by out-law figures -- mystical women like Marie de l'Incarnation and Madeleine de la Peltrie whose journeys to Canada were wilful acts of opposition; Indian women who entered into strange alliances with European men; errant wives like Anna Jameson and Abraham Holmes' Belinda who rejected nineteenth-century ground rules regarding feminine behavior; and transgressive

a self-seeker, a hedonist, an exploiter and a psychological or physical despot"; and the community builder who frequently is "an imaginer, teacher or preacher ... a reconciler of opposites" (3).

⁴²Morton 2.

daughters like Frances Brooke's Emily Montague and Rosanna Leprohon's Antoinette de Nirecourt.

These fugitive figures have much in common. They generally adopt non-defeatist attitudes -- they are actors rather than acted on; they are associated with acts of appropriation as well as acts of generosity; they tell, transmit, invent their own stories; they share a common love for the land -- they celebrate the wilderness as part of rather than separate from the civilized world; they are all border-crossers -- their movements serve to destroy barriers and to re-establish new lines of communication. These figures band together to lend each other assistance, and collectively they affirm the existence of *communitas*, despite community censure.

When the fugitives are female, it is important for them to don a disguise in order to achieve mobility. Besides disguise, they also employ unusual means of transportation. Women in Canadian literature are not the innocent travellers that they often initially appear to be. In Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769) women cross oceans, contract unsanctioned marriages and immoral alliances, sell land, traverse the wilderness, and dance and play flirtatious games. In James De Mille's The Lady of the Ice (1870) women are associated with perilous places and dangerous liaisons. De Mille resorts to a military metaphor to describe the interaction of the sexes: men are

constantly being assaulted or besieged by advancing, desiring women. They make advances while the men cautiously retreat. In Charles G.D. Robert's The Forge in the Forest (1896), woman as *claritas*, as the light which shows the way, joins with the circumspect narrator to search for her lost son in the wilderness. Mizpah, the name of this female warrior, means watch-tower. Like John Richardson's Madeline De Haldimar (Wacousta), Lily Dougall's Sophia (What Necessity Knows 1893), and all of Gilbert Parker's holy women, Roberts' defiant and perceptive characters are strange and estranged women who prove to be morally and spiritually superior to man and his laws. Through the epiphanies or visions of these ex-centric characters, a more tolerant and diverse community comes into existence. Moving centrifugally, they remap the country from spaces which are not fixed, centered, or fully known.

Despite the assumption that "the colonial world was no place for a woman ... [that] it was a man's world, demanding pioneering, martial and organisational skills,"⁴³ these conventional notions are negated by the images of women in our fiction, and in historical accounts, which reveal a solid tradition of female agency in Canada. That the colonial world was not ready to openly sanction female

⁴³Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, eds., Preface, A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing (Mundelstrup: Dangaroo Press, 1986) 9.

agency is suggested by the camouflage strategies which male and female writers employ to disseminate radical ideas in their texts. Critics such as Lorna Irvine and W.H. New⁴⁴ have observed the tendency on the part of Canadian writers to use indirection, a subversive technique, in order to tell their stories. The result of this obliquity is a literature riddled with violence, ruptures, and marginalized voices, what John Moss refers to as "double vision,"⁴⁵ and what Sherrill Grace calls a "violent duality."⁴⁶ Hence, subversion, as well as a search for a voice, seems to be directly related to Canada's colonial status for much of the nineteenth century.

An equally important feature of early Canadian literature is intertextuality: "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect

⁴⁴See W.H. New, Dreams of Speech and Violence; Lorna Irvine, Introduction, Sub/Version (Toronto: ECW Press, 1986) 3-19; Sherrill Grace, "'Listen to the Voice': Dialogism and the Canadian Novel," Future Indicative 117-136; and Coral Ann Howells, "Canadianness and Women's Fiction," Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s (New York: Methuen, 1987) 11-32.

⁴⁵John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction.

⁴⁶Sherrill Grace, Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood, ed. Ken Norris (Quebec: Véhicule Press, 1980). Violent duality is a phrase used by Margaret Atwood, Afterword, The Journals of Susanna Moodie (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970) 62.

and neutralize one another.⁴⁷ This is evident in Catharine Parr Traill's Canadian Crusoes (1852) where Jacobite songs, biblical text (Matthew, Jeremiah, the Psalms), popular poetry, children's stories, romantic poetry, etc. are transposed upon the dominant narrative. In Rosanna Leprohon's Antoinette De Mirecourt (1864) French texts, literary and historical (François-Xavier Garneau's History of Canada, Balzac's La Femme de Trente Ans, Voltaire's Candide), and biblical text are assimilated. This study attempts to show how early writers create interference and rupture within their works through the utterances of characters whose discourse is not immediately heard or, when heard, not readily sanctioned. The scarlet woman, the holy woman, the lonely or reluctant pioneer, the madwoman -- these figures all create textual resonances that are ambiguous and open to interpretation. For instance, in the works of Gilbert Parker, William Kirby and Charles G.D. Roberts, the scarlet woman creates an intertextuality of feminine voices which echo as well as challenge holy writ. In so doing, she questions the moral imperatives proposed by a community that would exclude difference and opposition. These textual and intertextual disturbances negate the closed spaces which the narratives seek to create.

⁴⁷Kristeva, Desire in Language 36 and 15.

Canadian literature comes of age during the nineteenth century, a period characterized by romanticism which privileged the creative imagination over reason, intuition over scientific truth.⁴⁸ This stage in the development of Canadian literature also coincides with what Terry Eagleton refers to as the feminization of literature,⁴⁹ the rise of the novel as a literary genre, the emergence of the female author, and the increased level of literacy among women in America. As Leslie Fiedler points out in his study of the novel, the ideal protagonist is female, and in the nineteenth century the novel addresses a predominantly feminine audience.⁵⁰ The adverse reaction to novel writing,

⁴⁸See Marilyn Gaull, English Romanticism: The Human Context (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988); M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton, 1971), and Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism (New York: Random House, 1968).

⁴⁹Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

⁵⁰Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1962) 7. Fiedler suggests that the novel becomes a weapon against high culture and the elitism of an earlier age: "Though the novel marks the entrance of the libido onto the stage of European art, in it the libido enters with eyes cast down and hands clasped -- in the white garments of a maiden" (9). Fiedler also describes the novel as "a kind of conduct book" for women: "Prayer and almsgiving and self-conscious virtue" (10) were the characteristic graces of the sentimental heroine in the early novel. He places the origin of the novel at the point of intersection between "mother-directed Catholicism and father-centered Protestantism" (22). Having officially rejected the Great Mother and replaced her with "a symbolic installation of Woman, half in play, half in ritual earnest, in positions of reverence and power quite out of accord with her actual status -- on her theoretical place according to

which comes from official as well as unofficial sources, indicates an awareness of its potentially revolutionary power. Writing of the novel's reception in America, Cathy Davidson suggests "it was a dangerously inchoate form appropriate for and correlative to a country first attempting to formulate itself."⁵¹ Despite a tendency to see Canada's history as peaceful and relatively uneventful, as historian W.L. Morton points out, revolutionary ideas were by no means alien to Canadian minds.⁵²

In pre-twentieth-century Canadian fiction, revolutionary ideas are transmitted by feminine characters who often play ambiguous roles: they are neither central nor completely peripheral to the action. They are more

Christian orthodoxy" (12), the Christian world was forced, in literature, to confront what it would deny: "the eruption of the feminine principle into a patriarchal world" (12). It emerges in a myriad of forms: sentiment, hysteria, magic, holiness and madness.

⁵¹Cathy Davidson, Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 14.

⁵²W.L. Morton, ed., The Kingdom of Canada: A General History from Earliest Times (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963) 164. Perhaps rebellion rather than revolution more accurately describes Canada's past. During the seventeenth and eighteenth century there were the Indian wars, and the continual struggle for supremacy between France and England. In the nineteenth-century there was the War of 1812, the Rebellions of 1837, the Red River Rebellion of 1869, and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885.

accurately what Barbara Godard terms "ex-centric,"⁵³ both subject and object in the text. Lorna Irvine also comments on the triple role played by woman in Canadian writing: she is character, producer, and reader. Critics have theorized considerably as to why women are so prevalent and dynamic in our fictions.⁵⁴ Some suggest that because of male absence during the early years of Canadian history, the new environment placed women in unconventional positions of power. Others suggest that woman's kinship with a wilderness world encouraged an active exploration of the land and the development of abilities that, under normal circumstances, would not have taken place. In any case men and women in Canada have appropriated a feminine literary heritage. The traditional tale bearers of our culture are women and feminized men.

The feminization of our literature extends, however, beyond the significant number of women writers in our canon.

⁵³Godard, "Ex-centriques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde."

⁵⁴Adele Wiseman, "Word Power: Women and Prose in Canada Today," Journal of Canadian Studies 20.2 (Summer 1985): 5-17. Wiseman suggests one reason for the number of significant women writers in Canada is that the conditions were "similar enough to those under which male writers flourish to make it possible" (17). Anne Innis Dagg, "Women and Writing in Canada," Canadian Women Studies 8.3 (Fall 1987): 57-59 describes the popularity and success of women writing during the early days of Canada -- a time when women's novels were in great demand, even though much of the writing was not of high quality. She suggests that "of all the fiction books published by Canadians up until 1950, 40 percent were by women" (57).

It is also evident in the forms that Canadian writers generally use. Beginning with the diaries, journals, and "rambling epistles" discussed in Chapter I, many of the texts examined in this study are fragmented rather than unified or coherent narratives. In contrast to these feminine forms, Chapter I also examines as examples of masculine writing, the "gospel narratives" of the early explorers and fur-traders.

The genres used by early Canadian writers are also not fixed or rigidly adhered to. There appears to be a marked preference for blurred genres, particularly the blending of history and literature. Frances Brooke in The History of Emily Montague (1769) uses the epistolary form; she calls her novel a 'history'; it is also a subversive feminine text; it is documentary; it is romance. Likewise Richardson's Wacousta (1832) defies fixed generic description -- it is gothic, romantic and historic.

The construction of character also reflects a Canadian feminine bias. Both male and female writers create heroic female models and often impotent male models. In Brooke's The History of Emily Montague Ed Rivers is the man of sensibility who is captivated by both wild and domesticated women. Richardson's Wacousta and The Canadian Brothers depict amazonian women and impotent men. Feminine characters create indispensable ruptures, disruptions, and transformations in these texts. In Wacousta Frederick de

Haldimar violates his father's direct orders and puts himself solely in the charge of a fugitive Indian woman. The actions of characters like Ed Rivers and Frederick de Haldimar indirectly lead to the questioning of gender roles and fixed identities. They also direct the reader's attention from a centralized authority to those voices which come from the margins. Assuming in-between positions within the text, these characters assume postures which open into indeterminacy, and which reflect non-official status. For instance, Frederick abandons the uniform of a British soldier and replaces it with Indian dress and later with a Canadian disguise. This cross-dressing allows him to step out of the shadow of an overbearing, authoritative father, and enables him to view the land through the eyes of the Indian and the French-Canadian. This willing relinquishment of an old identity endows Frederick with new powers which are egalitarian, not hierarchal.

Public and official ceremonies are also rejected, to be replaced with games, play, carnival, dance, and more feminine rituals and mysteries. This shift from public to private ceremonies serves to challenge conventional authorities and to celebrate collectively other sources of knowledge. In The History of Emily Montague Arabella Fermor's love of cards and flirtation reflects her opposition to a regulated life and a strict code of ethics. In William Kirby's The Golden Dog (1877) games have a more

sinister appeal. Ludic agents like La Corriveau and Angélique des Meloises subvert the powers of a moral universe, and create havoc and destruction in private as well as public realms. Male authority is merely an illusion which these transgressive women easily shatter.

Just as systems and figures of authority are questioned in nineteenth-century fictions, so too are the limitations and inadequacies of language exposed. Most early writers are aware of the inability of a language of enlightenment, a rational discourse, to articulate a strange and recently named land. The novel experiences they attempt to record cannot be accommodated within a conventional language. As a result, writers are forced to resort to the use of other languages or systems. Embedded in traditional narratives are diverse voices: the names and traces of a vanishing indigenous people; gestures and signs which counteract or complement the resultant silences; mysticism, magic, madness, and prophecy. As the newcomers encounter a labyrinthine world, and as old-world ways of approach, entry and exploration fail them, they are forced to seek alternate systems of communication, and to embrace new sources of knowledge. Many of these alternate forms have much in common with and contribute to the reinstating of the feminine.

Action as well as language characterizes the feminine in nineteenth-century works. Critics suggest that

domestication, not conquest, is favored in Canada, and that settlement asserts the importance of community. Frye describes the wilderness as a potentially destructive site, one which instills fear and apprehension in a civilizing agent. This apprehension, however, seems to be restricted to masculine characters in Canadian fiction -- men like Sinclair Ross' Philip Bentley in As For Me and My House (1941), who assumes a Lady of Shallot position, stationed above the community where he watches a distant and inverted world. Other male characters accept the unruliness of settlement and wilderness; even their names reflect their willingness to embrace multiplicity -- Ed Rivers (The History of Emily Montague), Captain Forrester (The Canadian Brothers), and Robert Moray (The Seats of the Mighty). This movement of feminine characters between ordered and unruly worlds implies a notion of home that is also shifting. Home may be in the forest as in Charles G.D. Roberts' In the Heart of the Ancient Wood (1900); it may be in a garrison as in Brooke's The History of Emily Montague and Richardson's Wacousta; or it may be in a nomadic Indian encampment which constantly moves further away from settlement, as in Pierre Esprit Radisson's captivity narrative. It is the movement of character between settlement and wilderness and the nature of the relationship between individual and society that this study explores.

Chapter I "The Other Cartographers" provides another way of reading the genesis of Canadian letters -- not "in the beginning was the Word," but in the beginning was the land and its inhabitants. The new world was an old world, one which did not come into existence with the arrival of the European. Section i "Women and Wilderness" attempts to put woman into the landscape, to show the important contributions she made to the discovery, exploration and settlement processes. She arrived with Cartier, in fact she arrived before Cartier to survey the land. She gave birth and helped to populate the land. In the creation of new spaces in which to put down roots, she was forced to re-invent herself. She entered into an intimate contract with the wilderness and its inhabitants. Section ii "Gospel Narratives" describes a masculine response to the land -- a response characterized by physical mapping as a means to conquest and exploitation. Men like Cartier and Champlain distanced themselves from the Indian while attempting to fashion a new world based on ownership, dominance, and hierarchy. These men attempted to create a world fashioned in their own image. Section iii "Rambling Epistles" explores the beginning of an alternate tradition of feminine writing in Canada -- a style which originated in the fractured forms used by female pioneers like Anna Leveridge and Catharine Parr Traill, and letter-writers like Marie de l'Incarnation.

Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades" examines the continuity between the nineteenth-century female world as it emerges in fiction, and the lives of the real women who first settled in Canada. It also identifies the medial feminine, a literary figure which is anticipated by our ancestral shades -- those first mothers whose voices contribute to the articulation of a feminine literary tradition in Canada. This figure is associated with female agency, in particular, with the assistance which surrogate mothers give to orphaned young girls during their coming of age. These "small and private ceremonies" involving mothering agents and their female charges play a significant role in the close relational ties which develop between women in Canada. The importance of feminine rituals and traditions are affirmed in our literary works.

A very specific kind of female assistance is explored in Chapter III "Female Savior or Redemptrix." This chapter focuses on the Indian woman, a female warrior who crosses cultural borders in order to perform acts of deliverance. She has her counterpart in the historical women who functioned as guides, interpreters, peace-makers, etc. for the early explorers and fur-traders. Because of the linguistic difference between Indian and European and in fact among Indian tribes, the redemptrix very often employs silence as an alternative to a spoken or written language. Gestures and signs convey her special knowledge of the

wilderness to those in need of her assistance. With the arrival of European women in significant numbers, the Indian woman became what Sylvia van Kirk calls a "woman in between."⁵⁵ Her interaction with the European estranged her somewhat from her Indian heritage -- and yet she was not to be so readily embraced by the other culture.

Chapter IV "'A Torn Presence': Madwomen in the Wilderness" explores the consequences of rejecting female assistance. As the hysteric and the melancholic move from centre to margin, they come to occupy positions of vestige. Without maps, charts, or reliable guides, these figures move steadily toward a solitude that culminates in disaster. The hysteric, Ellen Halloway (Wacousta), dies with a violence appropriate to her extremity of action and positioning. The melancholic, Antoinette (Antoinette De Mirecourt), is rescued by the powerful voices of ancestral shades and through the intervention of fate.

While the madwoman is torn by the wilderness, the magic women of Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power" are empowered by it. Ostracized by the community because of some act of transgression, the violation of some social taboo, witch-women and wilderness crones learn to utilize

⁵⁵Sylvia van Kirk, "'Women in Between': Indian Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada," Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History, eds. Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988) 49-56.

the forces of nature. These special powers associated with the world of darkness enable ex-centric women to regain entry into society. As spy and spectator, the magic woman surveys, manipulates, and commands from the subversive reaches of the forest. She enacts her own reconciliation with or severance from community. In many ways, she is a spectre of man's fear, that the other, the wilderness exists within as well as without the perimeters of the community.

Chapter VI "Spiritual Fortress Inviolable: Falling into [W]holiness" examines how a number of writers, both male and female, try to appropriate the power of the female by stripping her of her sexuality. Transformed into a sacred space, woman with her unruly powers is rendered immaculate.

In response to male idealization, woman once again displays her fugitive nature. She accepts the moral responsibilities thrust upon her and functions appropriately as a redemptive agent. However what she refuses is the restricted space and the stasis associated with sanctity. As Mary Howard warns her male audience in the closing pages of Dougall's The Madonna of a Day, female agency is needed as much in the market-place as it is inside the home. Hence it is this movement between private and public spaces that continues to characterize women in Canada during the period of transition between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER I

The Other Cartographers

"Seeing comes before words It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled."

John Berger, Ways of Seeing

"Events are always presented from within a certain vision. Perception is a psychological process, strongly dependent on the position of the perceiving body. Seeing ... constitutes the object of narrating."

Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative

"The voice that demands to be heard is the voice of the land."

D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock

Women and Wilderness

In "Reading the Land: The Wilderness Tradition in Canadian Letters", T.D. Maclulich suggests that "the most distinctive feature of English-Canadian letters is the large number of works that deal with the wilderness tradition, the encounter between European man and the North American natural environment."¹ This reading of the land by Maclulich and others implies that the genesis of Canadian literature originates with the male -- that European man is the first significant see-er and seer in the new world.² In

¹T.D. Maclulich, "Reading the Land: The Wilderness in Canadian Letters," Journal of Canadian Studies 13.1 (1978): 30. Maclulich rejects a simplistic divided response to European-North American interaction: either the triumph of heroic European man over a primitive culture, or his disastrous impact on a natural landscape and its native people. He focuses instead on writers who seek "to read the significance of the land in the land's own terms" (30). The wilderness tradition that Maclulich examines includes fictional and non-fictional works that deal "imaginatively with the land (its natural features, plants, or animals), with the native peoples who inhabit the land, or with those whites whose lives have become closely linked with the land" (30). One problem with Maclulich's reading of Canadian letters is that it does not to any extent acknowledge the encounter between European woman and the North American natural environment. Does his neglect suggest that women do or did not read or write the land?

²Victor G. Hopwood, "Explorers by Land to 1860," Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 19-40. Hopwood states that of the early explorers and fur traders, "a large proportion were literate since both activities require records, the ubiquitous log or journal from which more subtle forms of writing can evolve" (19). He suggests that the "proto-form of our still largely

the past, historians have reaffirmed this notion that the earliest literary, as well as physical mapping, is done by male explorers, travellers, adventurers and priests. Women's stories are rarely, if ever, included in the first stage of writing in Canada. It is implied for various reasons, including physical absence and minimal representation, that women in significant numbers were not authorized to contribute to these early narratives.³ It would seem that because so few women experienced the wilderness first hand, they left no immediate accounts of their maiden journeys to the new world. Traces of a shadowy

unwritten foundation literature is the record of our explorers, fur-traders, and pioneers." See also David Galloway, "The Voyagers," Literary History of Canada 3-18. He suggests that "The early voyagers -- plain and crude as their accounts usually were -- are the real forefathers of later poets such as Earle Birney, for it is they who held in their 'morning hand/the welling wilderness of Canada, the fling of a nation'" (18).

³Ironically it was woman and her reproductive capacity that created a strong population base in New France which, in turn, enabled the French to oppose the English for so long. See Jay Myers, The Fitzhenry and Whiteside Book of Canada Facts and Dates (Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1986) 41 and 44. In 1666 when the first official census was taken, the total population was 3,215. Of this number, 2,034 were male, 1,181 were women. In 1673, the general population had increased to 6,705; in 1709, it was 42,701; in 1784, it reached 113,012. See also R. Cole Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) vol. I, plate 45 for a record of immigration to Canada by sex, 1608-1759. Before 1630, 8 women and 15 men came to Canada. Between 1650-1659, 239 women and 403 men came; between 1660-1669, 623 women and 1075 men came; between 1670-1679, 369 women and 429 men came.

female presence appear only in the brief acknowledgements they are afforded within male narratives.

And yet according to the accounts of Jacques Cartier's 1541 voyage to Canada, there were several women among the predominantly male crew.⁴ Unfortunately they have left for posterity no record of their experiences. Likewise, Samuel de Champlain's 1620 voyage included at least one significant woman, his child-bride H el ene Boull e.⁵ Again, however, there is mostly silence surrounding her short stay among the French colonists and Indians of New France. Others -- male writers -- provide tantalizing glimpses of this young woman delighting the Indians with images of themselves, reflected in a tiny mirror she wore suspended from her waist.⁶ It is obvious from these fissures and silences that the beginning of Canadian letters is related directly to the presence and mobility of the male, to the authority of the male pen, and to the limited representation of the female. Woman could not describe or inscribe that which she had not witnessed.

⁴See Jacques Cartier, ed., The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, Ed. H.P. Biggar (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924). Cartier was accompanied by Roberval who provided ships, money, men, women, and children.

⁵See Samuel De Champlain, The Works of Samuel De Champlain, Ed. H.P. Biggar, 6 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922) Vol. v, Book 1.

⁶See Marie-Emmanuel Chabot, O.S.U., "H el ene Boull e," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1966) Vol. I, 110; and Morris Bishop, Champlain: the Life of Fortitude (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) 282.

And those few privileged (or underprivileged) women, who did accompany the early male explorers, have disappeared from history, perhaps because early Canadian historians, like most historians, tend to tell his story rather than her story.

Marni L. Stanley suggests that not until the shift from male exploration to female romantic travel does a written female response to the new world finally emerge.⁷ However, bridging these two periods, as recent feminist critics have shown, there are a number of women who did contribute to the genesis of female letters in Canada.⁸ Like "the desperate

⁷See Marni L. Stanley, "Travelers' Tales: Showing and Telling, Slamming and Questing," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing, eds. Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli (Alberta: Longspoon and Newest, 1986) 51-60. Stanley focuses on the many accounts written by nineteenth-century Canadian women in diaries and letters. These women were either settlers or upper-class Englishwomen passing through Canada. Her list includes E. Catherine Bates, Harriot Blackwood, Mary Bosanquet, Agnes Dean Cameron, Mrs. E.H. Carbutt, Emily Faithful, Mary Fitzgibbon, Lady Theodora Guest, Frances E. Herring, Lady Winefred Howard, Anna Brownell Jameson, Lady Jephson, Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, Elizabeth Taylor, and Lady Ethel (Howard) Vincent.

⁸Some women who did record their responses to the new world during the early years of colonization are Marie Guyart (Marie de l'Incarnation), Elisabeth Bégon and Madeleine de Verchères. For a selection of Marie's letters, see Joyce Marshall, ed. and trans., Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967). Marie's letters will be examined in section iii of this chapter, "Rambling Epistles" and also in Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades." For the correspondence of Elisabeth Bégon with her son-in-law, Michel de La Rounillière, see Elisabeth Bégon, Letters au cher fils, ed. Nicole Deschamps (Montreal: Hurtubise, HNH, 1972). See also Céline Dupré,

and daring [male] adventurers"⁹ that Hugh MacLennan assures us form the basis of a unique Canadian character, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pioneer women such as Elizabeth Bégon, Marie Hébert, Marguerite de La Roque, Madeleine de Verchères, and Marie Guyart were impelled by the same credible sense of adventure and willingness to take grave risks. Obviously from their stories, they, like their male counterparts, did not share the exile mentality of the pioneers of a later century. There still exists today a need to make the writings of these women more visible and accessible. In 1870 George Stewart noted how easily Canadians lost view of these female figures. Commenting on their importance to a more thorough understanding of

"Elisabeth Bégon," Canadian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. III, 563-4. Elisabeth Bégon's correspondence includes nine quires and covers the years from 1749 to 1753. Dupré cites Claude de Bonnault who described the letters as "a precious and invaluable collection which could be entitled 'The 18th-century Canadians described by themselves'" (564). Madeleine de Verchères' writings are contained in Lettre à la Comtesse de Maurepas in French and English, in the Supplement to the report of the Public Archives of Canada for 1899 (Ottawa: 1901).

⁹Hugh MacLennan, "The People Behind This Peculiar Nation," Northern Lights: A New Collection of Distinguished Writing by Canadian Authors, Selected by George E. Nelson (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1960) 513-518. The nation builders that MacLennan identifies are all male. Jean Johnston, Wilderness Women: Canada's Forgotten History (Toronto: Peter martin Associates, 1973) writes "... women enjoyed much of the daring and boldness of the men and they assumed one other trait -- stability. When they reached a stopping place, they made the land theirs" (vii).

Canadian literature, Stewart suggests that critics need to rescue lost "lady warriors"¹⁰ such as Madame La Tour (who has been forgotten, her grave unmarked) and Madeline de Verchères.

Besides the vague traces of female stories glimpsed in male narratives, the fascinating story of one young woman's adventure to the new world, during the period of initial exploration and tentative colonization, does survive. Marguerite de La Roque was the niece of Sieur de Roberval, a Protestant soldier who led the 1542 expedition to take possession of Canada for France.¹¹ Having angered her uncle during the journey because of an unauthorized affair with a young man in the expedition, Marguerite, her lover and a servant were abandoned on a deserted island off the coast of Newfoundland. There within a year or so, she gave birth to a child, buried child, lover and servant, and survived for another solitary year. Eventually she was rescued by a passing ship. This story of female transgression, defiance, struggle and survival is, however, not recorded or presented

¹⁰George Stewart, "Canadian Literature," Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Editorials and Manifestos, Vol. 1, eds. Douglas M. Daymond and Leslie G. Monkman (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1984) 95-96.

¹¹See Johnston, Wilderness Women 23-33; R. La Roque de Roquebrune, "Marguerite de La Roque," Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. I, 425-6; and Arthur P. Stabler, The Legend of Marguerite de Roberval (Washington: Pullman, 1972).

from Marguerite's point of view. Her story survives as a footnote in male narratives, as court gossip told by Marguerite de Navarre,¹² or in the historical writings of André of Thevet.¹³

It is not until 1630 when communities of religious women flocked to Quebec that woman's response to the land and its inhabitants begins to actively contribute to the shaping of female narratives in Canada. Marie Guyart, an Ursuline nun known later as Marie de l'Incarnation, is the first European woman to record her immediate and personal response to the strange new environment.¹⁴ Unlike the writings of many of her male predecessors, Marie's letters were rarely revised, so they provide a somewhat spontaneous and unrestricted view of life in seventeenth-century Canada. Speaking peripherally, as a religious figure from within cloister walls, and as a woman within the walls of a

¹²Marguerite de Navarre, The L'Heptameron of Margaret, Queen of Navarre, trans. Walter K. Kelly (1559; rpt. London, 1900) 210-223.

¹³André Thevet's North America: A Sixteenth-Century View, ed. and trans. Roger Schlesinger and Arthur P. Stabler (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1986) 62-69.

¹⁴Guyart, Word from New France. See also Marie-Emmanuel Chabot, O.S.U., "Marie Guyart" Canadian Dictionary of Biography Vol. I, 351-359. For a brief discussion of the important contribution Marie's letters make to a female tradition of writing in Canada, see Catherine Rubinger, "Some Pioneer Women Writers of French Canada," Canadian Women's Studies 3.1 (1981): 37-39.

garrison, Marie in her correspondence provides an important document, situated at the beginning of a female tradition of writing in Canada. Her long and consistent written contact with Europe, extending from 1633 to 1671, provides a female alternative to the officially recognized male corpus, the Jesuit Relations, letters covering a similar period.¹⁵

Although in coming to Canada Marie shares a common goal with her religious male counterparts, on arrival at Quebec she assumes a slightly different position. While the Jesuit fathers establish itinerant missions and attempt naturalization, adopting in many cases the life style and accepting the subsequent hardships of the Indian, women in religious communities occupy fairly stationary positions. Segregated within the garrison, they lack male mobility, and hence the opportunity to physically explore and know the world outside its walls. Instead the wilderness is somewhat distant and subdued. On the other hand, the Indians with whom they come in contact actively seek the sanctuary offered by these holy women. The restriction placed on female movement is emphasized when Madeleine de la Peltrie, Marie's companion, wishes to accompany a group of Indians on

¹⁵Thwaites, Reuben, ed., Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791, 73 vols. (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959). In Word from New France, Marshall estimates that Marie's total correspondence numbered twenty thousand letters, many of which have been lost (31).

a canoe voyage -- she is promptly forbidden by authorities to proceed with her plans. In Letter 15 "The Desertion," Marie writes that Madeleine de la Peltrie "is resolved to spend the winter [at Montreal] amidst the dangers ... her intentions are good and holy ... she is staying in Montreal to seek some means to make a second establishment of our Order there.... But ... the danger to her person troubles me more than all the promises she makes me."¹⁶ Marshall writes that Madeleine de la Peltrie was finally persuaded to return to Quebec: "She had been determined to visit the Huron missions and had got as far as arranging for a canoe and men to paddle it, but the necessary permission was not so easily obtained."¹⁷ And so, although a woman is willing to explore the land, a distance is imposed between woman and wilderness.

Despite a lack of movement through the landscape, Marie suggests that nature is an intrusive force in the lives of all the garrison's inhabitants, male or female, European or native. Partial separation does not inhibit the women from developing intense relationships with the land or the Indian. Although women were not engaged so intimately in shaping or changing the physical environment as were the

¹⁶Guyart, Word from New France 118-119.

¹⁷Guyart, 387.

men, they did indeed leave their imprint on Canada's social and religious institutions. Perhaps more important though was the extent to which the land shaped the lives of women, for it allowed them to explore new roles, to test their capabilities, and to acquire unconventional skills.

The establishment of these first religious and commercial communities at Quebec, Montreal, and Three Rivers led to the first permanent organization of women in the new world. Veronica Strong-Boag suggests that the frontier thesis (made famous by Frederick J. Turner and applied initially to the American settlement process), which emphasizes nature's impact on man and his institutions, helped to popularize the heroic figure of the competent pioneer woman in Canada. Certainly in the frontier world of New France, prior to the English conquest, women were visible, vocal, and played important historical roles. With the shift from frontier to metropolis, sexual patterning takes place, and women appear to lose prominence. Strong-Boag implies that the metropolitan thesis advocated by H.A. Innis fails to provide "a mythopoeic figure comparable to that of the pioneer."¹⁸

¹⁸Veronica Strong-Boag, "Cousin Cinderella: A Guide to Historical Literature Pertaining to Canadian Women," Women in Canada, ed. Marylee Stephenson (Toronto: New Press, 1973) 264.

Whether within a frontier or metropolis setting, women in the new world who write about their experiences assume a relationship with the land that is markedly different from that of the male. Whereas he ranges freely or anxiously through the wilderness, her explorations take place closer to home. Any physical journeys taken by women are usually unauthorized or undertaken reluctantly -- for example, generally they could only enter the hinterland as captives or unwilling voyagers. Captivity narratives by and about women appear frequently during the colonial period. One of the earliest is The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682). The authors of these popular captivity narratives rely heavily on the theme of the weak, unfortunate woman destroyed by the wilderness. Many claim to be based on actual experiences of women captured by American Indians, while at the same time they employ sensationalism and sentiment. American critic Annette Kolodny sees the female tendency to create smaller spaces, such as the domestic and enclosed gardens, as an anxious response to her fear of captivity by wandering groups of Indians.¹⁹

The captivity narrative, a literary form indigenous to the new world, is represented in an altered shape in

¹⁹Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

Canadian fiction by both Susanna Moodie and her sister, Catharine Parr Traill. In Roughing it in the Bush (1852) Moodie depicts the backwoods as a prison-house and herself as a captive of the wilderness. In Canadian Crusoes (1852) Traill also examines the theme of female captivity and restoration. In Lords of the North (1900) Agnes C. Laut presents a romantic narrative about the capture of a European woman and her young son. In contrast to these apprehensive views of Indian and wilderness, Mary Jemison's captivity narrative presents a reasonably favorable view of Indian life. Following a lengthy period of captivity, Jemison suggests that the tasks of Indian women were not harder than her white sisters, while her cares "were not half as numerous nor as great."²⁰

Unlike in American history and literature, relatively few female captivity narratives have surfaced in French or English-Canadian writings, although history and fiction record that a number of European women did in fact experience captivity among various Indian tribes. In her letters home, Marie de l'Incarnation mentions a French woman who was abducted by the Indians from her home at

²⁰Mary Jemison, A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison, ed. James Seaver (New York: Corinth Books, 1961) 70.

Montreal.²¹ Marshall identifies this woman as Catherine Boudart. She was captured 6 May 1651 and was "burned alive after having her breasts, nose, and ears cut off."²² In The History of Emily Montague (1769) Frances Brooke refers to Esther Wheelwright (later Marie-Joseph de l'Enfant-Jésus) who was rescued from the Abenakis by Vincent Bigot (1649-1720), a Jesuit missionary to the Indians.²³ She was ransomed and brought to Quebec where she entered the Ursuline convent. Later in 1760 she was elected Mother superior. Another young woman Marie-Anne Davis, who was a captive of the Abenakis at the same time as Esther, also came to Quebec and became a nun (Sainte-Cécile) at Hôtel-Dieu in 1710.²⁴ Another historical account of female captivity in Canada is the story of Theresa Gowanlock.²⁵ She was taken prisoner by a band of Cree Indians following her husband's murder in a massacre during the North-West

²¹Guyart, 203.

²²Guyart, 399.

²³Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, ed. Mary Jane Edwards (1769; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1985) 14-15.

²⁴Canadian Dictionary of Biography Vol. II, 65.

²⁵Eve Zaremba, ed., Privilege of Sex: A Century of Canadian Women (Toronto: Anansi, 1974) 55-92.

Rebellion of 1884. In her personal epistle of privation and terror, she comments bitterly on the discrepancy between real life and the world of fiction: "Where the charm of a savage life comes in I do not know, I failed to observe it during my experience in the camp of the Crees. The charm is a delusion, except perhaps when viewed from the deck of a steamer as it glided along the large rivers and lakes of the Indian country, or perhaps within the pages of a blood and thunder novel."²⁶

Whether as captives, companions to male explorers, religious teachers, or pioneers, it becomes clear from a rereading of Canadian history (or more often reading between the lines), that from the time of the earliest collisions between old and new world cultures, women did see, respond and record their personal impressions of the land. They are neither absent, invisible, nor silent. From the beginnings of exploration and settlement women existed side by side with men, and filled multiple and significant roles.

A number of contemporary women historians are now beginning to piece together a more dynamic portrait of female contribution to the genesis of community in Canada than historians generally have presented in the past. In "Women of Three Rivers: 1651-63" Isabel Foulché-Delbosc re-examines the role of women in this small outpost during the

²⁶Zaremba, Privilege of Sex 82.

turbulent early years in New France.²⁷ Through her study of official documents, Foulché-Delbosc suggests that, while the majority of women in the metropolis were wives, nuns, or servants, several outstanding women performed more public roles. Jeanne Enard, mother of six children and wife of a fur trader, "was the business head of the family both as regards the fur trade and the household management."²⁸ Mathurine Poisson was a wife and "a recognized merchant [who] sold imported goods to the colonists. She acted in her own name and had no need for her husband's permission in her dealings."²⁹ Mme. Christopher Crevier was described as a "termagant" in business relations and Mme. des Groseilliers was "the first advocate of women's rights."³⁰

In Canadian Women: A History Alison Prentice et al. also describe the complex circumstances that marked the lives of French women who came to New France, and the

²⁷Isabel Foulché-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers: 1651-63," The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol. I, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 14-26.

²⁸Foulché-Delbosc 25.

²⁹Foulché-Delbosc 25.

³⁰Foulché-Delbosc 26.

diversity of their contributions to communal development.³¹ Some came independently to serve as engagées or indentured servants, or as members of female religious societies. Others play a more direct role in the commercial life of the colony. Agathe de Saint-Père (Madame de Repentigny) of Montreal is credited with introducing the textile industry into Canada. Marie-Anne Barbel took sole charge of a business she shared with her husband following his untimely death. She traded in furs, bought and sold properties, and established a brickworks. As mistresses and wives, women actively influenced political affairs. Marie-Madeleine Maisonette was an Acadian woman who influenced the military circles of her British husband. Mme. Peán was reputed to be the mistress of the powerful French Intendant, François Bigot. The wife of Governor Vaudreuil was often directly petitioned in preference to her husband. Women also operated taverns, illegal as well as legal trading operations, sawmills, etc. They played a vital role in medicine as healers and midwives. They managed hospitals, almshouses, and schools.

In their collective history of Quebec women, Micheline Dumont et al. also describe the significant roles "worthy of

³¹Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, and Naomi Black, eds., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).

recording in official histories"³² that a large number of women played during the colonial period. New France also paid homage to the first female rogue. In 1738 Esther Brandeau, aged twenty and disguised as a boy, arrived in Quebec on a ship from France. Her identity was discovered by chance and after much official interrogation, she was arrested and shipped back to France. Esther was Jewish and no Jews were allowed in the French colony.³³ Dumont et al. suggest that as a stable society began to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century, women were restricted more to family life. A normalized society led to the rejection of women from more prominent public roles.

Just as historians are reviewing Canada's early history, so too literary criticism in Canada is undergoing a process of revisionism. Responding to recent literary discussions regarding what in the past has been a male reading of the land, Heather Murray proposes in its place "an other" tradition of wilderness writing in Canada that is

³²Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne, and Jennifer Stoddart, eds., Quebec Women: A History, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987).

³³See B.G. Sacks, History of the Jews in Canada, trans. Ralph Novak (Montreal: Harvester House, 1965).

"existent, different and unacknowledged."³⁴ Offering a model for land which differs from the binary system generally employed by male critics, Murray postulates a "spectrum of environments"³⁵ which includes a city/pseudo-

³⁴Heather Murray, "Women in the Wilderness," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Alberta: Longspoon/Newest Press, 1986) 74-83. In redefining the land, Murray suggests that "Wilderness in Canada is where you make it, or where you imagine it to be. It is not a place, but a category, defined as much by absences and contrasts as by positives and characteristics" (75). In viewing women's writing as "a literature of dangerous middles" (75) Murray emphasizes English-Canadian women authors as both mainstream and marginalized writers.

³⁵Murray, 74. Here Murray refers back to the ideas of Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (1967; rpt. New Haven, Yale University, 1982). For other discussions of the relationship between women and the land, see Marcia Kline, Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) and Susan Joan Wood, The Land in Canadian Prose 1840-1945 (Ottawa: Carleton Monographs, 1988). Like Murray, Wood sees a complex relationship between the individual and the land: she views it as a "triple inter-relation of the individual, the physical environment, and the social environment ..." (1). See also Annette Kolodny, The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975) and The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), and Glenda Riley, The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988). In The Lay of the Land, Kolodny suggests two different responses to the new world landscape: the male perceives it as an object to be dominated and exploited; the female views it as a maternal garden which provokes from woman an erotic response. Kolodny explores this female relationship further in The Land Before Her where she describes how women held to their dreams of creating gardens in the wilderness. Dispossessed of paradise, they were impelled to create spaces that were truly and unequivocally theirs. Kolodny suggests that, for women, gardening became a socially sanctioned means of altering the landscape; it

wilderness/wilderness continuum. She suggests that as "a mediating middle ground,"³⁶ the pseudo-wilderness acts as a site of redemption, inspiration, transition and change for the female. In rejecting the simplistic dualism of wilderness/garrison and nature/culture, for a more complex and shifting continuum of place, Murray highlights, as features of feminine writing "the importance of multiplicity, variety and contrast; the attachment of values to nature's several states, depending on the mood and placement of the viewer; and, most important, notions of the scenic and picturesque, and especially the division of an apprehended landscape into near, middle and further grounds."³⁷ Because men and women occupy different cultural as well as physical spaces, it is reasonable to assume that their different positions contribute to alternate perspectives. Seeing the world differently, women read and narrate what they see in a fashion different from men.

The wilderness continuum proposed by Murray is clearly

afforded an intimacy that man's larger-ranging explorations precluded; it suggested a non-violent response to the environment; and the language associated with gardening offered escape from the psychology of captivity. Consequently, Kolodny sees the male as denaturalizing (clearing, erecting, building) and the female as renaturalizing (entering into a new contract with nature).

³⁶Murray 76.

³⁷Murray 79.

evident in Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769) which is often cited as the first Canadian novel.³⁸ The three central characters, Ed Rivers, Arabella Fermor and Emily Montague, move between the green world of England and colonial Quebec, where wilderness infiltrates the garrison. As one of Canada's earliest fictional colonists, Rivers exhibits an ambivalent response to his wilderness environment. He is amazed by the beautiful and sublime in nature. The silence and magnificence of the land evoke feelings of veneration for a land still relatively inviolate. On the other hand, he is keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of the country: "This colony is a rich mine yet unopen'd."³⁹ In this uncultivated wilderness, Rivers proposes to fix his dominion, to "taste one of the greatest of all pleasures, that of creation, and see order and beauty gradually rise from chaos."⁴⁰ Perceptively he acknowledges the wealth which awaits him: "Nature is here a bountiful mother, who pours forth her gifts almost unsolicited."⁴¹ Ironically Rivers comes to Canada because

³⁸Brooke, The History of Emily Montague.

³⁹Brooke 25.

⁴⁰Brooke 4.

⁴¹Brooke 25.

both his mother country and his mother can no longer provide him with a level of prosperity which his station in life requires. Yet rather than wait to reap the riches he anticipates in Canada, Rivers eventually returns home where he shares with Emily an idyllic pastoral retreat.

Three female characters in Brooke's text represent various positions in the wilderness spectrum. Emily, who has recently left a convent, is associated primarily with the image of the garden, a domesticated and bound space. She has no connection with the wilderness and no strong desire to stay in Canada. Madame des Roches signifies the naturalized space of the wilderness now threatened by the English conquest. She is a dangerous presence who momentarily lures Rivers away from the safety of Quebec and Emily. She provides him with the possibility of exploring the wild lands of Quebec. Arabella represents the mediating middle ground -- her response to the wilderness is characterized by pleasure and playfulness. Although not naturalized (she is English), she, more than any other European character, enters into an intimate relationship with the land. Unlike Rivers and Emily who guard themselves against its powerful enticement, Arabella allows the land to seduce her with its savage luxuriance. This is an

appropriate response for Arabella is also the first artist-figure in Canadian literature.⁴²

As aesthetic voice, Arabella articulates a female response to the land as she moves freely between garrison and wilderness. Her treks outside the walls of Quebec are not as free ranging as those of Rivers but what she lacks in mobility, she compensates for in her detailed appreciation of the Canadian landscape. Although she shares with Rivers a romanticized view of the wilderness, at the same time she also possesses a practical or utilitarian approach which implies a more sensible relationship. As a result, her encounters with landscape seem more sensual and immediate. Annis Pratt suggests that a close identification with nature is a persistent theme in women's fiction.⁴³ Unlike in masculine writing where the land is to be conquered, possessed and exploited, in feminine works it "is a place

⁴²See Robert Kroetsch, "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue," Mosaic 4.2 (Spring 1981): v-xi; rpt. The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989) 64-72. Kroetsch writes "The figure of the artist is obsessively present in Canadian writing; the Kunstlerroman is, often, its sub-genre. In the beginning is the artist, beginning. With the difference that in Canadian writing the artist-figure is often a woman" (66).

⁴³Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fictions (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981).

from which [woman] sets forth and a memory to which she returns for renewal."⁴⁴

Like other women who are dissatisfied with the usual ways of defining the frontier or wilderness area as male in orientation, Glenda Riley in The Female Frontier offers a unique view of the interaction between woman and wilderness, not as a place but as "shared experiences and responses."⁴⁵ Observing that men's lives more often take form as a result of their physical setting and its resources, Riley suggests that women are not as actively or intimately involved in the frontier as are men. She posits as reason for women's separation from wilderness the fact that women's lives are focused upon domestic production, childbirth, childcare and family relationships. In this Riley affirms Jessie Bernard's conceptualization of the female world as radically different from that of the male. Bernard views women as more communal than men, whom she defines as agenic.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Pratt, Archetypal Patterns 17.

⁴⁵Riley, The Female Frontier 2.

⁴⁶Jessie Bernard, The Female World (New York: The Free Press, 1981). Bernard believes that women and men do indeed experience the world differently. She suggests that men, using exclusionary techniques, regularly or intermittently need to distance themselves from the female world. As an example, she refers to the fleeing man as the archetypal hero in the American novel. See also Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1962). The Jesuit fathers saw as their first task the necessity of fixing or rendering stationary, the nomadic bands of Indians. See Eleanor Leacock,

Regardless of whether women are settled or migratory, static or mobile, associated with metropolis or hinterland (and, as this thesis shall demonstrate, they do cross all these borders both historically as well as in the fiction written in Canada), woman's place in early Canadian fiction is characterized by closer relational ties, and by more intimate connection, a love and/or duty ethos and commitment to the land.⁴⁷

This study suggests that what men and women share regarding their responses to the land and what contributes to the uniquely feminine nature of Canadian writing is an acceptance that the land and forces outside of man or woman are dominant. The female pioneers of the nineteenth

"Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization," Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986) 7-22. Leacock suggests the Jesuits were troubled by the lack of hierarchy among certain Indian tribes and in particular by the presence of female authority. They responded by imposing a European family structure on the Indians. The early fur traders moved between hinterland (the unsettled, marginal world of Indian and wilderness) and metropolis (settled, more civilized centres). Critics suggest that a lack of mobility and the largeness of the land contributed to the strong sense of regionalism which has developed in Canada. For discussion of "geography as psychology" see Emily Toth, ed., Regionalism and the Female Imagination: A Collection of Essays (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1985). Of particular interest is Cathy N. Davidson, "Geography as Psychology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence" 129-138.

⁴⁷This intimate connection will be explored in section iii of this chapter, "Rambling Epistles," and in Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades."

century, like the early male explorers and adventurers, were compelled to occupy positions "on the continuous periphery of culture's clearing."⁴⁸ Shifting uneasily between metropolis and hinterland, house and wilderness, all new arrivals (both male and female) struggle to achieve a precarious balance between utilizing and intimately knowing the wilderness. In a country where the land refuses to be compliant, man is forced to readjust his relationship with the environment in order to accommodate its capriciousness. Both men and women have to submit to the pull of an "other" more powerful and pervasive force.

As Leslie Armour observes, for Canadians the land has always been close and problematic -- "the source of our prospects and the source of our limitations."⁴⁹ For the female, it offers infinitely more prospects than limitations. So many Canadian women and fictional females actively seek, enter, and survive in a wilderness environment. However, for the male, burdened by social conventions that he must tame, cultivate, master the land,

⁴⁸Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," Woman, Culture and Society, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (California: Stanford University Press, 1974) 85. This notion of woman as intermediary or medial figure is explored in Chapter II.

⁴⁹Leslie Armour, "Canada and the Idea of Nature: An Interpretation," Interpreting Canada: Four Essays (Vancouver: Tantalus Research Ltd., 1986) 43-65.

the land often creates more anxiety for it tends to emphasize his impotence, to stress his weaknesses, to define explicitly the limits of his endurance. This may account for the many impotent or powerless male characters depicted in Canadian fiction.

Having established that historically the lives of women in Canada were intricately connected to the land, I will in the following sections show how the unique double vision of characters like Frances Brooke's *Arabella Fermor* establishes a continuum that eventually lends to the shaping of a feminine Canadian literature. Moving from the chronicles and the gospel narratives left by the earliest male explorers to the "personal epistles,"⁵⁰ the gossip narratives written by women, a perceptible shift begins to take place. The authoritative discourse, the sacred writ of men like Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain and Alexander Mackenzie gives way to a more subjective and fragmented discourse. To exemplify this shift from a masculine to a

⁵⁰I am indebted to Dale Spender, Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers (New York: Pandora, 1988) for this description of female letters, diaries and journals. In her recovery of lost, forgotten, or devalued female writers, Spender identifies these personal epistles of women as a significant contribution to the history of women. The daily details of women's lives in the past enable us to piece together a pattern of women's heritage. Spender suggests that while women were blazing new trails in the new land, they adopted a non-confrontational stance with the indigene and attempted to interweave public and private concerns in their works.

feminine tradition of letters,⁵¹ I will examine the eccentric works of Pierre Esprit Radisson and Samuel Hearne to show how they are at odds with their masculine counterparts. The chapter will conclude with an examination of how women write the world during the formative years of Canadian literature, and how this feminine perspective or focalization becomes a distinguishing feature of our fiction from the publication of Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769) to the contemporary texts of writers like Timothy Findley, Jack Hodgins, and Margaret Atwood, to name just a few.

⁵¹I am drawing on the theories of French feminists for a definition of feminine literature. Hélène Cixous, "voice i" in Boundary 2 12.2 (1984) describes feminine writing in this manner: "I speak of a decipherable libidinal femininity which can be located in a writing that can have been produced by a male or female. [Libidinal] defines something precise which has been defined by Freud in his numerous writings as libido. It is something that can be defined from the body, as the movement of a pulsion toward an object and which is part of the discoveries that may be defined as the Freudian discoveries par excellence. It allows us to know what in other times had been analyzed as the treaty of passions" (51-52). See also Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Post-structural Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987). Weedon cites the French feminists' theory of language that aligns rational discourse with the masculine, and feminine discourse with forms and aspects of language marginalized or suppressed by rationalism (9).

ii

Gospel Narratives

"Even with his back turned to her she yields to him. And in his mind, he imagines that he can conceive without her. In his mind he develops the means to supplant her miracles with his own. In his mind, he no longer relies on her. What he possesses, he says, is his to use and to abandon."

Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her

"This is a tale of arms and of a man."

Virgil, The Aeneid

"Canada seemed so full of accidents and possibilities that it could have broken a man."

Marion Quednau, The Butterfly Chair

"Civilized Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is Other -- outside, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control."

Ursula K. LeGuin, "Women/Wilderness"

The male narrator that emerges from several of the journals and log books of the early explorers and fur traders⁵² views himself as a civilizing agent whose duty !t

⁵²The texts examined are: H.P. Biggar, ed., The Voyages of Jacques Cartier (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924); H.P. Biggar, ed., The Works of Samuel de Champlain 6 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922); Gabriel Sagard, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons, ed. George Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society,

is to survey, penetrate, and master the wilderness. Such an approach is doomed to failure, for in Canada, a harsh northern country, the land does not acquiesce to these male imperatives. The resultant clash between human arrogance and an unyielding land creates feelings of anxiety and fear of impotence in those who actively seek to conquer. As a number of historians have observed, Canada's development was based on an accommodation between man and nature.⁵³ The

1939); Sir E. Denison Ross and Eileen Power, eds., Marc Lencarbot: Nova Francia, a Description of Acadia, 1606 (London: Harper and Brothers, 1928); Rueben Twaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents; Travels and Exploration of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791, 73 vols. (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959); Arthur T. Adams, ed., The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson (Minnesota: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1961); Jonathan Carver, Travels through the Interior Parts of North America 1760-1776, ed. James Bain (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969); Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772, ed. T.B. Tyrrell (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1911); Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America (1859; rpt. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1968); Alexander MacKenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793 (Toronto: The Radisson Society of Canada Ltd., 1927); William Francis Butler, The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1872); and George M. Grant, Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872 (Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1873). For a discussion of how a few of these journals, diaries, log books, etc. become shaped narratives, see T.D. MacLulich, "Quest, Odyssey, Ordeal: Canadian Exploration as Literature," Kanada: Grundlagen zur Literatur in Englischer Sprache (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1987) 129-136; 1st pub. Canadian Literature 81 (Summer 1979): 72-85.

⁵³Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) 19, notes how indispensable the Indians and their skills were to the survival of the early Europeans in North America, as well as to later pioneers. One of the most comprehensive overviews of historical examinations of

early fur traders, explorers, Jesuit missionaries, and pioneers were all at some point forced to utilize the skills of the Indian and know the land intimately in order to enter the wilderness and survive its hardships.

As Victor Hopwood notes, the historical process of creating an image of the new land starts with the early explorers, fur traders and missionaries.⁵⁴ Hence, the earliest images of Canada are filtered through a male perspective. As early documents of Canadian literature, these shaped narratives are generally plain, concrete, incisive and free from rhetoric or conceit. More

the impact of land on the development of Canadian letters is Eli Mandel's "Introduction," Contexts of Canadian Criticism, ed. Eli Mandel (1971; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) 3-25. Mandel notes George Grant's fateful analysis that Canadian literature is "impinge[d] on ... in an enormously threatening way" (5) by an alien and powerful physical environment. See George Grant, Technology and Empire (Toronto, 1969). Mandel describes E.K. Brown's On Canadian Poetry (Toronto, 1943) as a classic critical work because of Brown's perceptive notions that "a new literature evolves from some primitive beginning toward a more and more sophisticated present" (6) and that "this evolution is hampered in Canada" (6) by the formidable presence of the wilderness. In a review of Brown's work, Northrop Frye, "Canada and Its Poetry," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, eds. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski (Toronto, 1967) 93, concludes that the "outstanding achievement of Canadian poetry is the evocation of stark terror" (93). Historian J.M.S. Careless also analyses the relationship between metropolis and wilderness in terms of a continuous process of adaption to the environment. See J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," Approaches to Canadian History, ed. Carl Berger (Toronto: 1967) 63-83.

⁵⁴Victor G. Hopwood, "Explorers by Land: to 1860," Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 19-40.

informative than imaginative, they seem concerned with society more than with nature. Written by men trained to observe and record accurately, these descriptions of the land are often starkly unadorned.⁵⁵

What most of the male narrators of these works have in common is a shared belief that they are assisting, are agents in, some divine plan. Like knights on a crusade, they travel under some sense of direct guidance. That these historical narratives contributed to the shaping of Canadian literature is evident in the characters depicted within subsequent fictions. Ed Rivers in Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769) is a purely fictitious construct, yet he echoes many of the sentiments of these earlier historical figures. As a colonizer, he comes to Canada to exploit and domesticate the land and to civilize its inhabitants. This is the central motivation of most characters in early nineteenth-century fiction. In Bogle Corbet (1831) John Galt's allegorical Mr. Hoard exemplifies the enterprising colonial spirit and pursuit of wealth that entice men from all walks of life to dare the hardships of a labyrinthine new world. Oppressed with taxation and having less and less recourse to the profitable investment of money, the celibate Mr. Hoard contemplates increasing his

⁵⁵David Galloway, "The Voyagers," Literary History of Canada 3-18.

wealth in America. In the opening chapter of Bogle Corbet Galt discusses the romanticized notions about emigration and exposes "the various subterfuges"⁵⁶ employed by those too embarrassed to admit their true intentions. "Money, the want of it, or to get it, is the actuating spring, whatever may be the pretexts of intending emigrants"⁵⁷ Although he does not share Ed Rivers' romantic notion of questing in new lands, Bogle Corbet, like the explorers, does keep "a log-book, more minute than that of the ship"⁵⁸ during his voyage to Canada. And on arrival, he relies on his scientific knowledge of astronomy, ornithology, botany, etc. to learn to adapt to the foreign landscape. In Brooke's novel, Ed Rivers also describes himself as a "poor knight errant"⁵⁹ questing through the wilderness; Jacques Cartier sails under the guidance of Francis I; Samuel Champlain seems to be directly led by God. This masculine approach to the land, reflected in Turner's frontier thesis,⁶⁰ is

⁵⁶John Galt, Bogle Corbet (1831; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 9.

⁵⁷Galt 11.

⁵⁸Galt 20.

⁵⁹Brooke, History of Emily Montague 18.

⁶⁰See Michael S. Cross, ed., The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Publishing Co., 1970) for a review of the historians' debate, beginning with Frederick Jackson Turner,

characterized by a strong sense of individualism, ambition and domination. Ironically as these diverse men enter alien territory, their authoritative posturings come under attack, as they find themselves constantly in need of reinforcement. Reading between the lines of these early journals, one

"The Significance of the Frontier in American History," The Frontier in American History (1893; rpt. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920). Turner theorizes that American development is demonstrated by western expansion, a continuous return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line. He defines the frontier as the outer margins of settled areas, the hither edge of free land. This point at which wilderness and civilization meet becomes the site which furnishes the forces contributing to the formation of the American character. It strips man of his conventional attitudes and forces him to adopt a more primitive (i.e. Indian and wilderness) attitude. The repeated exposure to primitive conditions nurtures an aggressive pioneering national spirit characterized by a strong sense of individualism and self-reliance. Cross includes historical views of how Turner's thesis relates to French Canada. See John L. McDougall, "The Frontier School and Canadian History," 35-38. McDougall argues that despite the proximity of the wilderness and the French adoption of Indian methods of wilderness survival, the "distinguishing mark of French Canada is the degree of social cohesion which it possesses" (37). The establishment of community takes precedence over responding to the call of the wild. In "The North American Environment and the French Canadians: a Nationaliste Interpretation," 45-58 Raymond Douville and Jacques Casanova describe how the European tried to understand and tolerate the severity of the wilderness. Influenced by the climate, the immensity of the land, and the proximity of the Indians, the French evolved a new culture in a strange land many miles from the mother country. Nationalist historians in Quebec view the English conquest as a neutralizing influence, which sapped French Canadian society of its spirit of independence. Other accounts relating French Canada and the frontier included in Cross, ed. The Frontier Thesis are "Contemporaries Explain the Frontier in Terms of Free Land" 49-52; "The Communal Nature of the French Canadian Frontier" 53-54; and "The French Canadians and the Pioneering Instinct" 55-58. Another comprehensive discussion of physical environment and the French regime is The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760 by W.J. Eccles (1969; rpt. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974).

senses that often both God and any earthly power seem far away. Because the male writer accepts the role of central intelligence and adopts a centripetal position, he strives to attain God-like stature in his text -- a feat he does not always successfully achieve.

Underlying many of these shaped narratives in which the narrator is presented as a fixed identity -- explorer, priest, governor, colonizer -- there are echoes of an ominous and pervasive fear of the unknown. When, on their initial voyage to the new world, Cartier and his men encounter a large group of Indians in two fleets of canoes, the Europeans ignore the Indians' attempt to make immediate contact. Not trusting their ambiguous signs and gestures, Cartier waves to them to retreat. When they fail to comply to the European command to withdraw, Cartier's group shoots over their heads several small cannon. When this aggressive action again fails to deter the Indians, Cartier orders his men to intensify their defence. Finally the Indians scatter.⁶¹ Likewise, when on their second voyage Cartier's men come down with scurvy and twenty-five die, Cartier conceals their vulnerability from the Indians lest they take

⁶¹See Cartier 50-51. In this encounter Cartier realized that he and his crew (which occupied one boat) were outnumbered and inadequately armed to defend themselves. European and Indian finally do make contact but not until Cartier has the force of his ship and his complete crew behind him.

advantage of the Europeans' plight.⁶² Very few of the early explorers openly admit feelings of fear or anxiety. Any unmanly response is often partially concealed by a projected image of combined competency and superiority.

Like other writers who follow him, Cartier attempts to make the strange world familiar by constant naming, most often within a religious framework (i.e. he makes reference to saints' days, to the observance of religious ceremonies, to the names of the regency, etc.). In so doing, he creates the illusion of ordering or controlling the unruly and shifting forces which surround him. In some cases, his relations indicate "double naming."⁶³ One site is named St. Lenore's after a sixth-century Breton bishop whose festival

⁶²Cartier, Voyages 204-205. When several of the men die, Cartier and his men offer prayers to the image of the Virgin Mary and vow to go on a pilgrimage to the Lady of Rocamadour. By mid-November twenty-five men are dead, and Cartier orders the remaining survivors to create a ruse to deceive the Indians as to the extent of their illness. Through deception the captain obtains the information from the Indians that Dom Agayal, who had been formerly ill, was cured by the juice of the leaves of the annedda tree (perhaps the sassafras or hemlock).

⁶³Cartier, Voyage 44. Naming and double naming indicate the Europeans' intent to appropriate the land and re-invent it by identifying it as an extension of Europe. For example one of the first places named by Jacques Cartier on his first voyage is St. Catherine's Harbour (the Spanish had named it Catalina) in Newfoundland. Again this site was named doubly: once for Cartier's wife, Catherine des Granches and second for St. Catherine of Sienna's feast day. For a discussion of naming in America, see George Stewart, Names on the Land (1945; rpt. San Francisco: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1982). Stewart writes that "names are always shadows of the men who gave them" (85).

they were celebrating. Then it is renamed Baye de Ste. Marie, after the Visitation of the Virgin which is also commemorated in July. Another example is the island of Orleans, named for the third son of Francis I, which is also called Isle of Bacchus because of the abundance of fruit.

In The Conquest of America, Tzvetan Todorov suggests that "nomination is equivalent to taking possession,"⁶⁴ and

⁶⁴Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, trans. Richard Howard (1982; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1984). I am indebted to Todorov's examination of the Indian as "the exterior and remote other" (3). Todorov suggests the other may also refer to any specific social group to which we, who view ourselves as subjects, belong: women for men, rich for the poor, the mad for the insane, the Indian for the European. He also equates the conquest of the American continent with the European attempt to assimilate the other, to entice colonized peoples to adopt European customs. The dual processes of adoption and absorption were attempted by the Jesuit missionaries in New France in their experiment at Huronia. More often, however, these religious men reversed the processes when they actively sought adoption among various Indian tribes where they absorbed facets of Indian life while attempting to impose Christianity on what they believed were a heathen people. In many of these cases the discovery of the other led to realizing more aspects of the self (strength, courage, endurance, etc.) that normally would never have been confronted. By experiencing and accepting difference, European man detected the strange diversity within all men. For other discussions of the self and other in relation to the encounter between European and the North American landscape, see Terry Goldie, Fear and Temptation: the Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), especially 3-18; and Sander L. Gilman, Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) and Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine and Literature," Critical Inquiry 12 (1985): 209-31. Gilman suggests that stereotyping, which usually results from an awareness of difference, is a universal means of coping with anxiety. We tend to create images of things we fear or glorify. Difference, Gilman suggests, is that which threatens order and control. Gilman examines difference as it exists in relation to the self: through illness, sexuality and race.

that it reflects the European's attempt to appropriate the land, to erase its strangeness, and to obliterate its otherness. In his relations⁶⁵ Cartier remains equally distant from the land and its inhabitants. Rarely do his accounts establish a sense of intimacy. The Indians are ignored or viewed merely as extensions of the landscape itself. He describes the inhabitants that he encounters as "savages" or "a wild and savage folk."⁶⁶ He concludes that "this people may well be called savage; for they are the sorriest folk there can be in the world."⁶⁷ When, on their second voyage, Cartier and his men become weary on a trek through the wilderness, the Indians, like beasts of burden, carry the Europeans upon their backs. He continues to devalue the Indians following a meeting in which his men

⁶⁵According to the Oxford English Dictionary relation comes from the Latin relatio, a carrying back, a bringing back, and relatus, a narrative, a recital. It may refer to 1. an action of relating in words; narration, recital, account, or report 3. that feature or attribute of things which is involved in considering them in comparison or contrast with each other; any connection, correspondence, or association which can be conceived as naturally existing between things 5. a connection between persons arising out of natural ties of blood or marriage, kinship 6. the particular way in which persons are mutually connected by circumstances. See Oxford English Dictionary, 13 Vols., ed. James A.H. Murray, et. al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) Vol. 8, 398.

⁶⁶Cartier, Voyages 22-23 and 41.

⁶⁷Cartier, Voyages 60.

barter with them, leaving the Indians with nothing "but their naked bodies."⁶⁸ Enticed to part with their meagre possessions for "knives, glass beads, combs, and other trinkets of small value,"⁶⁹ the Indians appear to Cartier and his men as essentially worthless. Feeling victorious, Cartier boasts that the Indians would "be easy to convert."⁷⁰

During further interactions Cartier reiterates that they could easily be moulded to the holy faith. Having impressed the natives with his authority and superiority, Cartier constructs, in their presence, a cross thirty feet high which he then erects as a sign that he intends to take possession of the land with as much ease and arrogance as he took their valuables. Beneath this massive cross he places a shield with three fleurs-de-lys in relief, and above he hangs a wooden board engraved in gothic letters LONG LIVE THE KING OF FRANCE.⁷¹ The chief of the tribe expresses his displeasure, but Cartier ignores his protest. Confident that he is on an approved mission, Cartier does not pause to

⁶⁸Cartier, Voyages 56.

⁶⁹Cartier, Voyages 60.

⁷⁰Cartier, Voyages 57.

⁷¹Cartier, Voyages 65.

question his right to dominance over the land or its inhabitants. Motivated by power and glory, Cartier and others believe it is their duty to do away with "alterity."⁷² Consequently the Indian is urged to assimilate, to adopt European customs. The actions of many of the male explorers in the new world are generally based on a denial of similarities. Insisting on distance and difference, they fail to discover or acknowledge the other concealed within themselves. The typical male explorer acknowledges the presence of the Indian only if he is an obstacle or if he can be utilized or exploited. Otherwise he has little significance.

Cartier's final act of erasure of the other occurs when his men capture, by an act of deception, two of the chief's sons. These two men are then dressed by Cartier and his crew in "shirts and ribbons and in red caps," and "little brass chain[s]"⁷³ are placed around their necks. During Cartier's second voyage, European arrogance becomes even more pronounced as they ridicule the Indians' warnings to stay away from Hochelago. The Indians are informed by Cartier that Audoygny, the Indian deity, is a fool-god. Dismissing the native beliefs, Cartier assumes the role of

⁷²Todorov, Conquest of America 42.

⁷³Cartier, Voyages 67.

God's messenger as he reads the Gospel of St. John and conducts a Christian religious ceremony that includes the Indians.

Cartier's relations take the form of an ordinary day by day ship's log. H.P. Biggar suggests that these journaux de bord⁷⁴ were reworked or shaped into their present form following Cartier's return trip to France. Robert Gibbs views the keeping of a journal and the making of charts and sketches (he refers specifically to Champlain) as ordering strategies. These actions on the part of many of the early explorers correspond "to a desire in the explorer to make geography of formless tracts."⁷⁵ They also place man in a controlling context as creator or maker. Besides naming, constructing maps, and imposing European attitudes on the Indian, the European explorers and travellers also attempted to regulate, measure and order the chaos of the new world scientifically, despite the crudeness of their methods. They relied on nautical instruments such as astrolabes and quadrants to create some semblance of accuracy regarding movement and location. This systematic, analytical approach is best illustrated by Alexander Mackenzie's journal which contains obsessive descriptions of directions and

⁷⁴Cartier, Voyages 139.

⁷⁵Robert Gibbs, "Early Explorers: Antidotes for the New Sentimentality," Journal of Canadian Fiction 2.3 (1973): 104-105.

distances.⁷⁶ To prepare himself to meet the challenge of the wilderness, Mackenzie travelled to Europe for books and instruments to assist him on his travels. He acquired a knowledge of the sciences of astronomy and navigation before setting out on his wilderness trek.

Like Cartier, Samuel de Champlain, who made his voyage to New France in 1603, also perceived himself as a redemptive agent in the new world. He believed that the Indians, most of whom "lived like beasts, could be easily brought to be good Christians if their country were colonized, which most of them would like."⁷⁷ Their religious beliefs he viewed as brutish or non-existent, and their ceremonies primitive and barbaric. One of the most revealing of Champlain's journals describes his return to New France in 1620 with his young wife H el ene. Here he appears as an earnest missionary who imagines much in terms

⁷⁶Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793. See also T.D. MacLulich, "Alexander Mackenzie," Profiles in Canadian Literature 5, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto: Dundurn, 1986) 17-24. MacLulich notes the impersonal prose style, despite its clarity and detail; he suggests the matter-of-fact tone of the journal is achieved through the use of deliberate understatement. MacLulich also comments on Mackenzie's lack of curiosity and tolerance for non-European peoples. When Mackenzie does include descriptions, they are brief and superficial.

⁷⁷H.P. Biggar, ed. The Works of Samuel de Champlain Vol. I, 117. This volume contains Champlain's 1599-1601 voyage to the West Indies; his first trip to New France in 1603; and his 1604-1607 return voyage to Canada.

of French prosperity in the new world. However, his is a strong voice of warning to the rascals or rebels who trade with the Indians despite the King's prohibition and who desecrate their Catholic religion. He reveals an almost obsessive compulsion to create barriers between himself and the unruly forces of nature, be it Indian or French outlaw. His anxiety echoes in his comment "we can only hold our ground by force."⁷⁸ A more positive aspect of his journals is that he does include, albeit too infrequently and too casually, a brief list of the women who made up a significant part of the early colony: H el ene, his wife; Anne H ebert, daughter of Louis H ebert and wife of Etienne Jonquest, who died in child-birth; Marguerite Le Sage, wife of Nicolas Pivert; Guillemette H ebert, wife of Guillaume Couillard; and Marguerite Langlois, wife of Abraham Martin.

Whereas Cartier's survey of the land is brief, Champlain's is much more thorough and detailed as he charts distances, locations, and distinguishing features of the land. His accounts include the first cataloguing of flora and fauna, a feature later explorers and travellers to the new world would incorporate in their writings. He is also the first European to identify the differences between various Indian groups rather than view them as a whole. There is evidence in his journals of more extended and

⁷⁸Champlain, The Works 91.

intimate contact between European and Indian. With Champlain the knowing process begins as he records Indian narratives within his own narrative of discovery.⁷⁹

However his superior stance in relation to the Indian is something he shares with Cartier. When Champlain returns to Europe following his first voyage to New France, he brings back trophies of his conquest, a number of Indian men, women and children. To extend the range and strength of French control in the new world, he maps the first accurate descriptions of the coast line to complement his narrative. These maps and charts⁸⁰ function as guides for future explorers as well as serve as concrete evidence of his heroic triumph. In the introduction to the journal kept during the 1604-1607 voyage, Champlain, addressing the Queen regent, discusses "the most useful and admirable art"⁸¹ of navigation. His writings reveal a man who feels confident that he is equipped to conquer the unknown. The knowledge gained by exploration leads to the acquisition of wealth, and an opportunity to overthrow paganism and to instate Christianity. Serving God and king, signified by his

⁷⁹Champlain, The Works 186.

⁸⁰Champlain, The Works 195. Of these maps, three are of a general character, thirteen are special charts of important harbours, and three are associated with picture plans.

⁸¹Champlain, The Works 209.

allusion to the cross and the lily, Champlain dedicates his life to the "honour of God" and "the welfare of France."⁸²

Two other explorers who record their impressions of the wilderness are Gabriel Sagard and Marc Lescarbot, both well-educated men who differ somewhat from Cartier and Champlain. Lescarbot accompanied Sieur de Monts on his expedition to Port Royal in 1606 and he remained in the country for one year. He offers, as the reason for his narrative, the hope that "it might stir [the French authorities] the more to prosecute the popularity of the lands, to bring the Naturals thereof ... to civility and right knowledge of God, and so to the salutation of their souls."⁸³ A year after his return home to France, Lescarbot was persuaded to write a history of French efforts to establish a foothold in Acadia. His narrative is an attempt to reinforce the French claim to the land.

However, more so than Cartier or Champlain, Lescarbot provides an imaginative impression of the new world and its inhabitants. Book I describes de Monts' earliest attempts at colonization; his exploration, mapping and naming of New France; facts about the soil, flora, fauna and climate. Book II is a comparative study of Indian and European habits

⁸²Champlain, The Works 209.

⁸³Lescarbot, Nova Francia v.

and customs, one of the earliest written attempts to bridge the gap between the natural and the civilized worlds. Lescarbot examines the Indian system of naming; how they raise their children; he discusses their religion, superstitions, language, clothing, physical appearance, marriage customs, feasting, dancing and singing, health cures, exercises, vices and virtues, hunting and fishing, funeral rites and methods of warfare. His descriptions are all interspersed with biblical text and classical allusions. When Nicolas Aubrey, a member of the expedition is lost in the woods for sixteen days and is given up for dead, Lescarbot compares him to Ariadne, daughter of Minos, King of Crete. Miraculously when the group is passing near the site where Aubrey had disappeared, he is suddenly discovered and recovered safely. It is a more expansive humanistic attitude that provides a framework for Lescarbot's narrative. Although his approach also reveals a distancing and his own unique way of ordering his myriad impressions of a strangely diverse land, it also suggests the beginning of a dialogue where the Indian is viewed as natural rather than simply savage. His use of figurative prose ("hoary, snow father being come, that is to say winter")⁸⁴ lends to a more

⁸⁴Lescarbot, Nova Francia 33. Lescarbot is also believed to be responsible for writing the first verse and staging the first dramatic production in North America, a pageant titled "Théâtre de Neptuné" written especially for Sieur de Poutrincourt's return to Port Royal in 1606. See David Galloway, "The Voyagers" 11.

romantic view of the land and humanity. Weary perhaps of the troubles in France, Lescarbot takes an optimistic, idealistic stance towards this other place.

Gabriel Sagard, like Lescarbot, also possesses a classical education as well as a devout faith in God.⁸⁵ He follows Lescarbot in depicting the land and its inhabitants with a sense of vivid intimacy. His narrative is, like the others, written after the fact, for he has the misfortune of losing in the wilderness all the notes he had made "on the countries, journeys, meetings, and remarkable things ... seen"⁸⁶ on his trip from France to Canada. Sagard wisely decides to reject a refined or affected style of writing which would hide his true personality and "cloud candid sincerity," and to choose instead a frank and "artless simplicity."⁸⁷ Like Lescarbot, Sagard reveals in his account a genuine compassion for the Indian whom he views as part of rather than separate from God's universe. However, he too shares with other male explorers and travellers, an impelling desire to leave a mark on the land. As he

⁸⁵Sagard, The Long Journey. Gabriel Sagard came to Canada in June 1623 and remained until autumn 1624. During his stay he worked on a Huron/Iroquois dictionary which was an appendix to his narrative.

⁸⁶Lescarbot, Nova Francia 64.

⁸⁷Lescarbot, Nova Francia 8.

journeys through the Canadian wilderness he carves crosses on the largest trees "to signify to Satan and his imps that we were taking possession of that land for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ."⁸⁸

Not all of the early explorers were convinced of these imperative powers. One exception is Pierre Esprit Radisson who literally adopts, as the result of his captivity among the Iroquois, the point of view of the Indian.⁸⁹ Extremely individualistic and exhibiting a love for dramatic presentation, Radisson combines in his tales of wilderness life an interesting mix of fact and fiction. His commercial insights -- that the fur trade could be more accessible from Hudson's Bay than from Montreal -- led to the eventual founding of the Hudson's Bay Company, and created a shift in focus from the east to the largely unexplored north-west and north country. Unlike other male explorers who assume positions of power and privilege, Radisson takes a more marginal stance. He is more closely allied with the peripheral figures of the coureurs de bois. Even his writing, with its grammatical errors, inconsistencies, gaps and omissions, differentiates his stories from the more

⁸⁸Lescarbot, Nova Francia 41.

⁸⁹Adams, The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson. See also Grace Lee Nute, Caesars of the Wilderness: Médard Chouart, Sieur Des Grossilliers and Pierre Esprit Radisson, 1618-1710 (1943; rpt. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1977).

carefully shaped narratives of Cartier, Champlain, and others.

It is possible that Radisson's age -- he was just sixteen when he was captured -- contributes to the ease with which he accommodates the wilderness and the Indian way of life. In an extremely brief period of time following his captivity, he finds himself "somewhat altered."⁹⁰ The change he perceives goes far beyond mere physical appearance. The uniqueness of Radisson's perspective is indicated fairly early when the Indians strip him of his clothing and secure him. When the Indians begin to laugh at his exposed body, it immediately occurs to Radisson that it is because of his white skin. Abruptly he realizes his sense of difference which makes him, not his captors, the other. Within "five weeks" he settles into the Indian way of life "without thinking from whence [he] came."⁹¹ He is adopted by an Indian family whom he refers to as "my kindred" and is given a new name, Ovinha, which signifies "stone or lead."⁹²

⁹⁰Radisson, Explorations 4.

⁹¹Radisson, Explorations 11.

⁹²Radisson, Explorations 12. This occurs following a conversation between Radisson and his Indian family. The "good old woman" who is his refuge for much of his captivity asks him if he were French. Radisson replies no, that he is of their nation. The Indians are so pleased with his response that his family decides to give a feast for three hundred members of the tribe. It is during this feasting that Radisson is formally

The choice of name indicates Radisson's ability to assimilate and adapt to the harshness of the land and his new life. When he demonstrates a willingness to help with the work, his captors teach him how to perform difficult tasks without overexerting himself. He learns to cut wood "as the rest, with all diligence,"⁹³ and to carry burdens of considerable weight upon his head "as it's their usual custom."⁹⁴ They also teach him to sing, and he attempts to master their language. He does not complain on long journeys when they suffer hardships such as cold, hunger and enemy ambush. When he accompanies a hunting party to revenge his captors' enemies, he plays an active role in capturing and executing the prisoners taken during the raid.

Despite the tortures that he undergoes at the hands of the tribe following a foiled attempt at escape, Radisson consistently describes the humane and "Christian fashion"⁹⁵ in which he is treated. During the period of his captivity from spring 1651 to fall 1653, he gains confidence in his hosts as well as in his own ability to endure in the

adopted by his new family and is renamed.

⁹³Radisson, Explorations 8.

⁹⁴Radisson, Explorations 9.

⁹⁵Radisson, Explorations 9.

wilderness. When forced to murder several members of the tribe in order to attempt an escape and a return home, Radisson reveals a genuine regret for his actions. One of the most prominent features of Radisson's narratives is the sense of adventure and a real appreciation for the spectacular land("the most delicious bit of the world")⁹⁶ and the people he encounters in it. Like his fellow countrymen, he believes that his adventures are "ordained by God," and that it is his divine "destiny to discover many wild nations."⁹⁷ He differs radically from them, however, in the sense of kinship he establishes with the Indian and the intimacy he establishes with the land. His experiences during captivity and his subsequent explorations suggest a finer line between the natural and the civilized worlds.

Samuel Hearne's journeys have much in common with Radisson's movements through the wilderness -- he, too, adopts the Indian method of travelling, and places himself

⁹⁶Radisson, Explorations 37.

⁹⁷Radisson, Explorations 38.

willingly under their protection.⁹⁸ Following their nomadic wanderings, Hearne abandons any position of authority or leadership to become a disciple. As a result, his narratives reveal an unusual sympathy with tribal custom and a respect for the other culture. More than any other of his male counterparts, he insightfully observes the similarities between what on the surface seem to be two irrevocably different cultural groups. As much as possible, he tries to relinquish prejudice and social convention in order to obtain a better understanding of the land and its people. He functions more as a participant observer than as an heroic quester. Throughout his travels, Hearne displays an equal interest in the Indian, his way of life, and in the terrain. He is willing to change his habits and abolish his preconceptions in order to enter a more equitable contract with the new world and its inhabitants. Rather than actively trying to shape the land or the Indian to his own needs, Hearne himself is shaped and influenced by his new environment. Of especial interest to this study is Hearne's extended account of female contribution to life in the

⁹⁸Hearne, A Voyage from Prince of Wales's Fort. See Also Mary E. Hamilton, "Samuel Hearne," Profiles in Canadian Literature 3, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto: Dundurn, 1982) 9-16, which includes a selected bibliography of works and criticisms; Stuart and Mary Houston, "Samuel Hearne, Naturalist," The Beaver (August/September 1987): 23-27; and I.S. MacLaren, "Samuel Hearne and the Landscapes of Discovery," Canadian Literature 103 (Winter, 1984): 27-40.

north. Hearne's first two exploratory journeys were aborted and Hearne was forced to return to the fort. While he prepares to set out again, Matonabee, an Indian leader, informs him that the reason for his misfortunes was a failure to take women along. Hearne discovers that women are crucial: they carry or haul as much as two men; pitch tents; make and mend clothing; when animals are killed, they bring them back to camp and prepare them; they cut holes in the ice and fish for food; and they help keep other members of the group warm at night. Hearne wisely concludes that "there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or for any length of time, in this country, without their assistance."⁹⁹

Through his journal, Hearne exhibits a considerable concern for female experience -- unlike so many other explorer/narrators, he does not exclude or marginalize the female or the Indian. If anything, he assumes a peripheral position of outsider/spectator within his own text. Besides a respect for the Indian and the wilderness, he acknowledges the exploitation and negative effects of the European on native culture. Also, unlike Cartier, Champlain and others, Hearne does not rename the land -- usually he retains the Indian name. He also documents female rituals such as the isolation of women during labor. He empathizes for native

⁹⁹Hearne, A Voyage 70.

women who must bear children under such harsh physical conditions, and become pawns in male power struggles as men wrestle for ownership of any woman who takes their fancy. He also notes that women often kill their female children to save them from lives of pain and toil; and that abortion is practised routinely by the women. He responds adversely to the raping of Indian women and overall records a fabulous story of female heroism and endurance.

This brief survey of narratives written by men indicates that there is no consistent male response to the wilderness. There does seem to be, however, a shift from fear and resistance to a more open embrace of difference, although this shift is neither linear (in terms of time) nor progressive (as settlement begins to replace wilderness). Attitudes appear to depend upon individual personalities and the controlling context of initial encounter. The perspective of the author/narrator in these early works is also contingent on the motivation behind the narrative. Whether fur trader, priest, colonist or explorer, these men were often motivated by a desire for power, position, wealth and glory. W.J. Eccles identifies as the chief male imperatives a longing for recognition and fame; a desire to achieve higher social status; a quest for knowledge; and

highly developed acquisitive and competitive skills.¹⁰⁰ Their journeys were physical. They mapped new territory, instituted rigid boundaries, and established themselves as heroic protagonists (as both witness and actor) in their personal dramas of discovery and conquest. Ironically these long journeys through the wilderness did not affirm their supreme authority. The male's peripatetic movements created instead feelings of vulnerability and exposure. Men like Radisson and Hearne never presumed the same position of transcendence that many of their male counterparts did. Instead, their writings reveal a different kind of contract with the land, one based on interdependency and utilization, rather than mere exploitation.

For many of the early male explorers and some of the pioneers that followed, the wilderness remained a labyrinth, a place characterized by loneliness, isolation and terror. It emphasized the limitations and obstacles related to the male quest for dominance. Consequently these men shut out, erased, or attempted to transform the wilderness -- they built forts, erected garrisons, staked out their claims to various regions of the land, and renamed it in order to render it familiar. The model of community instituted by these men was subsequently based on hierarchy, order, and

¹⁰⁰W.J. Eccles, The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1974).

ownership. For others, like Radisson and Hearne, the wilderness is not a world to be ordered, owned or avoided. Instead it is the site of their becoming, a place to relinquish European attitudes in order to accommodate the other that exists there. It is this approach, one based on acceptance and accommodation rather than conquest or rejection, that connects men like Radisson and Hearne to the female cartographers who fashioned new spaces and created new identities in the wilderness.

iii

Rambling Epistles

"... ironically it's the women who are survivors in this country. They don't fight the landscape as the men do but accept it in a deeply-felt feminine way; men fight an heroic confrontation that can only end one way. The women just go on...."

Michael Cook in The Work: Conversations With English-Canadian Playwrights, Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman

"Out of the margin they have made many centres."

Kamboureli and Neuman, A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing

"This place which allows her to exist.... The labyrinth of her knowledge. Where she has her own reasons.... Of her knowing. This place of her wandering.... The room of her first wandering and of her finding. This place where she finds her way."

Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her

"Perhaps I am a settler, not a traveller."

Leslie Silko, The Delicacy and Strength of Lace

In The Female Imagination Patricia M. Spacks elaborates on Mary Ellmann's suggestion that prior to the twentieth century a general distinction can be made "between masculine writing, marked by its notes of authority, and feminine [writing], characterized by commitment to sensibility."¹⁰¹ In Thinking About Woman Ellmann identifies feminine writing as that which disrupts authority and reason,¹⁰² a description which approximates Julia Kristeva's notion of the semiotic.¹⁰³ Ellmann views the playful nature of feminine writing as a means of undermining the symbolic order. It emphasizes the more pleasurable and rupturing aspects of language; it permits the decentering of authorities; and it allows for multiplicity and difference.

As revealed in the gospel narratives of Cartier, Champlain and MacKenzie examined in section ii, "Gospel Narratives," masculine writing frequently takes the form of official documentation, often with an instrumental intent.

¹⁰¹Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972) 31.

¹⁰²Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1968). Play and parody as female strategies of subversion are evident in the "Preface: An Interview" which precedes Ellmann's study. Ellmann writes: the male body lends credence to assertions, while the female takes it away" (148).

¹⁰³Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Generally it is highly structured with a chronological and progressive ordering of events. As public witness and testimony, it suggests the primary vision of an authoritative male like Cartier who records in the present tense either immediately or shortly after the historical moment. Usually it addresses a male audience. Its expression is overt and its views are generalized.¹⁰⁴

Feminine writing assumes unofficial forms as in the private diaries, personal correspondence and journals of women like Anna Leveridge and young girls like Henriette Dessaulles. It addresses a female, and sometimes an imaginary audience. It reflects a view of time as cyclical or organic, often fractured as revealed in the intermittent letters composed between chores or in the interstice prose of a woman's diary. Feminine writing looks to the future as well as to the past¹⁰⁵. Kristeva suggests that female subjectivity is

¹⁰⁴ See Claudine Hermann, "The Virile System," New French Feminisms: An Anthology, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981): 87-89. Hermann theorizes that women and men are fundamentally different and that they write differently. Masculine writing, she believes, is characterized by system and hierarchy. "Man's thought reflects the order of structures outside himself" and "Man prefers himself over all that surrounds him" (87-88). See also Stephen Heath, "The Sexual Fix," Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader, ed. Mary Eagleton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 87-88 for a discussion of differences in masculine and feminine writing.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of female time, see Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 188-213. See also Elaine Showalter, "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the History of Feminist Criticism," Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. Shari Benstock (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987)

linked both to cyclical time (repetition) and to monumental time (eternity); in both instances time is conceptualized from the perspective of motherhood and reproduction. She also associates men with historical or linear time, time as project -- departure, progression and return. This conception of time is evident in the journals of explorers like Cartier, Champlain and MacKenzie. Kristeva implies that one of the tasks assigned to this new generation of feminists is to reconcile maternal time with linear or historical time.

Feminine writing is often subversive.¹⁰⁶ Lowder-Newton suggests that female power lies in covert acts which "subvert masculine control and male domination ... by giving emphasis to female capability."¹⁰⁷ In advocating a shift of perception from victimization to agency, Lowder-Newton

30-44. Showalter suggests writing the history of feminist criticism by situating it, not historically, but in "women's time -- that is, to emphasize its specificity by narrating its development in terms of the internal relationships, continuities, friendships, and institutions that shaped the thinking and the writing of the last fifteen years" (31).

¹⁰⁶For discussions of subversion and women's writing, see Judith Lowder-Newton, Women, Power and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860 (London: Methuen, 1981); Eva Figes, Sex and Subterfuge: Women Novelists to 1850 (London: McMillan Press, 1982); Lorna Irvine, Sub/Version (Toronto: ECW Press, 1986); and Patricia Yaeger, Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁷Lowder-Newton, Women, Power and Subversion 6.

suggests we begin by redefining or deconstructing traditional attitudes. She suggests we abandon the notion of power as control and replace it with a more positive definition: power as ability or competence. Patricia Yaeger also describes how women subvert the masculine language of traditional literary texts by inventing "terrorist texts." She views the female writer as a spy who performs, through language, acts of "ecstatic espionage." Yaeger suggests contemporary women are involved in defining a counter-tradition that includes "the reinvention and reclamation of a body of speech women have found exclusive and alienating."¹⁰⁸ This subversion is reflected in the equivocation (multiplicity and doubleness) of language. Other times it is manifested in secrecy and indirection. In nineteenth-century Canada, young women often resorted to private forms of writing -- the diary became an outlet for what was denied public expression.

¹⁰⁸Yaeger, Honey-Mad Women 2-5.

Immediately the notebooks of Henriette Dessaulles come to mind.¹⁰⁹ She began writing to her private "confidant" when she was fourteen and stopped at age twenty-one, eight weeks before she was to marry. Henriette's diary reveals a "duality"¹¹⁰ of character that she keeps hidden from even those closest to her: "it crossed my mind I might be two people instead of one."¹¹¹ Self-consciously she refers to her "little self" as a "presumptuous, incompetent architect."¹¹² Feeling insecure, shy and unloved by an austere stepmother, Henriette retreats to the world of music, literature and her writing. These things compensate for her feelings of loneliness; they also enable her to objectify her emotional hurts and to learn to accept that which she cannot change.

¹⁰⁹See Liedewy Hawke, trans., Hopes and Dreams: The Diary of Henriette Dessaulles 1874-1881 (Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1986). I am dealing with the first English translation of the text. It had been published earlier under the title Fadette, Journal d'Henriette Dessaulles 1874/1880 (Montreal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, 1971). Hawke observes the importance of Henriette's journals both as a unique social document and for its literary value. She also comments on the lyrical style of the writing and its clear and simple prose.

¹¹⁰Dessaulles 217.

¹¹¹Dessaulles 51.

¹¹²Dessaulles 26 and 23.

Despite her shyness, Henriette is also a defiant and critical young girl. When questioned by her teacher about an event in history, Henriette replies "I'd be interested in reading a version of history other than the one we are taught."¹¹³ These dangerous ideas often lead to her interrogation by some offended person in authority. Henriette's questioning of accepted beliefs does not end with history. When asked, during a religious retreat, to write an analysis of a sermon she had just heard, Henriette observes that it is intellectually lacking in ideas. And so she writes her own sermon on Duty which startles her instructors. She also mocks the pious postures of those who accompany her on the retreat: "apparently we are all saved, an army of angels with wings."¹¹⁴ When boredom sets in, Henriette instigates an imaginary conversation with Mister Devil.

She also has harsh words for incompetent doctors. After a long illness that leaves her weak and confined to bed, she angrily concludes that "That poor doctor is either demented or lying like the devil when he says I am not ill."¹¹⁵ Henriette is especially outraged by "typical

¹¹³Dessaulles 30.

¹¹⁴Dessaulles 72.

¹¹⁵Dessaulles 106.

convent nonsense" and by the "stupidity of their rules."¹¹⁶ One restriction she especially detests -- she is forbidden to keep a private diary. Despite the rules, she continues her subversive act of recording or keeping a diary during her year of boarding at the convent.

More prosaic restrictions such as the style of female clothing also provoke an outburst from her. When friends have to wait for her to finish dressing, she rages against "... so many things to put on! Lots of times I wish I were a savage. That would certainly simplify the dressing ritual."¹¹⁷ When on a mission of charity to the home of a large, impoverished family, Henriette questions the church's right to interfere in family planning: "... isn't it up to [parents], then to decide not to have any more [children]?"¹¹⁸

The restrictions placed on her personal freedom are also criticized by Henriette. Bored with her "cloistered life," both at home and at school, she expresses a wish to travel "to exciting, far-away countries whose names alone

¹¹⁶Dessaulles 132.

¹¹⁷Dessaulles 224.

¹¹⁸Dessaulles 338.

set you dreaming."¹¹⁹ She has, unfortunately, to settle for imaginary journeying, to mental cartography. She also longs to be more intellectually stimulated and would "like to study law"¹²⁰ with her friend, Maurice. Forbidden to go beyond contemplation of such things, Henriette explores the more exciting and eventful world outside by way of her collected books. She cherishes her small library which consists of the Memoirs of Mme de la Rochejaquelein, Charles Dickens' Dombey and Son and Pickwick Papers, the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Longfellow, Tennyson, Racine, and Lamarline. She also possesses a music library: Mozart, Chopin, and others.

Her notebooks, which cover a seven-year period, reveal the personal and the emotional growth which accompany Henriette's coming of age. Delicately detailed and lyrical, her diary is both a site for concealment and a place for revelation. When an undemonstrative stepmother fails to show Henriette any love, the young girl turns to other sources -- to her dear aunt Leman who nurses and nurtures her, to servants (Kate, an Irish nursemaid who held Henriette as a child and told her fanciful stories; Adèle, the cook and storyteller), to her best friend, Josephine,

¹¹⁹Dessaulles 39-40.

¹²⁰Dessaulles 219.

and to Maurice whom she loved as a young girl and whom she eventually marries. These people compensate somewhat for the real absence in Henriette's life -- her biological mother. During times of great turmoil,¹²¹ she dreams about her own mother who died when Henriette was only four, and longs for this source of unconditional love. This love eventually comes to her from Maurice. Unfortunately her husband dies while fairly young, leaving her with five children. This separation is prophetically revealed to Henriette in a dream while she is still a young girl.¹²²

Comprised of personal details,¹²³ and with a more specialized focus than found in masculine writing examined in section ii of this chapter, Henriette's diary illustrates an intimate observation of life, considerable self-reflection, and a deep concern for and reliance on inter-

¹²¹Dessaulles 50 and 331.

¹²²Dessaulles 211-212.

¹²³For a provocative analysis of the feminine and the particular, see Naomi Schor, Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine (New York and London: Methuen, 1987). Schor begins with the observation that contemporary critical theory valorizes the minute, the partial, the marginal -- it privileges the detail. She traces, through a reconstruction of "feminist archaeology," the story of the rise of the detail from the demise of classicism to the birth of realism. She suggests that the detail is viewed as legitimate today only because "the dominant paradigms of patriarchy[general/masculine/mass and particular/feminine/ detail] have been largely eroded" (4).

personal connections. These journals are also important because they present a view of French Canadian life that is "in sharp contrast with the accepted stereotype of a Quebec cut off from the outside world, where traditional values were kept intact, where there was little differentiation between social classes, and where all social life centred around the parish church."¹²⁴

In "Diary Literature: The Archetypal Canadian Form" Marian Fowler suggests that an "attention to fine detail, to appearances carefully described"¹²⁵ is a predominant trait in Canadian literature. Immediately one thinks of Emily Montague with her microscope and her devoted studies of John Ray and William Denham, two English philosophers who published widely on botany and other natural sciences. Fowler perceives this attention to detail in other artistic mediums: the magic realism in artists like Alex Colville, Ken Danby and Christopher Pratt. She suggests that "the carefully delineated close-up is a defence against the overwhelming size and mass, the raw, undigested quality of the Canadian landscape. Freezing its small, still-life aspects within a frame allows Canadians to forget, for a

¹²⁴Hawke, Introduction 121.

¹²⁵Marian Fowler, "Diary Literature: The Archetypal Canadian Form," Canada: The Verbal Creation, La Creazione Verbale (Abambo Terme: Piovon Editore, 1985) 101.

moment, the sudden violence and swift motion of river rapids or blinding blizzard."¹²⁶ Whereas the masculine author seeks to subdue the wilderness and to make sense of the chaos through writing, the feminine author enters and is transformed by a land she does not claim to own or control. While men like Alexander Mackenzie long to "penetrate the continent"¹²⁷ for economic gain, other arrivals like Hearne, Raddison, even Moodie and Traill, discover that they must respect the wilderness world, and that nature can be utilized without exploitation. Many of the earliest publications in Canada contain useful information about the land. Catharine Parr Taill's The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855) and John Galt's Bogle Corbet (1831) contain appended charts, tables, and miscellaneous information. Anna Jameson's journals (1838) contain anecdotes, excerpts from historical documents, even a segment from an Indian petition addressed to Sir John Colbourne asking that they not be expelled from their lands.

While men were constructing garrisons (only to find to their amazement that the wilderness was still there) and imposing European attitudes on the land, women were beginning a process of settlement characterized by inclusion

¹²⁶Fowler 101.

¹²⁷Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal 4.

and integration. Astutely they recognized that there were no perimeters, no boundaries separating wilderness and community, no single centre to adhere to. By viewing the land as autopia, a "good place",¹²⁸ women managed to transform labyrinth into a green world site of feminine epiphany and power -- a place which provided the conditions of possibility. French feminist Hélène Cixous theorizes about the importance of utopia as a mark or feature of feminine writing. She lashes out at binary habits of thought, which signal patriarchy and hierarchy, and suggests that these oppositions reveal how subversively women and other minorities and anomalies are rendered powerless and kept in positions of defeat. Cixous believes that through the revolutionary power of writing, women dream and invent new worlds, utopian spaces where woman as other begins to speak of before-unmentioned things. She describes women who write as "a species of mole (Topoi, ground mines) never

¹²⁸See Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986). In "Sorties Out and Out Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" 63-122, Cixous writes: "Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where it writes itself, where it dreams, where it invents new worlds" (72). See also Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," On Lies Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979) 34-49.

known before,"¹²⁹ and utopian space as the place where women go when they tell their own stories.

What evolves from a positive stance of anticipation adopted by women like Traill and Leveridge is a community based on mutual assistance, the recognition of differences, feelings of interdependency, and the creation of new mythologies. Canada becomes, when viewed through a feminine lens, a "wild zone"¹³⁰ which brings together the familiar and the strange. It becomes "a space in which there is no centre."¹³¹ For Traill and others it is a place to begin anew: "Here all is new: time has not yet laid its mellowing touch upon the land. We are but in our infancy;

¹²⁹Cixous, Newly Born Woman 65.

¹³⁰See Edwin Ardener, "Belief and the Problem of Women," Perceiving Women, ed. Shirley Ardener (New York: Wiley, 1975) 1-17. Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Writing and Sexual Difference, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), describes this feminine space culturally as "a no-man's land, a place forbidden to men" (30). In women's texts, it is the site "for the revolutionary women's language, the language of everything that is repressed" (31).

¹³¹This phrase comes from Susan Griffin's Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (San Francisco: Harper and Colophon, 1978), an eclectic work of female intertextuality in which the author imagines woman reclaiming a relationship with nature, a relationship which in every culture has been devalued (170).

but it is a vigorous and healthy one, full of promise for future greatness and strength."¹³²

Texts by nineteenth-century women often focus on the significance of the feminine voice.¹³³ Even within Brooke's The History of Emily Montague, an eighteenth-century novel of sensibility, the masculine element is downplayed. As Ed Rivers prepares to leave England on a sea voyage to Canada,

¹³²Catharine Parr Traill, The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969) 18.

¹³³Some of the texts surveyed, and on which this assessment of feminine writing is based, are: Patricia Godsell, ed., The Diary of Jane Ellice (Canada: Oberon, 1980); Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada. 3 vols. (1838; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1972); H.H. Langton, eds., A Gentlewoman in Upper Canada: The Journals of Anne Langton (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd., 1950); Joyce Marshall, ed. and trans., Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967); Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush: or, Life in Canada, ed. Carl Ballstadt (1852; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988); Susanna Moodie, Life in the Clearings, ed. Robert L. McDougall (1853; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1959); Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman, eds., Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Elizabeth Smith, A Woman with a Purpose: The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith 1872-1884, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada (1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1980); Catharine Parr Traill, The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969); Gladys Chantler Walker, ed., Lady Dufferin: My Canadian Journal 1872-1878 (1891; rpt. Ontario: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1969); Frances E.O. Monck, My Canadian Leaves: An Account of a Visit to Canada in 1864-1865 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1891); Mrs. George Cran, A Woman in Canada (London: John Milne, 1910); Liedewy Hawke, trans., Hopes and Dreams: The Diary of Henriette Dessaulles 1874-1881 (Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1986); Anna Leveridge, Your Loving Anna: Letters from the Ontario Frontier, ed. Louis Tivy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

he writes a letter of farewell to his friend, Temple -- an opening letter which evokes images of Virgil's third eclogue and associates Rivers with Virgil's rustic shepherd. This classical connection implies that Rivers anticipates in Canada a pastoral world, a utopian vision of a "green world"¹³⁴ which existed before man's fall. Rivers' kinship with the natural order and his insistence on the importance of affective ties with friends and family enable the reader to respond to him as a feminine presence within the text. He also emerges, during the progress of the narrative as Emily Montague's "green world lover."¹³⁵ Rivers' name suggests a feature of natural landscape. Emily turns away from the socially more appropriate suitor, Sir George Clayton, who is associated with stasis, and chooses Rivers, a figure more suitable to her own needs. Pratt suggests that the figure of "the green world lover" evokes "from the feminine unconscious the image of an ideal lover and almost always includes a rejection of social expectations"¹³⁶

¹³⁴See Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fictions (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982) 16-24. Pratt identifies nature, "the green world," as an archetypal pattern in female fictions. She describes it as "a kingdom and a place of exile" (17).

¹³⁵Pratt, Archetypal Patterns 22-23.

¹³⁶Pratt, Archetypal Patterns.

In Brooke's text, various characters, both male and female, act or comment negatively on conventional attitudes. Emily defies her guardian, Mrs. Melmoth; and Arabella, as well as minor female characters such as Louisa and Fanny, defy authoritarian fathers. In fact, reason is often disrupted and refuted by Arabella's preference for pleasure and laughter. Through Arabella's playful actions, Brooke challenges the symbolic order.¹³⁷ Many of the sentimental novels of the period focus on a female reappropriation of choice. Women like Brooke's Arabella and Abraham Holmes' Belinda "vicariously enact [their] own courtship and marriage fantasies."¹³⁸ The gossipy nature of the letters in The History of Emily Montague raise, in a non-confrontational manner, questions about boundaries, difference, authority and the nature of knowledge.¹³⁹ It

¹³⁷Brooke's Arabella is just one of several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coquettes: Mary Davy's Reform'd Coquet (1724); Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote; or the Adventure of Arabella (1752); Hannah Webster Foster's The Coquette (1797); and Abraham S. Holmes' Belinda; or the Rivals (1843). In The Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America, Cathy N. Davidson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 110-50, "Privileging the Feme Covert: The Sociology of Sentimental Fiction" suggests that the eighteenth century was concerned with reforming patriarchal structures.

¹³⁸Davidson, Revolution and the Word 123.

¹³⁹See Patricia Meyers Spacks, Gossip (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). Spacks notes analogies between gossip and literature. She suggests that gossip, as it is manifested in literary forms as diverse as biography, memoirs, journals, diaries and autobiography, affords the opportunity for "emotional speculation" (3). Spacks advocates new ways to read these extra-

implies answers often at odds with dominant cultural values. The result is a palimpsest, or multi-voiced discourse, which contains dominant and muted stories. Certainly the narrative of Arabella's father, William Fermor, is not given an authoritative position within the text. It constitutes only thirteen of the 228 letters.

Like the female writers who follow her, Brooke also attempts to find some alternate set of images through which the female can make her own unique accommodation to the strange and often wildly exhilarating new world landscape. Unfortunately the novel reveals merely a brief flirtation with the land; ultimately the wilderness, as exemplified by Madame Des Roche, is rejected as the central characters return to England. Perhaps this rejection of the wilderness for garden suggests European anxiety about desire and sexuality, playfulness and pleasure. Canada is appropriate as a place of courtship and exploration, but when marriage is contemplated, perhaps as an antidote to passion, the characters return home to England. Of the three marriages, only one is contracted in Canada -- Arabella and Fitzgerald wed clandestinely before leaving for home. Before departure, Fitzgerald inscribes Arabella's name on a maple tree during their last ramble through the Canadian woods --

literary forms which, until recently, lacked a clearly defined theory of aesthetics. She describes gossip as "inhabiting the borderlands of socially sanctioned discourse" (65).

a gesture which signifies his recognition of her sense of identification with the land she has come to love.

As a feminocentric novel, Emily Montague initiates an important trend in Canadian letters. It describes the establishment of a female exodus community whose European members, while in Canada, discover connections with women of other cultural backgrounds. Non-naturalized women like Arabella and, to a lesser degree Emily, come in close contact with naturalized women: French, Indian and Canadian. In the process of describing this initial cultural encounter, Brooke interjects brief references to the stories of two historical women, Madeleine de la Peltrie and Esther Wheelwright who triumphed within a wilderness world.¹⁴⁰ What Brooke's novel shares with the works of later writers in Canada is a foregrounding of female power and insight, and a refusal to view woman solely as victim.

It also uses, through the epistolary form, a diffuse point of view which is itself a trait of feminine texts. Multiple narrative voices generate a dialogue in which there is no single central authority. By offering a composite of viewing angles, Brooke avoids the illusion of a fixed centre of consciousness. The final exchange of gifts between the French-Canadian Madame Des Roches and Emily, and the sharing of laughter and stories between Arabella and a wandering

¹⁴⁰See Chapter I section i, "Women and Wilderness."

group of Indian women imply a mutual willingness to view, however briefly, the country from the position of the other.

Brooke's female characters are the first fictional voices to ask "Where is here?"¹⁴¹ and to reply confidently that the wilderness can be a site of self-discovery. This feminine approach to the land, characterized by a willingness to accommodate the strange, is somewhat suggested by historian Harold Innis's Laurentian theory.¹⁴² Like the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century voyagers' accounts of travel and exploration in the new world, so too the works of the earliest women writing in Canada constitute their initial attempts to articulate the beauty as well as the vast loneliness of the country, the numerous pleasures and hardships experienced, and their subsequent sense of dislocation and acclimatization. In the voyage literature of these women, there is a preoccupation with entering and naming. Often to assist them in the process, they illustrate their narratives with drawings, sketches, and water colors. These visual aids reinforce a sense of intimacy between woman and landscape, and assist the individual woman in her search for a new frame of reference.

¹⁴¹Northrop Frye, Conclusion, Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 826.

¹⁴²Harold Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada (1930; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

Marni L. Stanley suggests that during the early years of settlement there were four types of female voyagers to the new world; those that engage in showing, telling, slamming and questing.¹⁴³ Stanley suggests that the women who wrote travelers' tales in Canada during the nineteenth century fall into two categories: settlers like Moodie and Traill, and upper-class Englishwomen like Anna Jameson who were simply passing through. She also suggests that the writers discussed in her article were all conscious of the tradition and conventions of récit de voyage. These female travelers share some of the same motives for coming here as the earlier male explorers. Some came for adventure, and to explore new places. Others, accompanying spouses and families, came with the hope of a better life for themselves and their children. Despite the similar motivations, women tell their stories differently and they focus, as significant, on different experiences.

In examining the narrative voice used in female travelers' tales, Stanley identifies four main narrative techniques: showing, telling, slamming and questing. Showing occurs when the narrator is relatively absent; when objective mimesis is the goal; and when the emphasis is on

¹⁴³Marni L. Stanley, "Travelers' tales: showing and telling, slamming and questing," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamourelli (Alberta: Longspoon and Newest, 1986) 60.

representation, not on the character of the narrator. A showing narrator avoids self-revelation; she disguises her observations as information and records them in a factual manner. Her narrative is characterized by distance and absence. As example, Stanley refers to the chapters in Roughing It in the Bush on economic and political subjects which were written by Susanna Moodie's husband. This method of narration most resembles the gospel narratives examined in section ii, as evident in the journals of Cartier, Champlain and MacKenzie. It demonstrates a masculine style of writing.

Telling occurs when narration takes precedence over representation. A persona organizes the events narrated, assumes a position of authority in the text, and reveals many things about herself. Here Stanley cites Moodie's own writing, particularly when she dares to create a persona for herself. This method of narration is also used by Traill who constructs for herself the persona of self-determining heroine in a new world: "There should be no wavering ... no yielding to prejudices and pride. Old things are passed away. The greatest heroine in life is she who knowing her duty, resolved not only to do it, but to do it to the best of her abilities with heart and mind bent to the work."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴Traill, Canadian Settler's Guide 4.

In slamming narratives, the narrator focuses on her own sensibility. She assumes a position of moral, cultural and intellectual superiority. Observation rather than participation is emphasized. One of the best examples of a slamming narrator is Frances Monck who accompanied her husband to Canada during the years immediately preceding Confederation.¹⁴⁵ Lord Monck was governor general of British North America from 1861-1866, a troubled period during which the government was concerned with danger of conflict with the United States, in particular the attacks of the Fenians. Frances Monck's fearful response to Canada (i.e. she is scared by the sea, thunder, rain, wind and darkness) connects her writing to Moodie's more anxious accounts of life in the bush.

Questers, the fourth type of traveler, seek answers, test themselves and expand their horizons. It is this category into which most of our female pioneers fall. Anna Leveridge, a young woman who came to Canada in the 1880s accompanied by six children, epitomizes more so than Moodie or Traill, the ordinary woman's quest for a better life in

¹⁴⁵See Frances Monck, My Canadian Leaves: An Account of a Visit to Canada in 1864-1865 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1891).

the Canadian backwoods.¹⁴⁶ Anna left England in 1883 to come to Canada to meet her husband, David, who had come ahead of her. David had been the overseer of Park Farm, an estate in Hochering, near Norwich in eastern England where he had earlier backed a friend's monetary note. When this friend vanished, David was left to repay the impending loan. This obligation drained the Leveridges of their entire savings and, in despair, David left for Canada. When she was able to accumulate enough money and, with David's small assistance, Anna brought her family to Canada to join David and to start anew.

In her letters to her mother and sisters back home in England, Anna relates the joys and hardships of life in Canada. These letters, which were circulated among family members, were rarely backward looking. They reveal Anna's confidence that Canada will be her new home. However, they also indicate the strength of family connections as Anna continues to maintain ties with England, even as she forges new relationships in Canada. Her letters identify a number of significant women -- Mrs. Pilgrim, Mrs. Peacock, Mrs. Hewton, Mrs. Elliott, Mrs. Foster -- who lend assistance and provide rare moments of companionship. Anna also takes time to give detailed descriptions of the physical changes as

¹⁴⁶See Anna Leveridge, Your Loving Anna: Letters from the Ontario Frontier, ed. Louis Tivy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

well as the emotional development of her individual children. From a one-room shanty in the backwoods of Ontario, she describes how she and her children flourish in an environment where there is "fresh air, and plenty of milk to drink."¹⁴⁷

Many of Anna's letters are undated and, in some cases, only fragments remain. Like other women letter writers, Anna does not always consciously organize her stories home. She relates what comes to mind at the moment of composition, then shifts abruptly to another topic. Often she will write intermittently as time becomes available to her. Her "rambling epistles"¹⁴⁸ home are a tribute to the kindness and the generosity of neighbours who often have little, in the way of material things, to give. On one occasion, Anna indicates the diversity of the kind of community that was evolving in the backwoods: "We were representatives of different nations, Mrs. Foster being Irish, Mrs. Mayo, Scotch, Mr. Mayo, French, and I, English, and a young woman there, Canadian."¹⁴⁹ Anna's first winter alone (her husband and two oldest sons were away working in the woods) becomes

¹⁴⁷Leveridge, Your Loving Anna 22.

¹⁴⁸Leveridge, Your Loving Anna 60.

¹⁴⁹Leveridge, Your Loving Arms 60.

for her "a time of testing."¹⁵⁰ However, with an optimistic attitude and with the assistance of good neighbours, she assures her mother that she and her children possess the ability to carve out a good life, a better life in the wilderness.

When the first spring comes, Anna begins to plant a garden around the shanty. She also makes sure that each child has a place for cultivating a personal plot with vegetables or flowers. This simple gesture instills in even the youngest member of the family an intimacy with the land and an awareness of the rewards which accompany arduous endeavors. Anna's fragmented account of pioneer life on an Ontario frontier is neither as overly optimistic nor as gloomy as the accounts of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie respectively. As she settles down to a new life, Anna slowly rather than miraculously acquires new skills -- she learns to make cheese and butter, preserve fruits and meat for the winter, and bake her own bread. She also learns that "what can't be cured must be endured."¹⁵¹ When her neighbour, Mrs. Elliott miscarries her child, Anna and the woman's husband are the only assistance available. "So, you see I happen with some strange experiences. If anyone

¹⁵⁰Leveridge, Your Loving Anna 44.

¹⁵¹Leveridge, Your Loving Anna 46.

had told me I should have to do such a thing, I should have thought it impossible."¹⁵² Without complaint or self-praise, Anna leaves in her letters a loving and detailed record of one woman's quest for a simple life in a good land.

In the pluralistic society which was emerging in Canada, many women like Anna Leveridge did not feel compelled to assume a rigidly defined role. They had the leniency to reinvent other images of femininity characterized by multiplicity, play, and change. These alternative roles could be as diverse as the women who adopted them. However, not all women who came to Canada were able to accommodate the social freedoms or the unruliness of the new world. For those apprehensive of change, and comfortable with and reliant on clearly defined stations, Canada proved to be a fearfully chaotic place. The result is the schizophrenic or split-subject position of women like Moodie and Monck.¹⁵³

Whereas the heroic territorializing of the male was essentially physical, female mapping in Canada was generally

¹⁵²Leveridge, Your Loving Anna 81.

¹⁵³These two women best exemplify female reluctance and fear. See Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 50-51; Carol Shields, Susanna Moodie: Voice and Vision (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1977); Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Upper Canada (Toronto: Anansi, 1982) 93-131; and Audrey Y. Morris, The Gentle Pioneers: Five Nineteenth-Century Canadians (Ontario: General Publishing Co., 1968).

a mental activity. Often it was accompanied by the relinquishment of fixed cultural assumptions. Restricted, at least for the majority, within convents, garrisons or on pioneer farms, women recorded their psychological, as much as their physical encounters with the land. This fixing of women did, however, endow them with a more intimate connection to and knowledge of the country. Because of the proximity of the wilderness to metropolis, the female constructed a new sense of home. She viewed community as a continuously shifting space, one formed from fragments of other cultures. Like the outlawed coureurs de bois before her, the female in Canada was free to reclaim, to renew her connections with nature, while simultaneously providing a nurturing influence on community development. With the births, the nurturance, and too often the burials of their children, these women accepted Canada as home. It was the site of their testing, a place where old rites of passage were enacted in new ways. For women like Anna Jameson, it was not to be a site of personal or permanent rooting but a place of physical journeying and self-discovery.

At the same time as these women were carving out new spaces for themselves and their families, they were also beginning to search for new modes of expression. In their use of such forms as lectures, novels, diaries, guide-books, journals, sketches, and memoirs, their writing seems to correspond to that of male writers. However, there are some

important differences.¹⁵⁴ Numerous critics have noted how women tend to use blurred genres and to subvert male conventions. Helen Buss suggests that women "find it easier to tell their stories through telling the lives of their significant others."¹⁵⁵ Examining the personal memoirs of three late nineteenth-century female pioneers -- Susan Allison, Mary Hiemstra and Elizabeth Johnston -- Buss shows that women define themselves in terms of past experiences and through the lives of their family members. She quotes Gerda Lerner who observes that women do not necessarily see the historical time periods considered significant by men as significant to their own development.¹⁵⁶

In "Diary Literature: The Archetypal Canadian Form," Marian Fowler suggests that diarists such as Traill, Moodie, and Jameson are "our foremothers, part of our mythology, at the very heart of the Canadian psyche."¹⁵⁷ As part of a

¹⁵⁴See Helen Buss, "Pioneer Women's Memoirs: Preserving the Past/Rescuing the Self," Reflections: Autobiography and Canadian Literature, ed. K.P. Stich (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988) 45-60; and Rosalind Miles, The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

¹⁵⁵Buss, "Pioneer Women's Memoirs" 46.

¹⁵⁶Gerda Lerner, The Female Experience: An American Documentary (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publications, 1977) xxi.

¹⁵⁷Fowler, "Diary Literature" 96.

continuous literary tradition that goes back to Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), these women observe the conventions of the diary form: they also discover, describe in detail, and highlight a didactic intent. However, individually they also infuse the diary with new elements: Traill uses aspects of the guide or conduct book; Moodie appropriates aspects of the sentimental and gothic novel; Jameson employs elements of the picaresque. These experiments result in a new form, "a Canadian hybrid"¹⁵⁸ which allows women to describe novel experiences in new ways. Other critics who examine tradition-shattering feminist forms are Susan Armitage, Gayle R. Davis and Rosalind Miles.¹⁵⁹ Miles examines how women writers have "mastered" the form of the novel, and how they utilize it to "order, interpret, dramatise and heighten [the] events and preoccupations of women's lives."¹⁶⁰

Although women experiment with new forms, rarely do they resort to satire or speculative fictions. Their works, more so than those of men writing during the period, are

¹⁵⁸Fowler.

¹⁵⁹See Susan Armitage, "Common Ground -- Introduction to 'American Women's Narrative,'" Women Studies 14.1 (1987): 1-4; Gayle R. Davis, "Women's Frontier Diaries: Writing for Good Reason," Women's Studies 14.1 (1987): 5-14; and Rosalind Miles, The Female Form.

¹⁶⁰Miles, Female Form 34.

more grounded in the real world of ordinary men and women. In Characteristics of Women, Anna Jameson discusses with an amused gentleman, Medon, the forms women writers do or do not use.¹⁶¹ She suggests she has never had any desire to be a female satirist: "a female satirist by profession is yet an anomaly in the history of our literature."¹⁶² She advocates that women instead should "soften the heart by images and examples of the kindly and generous affections."¹⁶³ She also warns them against the dangers of romance.¹⁶⁴ The best known satirists in nineteenth-century Canadian literature are male: Thomas McCulloch, The Stepsure Letters (1822-23) and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, The Clockmaker (1836). The only well-known science-fiction writer is James De Mille, A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder (1888).

If Marie de l'Incarnation is the spiritual mother, the founding figure for generations of French-Canadian women, then Catharine Parr Trail professes to be English-Canada's

¹⁶¹Anna Jameson, Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical, and Historical (1832; rpt. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1898).

¹⁶²Jameson 18.

¹⁶³Jameson 20.

¹⁶⁴Jameson 39.

"floral god-mother."¹⁶⁵ Through the backwoods of Canada she moves like a new Eve, naming and inventing new spaces that her female followers would adopt as their legacy from her. As a peripheral figure in her own narratives, Traill redefines the image of woman in the new world. She rejects the heroine of the popular nineteenth-century romantic novel for a more heroic female, a woman characterized by energy, initiative, competence, confidence, and curiosity. In doing so, Traill emphasizes female agency.

Traill's first written response to Canada takes the form of autobiography, a collection of letters to her mother, published in 1836 under the title The Backwoods of Canada. This first-hand account of pioneer life is written to educate other prospective female newcomers. Traill's motto in this text is "forewarned, forearmed."¹⁶⁶ As she begins to put down roots in Canada, Traill still maintains strong ties with her female family members back home. Meanwhile, as she adapts to pioneer life, she assumes the role of guide and medial figure for other women. She possesses a utilitarian rather than a strictly romantic approach to the new country. The Canadian wilderness is, for her, terra firma, not terra incognita. Free from the

¹⁶⁵Traill, Backwoods 144.

¹⁶⁶Traill, Backwoods 1.

restraints imposed on her by English society, Traill views Canada as "equal ground,"¹⁶⁷ a land of possibilities for all people. Because of her deep love for nature, she finds pleasure in the solitude of the wilderness.

For her sister Susanna Moodie, the wilderness primarily evokes apprehension and fear. In The Wacousta Syndrome Gaile McGregor describes Moodie as a reluctant pioneer who "avoided looking too hard or too often at nature in the broader sense at all."¹⁶⁸ When Moodie does attempt to articulate the land, it is usually through "safe, consoling, Wordsworthian conventions."¹⁶⁹ Other critics have also observed the distance Moodie tries to maintain from the land, and her tendency to focus on human nature rather than the land itself.¹⁷⁰ Unlike Traill or Jameson, she admits

¹⁶⁷Traill, Backwoods 272.

¹⁶⁸Gaile McGregor, The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 37. McGregor's study reaffirms Northrop Frye's and Margaret Atwood's thesis that the hostile Canadian environment instilled terror in most new-comers. She suggests that "rather than expressing overt hostility native Canadian writers have been more likely to demonstrate one (or a combination) of the following patterns of response" (26): simple avoidance, conventionalization, and domestication.

¹⁶⁹McGregor, Wacousta Syndrome 39.

¹⁷⁰See Atwood, Survival 51; Shields, Susanna Moodie; Audrey Morris, Gentle Pioneers; and Clara Thomas, Our Nature -- Our Voices: A Guidebook to English Literature Vol. I (Toronto: New Press, 1972) 27-30.

never being able to "enter into details."¹⁷¹ Landscape serves merely as spectacle. Her emotional response tends toward the sublime. Colors such as silver, purple, white and grey convey the abstract and awful silences of solitude. The land seems to magnify Moodie's own sense of incompetence and insignificance -- she is often over-powered by the presence of the wilderness. Homesick for England, Moodie declares herself "a stranger in a strange land."¹⁷²

In contrast to Moodie and Traill's works, Anna Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (1838) is unique in its relation to other nineteenth century works by Canadian women, for it emphasizes restlessness and mobility rather than settlement. Originally published in three volumes, it describes the period from her arrival in Toronto in December 1836 to her anticipated departure in the fall 1837. Unlike Moodie, Jameson was not an intrepid or inexperienced traveller. By the time she came to Canada to join her husband, she had already travelled over the continent of Europe.¹⁷³ Following a "cold, cold winter"¹⁷⁴ in

¹⁷¹Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman, eds., Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 129. Moodie makes this comment in a letter addressed to Richard Bentley, 1853.

¹⁷²Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush 39.

¹⁷³See Estelle M. Hurl, "Memoir of Mrs. Jameson," in Sacred and Legendary Art By Anna Jameson, 2 vols, Ed. Estelle M. Hurl (London, 1848; New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1895) xxvii-xliv. Based on a sketch by Mrs. Geraldine MacPherson (Memoirs

Toronto, Jameson, unaccompanied by her husband, plans a "wild expedition"¹⁷⁵ to Niagara, Hamilton, Brantford, Woodstock, London, Port Talbot, Chatham and Detroit. The second stage of her journey takes her from Detroit by steamer to Mackinaw; then ninety-four miles to Sault Ste. Marie by a small boat rowed by five French Canadian voyagers; on to Manitoulin Island; a four-day journey down Lake Huron; by canoe to Penetang; canoe and portage to Lake Simcoe; and finally back home to Toronto. It was during this wilderness journey that Jameson claims to have been the first European woman to shoot the rapids.¹⁷⁶

of Anna Jameson, Boston, 1878), Hurll's memoir describes Jameson's trip to Italy following the termination of her engagement to Robert Jameson. This tour took her to Florence and Rome and furnished the material for her first work of fiction, The Diary of an Ennuyée, published anonymously in London, 1826. On her return to England, she renewed her engagement and later married Robert Jameson. When her husband accepted an appointment in the island of Dominica in 1829, Jameson did not accompany him. Instead she took another trip on the continent with her father where she visited Germany. She returned to Germany again on a later occasion after her husband had been sent on a new appointment to Canada. She again came back to England when her father became critically ill. On his recovery, she went abroad for a period of several years. Her stay in Europe ended when Robert summoned her to Canada.

¹⁷⁴Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. I, 8.

¹⁷⁵Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. III, 356.

¹⁷⁶For a vivid description of this journey see Clara Thomas, Love and Work Enough: The Life of Anna Jameson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) 126-143.

Jameson's trip to the interior functions as a rite of passage which prepares her to make the inevitable transition from married life to a single state.¹⁷⁷ The hoped-for reconciliation with her husband, Robert, does not take place and following her trip, she decides to return to Europe. This active exploration of the wilds of Canada is a "feminist quest"¹⁷⁸ in which Jameson attempts to expose the myths which reinforce division between the sexes. Whether it was undertaken to prove something to herself or to others, it does result in a change of attitude. The loneliness and depression she experiences in Toronto are alleviated and in a moment of high drama, she is renamed in the wilderness. Following her display of bravery on the rapids, her Indian companions christen her "Wah, sáh, ge, wah, nó, quà," which means woman of the bright form.¹⁷⁹

A number of critics have also commented on the fragmented form and the subversive elements in Jameson's

¹⁷⁷Fowler, The Embroidered Tent writes: "Her voyage to Northern Ontario is a metaphor for a much more daring and psychological one into unknown areas beyond sex stereotyping and society's artificial fences which keep women dependent, delicate, and sexually innocent" (159).

¹⁷⁸Fowler, The Embroidered Tent 59.

¹⁷⁹James, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. III, 200.

work.¹⁸⁰ Jameson herself admits that there are gaps in her narrative, that much has been omitted."¹⁸¹ In the preface she refers to the journals as "fragments," a little book never "intended to go before the world in its present crude and desultory form." Circumstances prevented her from "remodel[ing] the whole," and in preparing the book for publication "much has been omitted of a personal nature, but far too much of such irrelevant matter still remains; --far too much which may expose me to misapprehension, if not even to severe criticism." She explains that she wished to extract "the impertinent leaven of egotism which necessarily mixed itself up with the journal form of writing," but to do so would have destroyed the "original character" of the work. As a result she believes the tone of personal feeling running through the journal links the ideas and experiences together. Winter Studies and Summer Rambles is a feminocentric text in which "resonant female voices"¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰Thomas in Love and Work Enough suggests that Jameson combines travel memoirs with social and literary criticism (126). Fowler in The Embroidered Tent sees the journal as the beginning of the picaresque tradition in Canada. Bina Friewald describes Jameson's writing, with its emphasis on intertextuality, as an early example of feminine writing in Canada. See Bina Friewald, "'Femininely Speaking': Anna Jameson's Winter Study and Summer Rambles in Canada," A Mazing Space, eds. Neuman and Kamourelli, 61-73.

¹⁸¹Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles v-xi.

¹⁸²Friewald 62.

function to reaffirm Jameson's place in a long line of women writers. Friewald suggests that collectively women like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joanna Baillie, George Sand and Miss Mitford act as "essential aides,"¹⁸³ reading each other's work and entering into multi-voiced dialogues within each other's texts. Jameson is acutely aware of herself as a woman writer who plays the triple roles of reader, producer and transmitter of female stories. This, says Friewald, places her within a "self-reflective female tradition."¹⁸⁴

Although woman's position in society is a central concern in all of Jameson's works, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles expands to include another interest -- nature. Jameson uses the seasons of winter and summer as a structural device to describe her feminist and utopian quest.¹⁸⁵ However, Jameson's response to the wilderness goes beyond Traill's intimate and reverent appreciation. Fowler suggests she is the first European woman to eroticize the land and that this sexual pleasure connects her to other Canadian women writers, particularly Pauline Johnson and

¹⁸³Friewald.

¹⁸⁴Friewald 63.

¹⁸⁵Fowler 158.

Isabella Valancy Crawford.¹⁸⁶ Jameson's appreciation of the land is evident on her arrival in America. The spectacular beauty of the Catskill Mountains and the vast spaces prompts an emotional outburst. Despite the mud and ice of Toronto and the severity of the winter which follows, she continues to view Canada as a magnificent country teeming with possibilities. In "the tangled wilderness"¹⁸⁷ she advocates a return to a more natural human existence and laments that "we have grown away from nature."¹⁸⁸ It is the multiplicity of a land that she explicitly characterizes as feminine that delights her. Like Arabella Fermor before her, Jameson enthusiastically records the awesome beauty of natural phenomena such as rainbows, the aurora borealis, majestic water falls, lakes "dappled ... like the back of a mackerel,"¹⁸⁹ wild flowers, birds and totemic trees. She shares other nineteenth-century writers' awareness that language and a conventional vocabulary fail to articulate precisely the strange beauty of the wilderness. It is to

¹⁸⁶Fowler 169-70.

¹⁸⁷Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. I, 16.

¹⁸⁸Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. I, 203.

¹⁸⁹Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles Vol. I, 291.

her credit that she attempts to acquire a new language to convey these novel experiences.

Jameson's search for an appropriate simile to describe the Canadian lake recalls John Galt's Urseline Corbet who, in Bogle Corbet (1831), demystifies the land by employing practical, domestic figures whereas her husband continues to resort to romantic imagery.¹⁹⁰ Bogle Corbet describes his wife as "not a person much disposed to enthusiastic sensibility; domestic and practical in all her ways, she yet feels not less excited, I verily believe, than I do myself."¹⁹¹ It is through husband and wife's choice of metaphoric language that the differences in their responses to the new land emerge. On watching the dim lights of the candles flicker through a thick fog, Urseline employs an "ingenious simile": "'They are no better ... than fish heads in the dark.'"¹⁹² Other expressive figures she uses are "the strength of a windle straw" and "men pliant as grass."¹⁹³ When Bogle chastises her for using inappropriate

¹⁹⁰John Galt, Bogle Corbet (1831; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1877).

¹⁹¹Galt 17.

¹⁹²Galt 21.

¹⁹³Galt 89.

language, she retorts "well, what signifies a word?".¹⁹⁴ Her no-nonsense approach to the grandeur of Niagara Falls functions to expose the overly romantic perceptions of Corbet and others who use "far-fetched and inflated phraseology"¹⁹⁵ to give voice to the new world.

Whereas Corbet mythologizes the land and reveals his anxieties through his compulsive attempts to order the landscape, Urseline demystifies Canada by accepting it on its own terms. Galt also observes that men and women establish different contracts with the land: Corbet thinks only of owning the land, of acquiring more property and wealth; Urseline and other women like Anna Leveridge, Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, view it as a new home, a place where they will bear and raise their children in a freer and healthier environment. Woman's practical approach is emphasized in the final chapter when Urseline ridicules Corbet's fancy for botany. She suggests he should "see what [the plants] are good for, and assort them [by properties] rather by their qualities."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴Galt 94.

¹⁹⁵Galt 163.

¹⁹⁶Galt 197.

iv

Summary

This survey of journal and diary writing by both men and women in Canada suggests that there are similarities and differences in how these newcomers see and articulate the land. Both men and women feel compelled to impose some kind of order on the strangeness they encounter. Men use maps, and charts; they erect crosses, inscribe their names, and impose their European attitudes. Women bear children, cultivate gardens, paint water colors, sketch, collect and identify flora, and attempt to re-define themselves in relation to the land and its inhabitants.

Men and women also differ regarding the postures they assume. Men seem to project themselves as heroic protagonists who play central roles within their own dramas. Women assume more auxiliary and peripheral positions, yet they prove to be the cohesive force to which others gravitate. Whereas men are economically or politically motivated to exploit the land, women utilize it without assuming the right to acquire or control. A feminine response leads to a more intimate relationship with place. This closeness is reflected in the detailed prose of much nineteenth-century Canadian fiction.

CHAPTER II

The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades

"Middle status, mediating functions, ambiguous meaning -- all are different readings ... of woman's being seen as intermediate between nature and culture."

Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?"

"... women's roles, and the biological symbolism attached to them, share a concern with the crossing of boundaries: Women mediate between the social and cultural categories which men have defined; they bridge the gap and make transitions -- especially in their role as socializer and mother -- between nature and culture."

Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering

i

Ancestral Shades

The nineteenth-century Canadian novel is very much a product of historical events and particularly of the collision between French and English, European and Indian. Reading back through historical time, there emerges a continuity between the nineteenth-century female world as it is depicted in fiction and the lives of real women who first

settled in the new world. The literary medial feminine examined in this chapter is anticipated by the traces¹ of her nearly invisible ancestral shades: the women associated with early male exploration; indigenous women who interacted and intermarried with the first European arrivals; religious women who arrived from France to seek as well as to create for others sanctuary in New France; and those first female colonists who attempted permanent settlement. Examining the past serves to establish the beginning of a diverse female network, one in which women play multiple and often unconventional roles. The faint tracks of these unusual women contribute to the tentative construction of a Canadian literary figure radically different from the doomed "victim" inherited from Margaret Atwood's Survival thesis.²

¹Trace seems to be the most appropriate word to use to describe the faint vestiges of female presence in seventeenth-century Canada. It is defined by Webster's as 1. a mark or footprint left by the passage of a person 2. a beaten path or trail 3. a visible mark left by something in the past; a sign; evidence 4. a barely observable amount. See Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, gen. ed. David B. Guralnik (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1956) 784. In Dictionary of Word Origins (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1964) 361, Joseph T. Shipley relates trace to the Latin tractus, a drawing, a succession of moving things.

²Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972). From her survey of Canadian literature, Atwood suggests that Canadians show a marked preference for negativity. She links this national response directly to Canada's past status as a colony: hence "Canada as a whole is a victim, or an 'oppressed minority,' or 'exploited'" (35). She suggests that the country and its citizens occupy any number of four basic victim positions. This pervasive sense of victimization, she continues, is also reflected in how Nature is imaged in our literature: it "is often dead and unanswering or

The medial feminine examined in section iii of this chapter is another version of the renaturalizing female encountered in Chapter I, the other cartographer who complements the male in his physical mapping of the new land. Mediating between nature and culture (by reminding man of the civilized world he left behind and by sharing with him a vision of a new social order), she gives both physical and imaginative birthing, thus establishing a new genealogy. While her male counterpart explores, maps, and names the geography of the land, she creates offspring to people, to creatively fill up the vast spaces.³ This act of mothering is simply one of many female contributions to the genesis of a new world culture. Tangible beginnings are improbable, if not impossible, without her assistance.

actively hostile to man" (49). According to Atwood, the Canadian perception of nature as monstrous is extended to include animals, Indians, Eskimos, ancestors, and mountains.

³The importance of the female's reproductive ability was noted by many. Marc Lescarbot, "The Conversion of the Savages" (1610), The Jesuit Relations (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959) Vol. I, 101-103 writes: "... how necessary a woman is in a house ... in any settlement whatsoever, nothing will be accomplished without the presence of women." In the Jesuit Relations of 1633 Paul Le Jeune pleads for women to come to New France in order to make the Indians "stationary." Female contribution to State policy to populate the colony is evident in the "filles du roy" or the King's Daughters, young women brought to New France during the 1640s to 1670s to provide husbands for male colonists and fur traders. The nearly legendary fecundity of the French Canadian woman literally ensured the continuation of the French race in Canada. See Quebec Women: A History, eds. Micheline Dunont et al. (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987) 40-46.

The mother of the first European colony, the first European woman to give birth, and the first known female cartographer in America is Gudrid, an eleventh-century Viking woman who accompanied the Norse explorers on their trips across the Atlantic.⁴ The Norse sagas describe a curious, daring and persuasive woman who convinced each of her three husbands to take her on his travels. She played an active role in these reconnaissance trips, especially on the voyage with husband Karlsefni to Vinland where they remained for three years. During her stay, Gudrid, with several other women in the group, raised a family and initiated trade with the Skraelings, an indigenous people.

Although a Christian woman, Gudrid is also in the sagas associated with female prophecy and revelation. As a result of innumerable hardships during their first trip to Greenland (i.e. sickness, loss of life at sea, harsh weather conditions), Gudrid was asked to consult a sibyl, with the hope that she might intercede with the gods to alleviate the colonists' misery. When Thorbjorg, the prophetess, came to Gudrid's house, she asked for the assistance of women who knew the spells required for performing witchcraft. Of all

⁴See G.M. Gathorne-Hardy, trans., The Norse Discoverers of America: The Vineland Sagas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 30-37; David B. Quinn, North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612 (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); and Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, trans., The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965).

the women present, only Gudrid possessed knowledge of the songs and ceremony. She had been taught the spells by her foster mother in Iceland. Although the sibyl's prophecies pertained specifically to the group, they also included a special prediction for Gudrid. The seer divined that Gudrid would one day leave Iceland and mother "a great and eminent"⁵ progeny.

Gudrid experienced another prophetic revelation during her trading encounter with the Skraelings. She saw a strange apparition, a young woman who appeared to be her double, and who said her name was Gudrid. The story of Gudrid's mysterious spirit woman was taken as a warning sign that the group should exercise caution in future dealings with the natives. Gudrid's premonition was heeded and during their next negotiation Norseman and native clashed violently. Another commanding figure to emerge from this drama of hostility is Freydis, Gudrid's amazonian kinswoman, who fearlessly confronted the Skraelings while contemptuously rebuking her own men for retreating. According to the sagas, Freydis' undaunted courage saved the day.⁶

⁵The Vinland Sagas 83.

⁶See Jean Johnston, Wilderness Women: Canada's Forgotten History (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1973) 1-20 for an account of Gudrid and Freydis, two women who gave birth to children in the new world. In Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 19, eds. Alison Prentice et al. suggest that the discovery of tools used for

Historical accounts indicate that the next attempt at colonization in the early seventeenth century also included courageous and competent women. Marie Rollet, wife of Louis Hébert (farmer and apothecary), was the first European woman to settle and remain in New France permanently.⁷ In 1617 she travelled from Paris to Quebec, accompanied by her husband and three children. There Marie assisted her husband in cultivating the land and tending to the sick. She also displayed a great interest in the Indians. She stood as god-mother to a number of the converted; she hosted a feast for the baptism of at least one particular Indian; and she was actively involved in the education of native children. Following Louis' death in 1627, Marie remarried Guillaume Hubou and, despite the occupation of New France by the English, she raised a second family. During the change in government she maintained contact with the Indians and reminded them of the affectionate ties they had established with the French. On the return of the French to power in 1623, she opened her home to Indian girls who had been given to the Jesuits for training and educating.

spinning and sewing in an archaeological Viking site in Newfoundland confirms the presence of European women in North America as early as the eleventh century.

⁷Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) Vol. I, 578.

Perhaps Marie's most significant legacy to the new world was her children which included two daughters, Anne and Guillemette. During the first year following her arrival in Quebec, Marie celebrated the first European marriage when her daughter Anne wed Etienne Jonquet. Unfortunately Anne shared the fate of many seventeenth-century women when she died in childbirth the following year. Marie's second daughter, Guillemette wed Guillaume Couillard in 1621, and she too began a family. Carrying on a tradition of assistance initiated by her mother, Guillemette took an interest in Indian children as she too served as godmother at a number of native baptisms. During the English capture of Quebec, she gave shelter to Charité and Espérance, two young Indian protégées of Champlain. She also cared for Olivier Le Jeune, a negro boy from Madagascar, who had been bought by the English and sold to the French. Following the death of her husband after a long marriage, Guillemette withdrew to the convent of Hôtel-Dieu where she lived until her death in 1684. At that time her descendants almost miraculously numbered 250!

The men who came to New France to explore and exploit the fur trade also discovered that it was essential to solicit female assistance, in this case, the aid of indigenous women who mediated between settlement and wilderness. Indian women functioned as guides, wives,

envoys, peace-makers, interpreters, and negotiators.⁸ They possessed and transmitted the knowledge necessary for European adaption and survival. The autonomy of Indian women had been noted by many newcomers to America, and their powers are affirmed by several contemporary historians. A communal pattern of living and a division of labor by sex

⁸See Sylvia van Kirk, "'Women in Between': Indian Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada", Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History, eds. Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates (Toronto: Copp-Clark Pitman, 1988) 49-56, and Sylvia van Kirk, 'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1879 (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980). Van Kirk examines the enormous complexity of the social interaction between European and Indian. She contends that Indian women themselves were active agents in the development of Indian-white relations, even though women's roles were defined in terms of their relationships to men: wife, mother, daughter or worker. She rejects the concept of victimization associated with Indian women in the past, and posits a revisionist approach -- that the responses of Indian women to the Europeans were dictated by their own needs and interests. She suggests that Indian women functioned as active agents to make the most of the opportunities available to them, and that often women took the initiative in seeking to become wives and partners to fur traders.

created circumstances in which female agency and decision-making were the logical outcomes.⁹

One of the best known female Indian guides was Thanadelthur, a Chipewyan Indian known as slave woman in the records of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁰ During the spring of 1713, a party of Chipewyans was attacked by the Cree tribe and at least three of their women were taken captive. Thanadelthur and another woman managed to escape the following fall and attempted to rejoin their own people. Finally they were forced by cold and hunger to seek refuge at York Factory. On route to the fort, Thanadelthur's companion died. Thanadelthur was later used by Governor James Knight as an interpreter to help re-establish trade with the Chipewyans, who were reluctant to bring their furs

⁹See Judith K. Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women Among the Iroquois," Ethnohistory 17 (1970): 151-167. Brown, investigating the relationship between women's status and women's work, suggests that Iroquois women played an unusually powerful role in politics, religion and domestic life. They controlled the factors of agricultural production, maintained the right to distribute and dispense all food, and had a voice in the conduct of war, the nomination of Council elders, the influence of political decision-making and the establishment of treaties. For a brief survey of the controversy regarding the position of native women in collision with the European, see Somer Brodribb, "The Traditional Roles of Native Women in Canada and the Impact of Colonization," The Journal of Native Studies 4.1 (1984): 85-103.

¹⁰See Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. II, 627-628; Sylvia van Kirk, "Thanadelthur," The Beaver (Spring 1974) 40-45; and Canadian Women: A History, eds. Alison Prentice et al. 24-25.

to the fort because of their fear of the Crees, who possessed firearms.

The special skills of Indian women were also utilized by a number of other male explorers. Alexander Henry used an Indian woman as a guide when he accompanied General Amherst's expedition of 1760.¹¹ Henry describes how his men bargained for the women; how the women helped to portage through the dangerous carrying places; and how they instructed the European in survival tactics by preparing lichen as a subsistence food during a time of famine. It was also an Indian woman who saved his life by hiding him in a tree and disguising him as a Canadian when angry Indians attacked British forts. Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie¹² (although in the latter's case more contemptuously) also acknowledged the considerable contribution Indian women made to exploration in the new world. However with the arrival of European women in significant numbers, the Indian woman became displaced,

¹¹Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760 and 1776, ed. James Bain (1809; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1969).

¹²See Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769-1770, 1771, 1772, ed. J.B. Tyrrell (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1911), and Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793 (Toronto: The Radisson Society of Canada Ltd., 1927).

truly a "woman in between."¹³ Her position and her powers were usurped by other powerful female figures -- both religious and secular.

Women came to the new world in many capacities: some to marry, or to devote their lives to religious service; as engagées or indentured servants; others to carry on business ventures.¹⁴ These historical women, as well as semi-legendary figures like Gudrid and Freydis, are important foremothers for generations of Canadian women for they provide the first traces of female agency in the new land. Their presence ensured the cultivation of the land, the

¹³Sylvia van Kirk, "Women in Between" 150-151. For a number of reasons, Indian women occupied a unique intermediary position between the European fur traders and their host, the Indians. "They became the 'women in between' two groups of males. Because of their sex, Indian women were able to become an integral part of fur trade society in a sense that Indian men never could ... certain circumstances permitted individual women to gain powers of influence and act as 'social brokers' between the two groups." These women may also be said to occupy what Victor Turner refers to as a liminal or "betwixt and between" period of social and cultural transition. See The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine, 1969). Their association with the European necessitated some relinquishment of former social arrangements in order to become part of an emerging European-Indian world.

¹⁴See Quebec Women: A History eds. Micheline Dumont, et al. (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987) 17-58, and Canadian Women: A History eds. Alison Prentice, et al. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 16-85. Dumont, et al. indicate that the first women to arrive in New France were pioneer farmers (women like Marie Poulliot and Marie Rollet who worked their own land), servants, religious leaders, business women, inn and tavern keepers, prostitutes, teachers, etc. Prentice et al. add to this list midwives, seamstresses, fisherwomen, missionaries, preachers, and craftspeople.

establishment of permanent social institutions, the "civilizing" of the inhabitants, both indigene and newcomer, and the genesis of strong female traditions. Their stories indicate the impact of environment on female character and affirm a theme constant in Canadian literature to the present: this northern land is harsh but not unyielding, and those who are strong and competent can do much more than simply endure.

In a study of the presence of the feminine in various cultures, Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner note the absence of mothers as guides or appropriate role models in nineteenth-century fictions written by women.¹⁵ As Susan MacDonald observes in her examination of Jane Austen's female characters,

Their mothers may be dead or absent or weak and in need of help themselves, so that while the heroines sometime receive help from other strong, supportive women, they rarely receive help from their own mothers.¹⁶

¹⁵Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner, eds., The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980).

¹⁶Susan P. MacDonald, "Jane Austen and the Tradition of the Absent Mother," The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980) 58.

Janet Todd supports this notion of ineffectual or absent maternal figures: "The mothers of fictional heroines are usually bad and living or good and dead."¹⁷ This chapter examines the function of the "medial feminine,"¹⁸ women who act as guides or surrogate mothers to motherless heroines in early Canadian fiction. Due to the death or absence of the natural mother, these figures act as mid-wives¹⁹ during times of crisis or change. Often portrayed as sibylline, these women attend to the needs of the female protagonist as she encounters opposition or obstruction on her journey into womanhood. They advise, warn, and assist in the female's rites of passage. They may also function as story-tellers or transmitters of female lore, thus providing the heroine with a body of knowledge not readily available from traditional male sources. Speaking often from peripheral positions based on female knowledge and experience, these intermediaries or medial women are competent to inform a

¹⁷Janet Todd, Women's Friendship in Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) 1.

¹⁸Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin: Reflections on the Archetypal Feminine (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) 161-215.

¹⁹Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983) 654. Walker notes that mid-wife comes from the Anglo-Saxon med-wyf, meaning wise-woman or witch. This original or root meaning of the word has special significance for Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power."

naive heroine as she leaves home and enters a convent to complete her education, or as she prepares for courtship, marriage and eventually motherhood.

The medial feminine is a term used by Nor Hall to refer to that impersonal aspect of woman that mediates the unknown. She accredits its conception to a colleague of Jung, Toni Wolff, who developed a fourfold structure for analyzing archetypal components of the feminine principle.²⁰ Wolff's structure consists of mother, hetaira, medial, and amazon. Hall examines two specific medial figures, the sibyl and the wise old woman, "women who were the embodiments of specific powers of transformation that have been called magical, spiritual and psychic."²¹ Medial suggests that such women act essentially as mediators; they intervene for the purpose of restoration or reconciliation, and they form important connections with others. The term also evokes images of rescue and deliverance, and so a medial is, to some extent, also a redemptrix figure.²²

In nineteenth-century Canadian fiction there are several types of medial figures. First there is the

²⁰Hall, The Moon and the Virgin 32-35.

²¹Hall, The Moon and the Virgin 161.

²²The redemptive figure is the focus of Chapter III "Female Savior or Redemptrix."

sibylline mediator like Mrs. Geràrd in Leprohon's Antoinette De Mirecourt (1864), a sacred crone who possesses a wisdom, often a subjective knowledge, not readily perceptible to others. Essentially she functions to unravel or reveal the truth. The source of her knowledge may be personal experience, observation or the female mysteries,²³ subjects not candidly discussed by most nineteenth-century women or writers. In the literature of the period, the sibyl restricts her utterances to the level of social discourse or subverts more personal or intimate messages within the text. When subterfuge or subversion is necessary, the text becomes palimpsest. This is true of Mère Malheur and La Corriveau, two subversive crones who create disturbances in William Kirby's The Golden Dog (1879).

Second there is the Cassandra or prophetic figure as medial feminine, someone whose warnings, taken as untruths, are ignored, suppressed or silenced. Ellen Halloway in John Richardson's Wacousta (1832) and Matilde in Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1896) are exemplary examples of the mad prophetess whose warnings are ignored. Failure to heed

²³For discussions of women's mysteries or female rites of passage, see M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1971), Jessie Bernard, The Female World (New York: The Free Press, 1981) who identifies the wedding as the central rite in the female world, and Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin. The seminal work on rites of passage is Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Coffee (1909; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

her words results in disaster. Heroines consequently contract destructive marriages or improper alliances; they find themselves in situations which they are incapable of controlling. As a result they make decisions based on false or incomplete information.

Third there is the crone, or wise old woman, a symbol of woman's power of nay-saying.²⁴ Associated with leadership and inspiration, she is medial figure who looks back to the past as well as ahead to the future. In many ways her existence reinforces the notion of a strong, though not always visible, female tradition. Often she mediates between a daughter and an absent mother to affirm the daughter's legitimate place in a female community. In Julia Catherine Hart's St. Ursula's Convent: or The Nun of Canada

²⁴See Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Space Crone," Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places (New York: Grove Press, 1989) 3-6, and Barbara G. Walker, The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom, and Power (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985). Nikki Stiller, "Eve's Orphans: Mothers and Daughters in Medieval English Literature" 23-32 in Davidson, The Lost Tradition observes that the figure of the female go-between comes from the medieval figure of the wise old woman, who is frequently presented as a hag. This older female figure embodies the fearsome powers of all women and mothers. This bond which exists between woman and woman, and mother and daughter evokes within the male an anxiety regarding the strength and persistence of the mothering instinct. The three kinds of mothering figures that Stiller identifies in medieval literature are natural mothers, foster mothers, and the old hag. She describes the first two as sympathetic to the daughter's plight, but powerless to help her. Only the hag, or wise old woman with her accumulated wisdom, the result of age and experience, possesses power and control. She provides the daughter with the help she failed to receive from her own mother.

(1824), Sister Catherine becomes young Adelaide's spiritual advisor and surrogate mother. Each fills an absence in the life of the other, and eventually each assists the other so that both women are restored to their proper families.

In this examination of the medial feminine, these three distinctions (sibyl, Cassandra, and crone) are not rigidly maintained for they all share certain characteristics. One important similarity is that all three are associated with knowledge as a source of female power. These diverse women may be mentors, teachers, female relatives, surrogate mothers, governesses, or spiritual instructors who counsel and advise their young charges during their transition from girlhood to womanhood. Sometimes as in Leprohon's works they are servants, hence the classification is not class-bound. Wherever they are found, they share a common responsibility -- to provide the novitiate with a link to a supportive female community, a world of women not always foregrounded. As Barbara G. Walker notes in her study of the crone, "Women have always banded together along the underside of male dominated social structures."²⁵ Hence these medial figures provide young women with networks or support systems, enabling them to survive the disruption

²⁵Walker, The Crone 3. See also Nina Auerbach, Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978) for a discussion of how literary female communities function.

which accompanies individual change and development. Their presence is most felt and needed during such times of crisis and upheaval. And so they function also as mid-wives, to relieve tension, to ease transition, to provide safe passage for the uninitiated. They oversee the small and private ceremonies of young women as they separate themselves from the familiar structure of the family and begin a quest for their own places in the world. Such a quest normally leads to a metamorphosis of character and an altered sense of place. The medial figure is often associated with, although she may not contribute to, the transformative process that her young charge undergoes.

In Betwixt and Between, a study of masculine and feminine patterns of initiation, Louise C. Mahdi suggests that traditionally "initiation and rites of passage trained the members of a given society for survival of their own group."²⁶ Mahdi views tribal survival and self-nurturance as the two main purposes behind all rites of passage. Bruce Lincoln, who has also studied the rituals surrounding women's initiation, theorizes that the presence of female ritual in any given culture is "a mark of the importance of women within that culture and of the culture's willingness

²⁶Louise C. Mahdi, Introduction, Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation, eds. Louise C. Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (Illinois: Open Court, 1987) xiv.

to recognize this publicly and institutionally."²⁷ The writings of women like Marie Guyart (de l'Incarnation), Catherine Beckwith Hart, and Rosanna Leprohon suggest that in Canada, in the years prior to and immediately following the British conquest, women within homes, schools, hospitals, or cloisters occupied positions of agency in which they functioned independently of men. Certain female passages -- the transition from childhood to adolescence, courtship, marriage, childbirth -- were events or moments celebrated collectively by women. As rites of solidarity, they enabled women to fashion special spaces apart from men, spaces where women could affirm themselves and female difference. For the women involved (agent and initiand), initiation became an act of unity, resistance, celebration and commiseration.

Usually the woman of agency was an ideal woman, a model of virtue who was expected to transmit to a younger charge her own good qualities regarding female behavior. In Catholic society, her efforts were reinforced by the mystical and pervasive presence of the Virgin Mary, a mythical heroine with whom most young women identified and whom they were inclined to emulate. The medial feminine was also supported by the presence of a significant number of

²⁷Bruce Lincoln, Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Women's Initiation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) 91.

holy women, past and present, who were responsible for the training and education of many young Canadian girls.

Lincoln views female initiation as an ambiguous rite in that it serves to preserve the status quo, and to introduce young women into society as it already exists rather than encouraging them to question or change it. He writes "it is simultaneously a ritual of sacrifice and an apotheosis, with the initiand at once the community's lamb-led-to-slaughter and its deity-in-the-making."²⁸ This rather dichotomous response to female initiation serves somewhat to explain the paradox of woman as a traditional symbol of conservatism as well as an independent agent in early Canadian society. This complexity of woman as sacred space in French Canada is examined by Jean Lemoine in Convergences and by a number of other literary critics.²⁹ Because of her privileged position, woman is viewed as the keeper of traditions, and as the cohesive centre of society. As a more active agent, she also aids in integrating disparate elements and in providing a sense of stability and security.

²⁸ Lincoln, Emerging 108-109.

²⁹ Jean Lemoine, Convergences: Essays from Quebec, trans. Philip Stratford (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966). See also Paula Gilbert Lewis, ed., Introduction, Traditionalism, Nationalism, and Feminism: Women Writers of Quebec (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) 3-10, and Christiane Makward, "Quebec Women Writers," Women and Literature 7.1 (Winter 1979) 3-11.

There was, from the beginning of settlement in Canada, an acknowledged need for a strong female network, for at the outset women were greatly outnumbered by men. When colonization began to be carried out in a serious manner, authorities realized that women were instrumental to any pioneering endeavor.

ii

Small and Private Ceremonies

"They have made her the keeper of the vineyard, and she has much trouble keeping her own."

Marie de l'Incarnation, Word from New France

"Someone full of grace was needed to come into this country so distant, so wild and so rude ... they had need of one thing they could not find and which their purses could not buy them, a girl or a woman of character sufficiently heroic and of determination sufficiently masculine to come to this country to take charge ..."

Dollier de Casson, A History of Montreal

Catherine Rubinger identifies as the origin of the novel in Canada the personal and business letters of Marie de l'Incarnation who arrived in New France in 1639 shortly

after its founding.³⁰ Marie's letters are an important contribution to Canadian women's history and literature for a number of reasons. Like the Jesuit Relations,³¹ they bear witness to the progress of a religious community which in its infancy struggled to take root and flourish in a foreign soil. However, Marie's accounts are unique in that they intertwine private and public sentiment, secular and spiritual concerns. In a letter to her son dated 9 August 1668, Marie identifies a crucial difference between her correspondence with France and that of the Jesuit fathers: "... they only make mention of the progress of the Gospel and of what is concerned with this, and also, when the originals are sent from here, many things are struck out of them in France."³² This study treats Marie's letters as "gossip narratives" rather than the "gospel narratives" written by her male religious counterparts. Here I am reclaiming the archaic definition of the word gossip: one

³⁰Catherine Rubinger, "Some Pioneer Women Writers of French Canada," Canadian Women's Studies 3.1 (1981): 37-39. These letters have been edited and translated by Joyce Marshall, Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967).

³¹Thwaites, Reuben, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791, 73 vols (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959).

³²Marie Guyart, Word from New France 337.

who contracts spiritual affinity with another by acting as a sponsor at a baptism; a godmother; or a familiar acquaintance or friend. Marie's own process of development, as her letters show, is intimately connected to the progress of the mission in New France, but also to her relationship with her son and other significant people in her life.

Marie is also an invaluable source of information about other women associated with the community, both native and European. Her letters catalogue the names of many women whom history has overlooked. As storyteller, she relates with simplicity and "with more of fidelity than of elegance or ornament"³³ the incredibly human stories of her own spiritual conversion, of her mysterious encounter with Madame de la Peltrie, and of the latter's dramatic flight from France. Marie's gossip narratives, though vivid and memorable, display little recourse to figurative language. They are also characterized more by secular than religious imagery. An exception is the recurrent echoings of the biblical Song of Songs which weaves its way through her text. There are also repetitive allusions to dreams, a shadowy female guide, oracular voices, water, gardens, and houses -- all maternal images that evoke a sense of continuity, and a spiritual network which connects her with other female writers.

³³Guyart, Word from New France 65.

As revealed in the shaped narratives of women like Marie, woman as both mediatrix and mother appears at the very foundation of Canadian society.³⁴ The fictional medial figure of this study has its historical counterpart in religious women like Marie and Madeleine de la Petrie who came to Canada in the 1600s to devote their lives to instructing native Indian girls. From the beginning these courageous and unusual women embraced the hostilities of a land echoing with tragic possibilities. In 1639, responding directly to a public plea for female aid and to their own private mystical visions, a group of Ursuline nuns led by Marie de l'Incarnation came to Canada to establish the first female religious house.³⁵ Accompanying Marie were Marie de

³⁴Woman's unique place in early Canadian society is noted by Micheline Dumont, et. al., Quebec Women: A History (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987). "New France was, for certain seventeenth-century French women, a privileged place where they could express their independence and initiative ... these women found in America a new milieu, free from the constraints of tradition ..." (40). For a discussion of other significant seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women, see Jean Bannerman, Leading Ladies: Canada 1639-1837 (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1977).

³⁵Antoinette de Pons, Marquise de Guercheville, was the wealthy patroness of the Jesuit missions in New France. She bought the ship, cargo, and royal patent of De Monts and sent the Jesuits to Canada early in the century. See Norah Story, The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967) 334. In 1633 Paul Le Jeune, Superior of the Canadian missions, appealed in the Jesuit Relations for some charitable lady in France to found a seminary for Indian girls. His second appeal was met in 1634. Marie Guyart (de l'Incarnation) and Marie-Madeleine de la Peltrie both read the Jesuit account and responded to it. Marie first heard of Le Jeune's request when a copy of the Jesuit Relation was sent to her by Joseph-Antoine Poncet, a Jesuit who had taught her son,

Saint-Joseph, Marie-Madeleine de la Peltrie and Cecile de Saint-Croix. Those roaming daughters of St. Ursula, along with several women associated with other religious houses, came to the new world expressly to found female communities, to nurse, and to educate young Indian women. Marie and her companions, as well as wealthy female patrons in France became godmothers to a number of native children. These strange and self-sacrificing women were also to provide role models not only for those they served but for countless generations of women who would follow. Unlike many of the male explorers and adventurers preceding them, and who were often materialistically motivated, these women came without hope of worldly profit or gain. They were devoted selflessly to the holy employment of God and man. They functioned solely as generative rather than destructive or impotent forces.

A very diverse group, these holy women were pilgrims, mystics, pioneers, teachers, nurses, missionaries,

Claude. However a year earlier she had "a sharp and haunting dream" (Guyart, Word from New France 1) of a land of fog and precipice. This was followed by a profound mystical revelation in which Marie was divinely instructed to go to Canada and establish God's Word. Marie-Madeleine de la Peltrie was also inspired by God following a severe illness. Defying her family, Madeleine resorted to a disguise and an assumed name in order to escape to Canada. The spirit of adventure which marked the arrival of Marie and her group in New France can be traced back to the legend of St. Ursula and her band of holy virgins, and to Angela de Merci. The Ursulines received the status of a monastic order in 1572 when Angela de Merci established the first house in Lombardy, Italy.

visionaries, travellers, adventurers, explorers and martyrs. Combining a concern for humanity with their love for God, they identified themselves from the outset with the land and particularly with the Indian. The Ursulines established their first mission at Sillery, an Indian village located above Quebec. There the sisters attempted to incorporate the Indians into the Christian community, to civilize them through education. It was not long before Marie de l'Incarnation realized the futility of the task and admitted that the Indian could not be permanently civilized. Marie's letters reveal the close bond that developed however between the religious sisters and the Indian women who referred to the Ursulines as "the virgin sisters."³⁶ Marie-Madeleine de la Peltrie, not cloistered like the other Ursuline nuns, expressed a strong desire to go into the wilderness to preach to the Indians in person, but she was persuaded by the authorities to abandon her plan.

Although traditionally restricted to a cloistered life in Europe, in Canada these women were not completely detached or segregated from the outside world. Marie de l'Incarnation was actively involved in the affairs of the young colony. Although technically cloistered within the walls of the convent, she had daily contact with the Jesuits returning from their wilderness missions, with the Governors

³⁶Guyart, Word from New France 19.

and other officials, with merchants, soldiers, servants and Indians. Her "apostolic life was intimately linked with the history of New France."³⁷ The frontier community to which these women contributed did not foster passive participation or encourage an abstract life of contemplation.

As Marie's letters reveal, the environment had considerable impact on her life. During her first year in Canada, she describes her new surroundings in glowing positive terms: "... we have not been sick and I have never felt so strong The air is excellent and in consequence this is an earthly paradise"³⁸ She also comments on her psychological growth and ability to adapt in the new land: "I have found in Canada something quite other than I thought"³⁹ Despite the harsh physical conditions Marie experiences during her more than thirty years in New France, she invariably refers to the country as a garden or a vineyard, albeit one where only "savage flowers"⁴⁰ could grow.

³⁷Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. I, 353.

³⁸Guyart, Word from New France 812.

³⁹Guyart, Word from New France 92.

⁴⁰Guyart, Word from New France 210.

The going forth of cloistered women into missionary territory was in itself an innovative, potentially revolutionary act. The terra incognita into which they entered was a democratic world which valued individual initiative despite the communal emphasis of its institutions. It was evident to Marie and the religious women who followed her, that traditional institutional models would not work, that they must somehow be compatible with this strangely wild country. One of Marie's strengths was an ability to accept and initiate change. In 1668 when the King's ministers were encouraging the Indians to adopt the French way of life, Marie responded "It is however a very difficult thing, if not an impossible one, to adapt the Indians to French customs." It was easier it seemed for the French to adapt to native ways. Again in 1660 when Bishop Laval declared that he intended to oppose the Ursuline Constitution of 1646, Marie was resolute in her defence of its articles. Only if "pushed to the limits of obedience" would she accept his plan.⁴¹ A willingness to invent new models, to construct alternate patterns is revealed in the eagerness with which these heroic women adapted to an alien life style. Marie and her sisters accepted the harsh physical conditions of frontier life, acquired new

⁴¹See Letter 37 "A Dispute with Laval" 258-259 in Word from New France.

languages, and responded to other voices which were intimately connected to the mysterious, awe-inspiring landscape. The Ursulines were taught by Le Jeune to speak Algonkin and Montagnais. Marie mastered these as well as Huron but not without a great struggle. In a letter to Mother Marie-Gillette-Roland in 1641 she writes "I confess that there are many thorns in learning a speech so contrary to ours.... But believe me -- the desire to speak does much. I wished to make my heart issue by my tongue...."⁴² From Marie's letters it is obvious that these desiring women possessed the physical as well as spiritual strength needed for survival.

The wilderness, despite its hostilities and dangers, was not unlike the sacred spaces to which in Europe religious women had been accustomed. Like the convent, it functioned as a holy or sacred place where the mysteries of God would reveal themselves. It was also a sanctuary, a place of safety and refuge from the unwelcomed demands of a secular world. For Madeleine de la Peltrie it is a refuge from an unwanted marriage. Despite its spatial restrictions, it promised freedom while at the same time it involved risk and responsibility. Entering any unknown space instinctively suggests change and exploration. And so

⁴²See Letter 11 "Indian Simplicity" 89-90 in Word from New France.

their wilderness home in Canada became, as with the cloister in Europe, a topos for self-examination, growth, and self-discovery.⁴³ Undoubtedly they found the silence and the austerity of the land oddly similar to convent conditions back home. New France was, in a mystical sense, a trysting place or point of rendezvous for these religious women. Here in the role of mediatrix they were free to carry out God's divine plan. Once settled, they established their own ground rules, often rejecting conventional religious mapping of the period. To have come so far was itself a breach of convention, an active opposition to various authorities. Canada's earliest female communities resulted from such blatant acts of rebellion and defiance, prompted often by prophetic dreams and mystical revelations. Possessing the courage to dare to define or interpret personal palimpsest signs from God, these early female pilgrims willingly initiated journeys to a strange and savage land. In so doing they transgressed firmly established boundaries and overtly violated socially sanctioned codes of conduct governing female mobility and behavior.

⁴³Eileen Power, Medieval Women, ed. M.M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 99 suggests convents were boons for medieval women. They gave women scope to explore, discover abilities; assured them self-respect and the respect of society; made use of their powers of organization; provided them with a good education; and allowed them the freedom to pursue a contemplative life.

In Holy Feast, Holy Fast Caroline Bynum suggests that, unlike men, "women's sense of religious self seems more continuous with their sense of social and biological self; women's images are most profoundly deepening, not inversions of what 'woman' is".⁴⁴ This observation supports Jessie Bernard's claim that the female, occupying a kin- and locale-based world, performs an integrating function in society.⁴⁵ Nancy Chodorow also suggests that women's roles are basically familial and concerned with personal affective ties, and that women find their primary social location within the sphere of mothering.⁴⁶

Marie de l'Incarnation, founder of the Ursulines in Canada, was a young woman who seemingly rejected, as did many others, traditional mothering for a life of public nurturing. Born Marie Guyart in Tours, France 1599, she experienced her first mystical vision when she was seven years old. At age fourteen she expressed a wish to enter a

⁴⁴Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: California University Press, 1987) 289.

⁴⁵Bernard, The Female World.

⁴⁶Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). See also Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," Women, Culture and Society, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (California: Stanford University Press, 1974) 43-66.

convent, but her parents were reluctant to admit their spirited daughter to a life characterized by austerity and denial. Instead, at seventeen she contracted a somewhat unhappy marriage, gave birth to a son, and became widowed at nineteen. The death of Marie's husband freed her from a secular marriage and allowed her to prepare for what she believed to be a destined mystical marriage of holy intimacy with Christ. Her rare visions continued through the years she spent raising her son and assisting in the business of her sister and brother-in-law. During this period, her life was characterized by obligation and activity. In 1630, finally ready to act upon the mystical revelations of God, she entered the cloistered house of the Ursulines, leaving her son in the care of family members. In 1633 in a prophetic dream she was instructed to journey to Canada on an apostolic mission. She embarked for the "afflicted place"⁴⁷ of heavy mists and vast spaces in 1639 in the company of Marie-Madeleine de la Peltrie, a young widow fleeing from a family that insisted she remarry. Marie recognized Madeleine as a shadowy female guide whom she had first met in her dream vision of 1633. Although very different in temperament and outlook, these two women began a friendship that would end only in death.

⁴⁷Guyart, Word from New France 52.

Marie left numerous writings as a record of her unusual life, the most important of which are several spiritual autobiographies and an amazingly large collection of letters. Her correspondence with the old world paints a portrait of a dynamic, resourceful and well-informed woman whose deep interior absorption with God did not inhibit a passionate human spirit. These letters were to provide the only tangible link with a son she left behind. They also provide an invaluable account of the spiritual and temporal state of Canada during this period of early settlement. They describe the progress of the mission, Indian and pioneer life, and the general affairs of the country. They also reveal one woman's personal struggle and acceptance of her place in a chaotic, ever-changing world. Like the Jesuit Relations of which some of her letters were an earlier abridgement, Marie's correspondence with various influential people in France was intended to elicit sympathy and support for the fledgling mission in Canada.⁴⁸ As letter writer, Marie functioned publicly as an intermediary as she sought the intercession of powerful public figures in her religious cause. To solicit a personal response from France, Marie identifies by name a number of young Indian

⁴⁸The recipients of her letters include the mother superior of the Ursulines of Tours; a brother and a sister back in France; her son, Claude; a lady of rank in France (the wealthy Anne-Marie d'Albert, Mademoiselle de Luynes), and others.

girls who "model themselves upon us as much as their age and their conditions can permit.... I could not express the caresses they give us, a thing they never do with their natural mothers."⁴⁹ In a letter written 3 September 1640 to a lady of rank, Marie describes the close bonds established between the girls and the Ursulines. Her affection is evident in the personalized descriptions of these, her adopted daughters: the wild and flighty Marie Negabamat who soon became a model of Christian piety; the gifted Marie Amiskouevan who assisted the Ursulines in their study of Indian languages; the devout and obedient Marie-Madeleine Abatenau; six-year old Marie-Ursule Gamitiens singing hymns in her native tongue; the gentle and skilful Agnes Chabdikouechich; and Nicole Assepanse who eventually returned to the wilderness to instruct her own people.

But embedded in the letters is a maternal text addressed to her son, Claude, which reveals as much about the heart of a mother who, although insistent that she has renounced all personal, earthly ties, desires desperately to maintain a link with the one in the world dearest to her. Marie's unbroken correspondence with her "very dear and well-loved son"⁵⁰ constitutes a powerful shaped narrative

⁴⁹Guyart, Word from New France 74.

⁵⁰This is the form of address Marie uses constantly when writing to her son. For other accounts of Marie's life and world, see Agnes Repplier, Mère Marie of the Ursulines: A Study in Adventure (New York: The Literary Guild of America, 1931) and

which expresses repeatedly the pain and suffering that the rejection of a traditional life caused her. These letters to her son, in which she insists on an inseparable bond between mother and child, suggest some questioning of paternal precedence even as she simultaneously affirms God's absolute authority. In contrast to the "hysterical vocabulary," the "stutterings"⁵¹ of her spiritual writings, these personal revelations are clear, deliberative expressions of an active, knowing self. They reveal Marie's awareness of the multiplicity of human existence. Living in an uncertain world, she attempts to bear witness to, rather than deny, the "strange diversity"⁵² of God's will. She learns to accept the strangeness that compelled her to abandon the mothering of her own child, in order to nurture and foster God's children in the wilderness. That Marie's life was not without struggle is indicated by the epigraph opening this section, where she refers to Canada as a vineyard and to herself as its troubled keeper.

As Marie struggles to fulfill God's plan in the wilderness, Claude's letters offer her consolation and

Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., Marie Guyart, trans. Miriam Thompson, O.S.U. (Quebec: Laval, 1973).

⁵¹Guyart, Word from New France 6.

⁵²Guyart, Word from New France 164.

reassurance. Her replies to his letters nearly all express her anxieties regarding the difficulties of communication. She refers numerous times to the risks and dangers attending their correspondence: piracy, shipwrecks, storms. Having made and survived the perilous journey herself, she reminds him that "what one entrusts to the sea is subject to mischance."⁵³ Aware of the great distance separating her from her son and knowing the tenuous nature of human links, she asks that they each "neglect no means of sending news to one another."⁵⁴ To counteract the effects of change and chance, Marie takes every opportunity to write, duplicate and send copies of her letters by alternate routes. Despite these precautions, letters often go astray. Her disappointment when the ships arrive with no word from her son is unconcealed. When news of sickness and death arrive, Marie is fearful for her son's survival. She poignantly expresses a mother's concern for Claude's physical as well as spiritual well-being.

The letters between mother and son are not always devoid of conflict. Two years after her arrival in Canada, she describes the pain she experienced on her son's behalf,

⁵³Guyart, Word from New France 122.

⁵⁴Guyart, Word from New France 181.

the "great convulsions, which were known solely to God."⁵⁵ Her letter of 4 September 1641 intimates that Claude, perhaps embittered by his mother's abandonment of him, was experiencing a period of rebellion against mother and the God that took her from him. Marie admits that she anticipated the estrangement which followed her departure: "my spirits envisag[ed] the reefs upon which you might fall."⁵⁶ News that Claude had entered the Benedictine order fills his mother with joy and relieves her perhaps of some of the guilt she was never totally able to erase.

Two years later, 1 September 1643, when Claude complains of not receiving news from her, Marie once again refers to the sorrow the separation had caused her, and blames herself for her son's "slightly too free"⁵⁷ life. She tells him that this break or gulf between them is the sole cause of her suffering. Despite God's assurance that if she devotes her life to Him, He would look out for her son, Marie continues to worry that her absence might cause Claude to fall into error. Torn by her natural maternal feelings, Marie forces herself to rely on the validity of her spiritual calling. She promises her son that someday

⁵⁵Guyart, Word from New France 91.

⁵⁶Guyart, Word from New France 91.

⁵⁷Guyart, Word from New France 120.

she will reveal to him the nature of her spiritual experiences.

In 1647, indicating again the extent of the grief caused by her choice of a spiritual life, Claude provokes another passionate response from his mother when he once again complains that she rejected him. Referring to the "mysterious will" of God, Marie describes her fierce struggle to hold on to her son. Believing still that she somehow must be "the most cruel of mothers"⁵⁸ and the direct cause of his prolonged suffering, she asks him to forgive her and to understand that she was compelled to accept the unnatural separation as God's will. She tenderly offers him the hope that they will be reunited in another world.

In the years between 1647 and 1670, the bond that had been so perilously threatened becomes stronger as Claude discovers his mother's strengths and sorrows in her personal account of her life in New France and in the spiritual autobiographies she prepared at his request. But despite the process of healing, Marie continues to hold the painful loss of her son inside her. July 1669 at age seventy she once again attempts to assure Claude that she was not an indifferent or unfeeling mother. In an anguished cry from the wilderness, she describes how she "made [her]self die

⁵⁸Guyart, Word from New France 164.

while yet alive."⁵⁹ The pain is rekindled as she remembers their initial separation. Claude was just twelve when she entered the Ursuline convent: "You came with me and, as I left you, it seemed to me that my soul was being separated from my body with utmost pain."⁶⁰ She recalls his daily appearance at the grille of the choir, weeping and watching for a glimpse of her. She remembers the day when the door to the convent was left open and he entered the courtyard before the sisters could send him away, walking backwards hoping for a sign of her whom he loved. And perhaps what seems to be the most painful memory, Marie recalls, when accompanied by a band of young children, Claude appeared at the window of the refectory crying "that [his] mother must be given back to [him] and that [he] intended to have her."⁶¹

Throughout her life Marie attempted to console her son and herself by insisting that vocations must come from God, and that it is the responsibility of the individual to submit his or her will to God's will. Because she accepted God's demands, although evidently not without a constant struggle, she selflessly consented to the necessary division

⁵⁹Guyart, Word from New France 348.

⁶⁰Guyart, Word from New France 349.

⁶¹Guyart, Word from New France 350.

between mother and son, confident that God would care for them both. Throughout her years in Canada, Marie sensed a oneness with her son that time and distance would never sever. In a letter dated 1 September 1643, replying to Claude's question as to whether he would ever see her again, she tells him that he is forever in her thoughts. Noting the five-hour time difference between France and New France, Marie imagines that they are singing in unison God's praises. To somewhat compensate for her physical absence, she raises her veil to a young domestic returning to France so he might describe to Claude the features of his estranged mother's face.

Love of God and mutual devotion to a spiritual life form a new bond between Marie and her son, but their personal relationship remains significant. As her strength begins to fade in her final years, letter writing becomes increasingly burdensome. A new note of weariness creeps into her correspondence but she still endeavors to retain contact with her son by continuing to send him numerous letters by alternate routes. Marie's dying words are directed to Claude: "Tell him I carry him with me in my heart to paradise."⁶² That Marie did not, could not, completely relinquish all worldly ties is evident in the personal record of her life of courage in the new world.

⁶²Guyart, Word from New France 31.

As Rubinger observes, in the French-Canadian novel women are never absent; nor are they always silent. The nineteenth-century Canadian novel, which is so much a product of historical events and particularly of the collision between the English and the French, is also founded on the lives of ancestral women like Marie who mediate between fact and fiction. It does appear, however, from a study of nineteenth-century Canadian literature, that in the transition between the French ancien régime and the English conquest, women in Canada became more constrained by a middle-class ideology that stressed their domestic duties and responsibilities. The integration of private and public spheres in New France had in the past provided women with opportunities to actively participate in the establishment of institutions and to exercise authority within the community. As Jan Noel observes in "New France: Les Femmes Favorisées,"⁶³ this situation did not survive into nineteenth-century British North America. However, what did survive were the memories or shadows of these powerful earlier women, as well as the continuation of the female mysteries or initiation rites that women enact across all cultures.

⁶³Jan Noel, "New France: Les Femmes Favorisées," Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986) 12-44.

iii

Literary Medial Feminine

"The medial woman's function is to be of assistance in times of difficult passage."

Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin

"... women's mothering reproduces itself cyclically."

Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering

"The female world has changed. It is changing. It is not set in concrete, not rigid. It is different today from the way it used to be and from the way it is becoming. It changes according to its own tempo, its own style, and its own logic."

Jessie Bernard, The Female World

The medial feminine first appears in English-Canadian fiction in Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769). She is imaged in Arabella Fermor and Ed Rivers, two characters who share the responsibility for advising Lucy Temple, Ed's sister in England, and Emily Montague, Arabella's best friend in Canada. Lucy and Emily are both involved in a specific female rite of passage -- the tumultuous transition between courtship and marriage. Both young women are in particularly vulnerable positions. Emily's mother is dead, and her father, though alive, is

absent and presumed to be dead. Her female guardian is the flirtatious Mrs. Melmoth who advises her in the case of marriage to choose affluence over love. Lucy's mother, although very much alive, is so grieved by her son's departure for Canada, that she fails to foresee and forestall the somewhat questionable union between Lucy and John Temple, a wealthy English playboy. Knowing that the consequences of a bad marriage could prove disastrous for the female, Lucy and Arabella recognize the need for guidance and mediation. The embedded narratives of the hermit and his lost Louisa, and the seduction, betrayal and death of Sophia, also serve to emphasize the dangers surrounding Lucy and Emily. The text of Ed and Arabella's letters functions also as a conduct or guide book for the female reader, instructing her in the perils accompanying the courting rituals of eighteenth-century men and women.⁶⁴ The interests and concerns of women are central to Brooke's text, and most of the correspondence involves a particular community of women, many of whom are motherless and hence defenseless.

⁶⁴Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada: Elizabeth Sincoe, Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Anna Jameson, Lady Dufferin (Toronto: Anansi, 1982). Fowler states, "Often the dividing line between conduct book and novel was thin, the former peppered with little moral tales and the latter profusely larded with long sermons on the lauded feminine virtues" (8).

This ever-present need for mediating women has special significance in the sketches, letters and journals of other early women writers. In their pioneer accounts of life in nineteenth-century Canada, Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill and Anna Jameson attempt to identify obstacles in an alien landscape, whereby they might aid other women as they too struggle to articulate this strangeness. In The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1854) Traill, Canada's floral god-mother,⁶⁵ acts as a mediator between the old world and the new. She also assists in her sister Susanna's process of adjustment to the bush. In Roughing It in the Bush (1852), Moodie refers to Catharine as her only female guide⁶⁶ in the vast forest. The Backwoods of Canada consists of Traill's personal correspondence with her mother and sister back home. These letters foreground the importance of familial ties and the need for a mutual exchange between women. The Canadian Settler's Guide, dedicated "to the Wives and Daughters of

⁶⁵Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada (1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1980) 144, Catharine refers to herself as a "floral god-mother," free to bestow names on the flowers and plants of the wild Canadian woods.

⁶⁶Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush: or, Life in Canada, ed. Carl Ballstadt (1852; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988) 294.

the Canadian Emigrant,"⁶⁷ was written to instruct and advise future settlers. In the preface, Traill acknowledges the assistance which a number of women gave to her. In "The Scottish Emigrant's Song" which appears at the end of her Guide, Traill employs an appropriate image of a woman spinning, "turn[ing] her wheel."⁶⁸ The fate of the emigrant, the chances of his or her survival, Traill repeatedly affirms, rests upon the transmission and acquisition of competent knowledge among women. As she states emphatically in The Backwoods of Canada, "knowledge is power."⁶⁹ Like Marie de l'Incarnation and other religious pioneers of an earlier century, Traill advocates a practical rather than a theoretical knowledge.

Although lacking the optimism and competence of her sister, Moodie too serves as a mediator between Canada and the distant motherland. Her sketches of life in the bush

⁶⁷Traill, The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969) xix.

⁶⁸Traill, Settler's Guide 234. Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent 7-12 comments on the significance of the image of woman with her needle or woman spinning, as it relates to female destiny. She describes the five women included in her study, those who in their writings wove links between England and Canada, as the "fore-mothers" of a later generation of Canadian women writers. Their early endeavors contribute to the make-up of a unique female community, and provide the ground-work for a female literary tradition in Canada.

⁶⁹Traill, The Backwoods 82.

shatter rather than reinforce the myth of the garden, as she presents an alternate view of man and woman's relationship to nature. Her intent is to inform future emigrants of the harsh reality of life in the backwoods, and to assist them in their passage from the green world of England to the ominous wilderness of Canada. Whereas Traill functions more as a mid-wife, Moodie adopts the more detached role of sibyl in order to voice warnings to other naive, overly optimistic and ill-informed countrymen. For Moodie, as for Traill, knowledge is empowering. For these women, Canada in the nineteenth century is still an incomplete text, a rudimentary, everchanging guidebook to be inscribed and enlarged upon if others are to learn survival.

While Traill and Moodie stress female community, Anna Jameson focuses on the tenuous position of woman as individual. Lacking the unified or constructed visions of either Traill or Moodie, Jameson's sense of possible disintegration is reflected in the fragments of her journal, which she too addresses to a female audience. Its publication coincides with the ascent of Queen Victoria to the English throne, a fact Jameson notes in the preface as well as in the conclusion. The text of Winter Studies and Summer Rambles (1838) is more idiosyncratic and self-revelatory than those of either Moodie or Traill, and, much more than theirs, woman as subject is at its centre. Jameson speaks first and foremost as a woman, and secondly

as a woman alone in a strange country. She describes herself ambiguously as "an uprooted tree, dying at the core,"⁷⁰ an image evoking violence and upheaval, as well as branches and roots. To combat a growing sense of estrangement and dislocation, Jameson turns to writing (which seems to function as therapy, as it undoubtedly did for Moodie, Traill and others), and to a network or community of women of which she perceives herself a part. Isolated from friends and family in Europe, she responds to the Indian whom she describes as "very natural and feminine."⁷¹ Unlike Traill or Moodie, Jameson does not support a social system in which "the honour, rights or happiness"⁷² of the individual must yield to those of the general good. She wisely recognizes the negative

⁷⁰Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (1838; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1970) Vol. I, 4.

⁷¹Jameson, Winter Studies, Vol. I, 24. Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fictions (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982) observes the frequent occurrence of "kinship between woodswomen, Indians and nature's magical powers" (18). This female response to nature and the Indian is present in writings by several Canadian women: Frances Brooke, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Agnes Laut, Margaret Laurence. One of the first European women to respond intimately to the North American Indian was H el ene Boule (1598-1654), child-bride of Samuel de Champlain. She accompanied her husband to Canada when she was eighteen. Unhappy, she "sought diversion among the Indians who admired her face, her clothes and a mirror hanging at her belt." See Dictionary of Canadian Biography I, 110.

⁷²Jameson, Winter Studies Vol. I, 112.

implications of such politics for women, and suggests that women must act as a marginalized group to circumvent such a system: "there is no solution for women but in ourselves: in self-knowledge, self-reliance, self-respect, and in mutual help and pity."⁷³ Acting as a spokeswoman for women everywhere, whether in the wilderness, in a pioneer community or in a civilized European salon, Jameson addresses herself to the paradox of the strange unreasonable power and the miserable weakness that women possess. In her journal entries she ironically notes the incongruity of women's "false position"⁷⁴ and fearful power. Jameson's writings indicate that female power is related directly to shared knowledge and female networking.

Other nineteenth-century writers create in their narrative fictions images of women as mediators and powerful agents. In John Richardson's Wacousta (1832), Madeline protectively nurtures her motherless young cousin, Clara De Haldimar, and the Indian woman, Oucanasta, and instructs both Madeline and her husband-to-be, Frederick De Haldimar, in the art of wilderness survival. The presence of this amazon, or warrior woman, ensures their safety as she crosses boundaries between fort and forest, culture and

⁷³Jameson, Winter Studies Vol. I, 118.

⁷⁴James Winter Studies Vol. I, 202.

nature. In Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1896) Mathilde, the scarlet woman turned sacred space, moves unimpeded between the Quebec authorities and the green hills surrounding the captured town. An outspoken revolutionary who speaks in riddles, chants biblical text, and disrupts the lies of the corrupt Intendant Bigot, Mathilde fearlessly leads the equally subversive heroine Alixe to a secret sanctuary outside the city following the British conquest.

Catherine Beckwith Hart's St. Ursula's Convent: or the Nun of Canada (1824) and Rosanna Leprohon's Antoinette de Mirecourt: or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing (1864), two historical novels set in post-conquest Canada, continue to explore the urgent need for mediation during a time of crisis and upheaval. During this period Canada was the site of political struggle between France and England. Both novelists moralize about the joys of rural life by contrasting town and city, colony and mother country, and through frequent allusions to Canada's golden age. They both look back nostalgically to an earlier time of order and stability. In the midst of personal and political chaos, marriage functions for Hart and Leprohon as a unifying and harmonizing force. Both novels depict life as a continual struggle or agon between unruly forces. The authors suggest that trials are sent to test the strength of moral goodness, loyalty and love. The domestic conflict between the sexes is reflected in the political tensions between France and

England, with Canada as an intermediate pawn, whose position is determined by others, more powerful and more knowledgeable. Again it is emphasized that knowledge, political or personal, is associated with power and the ability to act. In St. Ursula's Convent, lack of knowledge results in loss, confusion and long years of grief. In Antoinette de Mirecourt secrecy is explicitly equated with sorrow.

Both texts are written in the feminine;⁷⁵ they foreground female experiences by focussing on the important connections and significant events in the lives of girls and women. They also function as female scripts intended to instruct the young innocent protagonists as they prepare for marriage and motherhood. Here, matrilinear connections and enduring female friendships are honoured. Older women act as role models and mentors to younger girls.

⁷⁵Ann Dybikowski, Victoria Freeman, Daphne Marlatt, Barbara Pulling, and Betsy Warland, eds., In the Feminine: Women and Words/Les Femmes et Les Mots (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1985). See also Ann Rosalind Jones, "Inscribing Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine," Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism, eds. Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn (New York: Methuen, 1985) 80-112. I am suggesting that Hart and Leprohon are inscribing feminine scripts within their texts: they both emphasize woman to woman relatedness; the importance of affective relationships; the identification of the heroine with competent female figures; a continuous dialogue between women from one generation to another; and women telling their own stories, dispelling the silences which often characterize the female in male texts.

Hart reinforces her dominant female focus by dedicating her novel to the Countess of Dalhousie, and modelling her fictional character, Sister Catherine, on a historical religious figure. Sister Catherine also has a specific mystical resonance within the text.⁷⁶ She evokes the dilemma faced by many women in French Canadian society, whether to marry or enter a cloister. In St. Ursula's Convent the central female characters move from a secular to a religious world, between which the boundary is often blurred. Sister Catherine is the mother superior of the Ursuline convent, a religious house devoted to the

⁷⁶Catherine of Alexandria was a virgin saint and martyr. Of noble birth and learned in the sciences, she was only eighteen years old when she presented herself to Emperor Maximinus, who was violently persecuting the Christians. He summoned scholars to debate with Catherine but she converted them. She was sentenced to be torn on the wheel, an instrument of torture, but the wheel broke. Eventually she was beheaded. St. Catherine is the patroness of young maidens and female students. She is evoked to watch over virgins of the cloister and young women of the world. See Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia 149-150; H. Pomeroy Brewster, Saints and Festivals of the Christian Church (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1904) 104; and Donald Attwater, The Penguin Dictionary of Saints (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965) 209.

instruction of young girls.⁷⁷ In Parker's The Seats of the Mighty an Ursuline mother assists Alixe and Matilde in their flight from Doltaire by hiding them in the convent. Most young girls were educated at home by their mothers until they reached the age of twelve. Then they were sent to the Ursulines to complete their education. This period was also used as preparation for marriage. Sheltered from the outside world and removed from mothers and sisters, the convent was an ideal place for young girls to form strong female attachments, and to instill confidence in religious women.

In the nineteenth century, marriage and family act as symbols for balance and order in society. St. Ursula's Convent, which celebrates a total of nine marriages, seems to suggest that while a spiritual life is of the utmost significance to the development and happiness of the individual, secular marriage is preferable to mystical

⁷⁷The articles of union drawn up by the Ursulines of Quebec in the 1600s accepted the three Augustinian vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and added a fourth vow, to teach. See Marshall, Word from New France 22. As many early visitors to Canada noted, perhaps because of the existence of the Ursulines, women were often better educated than the men. Throughout the nineteenth century, religious houses continued to provide superior education to Canadian girls, French and English. Rosanna Leprohon, née Mullins, was educated at Convent of Congregation in Montreal.

marriage.⁷⁸ In The Manor House of De Villeraï: A Tale of Canada Under the French Regime (1859-60), Rosanna Leprohon suggests that marriage and the convent are not the only choices open to women. Blanche De Villeraï, wise-woman and diviner, chides Gustave De Montarville when he asks for assurance that she will someday marry: "... consequently whenever I wish to change my single state, I suppose I can accomplish the step without much difficulty; but I hope, Gustave, you do not share the vulgar error, that an unmarried woman must necessarily be unhappy."⁷⁹ Blanche neither marries nor enters a convent. During the time when Leprohon was writing, the religious life as a viable alternative to marriage, motherhood and spinisterhood was experiencing a comeback.

Chapter one begins with an epigraph evoking Hymen, the ancient Greek god of marriage, a pagan deity who was fast

⁷⁸As Marta Danylewycz observes in Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinisterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920, eds. Paul-André Linteau, Alison Prentice, William Westfall (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) the period between 1840 and 1920 "witnessed a reversal in a century-long trend of stagnation in convent population. Between the Conquest and the Rebellions of 1837-38 the religious population of Quebec hovered between 230 and 260. In the 1840's, it jumped suddenly to 560, soaring by 1900 to 6,629 and by 1920 to 13,570" (17).

⁷⁹The Manor House of De Villeraï: A Tale of Canada Under the French Regime (1859-60), ed. John Robert Sorfleet Journal of Canadian Fiction 34 (1985): 137-8.

becoming the new god of the Victorian age.⁸⁰ He represents a balance of the sometimes contradictory forces of eros and agape. The harmony that existed within New France before the English conquest is depicted in the marital union of Philip de St. Louis and Adelaide De Mont Pelier. Their marriage and the births of several children (Adelaide, Francis, Angelica and Charles) create a paradisaical world characterized by happiness and health.

When Adelaide, the eldest, is twelve years old, she is sent to the Ursulines at Quebec to complete her education. There she meets "the very interesting nun,"⁸¹ Sister Catherine, who becomes a mentor to Adelaide, as well as a teacher and spiritual advisor. When Adelaide is informed of the deaths of her grandparents, Sister Catherine, assuming the role of her absent mother, offers Adelaide comfort and assurance. She teaches the young woman fortitude and resignation to the will of God. This period of grief, Adelaide's initial personal encounter with death, serves to establish a special bond between the nun and her charge. Eventually Sister Catherine takes Adelaide into her confidence and agrees to comply with the young girl's

⁸⁰Richard D. McGhee, Marriage, Duty, and Desire in Victorian Poetry and Drama (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980).

⁸¹Julia Catherine (Beckwick) Hart, St. Ursula's Convent: or the Nun of Canada (1824; rpt. Sackville: Mount Allison University, 1978) 17.

request for a history of her life and loss. This transmission of female stories by medial figures is a significant feature of women's nineteenth-century fictions.

Chapters three to eight inclusive contain the text of Sister Catherine's sorrowful narrative, presented from a first-person point of view. Transmitting the story orally to Adelaide, who inscribes it, acts therapeutically to exorcise the sorrows of the nun. It also establishes a sympathetic bond between the two women. This story provides Adelaide with an intimate knowledge of past events which eventually enables her to bring about a reconciliation between Sister Catherine and her estranged family. This hereses or reunion of mother and daughter also affects Adelaide's identity. Sister Catherine's narrative begins in Canada but, it is completed in England when Adelaide, visiting the family of a friend, discovers not only the nun's missing relatives but also Adelaide's own real family from whom she had been deceitfully separated as an infant. These intricate and extended personal relationships, which include Adelaide's mother, Adelaide, Sister Catherine and her absent daughter, lead to a number of reconciliations within the text and a widening of familial circles.

Although Sister Catherine's early years had been spent in France, her life oddly resembled that of Adelaide. Born Julia De la Valière in Normandy, France, she received a traditional Catholic upbringing. She was educated at home

by her mother and sent later to a convent nearby, where the abbess was an intimate friend of her mother. Her life was uneventful until her fifteenth year when her family experienced financial ruin. This loss of wealth was interpreted as a sign of God's displeasure for the slightly liberal lifestyle of the family. Following the loss of his ships and goods, Julia's father, mysteriously funded by a benefactor, decided to begin anew in Canada. There Julia met Monsieur de Montreuil, a young gentleman newly arrived from France. They married and were blessed with a son, Theodore, and two daughters, one of whom Julia believed to have died at birth. In actual fact, the child had been given unknowingly to her sister-in-law whose own daughter had died at birth. This subterfuge was carried out by the respective fathers and remained unknown to the mothers until many years later.

Shortly after these events, the English invaded and conquered New France. Julia mistakenly believed that her husband had died in the resulting battle and that her sister-in-law and family, accompanied by Julia's son Theodore, were lost in a storm at sea. Julia is left alone to raise her remaining daughter and a new-born child, Annette. Tragedy continues to follow her as she next loses her mother and her two remaining children to death. Overwhelmed by grief, she seeks refuge in the Ursuline convent, and spends the rest of her life, until her

friendship with Adelaide, in "gloomy confinement."⁸² Having finished the story of her life, Sister Catherine warns her surrogate daughter not to become too strongly attached to earthly ties or worldly pleasures. Her counsel is intended to prevent Adelaide from similar sorrows.

Whereas Sister Catherine functions as a Cassandra figure, offering words of warning to the young girl, Adelaide uses the words, the story of her mentor, to unravel the mystery surrounding both their lives. This knowledge enables her to reunite mother and daughter. She solves the riddle of the confused identities with the assistance of a crone figure, Mary, the old Canadian nurse who witnessed the exchange of the girl children at birth.

During her own stay at the Ursuline convent at Quebec, Adelaide forms another close friendship with Charlotte Turner and her mother who are visiting New France from England. When Charlotte and her family return home, Adelaide accompanies them for a holiday. There she meets and is espoused to Edward who is later revealed as her natural brother. In this period of romantic initiation and subsequent confusion, Adelaide longs for motherly advice and direction. In the absence of her own mother and her spiritual advisory, Sister Catherine, Adelaide has a prophetic dream in which a harbinger of Christ intervenes to

⁸²Hart, St. Ursula's Convent 111.

prevent the incestuous union of brother and sister. This mysterious dream, a premonition of future events, reminds Adelaide of Sister Catherine's advice, to put her trust in Providence. Relying on Divine intervention, Adelaide is finally able to put together the pieces of the puzzle. Julia (Sister Catherine) is ultimately reunited with her earthly family, a reunion which takes precedence over the sacredness of her monastic vows, and Adelaide is welcomed into her own newly found family. The strong relationship and the exchange of stories between Adelaide and Sister Catherine enable Adelaide to function as an active unifying force capable of restoring order and wholeness. They also serve to affirm the interconnected fates of women.

If the central female characters in St. Ursula's Convent are active and intuitive subjects, the heroine of Leprohon's Antoinette de Mirecourt is object; she is acted upon. A "novel of social purpose,"⁸³ it describes the near tragic consequences when a naive young girl rejects the warnings of an experienced mentor and accepts the advice of "a dangerous guide and companion."⁸⁴ This second novel of a

⁸³Carl F. Klinck, Introduction, Rosanna Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt: or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing (1864; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) 12.

⁸⁴Rosanna Leprohon, Antoinette De Mirecourt or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing, ed. John Stockdale (1864; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989) 52.

trilogy⁸⁵ examines the difficult period of adjustment and accommodation for women and French society following the English conquest of New France. In this love story, Leprohon offers "a parable of amicable relations as the English and French provinces moved toward the Confederation of 1867."⁸⁶

The heroine, Antoinette de Mirecourt, is a wealthy heiress raised by a reclusive father and an aging governess, Mrs. Gérard. Her mother, a delicate woman subject to frequent headaches and chronic depression, died when Antoinette was an infant. Following the mother's death, Mr. De Mirecourt hires Mrs. Gérard, "so kind and prudent a guide to replace the mother"⁸⁷ his daughter has lost. Indulged by a generous father, Antoinette grows up to be a giddy and romantic young woman. Although a central character in the text, her position in Canadian society at the time is peripheral. She is raised in a protective country environment at Valmont, away from the intrigues of the city. Even though she is the daughter of a wealthy French family, her privileged position is undermined by the change in

⁸⁵The other novels in the trilogy are The Manor House of De Villerai: A Tale of Canada Under the French Regime (1859-60) and Armand Durand (1868).

⁸⁶Klinck, "Introduction" 9.

⁸⁷Leprohon, Antoinette 21.

political fortune; at the time of the narrative, New France is accustoming itself to English occupation and domination.

The dangerous phase of Antoinette's life begins in the autumn of her seventeenth year when she visits her cousin Lucille, wife of Monsieur D'Aulay, a member of one of the old French noblesse. The season foreshadows Antoinette's separation from the idyllic world of Valmont and her subsequent erotic fall. Lucille, a fair lady "on the shady side of ... thirty"⁸⁸ who proves to be an unfit guardian for Antoinette, contributes to the young girl's breach of conduct. Imaginative, thoughtless and impulsive, Lucille views Antoinette as a romantic heroine from the pages of one of her favorite novels or volumes of sentimental poetry. Alternating between practical advice and romantic notions, which are her ultimate source of knowledge, Lucille encourages Antoinette to form a romantic attachment with major Audley Sternfield, an arrogant English soldier. Ironically, Lucille believes that by bringing her young cousin to Montreal and exposing her to the world of parties and romance, she has somehow rescued her from a life of boredom and stasis.

Separated from Mrs. Geràrd, her practical role model, and having neither mother nor sister to protect her, Antoinette is overwhelmed by the wilful and daring Lucille.

⁸⁸Leprohon, Antoinette 5.

The soft musical tones of her voice and her elegant manner cause Antoinette to forget the warnings of her wise governess. Free from the restrictions of her father, she is at liberty to make her own decisions, and to choose her own suitors. In this more liberal environment, Antoinette defies the wishes of her father, and acts outside the authority of church and society. From obedient child, she is a transgressing daughter. Montreal is the scene of Antoinette's traumatic coming of age. A dangerous place for the uninitiated, the city is associated with disruption, revolution, betrayal, deception and death. However eventually it becomes also the site of female maturity.

While preparing Antoinette for her first extended separation from the family, Mrs. Geràrd, intuitively sensing "dangers and snares,"⁸⁹ prophesies Lucille's destructive though well-meaning influence on Antoinette. Relying on the power of her experiences and her years of faithful service to the family, she tries to prevent Antoinette's visit to Montreal. She expresses a strong belief that Lucille is "eminently unfit for the responsible office of mentor to a girl of seventeen."⁹⁰ Mrs. Geràrd's appeal falls on deaf ears as Mr. De Mirecourt eventually gives his assent to the

⁸⁹Leprohon, Antoinette 9.

⁹⁰Leprohon, Antoinette 9.

trip. The ironic voice of the frequent authorial intrusions reaffirms Mrs. Geràrd's fears and creates a foreboding tone.

Despite the warnings, Antoinette travels to Montreal to visit her spirited cousin. In honour of her arrival, Lucille plans a gala event to which she invites several eligible English soldiers. She chooses November 25, the feast day of St. Catherine, as the date for her party. The intrusive narrator insightfully observes that this significant religious holiday coincides with the English celebration of Hallowe'en, a pagan festival. This party, marking the transition between the old regime and the new order, is where the fateful meeting between Antoinette and her ill-chosen suitor takes place. Swept up in Lucille's "reign of anarchy"⁹¹ and pursued relentlessly by Sternfield, a fictionalized "rose-water hero,"⁹² Antoinette is lured into a secret marriage. Sternfield seduces his inexperienced lover with impassioned readings of poetry and sentimental fictions. At an inopportune moment, Louis, Antoinette's childhood friend, arrives in Montreal with a message from her father -- Mr. De Mirecourt has selected Louis as an appropriate husband for his daughter. Fearful

⁹¹Leprohon, Antoinette 6.

⁹²Leprohon, Antoinette 62.

that her authoritarian father might force the match, Lucille hastens Antoinette's reluctant decision to wed Sternfield.

Shortly after she is coerced into a clandestine marriage unsanctioned by family or church, Antoinette realizes the error of her choice. She perceives God's disapproval of her actions in the storm which follows the ceremony and in her own inability to pray. What she now recognizes as girlish infatuation ends completely when Colonel Cecil Evelyn enters the picture. Aware that she has fallen in love with Evelyn, Antoinette's health begins to decline. Mr. De Mirecourt, witnessing his daughter's fragile state, realizes too late that Mrs. Gérard's prophecies have come true. Antoinette's disastrous marriage does not bring her the happiness that Lucille and her novels promised. The headaches and fever which follow her secret alliance, and the melancholy which continues to plague her, act as a metaphor for her anxieties and guilt concerning the match. Torn between father and husband, Antoinette waits for disaster to descend. Her desire for peace and unity is signified in the emblematic tapestry on which she weaves the images of the lily and the rose. Antoinette's hope for a resolution is short-lived, for Sternfield, through persecution and intimidation, inspires fear and anguish in her. In his treatment of Antoinette, he resembles the oppressive actions of the new government. Like Apollo,

Cassandra's angry lover to whom he is compared, Sternfield is a harbinger of plagues and misfortune.

Unable to withstand his abusive behavior, Antoinette leaves Montrea' several weeks after the marriage and seeks refuge in Valmont. Her period of penance, corresponding to the "dark days of the country,"⁹³ begins appropriately in Lent, a forty-day period of fasting and penitence commemorating Christ's seclusion in the wilderness. Mrs. Geràrd is shocked by the transformation in Antoinette. Reassuming her role as friend and mother, Mrs. Geràrd attempts to regain Antoinette's confidence and to guide her through the turmoil. Suspecting that Lucille is somehow responsible for these unwelcomed changes in Antoinette, the governess warns the younger woman that she will be held accountable for Antoinette's actions or errors.

During Passion week, Antoinette enters an intense period of seclusion and meditation within the circle of her family. Her suffering intensifies when she realizes that Evelyn, a notorious woman-hater and suspected atheist, returns her love. Thrown together following a near accident, Evelyn tells Antoinette the story of his life, a narrative characterized by female absence and betrayal. Orphaned at a young age, Evelyn, like Antoinette, had never known the intimacy of a mother's love. When he finally fell

⁹³Leprohon, Antoinette 155.

in love, his betrothed was cruelly stolen from him by a manipulative, deceitful brother. Betrayed by his only family, Evelyn, "a stray waif" and "gloomy misanthrope,"⁹⁴ left England to wander the world aimlessly for twelve years. His tragic story strikes a responsive chord in Antoinette.

This new love creates another trial for Antoinette to endure. Bound by an oath she made to Sternfield on her mother's cross, she cannot return Evelyn's affections or even explain to him the reasons for her rejection. Humbly she accepts her suffering and grieves that she had so blindly linked her fate with that of an unworthy, destructive man. Antoinette's fate is remarkably similar to that of Quebec, the besieged, desecrated city now in ruins and ashes, occupied by contending hosts. Like her, it too bears melancholy traces of the country's struggle and fall. The intrusive narrator wonders whether Antoinette or Quebec will ever rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of despair to rebuild and renew life again.⁹⁵ Leprohon seems to suggest that health can only be restored by a return to the mother.

Evelyn becomes the means to Antoinette's resurrection and renewal. Unlike Sternfield, Evelyn is a just and liberal man, and he represents a radically different English

⁹⁴Leprohon, Antoinette 134.

⁹⁵Leprohon, Antoinette 161.

attitude. Free from the prejudices of so many of his countrymen and himself fearful of oppression and tyranny, Evelyn provides hope during the personal chaos of Antoinette's life. He proves his fidelity to the new country and his disdain for English oppression when he acts in defence of Jean-Baptist who was being openly swindled by Barnwell, an English inn-keeper. Antoinette's father who witnessed this event observes that the cooperation of men like Evelyn is needed to assist in the harmonious creation of a new order.

Following a brief visit to Montreal in order to prevent any more mischief from Sternfield, Antoinette returns home to Valmont where she remains through the summer and into the fall. Weary and disillusioned, she seeks comfort from Mrs. Gérard. She also seeks an account of her mother's life and early death. This story prompts from Antoinette a longing for her own death and a release from the miseries of the world. Mrs. Gérard advises her to face life and its hardship with courage. When Antoinette confides in Mrs. Gérard that she is restricted in her confidences by a secret coerced from her, the partial revelation establishes a new intimacy between the two women. However when Antoinette's health fails to improve, her family insists that she seek a change of scene in the city. As the time since her first meeting with Sternfield comes full circle, chance intervenes to release her from her secret marriage and to end her

sorrow. When Louis, her childhood friend and chosen suitor, is forced into a duel with Antoinette's husband, Sternfield is mortally wounded. Their unholy union is revealed when she visits his room unchaperoned to comfort him in his dying hours. She is then free to marry Evelyn who stands by her, despite the rumors concerning her spotted reputation.

This ending in marriage is not so much an assertion of the patriarchal order as a confirmation of female ability. Poised precariously between two conflicting cultures, Antoinette ultimately rejects the restrictive views of her father as well as Lucille's duplicitous fictions for the future. Despite Lucille's misguided approach to courtship and marriage, she remains nonetheless a positive force within the text. She subverts the existing domestic rules regarding French and English relations and rejects "the cloister-like seclusion"⁹⁶ in which many French Canadians continued to exist. More so than her husband or Antoinette's father, Lucille accepts the reality of the political situation, and is determined to utilize the limited resources that are left. Moving between the cautious guidance of Mrs. Geràrd and the naive daring of Lucille, Antoinette discovers her own personal strengths and abilities. In her transition from the idyllic world of Valmont to the corrupt and dangerous world of Montreal,

⁹⁶Leprohon, Antoinette 6.

Antoinette affirms the words of Leprohon's wise narrator in The Manor house of De Villeraï: "Men may dare, but women do endure. Men may falter, women never flinch. Their affections, loves, hatreds, die only with themselves."⁹⁷ Leprohon's narrative of one woman's seduction and betrayal provides an object lesson in the need for reliable female guides, but it also reminds the reader that times are changing. When young girls like Antoinette are inexperienced in the ways of the world and unaccustomed to male power and manipulation, it is crucial that women like Mrs. Gérard watch over their motherless charges and guide them through the dangers of courtship and marriage.

iv

Summary

Whether mystics or mentors, there was no shortage of strong, competent women to fill the gap created by the deaths or absence of real mothers in Canadian history or in the literature of the nineteenth-century. Their presence assured the existence of a supportive female community and the continuation of female traditions from one generation to another. They contributed to the founding and maintenance of social institutions, they presented their stories and

⁹⁷Leprohon, The Manor House 17.

demanded that their voices be heard, even in the wilderness. As Rubinger observes, in the French Canadian novel women are never absent; nor are they always silent. The nineteenth-century Canadian novel, which is so much a product of historical events and particularly of the accommodation between English and French, is founded on the lives of real women who mediate between fact and fiction.

CHAPTER III

Female Savior or Redemptrix

"The nursling of civilization, placed in the midst of the forest and abandoned to his own resources, is helpless as an infant. There is no [clue] to the labyrinth. Bewildered and amazed, he circles round and round in hopeless wanderings."

Francis Parkman, Conspiracy of Pontiac

"There is nothing like silence to suggest unlimited space."

Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space

"Redemption means radical change."

Nelle Morton, The Journey is Home

"The Savior figure brings together the human and the divine, disclosing at one and the same time, the gracious, redeeming face of God/ess and our authentic potential."

Rosemary R. Ruether, Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology

"The weakness of the colonial mentality is that it regards as a threat what it should regard as its salvation; it walls out or exploits what it should welcome and cultivate."

D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock

John Richardson's Wacousta: or, The Prophecy; a Tale of the Canadas (1832) and Catharine Parr Traill's Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains (1852) are two narratives subtly infiltrated by images of subversive women who move through shadowy spaces to perform acts of redemption.¹ Because these women belong to a muted rather than a dominant cultural group² (Indian rather than European), because they are female, and because they are acting on their own authority rather than that of the tribe, they must employ subversive strategies in order to fulfill their missions and to survive destruction in a disruptive, violent environment. In Canadian fiction, as evidenced in earlier chapters, feminine characters do not always remain in socially assigned or sanctioned positions. Often they defy established authorities by covertly performing revolutionary acts and by subverting the symbolic order. Relegated to the realm of silence, their presence ignored or unacknowledged, these figures resort to semiotic forms of

¹Judith Lowder-Newton, Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860 (New York: Methuen, 1985).

²For discussion of muted and dominant cultural groups, see Edwin Ardener, "Belief and the Problem of Women," Perceiving Women, ed. Shirley Ardener (London: Malaby, 1975) 1-17.

discourse to voice their dissent.³ Oucanasta, in Richardson's Wacousta, uses whispers, silences and gestures. Catharine, in Traill's Canadian Crusoes, fills the silences of the forest with biblical scriptures, maxims, songs, and stories. In so doing, both women upstage their seemingly more powerful male characters. In both Wacousta and Canadian Crusoes, an Indian woman, acting as fifth business,⁴ becomes the motivating, inciting force behind the narrative.⁵ She becomes a catalyst for change in other characters; she mediates between two opposing cultures; and

³See Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 21-106. Within the signifying process that constitutes language, Kristeva identifies two modalities that are inseparable: the semiotic and the symbolic. The dialectic between them determines the type of discourse involved (i.e. narrative, theory, poetry, etc.). The subject of enunciation (the speaking subject) is always both semiotic and symbolic. The semiotic refers to the actual organization or disposition, within the body, of instinctual drives as they affect language. The symbolic comes into being later than the semiotic; it involves the mirror stage, the identification of subject and its distinction from objects, and the establishment of a sign system.

⁴Dennis Duffy, Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) identifies Oucanasta as "fifth business" (48).

⁵Robertson Davis, Fifth Business (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970). I am drawing on Davies' use of the epigraph from Fifth Business in which he identifies fifth business as an operative term applying to the player who brings about the recognition or denouement in drama.

she functions as a means of redemption for another character or group.

This study uses the term redemptrix in its secular as well as its spiritual sense: it refers to a character who restores, saves or ensures the freedom or life of another.⁶ This character makes amends through acts of selfless love rather than displays of aggression, through service to others rather than to self. More often than not, it is the female who functions successfully as redemptrix or savior figure. Possessing and exercising a power and authority radically different from that of the male, she tends toward reconciliation and the creation of an alternate society, one characterized by diversity rather than unity.⁷

⁶Rosemary Radford Ruether, Womanquides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). I have borrowed the term from Ruether who asks: is the crucified woman only a victim, or can women bring forth redemption from their sufferings on the cross of patriarchy? Drawing from Ruether's work, I use the term redemptrix to refer to a woman who liberates, who reveals humankind's potential. Rather than passive object of a patriarchal world, she assumes an active position of authority, leadership and power.

⁷See Lowder-Newton, Women, Power and Subversion. Unlike male power which is characterized by influence or control, female power is viewed in terms of ability, competence and energy. It is based on a capacity to achieve, to perform tasks, to act not merely on other individuals but on situations. Lowder-Newton suggests that because female power creates feelings of unease (it undermines masculine control and authority), there is a need to disguise, to act subversively. Hence female power is frequently covert and oblique, rather than direct and aggressive.

The redemptrix figure examined in this chapter is a more active agent than the figure of the medial feminine discussed in Chapter II. As an agent of deliverance, the redemptrix is also more radical. Because her actions have a wider impact (they instigate changes that lead to breaks with community or group), and because she is not restricted spatially to acting within an exclusive female community, the redemptrix is associated more extensively with risk-taking, danger, and subversion. She is often forced to employ terrorist strategies, even acts of violence or bloodshed. In these instances she moves closer to the male model of heroic action.

Colonial fictions, such as Wacousta and Canadian Crusoes, safely explore this type of female agency, which is based on rupture and restoration, by displacing it to and through an indigenous woman. This displacement indicates a belief that women newly arrived from Europe were initially not equipped with the necessary survival skills to perform feats of deliverance in a wilderness world. This myth, which arises out of the belief that a colonial world is a male world, is shattered in Chapter I which examines woman's active participation in the reading, shaping and writing of the land; and in Chapter II which describes the small ceremonies which unite and empower colonial women in the wilderness.

This displacement of female power and agency may also suggest a colonial and a male reluctance to admit to female competency, at least as it manifests itself within European women. Despite an environment that allows and encourages female mobility, exploration, and role-reversal of the sexes, there seems to be an unwillingness to publicly celebrate female achievement outside the boundaries of the home.

The figure of the Indian woman as redemptrix which emerges in nineteenth-century fiction is very much a European construct. Her presentation within colonial texts indicates how European anxiety regarding her strangeness is alleviated by transforming her into something else. Visually, rather than textually, this is exemplified by the frontispiece to Paul Kane's Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America (1859), a portrait of a Cree half-breed woman named Cun-ne-wa-bum. The original painting by Kane illustrated the blending of the European and Indian features. Apparently, however, the London chromo-lithographer, who prepared the work for publication, "sacrificed every trace of Indian features in his desire to produce his own ideal of a pretty face, such as might equally well have been copied from an ordinary wax doll."⁸

⁸Dr. Daniel Wilson, "Review" of Paul Kane's Wanderings of an Artist in Canadian Journal (1859) Toronto. Quoted by Laurence Burpee, "Introduction," to Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America (1859; rpt. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1968) xxi-xlvii.

As this tinkering illustrates, colonial artists use Canadian and native subjects, but these subjects (like Oucanasca and Indiana) are still viewed through European eyes.

In some instances, this distancing of the Indian, and the erasure of her strangeness may also indicate a strong sense of male impotence or powerlessness. In Wacousta many of the male characters are bound figures -- De Haldimar and most of his officers and men remain cloistered in the garrison, struggling to maintain some faint semblance of power. Feminine characters on the other hand enter the landscape both as captives and captors. They don disguises, perform acts of espionage, stage theatrical performances, and fake neutrality. What they refuse to be are still points in some heroic masculine fiction.

The redemptrix, who assists in liberating the European from his physical and psychological prisons, is also akin to the medial feminine examined in Chapter II. The female savior's presence evokes her own ancestral shades (i.e. Richardson's maternal grandmother was of Indian descent) -- those historical Indian women who intermarried, and transmitted their stories to the children of these mixed unions. As a naturalized figure, she has a special awareness of the past and the wilderness which she presents to those who are not yet firmly of the land.

However, while the medial figure is connected to a private and exclusively female community, the redemptrix occupies a more peripheral and solitary site. Through her actions, she indirectly and from without contributes to the genesis of an alternate model of community -- one neither solely European nor Indian. The margin (whether of garrison or tribe) proves to be a privileged and unregulated site, a space equated with independency and ascendancy. There, the redemptrix is acknowledged, by those who need her assistance, as sacred (woman apart), strange and estranged. Both the medial and the redemptrix are guides; the first instructs young girls as they journey into womanhood, and the second blazes new paths through the wilderness for the uninitiated to follow.

The narratives of Richardson and Traill are located in a universe in the process of becoming decentered, a place where man, and more importantly European man, is no longer privileged.⁹ Anarchy is a real possibility in both

⁹In Wacousta, De Haldimar and the British soldiers within the fort are no longer privileged because their authority (and hence dominant position) is undermined by the attacks of the Indians who rise up in protest against the elimination of French power from America. Pontiac, the Ottawa chief, is foremost in urging attacks on the British garrisons. The war between the Indians and the British which break out in the spring of 1763 is characterized by ruses and sudden attacks. The nature of their warfare makes the Indians the masters of Michillimackinac and several other forts in North America. See W.L. Morton, ed., The Kingdom of Canada: A General History from Earliest Times (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963).

In Canadian Crusoes the children inadvertently wander into Indian territory where they become subject to Indian customs and laws.

narratives. Wacousta explores cultures in transition: the British are beginning to occupy what formerly had been French territory, and the Indians are opposing these European claims to the land. Canadian Crusoes, set in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, takes place in the "unbroken wilderness"¹⁰ just miles from a cultivated farm. There, three children become lost in the hunting grounds of wandering tribes of warring Indians. In very different ways, Richardson and Traill examine these early encounters and accommodations between European and Indian.

The gothic romance, a genre appropriated by women in the nineteenth century, allows Richardson more flexibility with his redemptrix figure than does the didactic children's adventure story used by Traill. In both instances, however, the rigid division between colonizer and colonized, civilized man and savage, settled community and shifting wilderness breaks down. These arbitrary divisions are brought into question by the "ex-centric" kinship which is established with several unusual Indian women who act outside the boundaries of their tribes and sex.¹¹ Their

¹⁰Catharine Parr Traill, Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains, ed. Rupert Schieder (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986) 1.

¹¹See Barbara Godard, "Introduction," Gynocritics/La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoise Women, ed. Barbara Godard (Ontario: ECW Press, 1987) i-ix. I am referring to Godard's terminology "ex/centricity" to

presence challenges and threatens the assumed hegemony of fort and settlement, and exposes the artificial nature of both worlds. Other voices, often feminine voices, whisper and reverberate mysteriously within spaces which amazingly cling to the notion of stasis and permanence. These feminine voices affirm the existence of disruptive, intrusive forces. They enact rupture and eventually lead from se' aration to change and reconstruction.

A distrust of the wilder aspects of the female and an attempted usurpation of her powers also occur in Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769). Ed Rivers, whose name evokes imagery of passageways and birthing (his name connects him to the St. Lawrence, the great river which penetrated the Canadian wilderness, enticing early explorers to enter the continent in search of magical kingdoms and precious treasure),¹² states that his reasons for choosing Canada rather than New York are the women and the wilder

suggest these women are odd or anomalous; and peripheral, on the margins of their respective cultural groups, as well as central. See also Barbara Godard, "Ex-centricques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literature of Canada," Tessera 1 [Room of One's Own 8.4] (1984): 57-75.

¹²See Victor G. Hopwood, "Explorers by Land to 1860," Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) 19-40. Hopwood writes: "The St. Lawrence became the portal of half a continent, the symbol of the nation's founding, expansion, and unity, a recurring theme in the poetry and romance of the new country" (20).

landscapes.¹³ In this respect he initially seems to resemble many of the earliest newcomers, men like Etienne Brulé¹⁴ and Pierre Esprit Radisson who wintered with the Indians of New France, attracted by the freedom of the land and its women. However, whereas Rivers connotes water imagery and wilderness exploration, Ed or Edward signifies his opposing role as blessed or happy guardian.¹⁵ Despite his initial attraction to women and wilderness, he also expresses a conflicting desire "to taste one of the greatest pleasures, that of creation, and see order and beauty gradually rise from chaos."¹⁶ Containment, then, rather

¹³Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, ed. Mary Jane Edwards (1769; Ottawa: Carleton University, 1985) 3.

¹⁴See H.P. Biggar, ed., The Works of Samuel de Champlain, 6 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922) Vol. 5, 132, and Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) Vol. I, 130-133. Born in 1592, Brulé was probably the first white man to make his way into Indian country to see Lakes Huron, Ontario, Superior and Erie, and to live with the Indians for an extended period of time. History presents an image of Brulé as explorer and outlaw. He was the first European to shoot the Lachine rapids near Montreal and he acted as an interpreter for other Europeans. According to Samuel de Champlain, Brulé was too "much addicted to women" (132). His behavior provoked negative comments also from Gabriel Sagard and Father Jean de Brebeuf. Radisson is the subject of Chapter One, section ii, "Gospel Narratives."

¹⁵Alfred J. Kolatch, The Name Dictionary: Modern English and Hebrew Names (New York: Jonathan David, 1967) 42. Rivers' rejection of New York may also signify his rejection of the spirit of individualism that America represented.

¹⁶Brooke, History of Emily Montague 4.

than confusion characterizes his vision of a new order. It is as colonizer, as civilizing agent that he has come to the new world.

Although Rivers, possessing a great deal of sensitivity to and an understanding of the feminine, flirts with women and wilderness and contemplates their seductive sway in the person of Madame Des Roche, lady of the rocks, he does manage to maintain his distance from both. Ultimately he rejects the wild sanctuary of the Kamaraskas and his lady of the woods, and opts for a return to England with Emily, his domesticated English rose. Having trifled with the darkness, Rivers retreats to Bellfield, an idyllic English country garden. Avoiding the labor pains that giving birth to a new nation would incur, Rivers retires to a sedentary agrarian way of life, one which harks backward to an illusory golden age rather than forward to a new era of nation building. The act of creation that he had anticipated in the wilderness of Canada is tentatively undertaken by Arabella.¹⁷

¹⁷Brooke, History of Emily Montague. Arabella is the only European woman associated with the garrison to establish an intimate knowledge of Canada. She accepts the culture of the Canadian people; she is knowledgeable about the climate; she identifies the changes in the seasons, the flora, the fauna (she mentions the habits of beavers); she learns to adjust to the severity of a Canadian winter (147) and delights in the emergence of spring. When it is time to leave Canada, she does so with regret. The strong ties she has established with the land are indicated when Fitzgerald inscribes Arabella's name on a maple tree (308). While Emily and even Mrs. Melmoth remain associated with gardens, cloisters and confinement, Arabella rambles outside the garrison walls to picnic with a group of Indian women (50).

In his assumed role as male creator in the new world, Rivers does not stand alone. Canada first takes its shadowy shape in the gospel narratives of male explorers such as Jacques Cartier, Samuel De Champlain and Gabriel Sagard, examined in Chapter One.¹⁸ As these men describe their initial encounters with the land and its inhabitants, they assume the role of Adam without his disruptive assistant, Eve. They depict an exclusively male world where the female is erased or ignored.¹⁹ The task of observing, charting and naming the emerging country is assigned to man alone by a powerful father in France. To contain and comprehend what on initial impact appears savage and unruly, these men impose the order of Catholicism and the notions of

She is also the most significant female letter writer or gossip in the novel.

¹⁸See H.P. Biggar, ed., The Voyages of Jacques Cartier (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924); Gabriel Sagard, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons, ed. George U. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939); and H.P. Biggar, ed., The Works of Samuel De Champlain, 6 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1933).

¹⁹In his first account of the new land discovered in 1534, Cartier presents a fairly objective record of weather changes, navigational information, ice conditions, physical descriptions of land features, flora and fauna. He states that he set out with two ships manned in all with sixty-one men (were there no women on board?). Champlain's account is also largely devoid of personal response, except as it relates to the colony. When he returned to New France in 1620, he was accompanied by his young wife H el ene Boull e, yet there is little mention of her (or her response to the land) in his written account of their five-year stay in the country.

civilization.²⁰ This male obsession with order is also evident in the language of the Enlightenment used within their texts. The very forms of narrative discourse subsequently demand the privileging of male heroism and a movement toward closure or completion. It is from this point of imposition that a somewhat uneven dialogue between the new world and its inhabitants begins.

Despite its prevalence, this myth of the male, rather than the female, as creator has a relatively short history. The creation myth recorded in Genesis is a revision of earlier creation stories in which birth/creation is inseparable from the figure of the mother. In the oldest existing stories, it is the female, not the male, who is the divider of waters, maker of heaven and earth.²¹ Having

²⁰See John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). Grant traces the first recorded presentation of Christian teaching to the Indians of Canada to 20 July 1534 when Jacques Cartier erected a cross, an act suggesting that Christianity (specifically Catholicism) was to be the source of Indian redemption. Pierre du Gua de Monts' first colonizing parties to Acadia in 1604 also included two priests and a Huguenot minister. The first recognized missionary to the Indians was Jessé Fleché who was recruited from Langres in 1610. The Jesuits began work in New France in 1611 when Pierre Biard and Enémond Massé reached Acadia. Samuel de Champlain also envisioned Canada as a new society, French in culture and Christian in religion.

²¹Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983) 183-86. Myths of creation, symbolic of birthing, often suggest a uterine environment: darkness, water, fluid movement, one entity within another, etc. Walker notes that the deep referred to in Genesis 1:2 corresponds to the mother's womb, tehom, a word derived from Tiamat, the Babylonian name of the primordial Goddess. In Egypt,

eliminated the pre-eminent female principle with its emphasis on multiplicity and transformation, and replaced it with a singular male God, the Judeo-Christian tradition took as its focus man's fall from grace, an act in which the female plays a significantly negative role.²² The disruptive force which she embodies was hence repressed or denied, and the chaos she creates diminished.

Whether seventeenth- and eighteenth-century man's attempt to transform the wilderness into an extended version of an English or biblical garden, and his usurpation of the female role as creator, reflect an innate desire to regain a paradise lost or is simply a means of sustaining a semblance of order in an otherwise unpredictable world, the result is the attempted repression of the feminine and the foregrounding of a world defined chiefly in powerful masculine terms. Having expropriated the powers of the

she is Temu; in North America, to the Huron, she is Ataensic. See Bruce Trigger, The Children of Aataensic: A History of the Huron People to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976); C.M. Barbeau, Huron and Wyandot Mythology (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915); and S.R. Mealing, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: A Selection (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963) 43-44.

²²See Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, eds., Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973) 85-94; and Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Daly writes that the biblical myth of man's fall from grace "has projected a malignant image of the male-female relationship and of the 'nature' of women that is still deeply imbedded in the modern psyche" (45).

mother and supplanted her as begetter and namer, man is nonetheless forced to confront a universe whose mysteries he is often at a loss to explain rationally. This disquieting knowledge is evident in the note of anxiety that characterizes the narrative voice in the journals of Samuel De Champlain, father of New France.²³ Sensing the hostilities of the land and the Indians, Champlain is fairly obsessed with the need to erect forts, to convert the native people to Catholicism and to convince them to abandon their nomadic ways. This was a dream shared by many of those who followed after him.

In Richardson's Wacousta, De Haldimar, the Governor of fort Detroit, resembles to some degree the prudent and cautious French colonizer Champlain. As the English begin to enforce their subjection of the French and to assert their lawful claim to French soil, they discover that they cannot afford the luxury of rejection or evasion of the wilderness. Unfortunately, under De Haldimar's command the English have done just that. Rendered ineffective, he and his soldiers are held prisoners, virtually garrisoned within their own walls by an increasingly hostile band of Indians and a duplicitous personal foe. The traditional divisions of power (European and Indian) are questioned by the violations of several characters: Frank Halloway and

²³Biggar, ed., The Works of Samuel De Champlain.

Frederick De Haldimar inside the fort, and Oucanasta and Wacousta outside its walls. The stalemate is ended and the European is eventually delivered from complete annihilation by the skillful intervention of Oucanasta, an Indian woman who acts simultaneously as guide and redemptrix. Her subversive actions lead to the restoration of peace, however tentative, between the two warring races. Under her guidance, the English survivors with French connections (Frederick and his cousin, Madeline De Haldimar) come to acknowledge and give admittance to a chthonial world that refutes the singular power of the father. At the end of the narrative the paternal Governor, having failed to save his family, is dead and the gates of the fort are open. The destructive nature of the wilderness is balanced by the reconstructive actions of women like Madeline and Oucanasta. At the same time, the fictional Canadian landscape welcomes its first female hysteric, Ellen Halloway.²⁴ The wilderness can no longer be viewed by the English as a male domain, and through the gates of the fort pass Indian and European, men and women.

²⁴The female hysteric will be the focus of Chapter IV "A Torn Presence': Madwomen in the Wilderness."

This imminent clash between an androcentric and a gynocentric²⁵ world is initially suggested in the power struggle between Governor De Haldimar and Wacousta, a white man gone Indian who aligns himself with Pontiac, renegade chief of the Ottawa Indians. The erection of manned forts proves insufficient protection against Indian hostilities, despite De Haldimar's cautionary measures of "hermetically closed"²⁶ gates, the posting of extra sentinels, and constant surveillance and vigilance. Enacting a kind of closure that betrays a growing sense of impotence, the European is forced to concur that the structures with which he surrounds himself are susceptible to penetration, that he is vulnerable to the darkness without as well as within.

This sexual emphasis on De Haldimar's military tactics is deliberate, for in the text there is an evident juxtaposition of phallic and yoni symbols.²⁷ Yoni refers to

²⁵See Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Man Made World: or, Our Androcentric Culture (1911; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprints, 1971), and Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism: Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 243-270. Gilman identifies "androcentric culture" as history made and written by men. She advocates the need to differentiate between humanity and masculinity if we are ever to pursue a human world.

²⁶Major John Richardson, Wacousta: or, The Prophecy; a Tale of the Canadas, ed. Douglas Cronk (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987) 18.

²⁷Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets 183-86.

vulval images (i.e. ditch, ravine, vessel, oasis, abyss, etc.), images of receptacle. Barbara Walker states that the Goddess Kali, who personified the yoni, bore the title Cunti, from which comes the Indo-European words "kin" and "country." Hence Canada, the country that the European is entering, penetrating, fighting to subject and subdue, becomes the central yoni image in Wacousta. Sexual politics are reflected in the resultant tension between a masculine and feminine response to the land.²⁸ He longs to possess it and speak univocally for it; she to embrace it and speak from within it. He constructs walls or boundaries; she intrudes, undermines, and transgresses. Some of the more obvious phallic symbols are the forts, the flag-post, swords and other weapons, all associated with force and aggression. The destruction of Michillimackinac, Detroit's sister fort, is an appropriate response by the North American Indian to the British claim that they are solely in control of the Canadas. Between these two chaotic and aggressive opponents

²⁸See Marcia Klins, Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States (Boston: Harvard, 1970); Annette Kolodny, The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 19 5); Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); and Annette Kolodny, "Honing a Habitable Languagescape: Women's Image for the New World Frontiers," Women and Language in Literature and Society, eds. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger Studies, 1980) 188-204. The distinction between a masculine and a feminine response is explored in Chapter I "The Other Cartographers."

stands the elusive, yet powerful warrior figure of Oucanasta, whose movements seek to mend the resultant disjunction.

In Traill's Canadian Crusoes the children's response to the land is in marked contrast to Richardson's *De Haldimar*. Although the theme of being lost in the wilderness reveals a similar anxiety regarding place, in Traill's text the wilderness is nonetheless entered, explored and survived. Once again knowledge of the outside is empowering -- to know the wilderness removes the threat, banishes the fear. Having become lost in the woods, three adolescents confront the brutality of Indian life and at the same time discover its redemptive qualities. Shortly after they become lost, fourteen-year old Hector rescues Indiana, daughter of a Mohawk chief, from a hostile Indian tribe. Then when his sister Catharine is later captured by this same tribe, Indiana offers her own life in exchange for that of Catharine. Both Catharine and Indiana survive captivity when a mysterious dark lady, Beam of the Morning, intervenes, assuring an end to bloodshed and the deliverance of the two girls.

Traill suggests that Catharine's two-year sojourn in the wilderness marks her coming of age. She emerges from this experience no longer a child; she has matured during

her period of trial in the dark green woods.²⁹ The three youths survive not simply as a result of their resourcefulness and newly acquired skills, but because, in times of peril, two different Indian women elect to suffer and die for their white counterparts. Like Wacousta, Canadian Crusoes affirms the need to break down rigid distinctions between Europeans and Indians if they are to live in harmony. Survival depends on the destruction rather than the construction of physical and social barriers between these different peoples.

In an early feminine history of culture, Helen Diner theorizes that North America, before the arrival of the Europeans, was largely a matriarchal and democratic

²⁹See Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982). In her analysis of the female bildungsroman, Pratt writes: "The patterns of pain in the female bildungsroman are embedded in image, leitmotif, and larger narrative patterns; their antitheses are images of desire for authentic selfhood. These images so often involve a special world of nature that they describe a green-world archetype, and the figure of Eros who inhabits this world we have correspondingly identified as the greenworld lover" (16). Also see Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. and ed. A.M. Parshley (1949; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1970). Beauvoir notes the special relationship between nature and the adolescent girl: "... she will devote a special love to Nature: still more than the adolescent boy, she worships it. Unconquered, inhuman, Nature subsumes most clearly the totality of what exists. The adolescent girl has not as yet acquired for her use any portion of the universal: hence it is her kingdom as a whole; when she takes possession of it, she also proudly takes possession of herself" (339).

continent.³⁰ She suggests that so overwhelmingly matriarchal was the continent that "the tide of immigrants gradually absorbed this ancestral soul."³¹ However, not all newcomers were willing to recognize the gynocracy of the Indians in Canada or the feminine nature of the land. In The History of Emily Montague, William Fermor's refusal to accept the conclusions of Père Lafitau is one instance of colliding ideologies between European and North American cultures. Fermor's denial of the significance of the Indian to an evolving Canadian identity denotes an attitude of superiority and exclusion on the part of the European. It is noteworthy that one of Fermor's earliest observations of life in the new world is the ease with which the French Canadian settler imbibes the manners and customs of the Indian. To the Earl of ____, he writes "there is a striking

³⁰Helen Diner, Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminine History of Culture (New York: Julian Press, Inc., 1965) 180-196. Diner's claim is echoed in the works of Joseph François Lafitau, an 18th century missionary who studied the customs of the North American Indians during his residence in Canada from 1712 to 1717 as a missionary among the Iroquois. See Joseph François Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times, eds. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977). Lafitau theorizes that gynocracy or empire of women is widespread in America; that there exists a system of matrilineage which gives primacy to the female line; that women maintain matrilocal residences (they do not leave their families to set up a separate residence with their husbands); and that they have great authority in governing (69).

³¹Diner 180.

resemblance between the manners of the Canadians and the savages ... the peasants having acquired the savage indolence in peace, their ferocity in war; their fondness for field sports, their hatred of labor; their love of a wandering life, and of liberty."³² Fernald attributes this integration to the French desire for military rather than commercial conquest. He concludes that the French gained the friendship and trust of the Indian for the express purpose of utilizing them to oppose British claim to the land.

Ed Rivers, the voice of sensibility, also comments on this French/Indian alliance but his perspective is slightly different. He suggests that in seeking to convert the native peoples to Catholicism, the Jesuit missionaries provided the Indian with an alternate religious system, one that permitted them to "engraft a few of the most plain and simple truths of Christianity on their ancient superstitions."³³ Attracted to the outward forms, the rituals of the Catholic faith, the Indian was likewise agreeable to a religion which, not unlike his own, foregrounds the female: "the women seem to pay great reverence to the Virgin, perhaps because flattering to the

³²Brooke 271.

³³Brooke 33.

sex."³⁴ Perhaps the force with which Catholicism was opposed by the conquering English, and gynocracy denied in the wilds of Canada was not unrelated to a suspicion that both embodied potentially disruptive feminine strains. This response to the feminine is evident in the two solitudes that have developed in Canada. From its beginning French Canadian literature has given prominence to the feminine (not only as sacred space) whereas English Canadian literature tends to suppress or deny female power.³⁵ Consequently it goes underground. In English-Canadian writing, female power is displaced. Its variant shapes become the subject of the following chapters -- female power displaced becomes hysteria, madness, magic and holiness.

Reflecting this struggle for dominance are the two disparate and conflicting discourses operating within Wacousta. French feminists, whose works centre on a

³⁴Brooke 33.

³⁵See Barbara Godard, "Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism," Gynocritics where she writes, echoing the opinions of Sandra Gwyn (Women in the Arts in Canada, 1971): "Although a barrier to their becoming writers in the first place,... the symbolic power of the mother figure in Quebec society ultimately gave women a more viable ethos from which to write. The absence of such a visible and cohesive symbol have meant that the energy and revolt of English-Canadian writers has been dissipated, and the resulting production weakened" (7). The first woman writer in Canada, Marie de l'Incarnation, wrote from the sacred space of the cloister. Her letters are examined in Chapter I "The Other Cartographers" and Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades." Marie's narrative constitutes both gospel and gossip.

psychoanalytic theory of language and subjectivity, align rational discourse with the masculine, and feminine discourse with forms and aspects of language marginalized or suppressed by rationalism.³⁶ In the opening chapter of Wacousta the British garrison is a paradigm for a masculine discourse which initially dominates the text and attempts to exclude all other forms of discourse. Like the exclusively

³⁶Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1937): 9. My reading of feminist theory begins with Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Beauvoir theorizes that through history, women have been reduced to objects for men; that woman has been constructed as Other. Woman, hence, represents immanence and man represents transcendence. Beauvoir believes that these opposing roles are socially, politically and culturally nurtured: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (249). Whereas Beauvoir advocates a need for equality between the sexes, contemporary French feminists emphasize difference. In The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), Hélène Cixous attacks binary habits of mind as a signal of patriarchy as well as hierarchy. She suggests that male thought advances through a system of oppositions (63-64). One side of the binary must be in a victim position -- a posture usually occupied by women. Against this binary scheme, Cixous proposes multiplicity and play. She rejects the old opposition between masculine and feminine, male and female, for she believes all human beings are inherently bisexual (84-85). Cixous advocates a concept of "feminine writing" based on a masculine and a feminine libidinal economy (90). Femininity in writing can be discerned in the privileging of the voice (90-94), a voice equated with the body and a return to the mother. Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1986) 99-118, also emphasizes the power of the mother and the relationship between maternity and language. For Kristeva, the maternal corresponds to Freud's unconscious, and its power arises from its position outside the symbolic order (See footnote 3). See also the theories of Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), and Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

male military world through whom and for whom it speaks, this rational discourse is based on a restrictive, hierarchical system where position results from privilege and rank. From the powerful position of commanding officer, De Haldimar's authority is filtered down through the ranks of soldiers. Uniforms, military titles and assigned duties reinforce and help maintain this rigidly regulated system. Despite the apparent delegation of authority, it is an inherently autocratic system in which De Haldimar can and does in the beginning attempt to exercise complete paternalistic power. Any dissenting voice that dares to intrude is immediately silenced. Because they are without authority, Indian, Canadian and woman are forbidden to speak.

In Wacousta Richardson records the Indian's and the female's struggles, in the face of great odds, to regain some measure of autonomy. The subversive intrusions into the fort by Wacousta and Oucanasta precipitate a chain of events which create the possibility of a form of discourse radically different from the rigid, restrictive discourse embodied by De Haldimar. This alternate discourse is characterized chiefly by its association with the Indian and the world outside the garrison. Unlike the restrictive, androcentric system with which it is at odds, the alternate discourse has a multiplicity of forms: the duplicitous language of the Ottawa chief, Pontiac, as he verbally spars

with De Haldimar; the incoherent utterances of Ellen Halloway, holy woman and mad prophetess; and the evocative silences and starkly metaphoric pronouncements of Oucanasta, savior and guide.

Indication that the regiment does not whole-heartedly support De Haldimar's views occurs when the Governor prematurely and without adequate proof assumes that the sentinel, Frank Halloway, has some sinister connection with Wacousta, an Indian intruder. When Halloway is arrested and tried for treason, the men, bound by the rules of the military, are unable to publicly voice their dissent. The exclusion of the female also serves to diminish the perimeters of discourse within the garrison. When the sorrowful voice of Ellen Halloway disrupts De Haldimar's interrogation of her husband, the Governor orders that in the future "the women of the regimen ... be kept out of the way."³⁷ Rebuked for permitting this infraction of military rule, the officer responsible acknowledges the "brief admonition of his colonel ... unaccompanied by speech of any kind."³⁸ Ellen's attempt to enlist the assistance of the effeminate Charles, younger son of De Haldimar, is also futile. Governed by a man of inflexible will, the fort must

³⁷Richardson 40.

³⁸Richardson 40.

look for its survival to an unlawful force outside its walls.

Pitted against the bulwark De Haldimar, Frank Halloway (whose name suggests honesty and sacredness) holds a pivotal position between garrison and wilderness. He is the sentinel on watch the night Oucanasta summons Frederick into the forest to discover the planned attack of the Indians. The events which follow are the direct result of Halloway's singular breach of military rule. For his single infraction of the rules he will die. Governed by his feelings for Frederick whose life he had saved on an earlier occasion (sentinel comes from the Latin sentire, to feel), Halloway decides to disregard regulated military procedure, in effect rejecting the logos or law of De Haldimar. Instead, he responds to the urgency which he detects in the voice of the mysterious Indian woman as, unseen, she summons Frederick into the darkness.

Having disclaimed the authoritarian voice of De Haldimar in compliance with Oucanasta's wishes, Halloway is left without an appropriate point of reference. One important drawback is that he does not fully recognize the significance of Oucanasta's presence. Initially he dismisses her as a village female with whom Frederick has supposedly contracted an amorous alliance. Because she is female, she is not perceived by him as either capable of threatening or contributing to the safety of the fort. For

valuing feeling above reason and for his erroneous assumptions concerning the Indian woman's presence, Halloway pays dearly. De Haldimar prevents Halloway from performing a second act of salvation. And as a result of his actions, De Haldimar likewise contributes to his own failure to protect or save family and fort. Halloway is also restricted by his inability to understand the language of the Ottawa Indian. Consequently he is excluded from the dialogue that takes place between Frederick and Oucanasta prior to their departure into the night. Unable to enter their discourse, he cannot provide De Haldimar with the answers that would set him free.

Unlike Halloway, Frederick has entry into the shadowy world of the Indian through an understanding of the language and through his association with Oucanasta. Whereas De Haldimar and Halloway are associated with and restricted by a male European world, Frederick is initiated into the world of the Indian and the feminine. With Oucanasta as his guide, Frederick blazes a trail into alien territory, into the realm of the imaginative and the emotional -- an amazing space which his father fears to enter. Abandonment is necessary for redemption. Frederick's willing submission to the will of Oucanasta and his active entry into the darkness suggest that he does not adhere strictly to the closed system which his father represents and struggles to maintain.

His acceptance of a power that is feminine, a power associated with the violent forces outside the walls, illustrates his recognition of alternate social mapping and disparate discourses. Acceding to the numinous nature of Oucanasta and to the wild space in which he finds her (his initial encounter with her is during a storm when he saves her from a watery grave), Frederick acknowledges Oucanasta rather than De Haldimar as an authority figure. By leading him outside the fort, she successfully usurps the authority of the father. From this point, Oucanasta assumes the role of savior or redemptrix.

Her willingness to assume multiple roles (a rejection of the stereotypical Indian woman)³⁹ and to move outside the circle of her tribe contrast with De Haldimar's inability to accommodate what seems to him to be conflicting roles, that of father and governor. Frederick's servant Donellan, who accompanies him into the forest, does not share his master's trust in Oucanasta. Like De Haldimar who classifies and stereotypes the Indian as demon and fiend, Donellan

³⁹One such stereotype is present in Agnes C. Laut's Lords of the North (Toronto: Ryerson, 1900). Here an Indian woman (Grand Diable's squaw) plays the role of antagonist. She is a "vengeful malign goddess" (425), "a red-eyed fury" (429), a warrior amazon who commands the attention of others. The narrator describes her as a "great bronze statue, a type of some ancient goddess, a symbol of fury, or cruelty" (46). Her scarred face signifies a kind of masculine valor.

mistakenly views her as a "she-devil"⁴⁰ who might lead them into an ambush. He misconstrues her power as demonic. Failure to heed her warnings to conceal himself in the woods results in Donellan's brutal murder. He dies dressed in Frederick's exchanged military uniform. Hence he is destroyed by a darkness he failed to respect.

The wilderness that destroys Donellan and others who refuse to respect it offers protection to Frederick. It functions also as a threshold symbol, a point of entry for his dark descent.⁴¹ Lying between Detroit and Michillimackinac, the last two British strongholds against Indian aggression, the terrifying darkness of the forest acts also as an omphalos,⁴² a place where two worlds meet. In Canadian fiction, the omphalos must necessarily lie

⁴⁰Richardson 236.

⁴¹See Victor Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969) 95. In "Liminality and Communitas" Turner discusses the attributes of "liminal personae" or threshold people, those who make the rite of passage from a fixed social structure to a cultural realm that they are unfamiliar with. These transitions consist of three stages: separation, margin and aggregation. Frederick enters the marginal world of the Indian when he leaves the fort to accompany Oucanasta into the forest. Liminal personae have no status during their initiation. This lack of status is signified by Frederick's removal of his military uniform and the donning of Indian moccasins. These personae are also passive; they accept their guides' instructions without question. Anonymity is emphasized as well as silence and compliance.

⁴²Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia 740-1.

within the wilderness for not only is that what existed before the European intruded with his intent to colonize, convert and change, but it is also the strange or alien territory that the newcomer must fully enter before he can begin to contemplate and envision the genesis of a new order. Canada was initially made known to explorers by way of rivers, lakes and carrying places, and by portage through the assistance of Indian guides who were frequently female. Water, women and wilderness have therefore remained important threshold symbols of entry, passage, and deliverance in our literature.

From the Latin umbilicus⁴³ referring to the centre of the world, omphalos also alludes to the centre of the Goddess' body as a source of all things. One of Oucanasta's functions is to foreground the female and, by doing so, to redefine the centre. Within the confines of the fort, man's true nature is concealed by uniforms, rules and a rigid system of discipline. Weaving a circuitous route, Oucanasta leads Frederick outside the walls of the fortress and into "the heart"⁴⁴ of the forest. Her movements negate the effectiveness of artificial boundaries or borders. Guided by the silent wisdom of Oucanasta, Frederick moves away from

⁴³Walker.

⁴⁴Richardson 237.

the false security of the garrison where the "hard-hearted"⁴⁵ De Haldimar reigns, where the heart of Ellen is broken. Following his discovery of the Indians' plan of attack, Frederick takes silent leave of Oucanasta by placing her hand on his heart, a sign that they are connected by a common bond of devotion. Frederick's nocturnal descent into the forest with Oucanasta provides him, in turn, with a knowledge that can save the fort and its inhabitants.

Regarding textual position, Oucanasta is not a highly visible or vocal character. When present, she is more often felt than seen. She avoids the fixing gaze of peering eyes; in fact, she subverts the male and the European gaze by disappearing into, by being one with the wilderness. She plays an auxiliary role, yet she is crucial from the setting of events in motion to the final uneasy peace that is established between the Indian and the European. Her identity remains a mystery until midway through the narrative when in the third person she names herself, an act which suggests she views herself as part of the wilderness rather than a representative or speaker for it. The only specific detail given concerning her physical appearance, beside the fact that she is an Indian of the Ottawa tribe,

⁴⁵Richardson 40.

is that she is a "tall figure."⁴⁶ This feature reinforces the image of Oucanasta as a powerful agent, especially when, dressed as a male warrior, she rescues Madeline, Frederick's beloved. Significantly she comes with no forces other than those of nature and employs no orthodox military strategies. Unlike the regulated, orderly maneuvers of De Haldimar and his men, or the deceptive ploys of Pontiac, Oucanasta's movements are magically woven through the darkness. Through gesture and movement, rather than voice, she images the dark, subversive power of the mother, not the leadership or authority of the father. The renunciation of her sexuality permits her to distance herself from man and to assume her own authority. Hence she remains, even to Frederick to whom she feels obligated, an inviolate or holy virgin.⁴⁷

As a warrior and woman apart, Oucanasta is associated with the mythical Amazons, goddess-worshipping tribes of women noted for their bravery and strength. Whether evoking the matrilinear system of the North American Indian, the Huron's Ataensic, or the mythical power of the Great Mother, Oucanasta silently opposes the commonly held image of the

⁴⁶Richardson 311.

⁴⁷See Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin: Reflections on the Archetypal Feminine (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). Hall traces the etymology of the word virgin and recalls that it initially meant "belonging-to-no man." She states: "Virgin means one-in-herself; not maiden inviolate but maiden alone, in-herself. To be virginal does not mean to be chaste, but rather to be true to nature and instinct" (11).

female espoused by nineteenth-century Europe. In contrast, Clara Beverley and her daughter Clara De Haldimar become bound figures who exemplify the then popular notion of woman as belonging solely to a private domestic sphere. The social position of European women in Wacousta is characterized through imagery of confinement and enclosure: windows, rooms, gardens, towers.⁴⁸ Ellen, who questions these restrictive constructs, but without any knowledge of an alternate space, is driven into madness. The two Claras are victimized by their innocence and the absence of mothers or strong female guides. In contrast, Oucanasta acknowledges no such authority or censure. Despite the peril involved (she is undermining the power of her tribe) and the necessary secrecy of her movements, she moves unobstructed, seeking to minimize the distance between fort and forest.

Oucanasta also differs from the European regarding the conception of nature with which she is identified. The two Claras are associated with a nature that is contained and

⁴⁸Richardson, Wacousta. Ellen initially looks down on the courtyard proceedings and speaks from behind the frame of a window (38). Madeline and Clara De Haldimar occupy an upper-level room in the fort at Michillimackinac. From a window, they watch the Indians attack the fort (295). Madeline locks Clara in a tower-room of the fort (306-307), and then leaves the safety of the lookout in order to warn the unaware inhabitants of the fort. Clara Beverley lives in a secluded area of the Scottish Highlands. There, in her garden home (455), she is discovered by Reginald Morton.

nurturing, one that protects and provides for human needs in an ordered and planned fashion. Weary of the continuing struggle between Scotland and England, Clara Beverley's father imprisons both himself and his daughter in an idyllic garden in a remote, mountainous region of the Scottish Highlands. Retreating from a world of war and violence, he attempts to create a new Eden for his daughter, and to save her from "the image of man"⁴⁹ whom he hates. There they are attended only by an old woman and her daughter. Until the intrusion of Reginald Morton/Wacousta, Clara Beverley remains a child of a nature manifested solely in terms of benevolence. It is a singular world that she perceives. Her daughter Clara is similarly confined to the univocal world of the garrison by the wishes of her father. When she is taken by force into the wilderness by Wacousta, she is unable to survive the abrupt transition from one world to the next. Like Ellen and Clara Beverley, Clara De Haldimar lacks an appropriate guide and sufficient knowledge to survey and survive the unknown.

Conversely, Oucanasta understands the strange diversity of nature. Wild and uncontrollable, rendering chaos and disruption, it is a nature capable of instilling terror in

⁴⁹Richardson, Wacousta 464.

the heart of the civilized European.⁵⁰ It evokes in him a desire to control, to order that which he fears. The silences are as fearful as the shadows. Neither controlling nor controlled by the wilderness, Oucanasta passes through it basically unchanged. She utilizes the darkness, respects the silences. Having led Frederick into the uterine darkness of the forest where they are surrounded by danger, she offers him protection by placing him within the trunk of a beech tree.⁵¹ Likewise she protects Madeline by placing her in the bottom of a canoe and covering her with foliage. Despite the fact that Frederick and Madeline are from the garrison which is at war with Oucanasta's tribe, they are more importantly, like her, of the earth. It is their

⁵⁰See Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), and Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper Colophon, 1978).

⁵¹In a number of instances Oucanasta is depicted as a mythical figure. Her positioning within the wood, her inviolate nature, and her role as intermediary or medial feminine between De Haldimar and Wacousta as they struggle for possession of the wilderness, all evoke the myth of Diana and the golden bough, recorded and explicated in Sir James Fraser's The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (New York: Macmillian Company, 1951). Diana was the queen of the sacred grove or sanctuary in which there grew a certain tree from which the golden bough came. Rule of succession was granted to the possessor of the golden bough. Subsequently he became known as the king of the wood. In Wacousta, Frederick with Oucanasta's help assumes this role. The grove or wilderness is obviously a uterine symbol. Frederick's entry into the forest with Oucanasta is a symbolic return to the goddess, the original site of holiness. It is where Frederick renews his connection with the feminine.

affinity with the earth as a life-giving force that draws Oucanasta to them. Having assumed the role of protector, Oucanasta extends her knowledge to the daughters that are later born to Frederick and Madeline. To them she also brings "curious presents, the fruits of Indian ingenuity."⁵² This act serves to emphasize Oucanasta's continued association with fertility, creativity and mystery. She is the matrix, the last of the Great Mothers in nineteenth-century Canadian fiction, before being replaced by a white, patriarchal father or transformed into a white Indian.

In Life in the Clearings (1853), Susanna Moodie regretfully notes the inevitable obliteration and desecration of Indian culture: "The white man has so completely supplanted his red brother that he has

⁵²Richardson, Wacousta 542. Cixous, The Newly Born Woman distinguishes between the proper and the gift. She equates proper-property-appropriation with a masculine value system, one based on ownership and dominance. She equates gift-giving-generosity with a feminine value system. She theorizes that men feel threatened by gift-giving for it seems to create an imbalance of power. Hence it is viewed as a subtle sign of aggression - it leaves the receiver open, vulnerable. Because women do not fear ex-propriation (which Cixous equates with castration anxiety), they create, with their generous actions, spaces characterized by pleasure and interchange. See Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); and Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?", trans. Annette Kuhn Signs 7.1 (1976): 41-5^e. For an examination of Cixous' theory, see Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 102-126.

appropriated the very spot that held his bones."⁵³ Richardson in his conclusion to Wacousta optimistically anticipates a synthesis between European and North American culture. The exchange of gifts between Indian and European suggests a relinquishment of rights to one another, as opposed to domination or subjection. It also supposes a commitment of the self to the interests of the other.

Having rejected a world ruled by logos, Frederick and Madeline embrace another language, an alternate discourse -- the evocative, metaphoric tongue of Oucanasta that does not possess the duplicity of De Haldimar, Wacousta or Pontiac. Oucanasta's mythopoeic speech is fluid and open to interpretation for those who listen and can divine. It is oblique without being deceptive. Oucanasta disrupts De Haldimar's discourse which is based on a law of outward observance, a language which is codified and limited. She ruptures his world and his word, not with a fierce battle cry, a sinister threat, or a flag signifying a false truce, but with a finger on her lips and with an unspoken promise of deliverance.⁵⁴ The veiling and silence surrounding her might logically suggest an absence of voice, a lack of identity, even a powerlessness. With ease, her actions

⁵³Susanna Moodie, Life in the Clearings, ed. Robert L. McDougall (1853; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1959) 6.

⁵⁴Richardson, Wacousta 235.

negate these inaccurate assumptions. She refuses to be a marginalized figure (even while she moves from periphery to centre), or fixed in a bound world, Indian or European. Weaving between fort and forest, she crosses boundaries and inspires change by doing and knowing. She transforms an old idea of community -- one based on fear, stasis and subjection -- into a new concept of fraternity or maternity symbolized by gift-giving, mutual exchange and instruction between the races. Her presence and her actions create the possibility of a more egalitarian system and a more comprehensive knowledge of the new space she has helped to create.

A somewhat cryptic character, Oucanasta eventually returns to her "solitary wigwam"⁵⁵ among the Indians after delivering Frederick, Madeline, and François, the Canadian, safely at the fort. Relinquishment, an ability to let go, is an important feature of Oucanasta's power. Regardless of her feelings for Frederick, she does not attempt to possess him. She ensures his happiness by selflessly restoring Madeline to him. She frees, rather than subjects, that which she has saved. Although a solitary figure, Oucanasta's separation is not viewed as isolation. Rather it is self-containment. Although at several points in the narrative, she is assisted by her brother, a young Indian

⁵⁵Richardson, Wacousta 540.

chief, Richardson gives primacy to Oucanasta, the female member of the tribe, an unauthorized leader and female savior. The brother remains her nameless assistant.

The feminine and the wilderness are also brought together in Traill's Canadian Crusoes. In an epigraph from a Jacobite song which opens the text, Canada "opening all pale to the sky"⁵⁶ is first identified as a woman robed in dazzling white. This image of luminous intensity and spiritual strength evokes the bewildering power of several unusual women within the text. Upon her return to civilization, Indiana, left bereft of family, "homeless in the land of her fathers,"⁵⁷ is baptized before becoming a bride to Hector. Another wedding is celebrated when Catharine marries Louis, her childhood companion. And Beam of the Morning, the self-made widow, appears before both girls arrayed in her bridal robes of white doeskin, and wearing a coronet of scarlet and black feathers in her hair. These related images, connecting the country and the female, evoke another myth of genesis or beginnings -- that of Ataensic, the Great Mother to the North American Indian.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Traill, Canadian Crusoes 1.

⁵⁷Traill 50.

⁵⁸See S.R. Mealing, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: A Selection (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963) 39-47. Father Brébeuf's 1635 relation describes the religious beliefs of the Hurons: "They say that a certain woman called Eataensic is the one who made earth and man.... They say that

According to the Hurons, she fell from the sky to give birth to humanity. The earth was created to provide a safe haven for her and her ensuing race.

In Canadian Crusoes, although Catharine espouses the authority of a biblical or Christian God, other powerful female figures eventually come to share in this authority. These women provide the group, and particularly Catharine, with another view of the country, the underside of Canada during a period of transition and upheaval.⁵⁹ Her entry into the world of the Indian and her encounters with several Indian women who are mysteriously linked by violence and

this Etaensic fell from the Sky ... and when she fell, she was with child" (43-44). See also Bruce Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976); C.M. Barbeau, Huron and Wyandot Mythology (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915); and Conrad E. Heidenreich, "Huron," Handbook of North American Indians: Northwest, Vol. 15, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978) 368-388. Heidenreich suggests atanesic was associated with the moon, while her grandson, iouskeda was equated with sun. Ataensic was constantly trying to undo the work of her reasonable grandson.

⁵⁹Situated during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Canadian Crusoes indirectly refers to the consequences of the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783) for the Mohawks, one of the Confederacy of the Six Nations (Iroquois). In this dispute between the American colonies and the Crown, the Iroquois allied themselves with the British. Displaced from their former lands by the American revolution, the Indians began to trickle into the vacant land around Lake Ontario. When Britain, having lost the war, signed a treaty with the United States in 1782, no stipulation was made on behalf of her Indian allies. In the wars between the white men, the Iroquois lost all their fertile land within the boundaries of the U.S. and were forced to occupy territory between the Great Lakes.

blood prepare for Catharine's unusual coming of age. Her initiation into adulthood ("she no longer thought and felt as a child"),⁶⁰ her preparation for womanhood and marriage take place under the guidance of Indian women deep in the wilderness, a green sensuous world of shadows and savagery.⁶¹

While retaining the "old symbolic of woman as house"⁶² through Catharine, Traill also acknowledges an alternate view of female mobility through the heroic interventions of Indiana and the Objewas widow. When Indiana is left to die in the forest, Hector rescues her and Catharine nurses the orphaned girl back to health. The same age as Catharine, Indiana becomes a welcome companion to her. Her arrival improves the quality of life for the group of lost children. Indiana instructs them in the native arts of survival, and

⁶⁰Traill, Canadian Crusoes 212.

⁶¹See Barbara Godard, "Voicing Difference: the Literary Production of Native Women" in A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Alberta: Longspoon/Newest, 1986) 87-107. Godard notes the use of the native woman as a symbolic character in the English-Canadian novel, and the "long standing desire" (87) of English-Canadian women, beginning with Frances Brooke's Arabella Fermor in The History of Emily Montague, to "turn squaw" (49).

⁶²Jacques Derrida, "voice ii," Boundary 2 12.2 (Winter 1984): 68-93. In a letter replying to Verena Andermatt Conley, Derrida suggests that because woman is "habitable", she remains easy to domesticate, "attached to values of habitation, to the hearth, to the private life, to the inside, etc." (93).

enlarges their knowledge of the woods.⁶³ The boys are taught how to disguise themselves with boughs in order to shoot game birds for food. Indiana also teaches Catharine how to fashion snowshoes and fur garments for the winter ahead. She shows them how to build a wigwam and plant corn. When they observe the Indians on the lake, she instructs the children how to receive the natives so as to avoid violence or death.

She also acts as a story-teller to preserve in oral narratives the history of her obliterated tribe. She transmits to Catharine and the boys the heroic tale of her fearless mother, an amazonian warrior who armed herself and defended her children to the death. Catharine also practises the art of storytelling learned from her Scottish father and Canadian mother.

Indiana also teaches the group how to read nature's signs as indicators of change. While exploring the islands of the Otonabee River, they narrowly escape death when

⁶³For discussion of the roles of Indian women, see Douglas Sanders, "Indian Women: A Brief History of their Roles and Rights," McGill Law Journal 21.4 (Winter 1975): 656-672; Somer Brodribb, "The Traditional Roles of Native Women in Canada and the Impact of Colonization," The Canadian Journal of Native Studies 4.1 (1984): 85-103; Judith K. Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women Among the Iroquois," Ethnohistory 17 (1970): 151-167; Eleanor Leacock, "Women in Egalitarian Societies," Becoming Visible: Women in European History, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) 11-35; and Sherrill Cheda, "Indian Women: A Historical Example and a Contemporary View," Women in Canada, ed. Marylee Stephenson (Toronto: New Press, 1973) 58-70.

Indiana anticipates a gathering hurricane. She guides them through the tempest to an island where they seek shelter for the night. Having led them on their exploration of the river, Indiana extends the boundaries of the forest for the group and increases their knowledge of Indian culture. She teaches them to revere the spirit world, to renew their kinship with nature, and to respect the sacred burial grounds of her people. She also shows them how to conduct council meetings Indian-style, and how to mimic the metaphoric language of the Indian. Indiana also teaches Catharine the value of herbs and shrubs, how to use bark to cure ague and fever, and to make ointments for burns.

When Catharine, left to tend house, disappears mysteriously from their shelter in the woods, Indiana's acquaintance with the forest leads to the discovery of an Indian trail. She detects the faint traces of footprints and a wreath of oak leaves woven by Catharine. This circular image symbolizes the unifying force of the female characters. The wreath, "a sort of leaf chain,"⁶⁴ represents the strength of human relations, the interdependency of the group, and the importance of individual members in maintaining the stability of the small community. These signs or traces of Catharine lead Indiana

⁶⁴Trall, Canadian Crusoes 198.

to the Indian camp and enable her to restore the young girl to her friends.

To save Catharine, Indiana moves selflessly from a position of safety and subterfuge to a place of peril and death. She enters the camp of her sworn enemy and offers herself in exchange for the release of Catharine. As redemptrix, she elects "to suffer and die"⁶⁵ that her white sister might be restored to the group, and order be re-established in the woods. On her entry into the camp, she is taken prisoner, and bound to a stake to await a lingering death.

While Catharine is a prisoner of the Objewas, she is cared for by an Indian squaw, Mother Snowstorm to whom Catharine had given assistance during an earlier encounter. Now her benevolence is returned when the Indian woman feeds, warms and cherishes the young girl "as a tender mother"⁶⁶ would do. She also promises to intervene for Catharine's release when the Indians return to the lake area the following fall.

Another native girl, Snowbird, the grand-daughter of the Indian chief, also welcomes Catharine into the tribe. From her, Catherine learns the Indian language, and begins

⁶⁵Traill 212.

⁶⁶Traill 186.

to adapt to their nomadic way of life. But perhaps the most powerful figure in the narrative is the enigmatic widow, Beam of the Morning, daughter of the Objewas chief. She is a sacred character in her tribe, "a great Medicine."⁶⁷ This female brave is regarded with mysterious reverence by all members of her tribe. Despite her deep love for a young man from the Mohawk tribe, she brutally murders him on their proposed wedding day. This personal, selfless sacrifice is enacted in order to revenge the treacherous actions of the Mohawks toward her nation.

When Catharine discovers that Indiana is to die in order to ensure the white girl's freedom, she approaches the powerful Objewas widow and asks her to intervene on Indiana's behalf. Speaking in the tongue of the Indian, Catharine suggests that she has been sent by the Great Spirit on a mission of mercy and goodness. She indicates that the widow might be granted redemption for the murder of her husband if she now saves the life of her sworn enemy -- Indiana. The following morning the sorrowful widow appears before the tribe with blood on her hands, demanding that the captured girl be delivered to her. The tribe complies with her wishes and Indiana is set free, ensuring peace and an

⁶⁷Traill 190. A "great medicine" refers to a powerful Indian healer. See Lynn V. Andrews, Medicine Woman (New York: Harper and Row, 1981) and Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Indian Women Chiefs (Muskogee: Star Printer, 1954).

end to future bloodshed. Following Indiana's release, the widow, wrapped in a dark mantle, returns to her solitary tent.

The end to these hostilities is celebrated by an exchange of gifts between Catharine and Snowbird, and Indiana and her savior, "the great medicine." This reconciliation between the tribes and the members of the group is imaged in the reunion of Catharine and Indiana as they sleep, two women together, "one fair as morning, the other dark as night."⁶⁸ After three years of separation from their families, the children are restored to their homes by Jacob Morelle, a French-Canadian friend of Louis' father. The group, which has now expanded to include Indiana, follows an old Indian trail which leads them back to their fathers' farms.

In relation to the Indian women in the narrative, Catharine remains a somewhat bound figure, associated more with home and hearth than the wilderness, despite her prolonged stay in the woods. During their separation from the civilized world, Catharine makes sure that the group continues to observe evening prayers and civilized customs. She quotes scriptural text frequently to console, reassure and remind them of their Christian background. Although she learns much from Indiana and increases her own practical

⁶⁸Traill 222.

knowledge of the wilderness, Catharine remains essentially a "Diana of the Woods,"⁶⁹ a settled agricultural figure rather than a wandering, nomadic female. Her cultivating influence also affects Indiana who accompanies the group back to civilization and adopts the Christian religion. In doing so, Indiana rejects the world of the forest and the violent ways of her people.

Wacousta and Canadian Crusoes are both structured on the tripartite principles of separation, descent and eventual restoration. With an Indian woman as a reliable female guide and redemptive force, characters identified with a civilized world come to witness another reality, to enter and experience a world radically different from the world from which they began their quests. In each case the wilderness functions as a mythical locus, a maze or labyrinth, and as a site of growth as the individual, separated from a known world, learns to survive in foreign territory. Like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) which provides Traill with a framework for her narrative, both Wacousta and Canadian Crusoes examine the effects of environment on character. The interaction between the races, which takes place in a fairly neutral territory, proves beneficial to both groups as they explore divergent cultures. Whereas Oucanasta appears to be the actuating,

⁶⁹Traill 92.

transformative power in Wacousta (while she essentially remains unchanged), Indiana is the character that is the most altered by her encounter with the lost children. Obviously Traill, while admiring the independence and ingenuity of the Indian, shared the bias of many of her country men -- that it is the duty of the colonizer to impose the tenets of Christianity on a savage people. It is significant that, unlike Oucanasta who names herself, Indiana is given a name by Catharine; and it is a name equated with a former slave woman. Also, Catharine's threat to go squaw is not meant seriously. It is merely a ploy to prompt the boys into carrying out their male duties.

In their depictions of an Indian woman as guide and redemptrix, Richardson and Traill provide traces of an indigenous culture and recall historical Indian women like Thanadelthur, Kateri Tekakwitha and Degonwadonti, Canada's founding mothers.⁷⁰ These awe-inspiring figures represent the many nameless, silent women who accomplished heroic feats of survival in an environment that was constantly changing and often hostile. Though no first-hand written accounts of these women survive, historians like Bruce Trigger and Sylvia van Kirk are beginning to reconstruct the indispensable roles Indian women played during the early

⁷⁰See Alison Prentice, et al., eds., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 16-40.

years of Canada's history. As "women in between,"⁷¹ they often functioned as interpreters, guides, storytellers, peace-makers, envoys and negotiators. Early Canadian writers, both male and female, display a fascination with this shadowy indigenous woman. They are often attracted by her mobility, her ability to assume multiple roles, her freedom, and her powers of survival. Most newcomers to North America observed a special female authority among the Indians, while at the same time they noted the severity of her physical existence. In terms of the Canadian landscape, the space she occupied could be viewed as either destructive or liberating. Much depended upon the individual writer's response to difference and change.

Both Richardson and Traill acknowledge the alterity of the Indian woman, and the significance of her contribution to the development of a Canadian identity. Richardson emphasizes the multicultural make-up of the emerging Canadian character whose roots are diversely French, Scottish, Indian, and British. Traill, on the other hand, emphasizes the assimilation of the Indian by the European's arrival. Like many of the early male explorers and missionaries, Traill suggests that Christianity and

⁷¹Sylvia van Kirk, 'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).

colonization are the only sources of redemption available to the indigene.

While both writers emphasize female power and Indian intervention, Richardson's Wacousta remains the more feminine text. In his characterization of both indigene and European, man and woman, Richardson allows for transvestism and less rigid gender stereotyping than does Traill. The form of the novel also allows for the blurring and the breaking down of clearly delineated borders and boundaries. His characters are transgressive, disruptive, and at times overtly revolutionary. The ending of the narrative does not tend toward closure and completion -- it is merely a pause before the eruption of forces in its sequel, The Canadian Brothers. And in his evocative use of natural imagery to depict a dynamic wilderness setting (i.e. woods, lakes, trees, etc.), Richardson creates a portrait of a country wildly beautiful and feminine. Traill, on the other hand, employs closure at the end of a narrative which only tentatively confronts the other or the wilderness.

CHAPTER IV

'A Torn Presence': Madwomen in the Wilderness

"The body of the hysteric becomes her text.... Hysteria ... generates hysterical narrative, and hysterical narrative makes strange reading."

Mary Jacobus, Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism

"Madness begins where the relation of man to truth is disturbed and darkened."

Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization

"To speak about madness is to speak about the difference between languages: to import into one language the strangeness of another; to unsettle the decisions language has prescribed to us so that, somewhere between languages, will emerge the freedom to speak."

Shoshana Felman, Writing and Madness

"The female hero who undertakes to adventure into a man's world finds herself confused and isolated at best and at worst succumbs to madness or an early death."

Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction

It is clear from the writings of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément that, unlike anglo-American theorists who often perceive female madness as the logical outcome of a restrictive patriarchal culture, French feminist literary theorists appear to accept the figure of the madwoman as redemptive, as powerful rather than powerless.¹ They tend to view her disruptive actions as a revolutionary rather

¹See French feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) which describes the female's flight from reality as "celebration," "festival" and "pleasure" (17-26). Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (1949; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1970) was one of the first French theorists to make the connection between hysteria and femininity when she called the female body a "hysteric body" (583). She suggested that "It is in great part the anxiety of being a woman that devastates the feminine body" (311). In Women and Madness (New York: Doubleday, 1972), anglo-American critic Phyllis Chesler suggests that madness incapacitates women, ends most often in tragedy, and rarely offers asylum or freedom. While madness does not liberate the female, Chesler does concede that it can enable the woman to name reality as she sees it, to criticize the community's hypocrisy, and to engage in "unfeminine behavior" (176). Like Chesler, Shirley Ardener in Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps (London: Croom Helm, 1981) also views madness as a female attempt to seize power in the face of powerlessness. Likewise, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds., The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) perceive the figure of the madwoman as an embodiment of authorial rage, female desire, and antagonism. This assessment is the result of their analysis of spatial imagery associated with literary female constructs. They see, as predominant, images of enclosure, confinement, renunciation, escape, despair and fragmentation. Female attempts at revolt, which are usually presented covertly or subversively in a text, most times, in Gubar and Gilbert's assessment, result in madness and death. Consequently, these two anglo-American critics see very little that is redemptive or liberating in female madness.

than a repressive force; her madness as a paradigm for a feminine language which is open, non-linear, fluid, explosive, unfinished, fragmented and polysemic.² However, in contrast to the redemptrix like Oucanasta in Richardson's Wacousta who is self-sacrificing and giving, the madwoman is displaced and self-absorbent. Her acts of renunciation are directed not towards restoring order to others but to liberating herself from repressive cultural and social structures.

Feminine figures such as the hysteric and the witch initially are not foregrounded in Richardson's texts, but stealthily they come to the forefront to overshadow and even to undermine masculine figures. Subversively Richardson endows these feminine presences with the powers of restoration as well as destruction. Associated with shadows and margins, rupture and rapture, they take decisive actions which cause things to happen. Like the female savior examined in Chapter III, the hysteric is also the other -- her lunacy makes her strange as well as estranged. And like the redemptrix, she is also ex-centric. Her extremist actions align her with Oucanasta, the radical redemptrix and

²See Shari Benstock, ed., Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Cixous and Clément, The Newly Born Woman; Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., New French Feminisms: An Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, 1981); and Ann Dybikowski, et al., eds., In the Feminine: Women and Words (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1985).

agent of revolution and change. However, poised between fort and wilderness, the madwoman occupies a restrictive limbo position. She enters the wilderness never to return. Her movement is linear as she moves progressively toward insanity, whereas the redemptrix weaves a circuitous route of separation, exploration, and return.

Both redemptrix and hysteric renounce rational speech for other forms of expression, both verbal and non-verbal. Richardson's Oucanasta and Traill's Indiana utilize silence, metaphor and gesture. These deliverers are also diviners; they discover through intuition. Their visionary powers set them apart from those who, blindly, cannot or will not see. The forms of their discourse and the ways of their knowing contribute to their sense of holiness (sacer, holy; but also set apart).³ Oucanasta, because of her textual position (she is set apart from others) and her rejection of a firm or fixed political stance, can be viewed as sacred. She is the holy woman who initiates and leads Madeline through the perils of the wilderness. Eventually she restores her to a world perhaps no longer maintained along rigid hierarchal lines. This transcending power enables the redemptrix to

³See Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983) 876-77. Walker traces the word sacred to the "Latin sacer which meant 'untouchable' in the dual sense of both holy and unclean. A sacer person or thing was set aside for a divine purpose...." See also Victor Turner, footnote 55.

redemptrix to intervene and to heal. The hysteric does not occupy such a privileged or ascendant site. Her prophetic discourse is erratic; her movements, errant. As a result, the madwoman, like Ellen Halloway, ultimately functions as sacrifice rather than savior. More vulnerable than the redemptrix who remains remote and inviolate, the hysteric descends to despair and fails to achieve legitimacy. On a more positive note, however, through her warnings and wild prophecies, she dares to articulate what others fear to voice. Condemned to a world of shadow, Ellen erupts again and again in the form of demonic power when she brings the house of De Haldimar down around his head.

In The Newly Born Woman Cixous and Clément present the images of the hysteric and sorceress as exemplary female figures who challenge, subvert and attack male authority. Sandra Gilbert, in "A Tarantella of Theory," an introduction to the Cixous and Clément text, suggests that these figures represent woman "who erupts at, and disrupts, the edge of female consciousness, the liminal zone between sleeping and waking."⁴ Rather than focus exclusively or negatively on ways in which woman is oppressed and driven voiceless into madness, Cixous and Clément choose to foreground how the

⁴Sandra Gilbert, "Introduction: A Tarantella of Theory," Newly Born Woman x.

"rebellious celebrations"⁵ of female madness enable her to shatter imposed silences, to break free of societal restraints. While madness, or magical power in the case of the sorceress, may place the hysteric outside the law, at the same time it allows her to explore the dreaded wilderness, the chaos from which the male characteristically retreats or attempts to evade. Like Cixous and Clément, Jane Gallop also describes the female who dares to transgress man's (i.e. society's) laws as heroic.⁶ Ellen Halloway in John Richardson's Wacousta and Matilda Montgomery in Richardson's The Canadian Brothers become heroines, albeit tragic, through acts of madness and magic respectively.⁷ Both women, through violence and rupture,

⁵Cixous and Clément 25.

⁶In Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction (London: MacMillan Press, 1982). Jane Gallop describes the heroine as "she who has broken something" (136).

⁷For a description of the female hero, see Lee R. Edwards, Psyche As Hero: Female Heroism and Fictional Form (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), and Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, The Female Hero in American and British Literature (London: R.R. Bowker, 1981). Pope and Pearson attempt to reclaim the female heroes of traditional literature and to reinterpret them in the light of feminist analysis. Debunking traditional assumptions, these women observe certain traits common to the female hero: she often travels outside the protective boundaries of her social environment; her journey offers her the opportunity to develop courage, skill and independence; she attains heroism through wisdom or commitment to a truth beyond that recognized by social convention; she is usually in tune with spiritual or natural values that society advocates but does not practise; because she is an outsider (female, black, poor, unusual, native), she is always a

shatter the silence surrounding them in order to inscribe the feminine within their constricted worlds. They disrupt the unfolding drama by creating scenes and by attracting attention to themselves. In doing so, they shatter the stasis of De Haldimar's military world and create carnivalistic moments within the text. Richardson's intent to use "telling scenes"⁶ as a central narrative strategy is signalled by the epigraph to Wacousta, a brief passage from Edward Young's The Revenge: A Tragedy (1721), a poetic drama which explicitly equates vengeance with female fury.

Hysteric and sorceress are characterized ambiguously as both radical and conservative -- radical because they disrupt the social order, and conservative because, aware of

revolutionary; she is often more realistic and less destructive than her male counterpart; because society frowns on her difference, the female hero must frequently resort to camouflage, or hide her tracks; and the female hero usually undergoes a journey for her own benefit. Her quest leads to a new order centered on the self, not necessarily to the formation of a new community.

⁶See Martin Meisel, Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) for an examination of the collaboration of narrative and picture in nineteenth-century fiction. Torn between a desire for reality and a tendency for signification, the artist resorts to the use of "telling scenes" (52) or symbolic pictorial moments. The staging of scenes and the iconic presentation of women are important features in Richardson's works. In Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), Robert Reed describes the theatrical figure of madness as an expression of the frustrations, rather than the potentialities of mankind, and as a testament to the folly and impotence of human effort.

the need to comply with society's demands, they are eventually assimilated into the family or removed discreetly from public view. Failure to comply results in destruction or oblivion -- they are banished from or ignored by a society that tolerates no extremities. The tension between revolt and complicity propels these female figures into positions that are tenuous, marginal and secretive. Excluded by their difference, they become ex-centrics, women "left stranded on the periphery."⁹ Their deviant behavior distances them from normal social structures, places them outside the symbolic order, and aligns them with a shadowy, semiotic world.¹⁰ Feelings of despair and difference cause

⁹See Barbara Godard, "Introduction," in Gynocritics/La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoise Women, ed. Barbara Godard (Toronto: E.C.W. Press, 1987) i. See also Barbara Godard, "Ex-centriques, Eccentric, Avant-Garde: Women and Modernism in the Literatures of Canada," Tessera [Room of One's Own] 8.4 (1984): 57-75.

¹⁰See Bridget Hutter and Gillian William, eds., Controlling Women: The Normal and the Deviant (London: Croom Helm, 1981) 12-13: "Deviance refers to behavior that does not accord with those expectations and norms for individual behavior which are generally shared and recognized within a particular social system. It involves the breach of social rules which are commonly thought of as necessary to cohesion and order within a social group" (12-13). For a discussion of the semiotic and the symbolic, see Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) 19. The symbolic is the "domain of position and judgement" and is associated with the acquisition of language. A child enters the symbolic order when the law of the father is imposed. The semiotic is the pre-Oedipal stage, a time when the child is still one with the mother. This is described by Kristeva as a ludic space, a site of carnival and disruption.

the hysteric and the sorceress to perform, like the desperado, dangerous and reckless acts. They cross borders, challenge authority, break laws, become heroes in their own dramas. Through these "imaginative journeys across the frontier of prohibition,"¹¹ the female encounters and accepts the unknown. She discovers limitless territory; denied access to the Word, she invents new languages to convey what she has learned; she begins to speak in her own tongue, and uses pure desire to seize and to besiege the world.¹²

In his studies on hysteria, Freud suggests that it is the repression of memory and the suppression of speech or stories that cause female madness. He observes that the bodily symptoms, the external signs of hysteria, are actually the physical expressions of mental ideas.¹³

¹¹Gilbert, "Introduction," The Newly Born Woman xiv.

¹²For a feminist reading of the intimate connection between hysteria and story-telling, see Mary Jacobus, Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), in particular, "Anna (Wh)o.'s Absences: Readings in Hysteria," 197-274.

¹³Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, Studies on Hysteria, trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publication, 1947). See also Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Sontag identifies illness as "that other place" (3). She examines the use of illness as a figure or metaphor: "In the nineteenth century, the notion that the disease fits the patient's character, as the punishment fits the sinner, was replaced by the notion that it expresses character. Disease

Amnesia, as an important manifestation of the illness, is connected to a pre-sexual trauma experienced by the patient during childhood and which, because of its social unacceptability, is defensively repressed or denied. He also points out that abreaction, the acting out or expression of sexual drives and desires, does not take place as often in the female as in the male. Freud suggests that this is because the female's sexual activity is more carefully regulated by society. It is when these repressed reminiscences or memories surface that the hysteric suffers. In her study of psychoanalysis and feminism, Juliet Mitchell likewise concludes that denied femininity is the culprit: "In the body of the hysteric, male or female, lies the feminine protest against the law of the father ... what is repressed is both the representation of desire and the prohibition against it."¹⁴

In Wacousta there are two categories of feminine characters: those prohibited or bound figures like Clara and Charles De Haldimar who are passive and orderly, who comply with society's demands; and those spectacular figures

can be challenged by the will.... Disease is what speaks through the body, a language for dramatizing the mental: a form of self-expression" (42-43).

¹⁴Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974; rpt. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975) 404.

like Oucanasta and Wacousta, active and chaotic, disruptive and subversive, who act without regard for social sanction. Posited between these two groups is Babette who represents the mythological woman who waits.¹⁵ She, like her static foremothers, is characterized by patience, neutrality and subterfuge. Babette is also associated with the mythological Penelope, and with the Moerae, the Greek goddesses of Fate who spin the thread of life for men at their births. As she sits outside her cottage knitting, Babette seems uninvolved in the lives of the soldiers or the Indians. She appears and professes to be neutral, yet secretly she assists and consorts with the enemy. She is covertly involved with Wacousta, while at the same time she takes Frederick and his companion into her home as they prepare for their journey into the forest. Even as she sits knitting, she holds the fates or destinies of Frederick and Wacousta, white man and Indian, in her hands. Outwardly she is law-abiding; inwardly, as maverick, she enacts her own kind of change. Silent and seemingly detached, she signifies the dividing line between the paranoia of the enclosed garrison and the license of the explosive wilderness.

¹⁵See Patricia Monaghan, The Book of Goddesses and Heroines (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981) 205-6 and 239.

Fort and wilderness become the central arenas for the struggle within the text between feminine desire as it is embodied by Ellen Halloway, and logos, the law of the father, represented by Governor De Haldimar. Much of the tension in the novel results from De Haldimar's censuring of the feminine, and his refusal to acknowledge instinctual freedom or innovation.¹⁶ In Wacousta this desire for freedom is imaged in several spectacular female figures: Ellen, whose revolt ends in madness, not renewal; Oucanasta who gains power through acts of salvation and deliverance; and Madeline De Haldimar who, through her initiation in the wilderness, transcends the role of madonna to mother a new generation of Canadians. It is interesting to note that this new mother is erotic as well as spiritual. All three women belong to a "muted"¹⁷ cultural group and share certain attributes. They are all more closely connected to the natural world than to the social order. For example, Oucanasta is a native woman belonging to the Ottawa tribe. Ellen, a European woman widowed in Canada, is abducted by

¹⁶See Dennis Duffy, Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 44-54. Duffy also observes this tension between social restraint and instinctual freedom.

¹⁷Edwin Ardener, "Belief and the Problem of Women," Perceiving Women, ed. Shirley Ardener (London: Malaby, 1975) 1-17.

Wacousta and abruptly initiated into Indian life. And Madeline moves from the more remote fort at Michillimackinac, into the maze of the forest, and is returned to her family in a canoe where she is concealed with foliage. These women are liminal figures or threshold personae -- those who cross cultural boundaries. Ellen and Madeline enter the world of the Indian, and Oucanasta enters the world of the European. These women are also associated with paralinguistic acts (i.e. silences, gestures, screams, shrieks, sobs, etc.) to a greater degree than they are to the dominant social or military discourse. Oucanasta uses silence and sign language; Ellen shifts from the use of a prophetic to an incoherent discourse; and Madeline's discourse is equated with the holy utterances of the Virgin Mother. Bridging the gap between an orderly and a chaotic

world, a gap where "almost anything can happen,"¹⁸ is the female and her theatrics.

Ellen is one of several female characters who dramatically, and to varying degrees, reject silence, stasis and implied invisibility. Through prayers and prophecies, blood and despair, she desires to inscribe her story into a text that would otherwise ignore or silence her. Imagery of blood and madness connects her to Shakespeare's tragic woman of spectacle, Lady MacBeth, and it warns of the danger of woman unrestrained, ungoverned by husband or father. The same blood also links her to women's mysteries or soma (cyclical patterns of the body, fluidity, cleansing and renewal).¹⁹ When legitimate avenues for action are closed,

¹⁸Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974) 13. Also see Donna E. Smyth, "Metaphors of Madness: Women and Mental Illness," Atlantis 4 (Spring 1979): 287-299. Smyth suggests that the deranged woman who appears in numerous 19th-century melodramas is a literary stereotype whose madness results from seduction and abandonment. Her madness functions to evoke pity or moral outrage, not to provide a consideration of madness or its causes. Carol Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in 19th-Century America," Social Research 301.4 (Winter 1972): 652-678, suggests that women choose character traits as a mode to express malaise, discontentment, anger or pain. She observes a parallel between the hysteric's behavior and stereotypical femininity. She sees female madness as a psychological response to limitations placed on women by society. Madness provides the female with an escape route, an assertion of power and a passive aggressiveness.

¹⁹See Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets 635-645.

action are closed, Ellen descends into madness. Her prophetic utterances become incoherent, irrational and fragmented.²⁰ Her complete story remains, in Wacousta, mysteriously untold.

In The Canadian Brothers, Matilda's tale of seduction and betrayal becomes a variation on her grandmother Ellen's unvoiced narrative. However Matilda's story is never actively repressed by others within the text. While rallying strategically for a firm position from which to exact revenge, Matilda herself deliberately withholds her story, hence gaining power from its absence. Unlike Ellen, whose story is told by Frank Halloway and Wacousta, Matilda controls the timing and the representation of her own narrative. This uninhibited expression of her desires leads her into magic, not madness.

²⁰For a discussion of female prophecy, see Christine Berg and Philippa Berry, "'Spiritual Whoredom': An Essay on Female Prophets in the Seventeenth Century," 1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century, ed. Francis Barker, et al. (London: University of Essex, 1981) 37-54. Berg and Berry equate prophecy with a feminine language (a language which both sexes may possess) which opposes and constitutes a threat to rational discourse. They suggest that during the revolutionary period in seventeenth-century France, prophecy provided women with the opportunity to debate political and religious issues in a public arena. The nature of this prophetic discourse generated considerable anxiety: "We believe that its threat lay precisely in its feminine character. By the sustaining of a multiplicity of various levels of speech and meaning, as well as by relinquishing the 'I' as the subjective centre of speech, the extremist forms of prophetic discourse constitute an extremely dangerous challenge to conventional modes of expression and control ..." (39-40).

As a central theme, madness in various forms concerns many nineteenth-century Canadian writers, both male and female. In Roughing It in the Bush Susanna Moodie refers to her family's decision to come to Canada as a "mania" or madness.²¹ Much more than her sister Catharine whose own life was not untouched by mental depression (in the introduction to Canadian Crusoes Schieder refers to the "paralyzing depression"²² that Thomas Traill suffered from), Moodie reveals her anxiety about failure and emigration in her semi-autobiographical sketches. Through the depiction of various ex-centric characters, Moodie explores the impact of the wilderness on individuals who are often ill-equipped to survive in a harsh environment. In Roughing It in the Bush she describes Tom Wilson, "a strange helpless whimsical being" whose sanity was surely suspect; John Monaghan, "a

²¹Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush, ed. Carl Ballstadt (1852; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988). In the introduction to the first edition, Moodie discusses "the great tide of emigration" (14) which flowed westward to Canada in 1830. She describes the movement from Europe to Canada as a general "infection" or "Canada mania" (14). Her word choice suggests she viewed the phenomenon as a contagious disease infecting all levels of society, but in particular it "pervaded the middle ranks of British society ... officers of the army and navy, with their families -- a class perfectly unfitted by their previous habits and education for contending with the stern realities of emigrant life" (6).

²²See Catharine Parr Traill, Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains, ed. Rupert Schieder (1852; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986) xxviii.

strange, wild-looking lad" who arrived barefoot at the Moodies' door on a bitter winter's night; Mr. Malcolm, the "little stumpy man," a self-professed murderer and madman; and Brian, the still-hunter whom Moodie described as "mad as a March hare."²³ These stories about the failures of others also suggest indirectly the rough period of adjustment Moodie herself had to make.

In Voice and Vision, Carol Shields examines the consequent collision between Moodie and the new land. Shields suggests that in her writing Moodie focuses on the strange complexities of human personality, the reversal of sex roles, and society's impact on the individual.²⁴ As a

²³Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush 61, 157, 387 and 187. In Susanna Moodie: Voice and Vision (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1977) Carol Shields notes Moodie's interest in "the most deviant of human beings" (14). She suggests that Moodie views "madness not as a horror, but as an alternative human response" (14).

²⁴Whereas Shields views the contradictory nature of Moodie's response as manifesting itself in her works thematically, Margaret Atwood's Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) views it psychologically in the form of paranoid schizophrenia. Atwood describes the result of this collision as "a markedly double-minded attitude towards Canada" (51). She suggests that Moodie experiences two emotions nearly simultaneously: "faith in the Divine Mother and a feeling of hopeless imprisonment" (51). The resultant vertigo experienced by Moodie in a new environment can be interestingly perceived in the "textual instability" which John Thurston observes in Roughing It in the Bush. In "Rewriting Roughing It," Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987) 195-230, Thurston suggests "Moodie's personality is split by the institution and system of la langue as she carries it and la parole as she finds it actualized in Canada" (202). He also notes the polyphonic nature of Moodie's narrative as discordant voices intrude,

"modern heroine, the pilgrim who must cope with a new habitat"²⁵, Moodie undergoes a transformation of personality as her knowledge of herself and her world broadens. This personal development, however, does not take place without considerable stress and strain, as she is, simultaneously, attracted to and repelled by a land of license and lawlessness. In such a foreign position, madness seems a constant possibility.

As Shields notes in her study of Moodie, female characters seem more adaptable than male characters: men become victims; women, victors. One reason for the female's new found abilities and strengths is the existence of mutually supportive female communities. However, male characters also undergo certain changes. Influenced by the nineteenth-century cult of sensibility, there is a "feminizing and gentling of male strength"²⁶ as men, too, enter a world where there is a significant shifting of boundaries regarding sex roles.

subvert, and carnivalize Moodie's own attempt at monologic language. The result is a text fractured by contradictions, irresolutions, disunity and open-endedness. For a discussion of monologic and dialogic texts, see M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

²⁵Carol Shields, Voice and Vision 71.

²⁶Shields 3.

As vulnerable and inept individuals break down under this strain of the wilderness, the myth of Canada as an El Dorado or the land of Goshen is quickly shattered. It becomes instead, for the dispossessed and the dislocated, a place of asylum or madness. Any illusions Moodie or Traill may have entertained are rudely abandoned on their immediate arrival in the country. As the Moodies sail up the St. Lawrence, admiring the spectacular landscape, they are informed that Quebec and Montreal are cities afflicted with pestilence; cholera is depopulating the area. Death and disease are figured in the person of a French official, one of the health officers who inspects the brig Anne which sailed from Scotland with the Moodies on board. Other instances of disease evident among the newcomers are alcoholism, ague, melancholy and strife between different social classes.

In Rosanna Leprohon's Antoinette de Mirecourt (1864) madness as a metaphor is manifested in a form quite different from the manic hysteria in Richardson's Wacousta or the sense of dislocation evident in the works of Moodie and Traill. Here the female response to betrayal and stress is melancholy, a mental depression characterized by anxiety, sadness and immobility. Following her coerced and unsanctioned marriage to Major Sternfield, Antoinette begins to suffer from tremors, headaches, general nervousness and

"frequent fits of melancholy."²⁷ In Madness and Civilization Michel Foucault refers to melancholy as "madness at the limits of powerlessness."²⁸ Unlike hysteria which is an active, audacious disorder, melancholy is characterized by inertia and despair. Lacking the violent disruption of mania, it renders the patient impotent and ineffective. Foucault describes the world of the melancholic as diluvian, a simplified world where one remains "deaf, blind and numb" to all but an exaggerated terror. In contrast, the world of the hysteric is like a parched desert, "a panic world where all [is] flight, disorder, instantaneous gesture."²⁹ Whereas the hysteric is ardently explosive and demonstrative, the melancholic is helplessly defeated by life.

The dis-ease which Antoinette begins to suffer from is indirectly connected to the political upheaval taking place in the country. The more immediate cause of her misery is her association with Lucille D'Aulnay and Major Sternfield, who does not prove to be the romantic hero Antoinette

²⁷Rosanna Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt; or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing (1864; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) 99.

²⁸Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (1961; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1988) 122.

²⁹Foucault 129.

envisioned. Instead he becomes an agent of persecution and intimidation, and robs the naive young girl of her innocence and peace of mind. Privately as well as publicly in Antoinette de Mirecourt, illness becomes a metaphor for seduction, conquest and/or betrayal. Fearful that her father will discover that she has contracted an unholy union with an Englishman, and prevented from seeking solace and assistance from Mrs. Gérard, Antoinette's health begins to suffer drastically. The silence and restraints which Sternfield imposes on her create an anguish which causes her to grow thin and pale. Unlike Richardson's Oucanasta, for whom silence is a way of knowing, Antoinette is surrounded with a silence that leads to abjection. Separated from an appropriate medial figure, she becomes voiceless and subjects her will to the whims of external authority -- Lucille, Sternfield, her physician, and her father.³⁰ As her health declines, Antoinette becomes increasingly passive and submits her life to the will of God and the whims of fate.

³⁰For an examination of how women acquire knowledge, see Mary Field Belenky, Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1986), which establishes five major epistemological categories or perspectives from which women perceive reality, and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority. These are silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge.

Like other nineteenth-century writers such as John Galt and Susanna Moodie, Leprohon implies through her narrative that melancholy or mental illness is an inherited disorder. Antoinette's own mother died at a very young age, following the birth of her only child, of a disease referred to as "decline."³¹ This was a term used in the period to identify any gradual wasting disease of the body (such as consumption) which often resulted in failing strength and even death. When there is no improvement in Antoinette's health, despite a change of scene from the city to the town, a physician is called to attend to her. Unable to discover the origin of her illness, he orders a reversed change of scene, and she is sent back to Lucille's house in the city. When there is still no change in her state of mind, Dr. Manby, one of the army's surgeons, is sent to her. In his wisdom, he recognizes that Antoinette requires "neither quinine nor tonics, but a daily dose of heart's ease."³² To alleviate her symptoms of despair, he prescribes exercise, cheerful company, and the avoidance of morbidity.

However, it is not until Sternfield's premature death that Antoinette experiences any significant change of health. Reacting, finally, to the long months of passive

³¹Leprohon 158.

³²Leprohon 170.

suffering Sternfield has subjected her to, Antoinette gives way, on the witnessing of his death, to a "wild hysterical fit of sobbing."³³ This violent display of emotion, which acts as a sort of exorcism, is followed by a physical collapse and a period of grave illness. For a week her life hangs in the balance as she wrestles with fever and delirium. This period of illness allows Antoinette to disassociate herself from an impossible situation, and to avoid taking responsibility for past actions. It also provides her with a brief shelter or reprieve from the gossiping tongues of the city.

Having compromised her reputation in a century which valorized female virtue and chastity, Antoinette is advised by friends and acquaintances to enter a convent or retire to the seclusion of her home at Valmont. Instead, she is rescued from this dangerous dilemma by Colonel Evelyn, whom she weds within a year of Sternfield's death. It appears that Evelyn's "mad infatuation"³⁴ never faltered, despite his bride's notorious past or society's condemnation of her. Appropriately Evelyn is described by the narrator as an anxious father rather than a romantic suitor. He refers to her "past madness" with Sternfield as a period of "dark and

³³Leprohon 195.

³⁴Leprohon 199.

bitter trial"³⁵ which has purified and perfected his young bride.

In John Galt's Bogle Corbet (1831) it is the male, not the female, that is afflicted with periods of melancholy. Elizabeth Waterson identifies Bogle as "the first of a long line of Canadian anti-heroes, given to melancholy, to irony, and to self-mockery."³⁶ His wife, Urseline, on the other hand is domineering, good-hearted, quick-tempered, domestic and practical. Her adaptation and response to the new land are radically different from that of her husband. She is constantly demystifying the land; accepting it on its own terms; learning to utilize it effectively; and establishing personal connections with it.³⁷ The male response is best characterized in Galt's narrative by anxiety and apprehension. Waterson suggests that Bogle, the central

³⁵Leprohon 197.

³⁶Elizabeth Waterson, "Introduction," to John Galt's Bogle Corbet (1832; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 1.

³⁷See Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982) 7-12. Fowler notes the reversal of roles that seems to take place in the wilderness as emigrants enter "into a wide-open, freely chosen world of individual responses and behavior. Men are allowed to be tender and intuitive, ... women to be tough and rational, to develop engineering ones" (10).

figure, is "a kind of Fisher King,"³⁸ plagued by inevitable failure and recurring depression. Bogle affirms this notion when he describes his separation from the mother country as a painful "amputation"³⁹ or severance, and his new home as an asylum, a place of madness rather than a site of sanctuary. He is disconcerted by the immense sense of space and solitude, elements which emphasize "the true insignificance of man."⁴⁰ Nature evokes in him sublime feelings but also conversely depression and despair. The chapter titles of the narrative reinforce these emotions as a dominant response: "Depression," "Anxieties," "Evasions," "Embarrassment," "Disasters." Bogle Corbet's continual allusions to anxiety and stress suggest a reaction to some form of outer danger.⁴¹ Actually what seems most threatening to Bogle is the loneliness and the monotony of pioneer life.

³⁸Galt 5.

³⁹Galt 11.

⁴⁰Galt 79.

⁴¹Sigmund Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, trans. Alix Strachery (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959). Freud views anxiety as an act of self-preservation. An individual senses or anticipates danger, or a traumatic situation that would entail helplessness. An attack of anxiety implies a dynamic response rather than a passive waiting for it to occur.

In Wacousta it is secrecy and prophecy which create anxiety and stress in the lives of so many of the characters. Unable to predict the erratic actions of the Indians, or to rely on the fidelity of the Canadian, the British military is forced to establish certain ground rules in an attempt to restrict and control movement within the garrison walls. Clearly defined boundaries seem to separate fortress and forest, soldier and savage, culture and chaos, fact and fiction. These borders come under attack and eventually blur as subversive characters move freely from one area to another. Following the traumatic death of her husband, an execution ordered by Governor De Haldimar, Ellen, a stranger in a foreign land, transgresses physical, social, cultural and psychological boundaries. Her subsequent infraction of the rules, her violation of civil as well as military codes of conduct are marked by utterances which are violently explosive. As madwoman, Ellen is able to express or provoke human truths that are beyond the threshold of De Haldimar's or Wacousta's sense of reasoning. Hence madness provides her with oracular stature, elevating her above the pathetic posture the Governor would impose on her. Her unsanctioned discourse continues to reverberate throughout the text even when she is absent. When her mad prophecies infiltrate the calm exterior of De Haldimar, they disturb and unsettle his normal sense of complacency. During the Governor's

interrogation of Frank Halloway, Ellen's voice is still heard despite the fact that she has been deliberately excluded from the proceedings:

There was something so painfully wild -- solemnly prophetic -- in these sounds of sorrow as they fell faintly upon the ear, and especially under the extraordinary circumstances of the night, that they may have been taken for the warnings of some supernatural agency. During their utterance, not even the breathing of human life was to be heard in the ranks.⁴²

These passionate outbursts are in stark contrast to the Governor's carefully controlled expression.

Ellen's exodus from the fort to the wilderness has dual significance. One, it signifies the rejection of the house as maternal domain, or as a place of safety and stability.⁴³ De Haldimar's house (i.e. his family), like the fort, is

⁴²Richardson, Wacousta 41.

⁴³In the nineteenth century, woman's social position was imaged in the house, a structure which contained, confined and defined the female. Private, rather than public space, was considered to be the proper female sphere. It represented the domestic and moral responsibilities of the female. When Ellen begins to question De Haldimar's authority, she is, in essence, going public with her grievances. See Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977). Showalter states: "The middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood, which developed in postindustrial England and America, prescribed a woman who would be a Perfect Lady, and Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her own inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home" (14).

totally devoid of a visible maternal or competent female figure. This absence is remedied at the end of the narrative by Frederick's marriage to Madeline, a woman capable and willing to inscribe the feminine in this new space. But before this can happen, the old house of De Haldimar must be destroyed.

Any semblance of home that Ellen has attempted to reconstruct in Canada, albeit it falsely (Ellen and Frank Halloway assumed false identities when they left the old world), ends with Frank's death. Speaking in his own defence during the court martial, Frank reveals their need for duplicity. From that moment of revelation which culminates in, rather than prevents, her husband's death, Ellen begins her lonely trek into the wilderness and her descent into madness. Society's failure to provide Ellen with a viable structure is imaged in the rejected family in Europe and the broken union between husband and wife in Canada. Consequently she is driven toward her only recourse -- madness and the alien world of the Indian. The solace that Ellen seeks is not found in a military garrison, perhaps because the locus she enters is merely an inversion of the world from which she fled. The fort at Detroit, unlike that at Michillimackinac, is described as an extension of the old world. Unlike Michillimackinac, it has not yet admitted to an Indian presence other than as threat.

Ellen's exodus from Europe, as well as her flight from the garrison, ironically does not result in a complete severance of kinship ties. Eventually, through the person of Wacousta, Ellen re-embraces what she believes she is negating -- family and origins. Toward the end of the text when it is discovered that Wacousta took Ellen to his tent to be his bride, the narrative discloses that Wacousta is really Reginald Morton, uncle to Frank Halloway. This second revelation implicates Ellen indirectly in an incestuous relationship, the monstrous result of which eventually is Matilda, Ellen's grand-daughter, and central character in Richardson's The Canadian Brothers. That the new order sought at the end of Wacousta may simply be a perversion of the old is also suggested by the close relational ties between Frederick and Madeline De Haldimar. This marriage between cousins violates the incest taboo which functions to keep sexual relations outside the family circle.⁴⁴ Failure by the characters to comply with this basic cultural code indicates a lack of innocence and/or a corresponding lack of regard for the law. These actions -- Ellen's marriage to her husband's uncle, and Frederick's

⁴⁴See Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics, trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Vintage Books, 1946). Freud examines the prohibition which exists in primitive tribes against members of the same totem (tribal clan) entering into sexual relations with each other. Those who trespass are seriously punished.

marriage to his cousin -- can be viewed ambiguously as a revolt against authority as well as a contributing factor in the ever-diminishing closed family circle, signified in Wacousta and The Canadian Brothers by the image of "the hideous abyss."⁴⁵

As long as Ellen remains within the family and the fort, and accedes to the authority of De Haldimar, the father, she is rendered voiceless and ineffective. Her discourse is suppressed or muffled. Following her husband's arrest, Ellen is denied by De Haldimar the opportunity to abreast or act out her own desires and frustrations in a socially sanctioned fashion. The military and the patriarchy refuse to acknowledge any emotional appeal. Denied normal means of expression, Ellen's feelings are eventually manifest in the form of hysteria. Forced to abandon speech, she resorts to performance.

The tension between repression and expression is evident in the images of space associated with her throughout the text. Her position is consistently perceived in terms of restrictive imagery. She came to Canada travelling under a false name, from a valley in Cornwall where she lived beneath the shadow of Morton Castle.

⁴⁵John Richardson, The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War, introd. Carl F. Klinck (1840; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 226.

Following Frank's arrest, she is confined by De Haldimar to a room within the hermetically sealed fort. There, a voice framed by a window, she is rendered invisible and inaudible. Violently separated from her husband, she is forced to don a military disguise in order to witness his execution. Following Frank's death, Ellen is taken unconscious to Babette's cottage which is supposedly situated in neutral territory between the garrison and the wilderness. There Ellen remains for a brief period of time in limbo before she is abducted by Wacousta and taken to his tent in the forest. Eventually, lost to the world and herself, she dies pathetically in childbirth. This knowledge of Ellen's fate is withheld in Wacousta, only to be revealed mid-way through Richardson's sequel, The Canadian Brothers. This narrative concealment and linking between texts also lend to the lack of closure in Wacousta. Throughout the narrative, Ellen's presence is evoked by continual references to suffocating silence, low sobbing, muted sounds, repetitive and often disjointed phrases, manic laughter and the echoing of wild, unholy prophecies.⁴⁶ Her disruptive utterances undermine the univocal discourse imposed by De Haldimar on the inhabitants of the fort, and anticipate the intrusive discourse of the Indian. Thus as an intermediary, she helps

⁴⁶Richardson, Wacousta 38, 41, 122, 153, 433, 434, 437, 438, 502.

to diminish the gap between the closed space of the garrison and the uncontained freedom of the wilderness.

During her passage between fort and fortress, in one of several spectacular scenes, Ellen, in a rare instance, becomes highly visible. Stripped of her duplicitous military disguise, she stands clothed in the white dress of the initiate as she begins her ritualistic descent into darkness. The bridge upon which her husband is executed functions as a portal or threshold symbol; it is there that Ellen's madness and her rupture from De Haldimar's "civilized" world begin. Her plunge into darkness is announced by her erratic movements from the exclusive and limiting spaces of a bound world into a space where the boundaries are wildly shifting or unknown. Within the barracks, all motion, all maneuver is regulated by De Haldimar. His voice alone attempts to control, to direct the actions of the drama. Outside the walls of the garrison there is no such cohesion or nucleus. Ellen, momentarily, is freed to move from centre to margin, away from the controlling hand of the director. She, in fact, upstages the actors around her. Unaccustomed to a leading role, she falters under a male gaze. Chaos abounds. Without an appropriate medial figure, like Oucanasta or a mother, to instruct, inspire or guide her, and lacking the necessary skills to survive the journey perilous, Ellen encounters and

is swept into a wilderness, an a-mazing space in which she loses her way.⁴⁷

The chthonian world of the forest functions as omphalos,⁴⁸ a place of truth or self-discovery; it provides sanctuary for Frederick and Madeline. Unfortunately for Ellen it becomes a labyrinth, a place of danger and perplexity.⁴⁹ In Wacousta, as in much of nineteenth-century

⁴⁷In Wacousta, as in other early Canadian texts, the wilderness represents "a space in which there is no cent.e." See Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978) 170. It is a sanctuary from the restrictions imposed by the homeland (Europe); a place of freedom where an individual, in utopian fashion, could imagine a classless society, an egalitarian rather than a hierarchal order. These sentiments are expressed, though often in radically different ways, by Frances Brooke, Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, John Galt and others. For a reassessment of woman's relationship to space in a Canadian context, see Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, eds., A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing (Alberta: Longspoon and Newest, 1986). This is a collection of essays which "reread our literary tradition in the context of insights from feminist criticism and ... bring recent theoretical formulations to bear on the question of woman's place in our culture and our writing" (ix).

⁴⁸See Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets 740-41.

⁴⁹Many nineteenth-century Canadian writers refer to the wilderness as labyrinth. For different examinations of the labyrinth as a literary image, see Gaetano Cipolla, Labyrinth: Studies on an Archetype (New York: Legas, 1987). Gaetano suggests that Petrarch conceives love and worldly relationships as a labyrinth, a site of confusion and entanglement. For Luigi Pirandello, the labyrinth represents a form of order, a way of controlling and minimizing the chaos of a constrictive, maddening world. Italo Calvino uses the labyrinth to demonstrate post-modernist literary theories, rhetorical devices which manifest themselves in what is irregular and fantastic.

Canadian fiction, the wilderness is a necessary space into which all, who are to survive, must enter. It represents, for the newcomer, the site of initiation and testing, a world to be entered in order to discover a significant relationship to the other world. It is also the place of epiphany or revelation, where a demonic, destructive humanity is confronted, the existence of which nineteenth-century man was reluctantly obligated to admit. And so the retreat by various characters in Wacousta into the forest signifies a symbolic death, or relinquishment of old-world attitudes, before initiatory rebirth begins. Under the guidance of Oucanasta, Madeline and Frederick complete the journey safely and emerge from the darkness stronger and more ably equipped to create a new order. Both undergo symbolic deaths -- the corpse of Donellan is mistaken for Frederick, and Madeline, captured by the Indians and freed

Critic Gaetano also analyzes the labyrinth as a site of initiation which involves spiritual death, rebirth and transformation.

by Oucanasta, returns at dawn like Tennyson's Lady of Shallot,⁵⁰ a spectre of death floating in a canoe.

Richardson uses this literary allusion to Tennyson's imprisoned woman, who contemplates a dynamic world through a mirror, to provide an ironic contrast. While De Haldimar and his men are confined to the world of the garrison and their own private anxieties, feminine characters -- Clara and Frederick De Haldimar, Ellen Halloway, Oucanasta and Madeline De Haldimar -- enter the chaotic world of the wilderness. Madeline's return to the community (the first of two returns), and her reunion with Frederick on the lake do not parallel Tennyson's tragic lady's return. Madeline leaves the tower (garrison) under the guidance of Oucanasta; she experiences the world of the wilderness intimately rather than remotely through a mirror (i.e. she sees the land through her own eyes; it is not translated or filtered for her through a lens); and she returns to a garrison no longer characterized by fear and impotence. Conversely, it is Ellen who most resembles Tennyson's doomed lady, for although Ellen leaves her tower, she fails to make contact

⁵⁰See Jennifer Gribble, The Lady of Shalott in the Victorian Novel (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1983) for a discussion of female imprisonment, consciousness, relationship with society, and the nature and role of creative imagination. See also Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (London: Harvard University Press, 1982). Auerbach suggests that the lady of Shallot functions ambivalently as "a mysterious amalgam of imprisonment and power" (10).

with a benevolent power, a redemptrix that can restore her to the fort or heal her in the wilderness.

In order to make the transition from fort to forest, Ellen must employ some form of subterfuge that will enable her to find a passage out of the garrison. She disguises herself as a drummer boy in order to accompany her husband on his death march to the bridge, the scene of his impending execution. Through this disguise of cross-dressing,⁵¹ Ellen undergoes sexual, social and cultural transformations. Her male pretense is a sign that Ellen is negating the old-world

⁵¹See Sandra M. Gilbert, "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature," Writing and Sexual Difference, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 193-220. Gilbert suggests that the industrial revolution (with the invention of the spinning jenny and sewing machine) created a corresponding revolution in fashion, that prior to the revolution clothing was most often perceived as uniform or theatrical dress. Proceeding from the notion that "clothing powerfully defines sex roles" (195), Gilbert suggests that costume as metaphor is used differently by masculine and feminist modernists: that male writers use the metaphor to suggest the traditional dichotomy between reality (appearance) and illusion, and nostalgically to reinforce the concept of hierarchal order in society. Feminists, on the other hand, employ the metaphor to suggest reversals between accepted notions of costume and self. She sees the feminist use of metaphor as a political act, as radically revisionary, as "a journey beyond gender" (196). See also Froma I. Zeitlin, "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazousae," Writing and Sexual Difference 131-158. Zeitlin examines role reversal as a comic device used to "imagine worlds where women are on top" (131). An assumed identity, in the form of costume or role, can free women from social constraints, can provide entry into public arenas, can give them opportunities to concoct plots and exercise power. Zeitlin suggests a costume can invest the wearer with powers of appropriation as well as allow the wearer to deconstruct established notions regarding gender.

concept of the feminine, a necessary step if she is to be permitted outside the walls. Her masculine disguise indicates a rise in status -- it expands her realm of possibilities by providing her with mobility. It allows her to reject the restrictive private sphere to which De Haldimar has banished her and to enter a public arena. It also undermines De Haldimar's attempt to exclude her from the drama of violence that is about to unfold. By donning a military uniform, she moves from the stasis of the garrison to enter the dynamic, explosive world of the wilderness.

Yet Ellen's physical stature requires that she also adopt the disguise of a manchild. Her slight build, her body rules out the option of manly soldier. This aspect of her masquerade accentuates the innocence and vulnerability of Ellen, and the tenuous nature of her position. It also emphasizes the possibility of her functioning as a "liminal persona,"⁵² poised on the threshold of a new adventure.

⁵²See Victor Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969) 94-130. Turner borrows the term liminality from Arnold van Gennep's concept of rites of passage or transition rites, those observances that accompany every change of state or social position. These are marked by three phases: separation, margin and reaggregation. Margin (from the Latin limen meaning threshold) is the period in which the subject enters a betwixt and between realm, a state of limbo. Here the subject occupies an ambiguous position as he "passes through a symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of his past or coming state" (95). Symbolically he becomes invisible, and is reduced to a state of equality with others. Sexlessness and anonymity are highly characteristic of liminality. Turner suggests that it is in liminality that communities emerge, as opposed to social structure which the persona has become separated

However rather than move forward, Ellen becomes paralyzed by her grief and fury, and her youthful disguise serves to foreshadow a regression back to childhood and dependency.

Ellen's association with the military world also indicates an ascent on the hierarchal scale as she moves from the neutral position of civilian to a minor military role. This shift implies that Ellen is abandoning passive acceptance of the situation, by refusing to abide by De Haldimar's orders, and is attempting to adopt a stance of aggression and power. In this shift, she prepares for revelation and confrontation with the Governor.

Unfortunately her tragic fate is already implied by the imagery of upheaval that surrounds her as she throws off her disguise and flies into the arms of her dying husband.

In a wild theatre of the body,⁵³ in a public spectacle, Ellen forces the crowd witnessing the events to confront the disastrous consequences of De Haldimar's restrictive regime and that of any closed system. Emphasis on the body and revelation -- her hair is wild and streaming; her feet, arms

from. See also footnote 41, Chapter III, "Female Savior or Redemptrix."

⁵³Referring to the hysteric's wild theatrics, Cixous and Clément write: "These women, to escape the misfortune of their economic and familial exploitation, chose to suffer spectacularly before an audience of men: it is an attack of spectacle, a crisis of suffering. And the attack is also a festival, a celebration of their guilt used as a weapon, a story of seduction" (10).

and legs, naked; her clothing, dishevelled⁵⁴ -- functions as a sign of Ellen's breaking out of such an order, a rejection of a closed system. Her body serves as a physical sign that such a world has failed her. This wild gesture, inscribed into the orderly procedures of the military maneuver, is an uneasy reminder to those whose gaze is fixed on Ellen, that order is an illusion very easily shattered. Like her story which is silenced or disrupted by the military discourse of De Haldimar, Ellen's body is also presented within the text as a fractured or fragmented site; as a series of disjointed, exposed images rather than a cohesive, unified whole. The reader glimpses her in fleeting moments as the narrator focuses on parts of her body (i.e. hair, legs, arms, etc.). This dismemberment signifies the disintegration that is taking place as the centre of her existence, Frank, is removed. Without an appropriate frame of reference, she comes undone.

Before her mad flight, Ellen stands alone, broken over the corpse of her husband. Here she is still in an intermediate zone or "neutral territory"⁵⁵ between a society

⁵⁴Richardson, Wacousta 121, 145, and 153.

⁵⁵See Victor Turner, The Ritual Process and Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. In liminality, subjects occupy a neutral space; they are outside the social system and its conflicts (i.e. feuds, factions, coalitions). Transiently they are set apart or "sacred" and stripped of structural attributes in the social, legalistic, or political sense.

that hides behind its masks and a culture that does not conceal its propensity for violence. At this juncture, Ellen can choose neutrality; she can retreat to the house of De Haldimar who is deceptive and destructive, but still able to provide physical if not psychological safety; or she can proceed into the wilderness and explore its mysteries. At a critical moment when Ellen is "reduced to almost infantine debility"⁵⁶ and is incapable of decisive action, Wacousta intervenes by forcibly abducting her. The denials imposed on her recently by De Haldimar and in the past by a class-conscious England that refused to sanction her marriage, are now repeated, re-enacted by another powerful, univocal male figure. Madness, then, seems to be Ellen's only avenue of escape.

Despite her apparent lunacy, Ellen, in her address to De Haldimar before her flight, is lucid and articulate. Eloquently she condemns him and his family to a tragic and irrevocable end. The manner of her address reflects the desecration that has taken place. Mocking a world and a God that have betrayed her, Ellen "raised her eyes and hands imploringly to Heaven and then, in accents wilder even than her words, uttered a imprecation that sounded like the

⁵⁶Richardson, Wacousta 145.

prophetic warning of some unholy spirit."⁵⁷ With Ellen's substitution of prayers with curses, there disappears all hope or dream of a world beyond the present fallen state for either De Haldimar's family or herself. In attacking the house of De Haldimar, Ellen's words and actions suggest an end, the death of the stifling, repressive family with its secrets and deceptions. Employing the traditional metaphor of the family tree and referring to De Haldimar as its "head," Ellen, in an epiphanic moment, vows to usurp the self-appointed king of the wood, and to destroy the sacred tree: "if there be spared one branch of thy detested family, may it only be that they may be reserved for some death too horrible to be conceived!"⁵⁸

Although she has moved beyond the garrison and entered a male world, Ellen's position in terms of power or ability to act is not radically altered. As Wacousta's pseudo-Indian wife, she is as much a prisoner within the Indian encampment as she was within the garrison. She still remains a fugitive, in flight from the law. She has merely substituted one patriarch for another, and has in essence donned another disguise. The Indian dress she wears does not conceal or erase her European heritage, and her elevated

⁵⁷Richardson, Wacousta 153.

⁵⁸Richardson, Wacousta 154.

status as the wife of a chief does not improve the life of a woman who has unmindfully gone Indian. Ellen's displacement and disintegration, evident in the conflicting images of these two cultures, are revealed by her vacant eyes and mechanical movements⁵⁹:

Her eyes were large, blue but wild and unmeaning; her countenance vacant; and her movements altogether mechanical. A wooden bowl filled with hominy, -- a preparation of Indian corn, -- was at her side; and from this she was now in the act of feeding herself with a spoon of the same material, but with a negligence and slovenliness that betrayed her almost utter unconsciousness of the action.⁶⁰

Ellen's trance-like state acts as another form of flight and disassociation. It also indicates an abandonment of self as

⁵⁹See Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (London: Barrier and Jenkins, 1973) 103-110. Douglas perceives a correlation between social and bodily forms of control. "The less highly structured [a society is], the more the value on informality, the more the tendency to abandon reason and to follow panics or crazes, and the more the permitted scope for bodily expression of abandonment" (103).

⁶⁰Richardson, Wacousta 433.

her struggle to acquire a voice is ultimately lost.⁶¹ Ellen initially takes an active approach to her situation when she insists that De Haldimar and his family be held accountable for the disastrous events which occur. However, at the end of the narrative, her actions imply a passive acceptance of her fate as she voluntarily allows external forces to affect and defeat her; later she is incapable of evoking any agency. Hence her oracular powers turn into incoherent mutterings and screams of utter despair.

In a poignant scene of self-recognition in Wacousta's tent, Ellen confronts a mirror image of herself as the young Clara De Haldimar is taken captive. Clara, who bears an uncanny physical resemblance to the madwoman, seems destined to share Ellen's tragic fate. Her child-like behavior, as she sits in a fetal position, rocking back and forth, fails to evoke in Ellen an appropriate human or even maternal response. The motherless child becomes, like Clara Beverley, her motherless mother before her, an object of exchange, an exchange which results in a complete severance of kinship ties. The power of these women -- Clara Beverley, Ellen Hallway and Clara De Haldimar -- is

⁶¹Mary Douglas, In the Active Voice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982). Douglas identifies a passive voice versus an active voice approach to sociological theory. "The passive voice implies that people receive whatever happens to them as so many buffets and blows, ... the active voice encourages a search for expectation held about human agency" (ix).

diminished by the male's perception (Wacousta and De Haldimar) of the female solely in sexual terms.

Whereas De Haldimar chooses to foreground female chastity, by isolating and excluding the female, Wacousta emphasizes her sensuality. De Haldimar aims to protect what Wacousta would violate. Ironically De Haldimar's violation takes place under the guise of protection and is sanctioned by a society blind to his true intentions. In both cases, the result is an unrealistic perception of woman and a refusal to grant her any degree of autonomy. Because of her treatment at the hands of both men, the civilized and the savage, Ellen is alternately deprived of a voice within the garrison and is reduced to a pathetic echo outside its walls. Her final utterances are direct repetitions of Wacousta's words, voiced in a fractured, disjointed syntax which blurs past and present. Ellen's final scene occurs on the bridge which was the former site of her husband's murder and her own abduction. Her inability to distinguish between reality and illusion is revealed in her last words:

"Almighty Heaven! where am I? surely that was Captain Blessington's kind voice I heard; and you -- you are Charles De Haldimar. Oh! save my husband; plead for him with your father! -- but no," she continued wildly, -- "he is dead -- he is murdered! Behold these

hands all covered with his blood! Oh! -
 _n⁶²

Memory breaks to the surface but she is unable to order or control it. This blurring of time past and present also serves to emphasize Ellen's break with the symbolic order with its linear sense of time. For Ellen time is cyclical; she returns in memory to those moments which have the most significance for her -- her childhood, her marriage, and now the death of her husband.⁶³ Ellen's mad discourse ends with a chilling reference to her hands covered with blood, an image which points the narrative toward the cataclysmic closure of The Canadian Brothers when Matilda takes her own life.

Ellen serves a number of functions in Wacousta as she first achieves an oracular stature and then disappears. She is a sign, first repressed but eventually forcibly made visible, of the dire consequences of a rigid, patriarchal order. Her madness is an expression of her powerlessness as

⁶²Richardson, Wacousta 504.

⁶³For a discussion of cyclical and historical time, see Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: University of Columbia, 1986) 187-213. See also Jessie Bernard, The Female World (New York: The Free Press, 1981). Bernard relates time to gender. "Time is conceived differently in the two systems [male and female]. It is intimately related to instruments in the male world; time is what the clock measures. In the female world, ... it is a process of cycles, of passages" (392).

well as a feature which allows her to transcend stasis and imagined male omnipotence. She also functions as an outraged sibylline voice issuing warning to a world governed solely by reason. However, such a world breaks Ellen as easily as her "heart is broken"⁶⁴ by Frank's undeserved death. With limited success she endeavors to inscribe her sorrow and loneliness into the emotional vacancy of a space governed by a paranoid man, but her discourse is repeatedly suppressed. Finally Ellen is 'mpelled to resort to speaking in other voices, none of which are associated with a dominant or legitimate social discourse. Paralinguistic, these voices remain marginalized throughout the text, indicating by their position the failure of 'normal' language and indeed the inadequacy of most fixed systems or constructs. When Wacousta captures Clara, the daughter of De Haldimar, and begins to relate to her his own personal narrative of betrayal, he assumes "a cool license of speech"⁶⁵ which Ellen never achieves.

Initially in the text, Ellen is a disembodied voice sobbing in a room, her sorrow linking her to a long line of grieving, despairing women depicted in literature. Protesting the injustice of her exclusion, she is a voice

⁶⁴Richardson, Wacousta 154.

⁶⁵Richardson, Wacousta 46.

silenced, made mute by the orders of a univocal Governor. Maddened and enraged by her inability to intercede on her husband's behalf, she is a voice savage and insane. Her break with a rational world is signified by blood and manic laughter, images which represent her as petrifying and disruptive. Ultimately, because of her estrangement, she becomes an echo, endlessly looking to others to tell her story. Somehow, the voluminous world of nature which consumes her, transmits Ellen's untold story to Matilda in Richardson's sequel, The Canadian Brothers.⁶⁶ It is then left up to the grand-daughter to make the female narrative whole. As Wacousta concludes, Ellen again becomes invisible, a scream of anguish echoing in the darkness. Forced by De Haldimar and a restrictive society to adopt a fugitive position, Ellen, without an appropriate guide, fails to achieve aggregation. Unlike Madeline and Frederick, she is not identified with a competent or significant other. There is no surrogate mother, no father or husband, no medial figure to offer her counsel and guidance. And no ancestral shades come to her defence. When a group of women within the fort attempt to assist her, Ellen rejects their aid.⁶⁷ And so she remains forever lost

⁶⁶Matilda as a malignant, magic woman will be examined in Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power."

⁶⁷Richardson 122 and 125.

in the wilderness, a liminal persona severed from society and self. Her madness prevents her from becoming heroic;⁶⁶ she remains merely tragic. Like the dynamic Oucanasta, Ellen crosses borders, advances into new territory and possesses momentarily the ability to inspire revolt. However, she is limited by a lack of knowledge about herself and the alien world which she enters, by her inability to act on rather than be rendered impotent, and by her failure to bring about change in order to generate a new model of community.

⁶⁶For a discussion of female heroism, see Lee R. Edwards, Psyche as Hero, Carol Pearson and Catherine Pope, The Female Hero, and footnote 7.

CHAPTER V

Magic Women and Female Power

"Sibyl foretold the future; but the sorceress makes it."

Jules Michelet, Satanism and Witchcraft

"Witches provide a particularly powerful symbol of women's resistance to the dominant order and their punishment for failure to conform."

Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory

"Why witches? Because witches dance. They dance in the moonlight. Lunar, lunatic women, stricken, they say, with periodic madness. Swollen with lightninglike revolt, bursting with anger, with desire, they dance wild dances...."

Xavière Gauthier, "Why Witches?"

"Witches represented a political, religious and sexual threat to the Protestant and Catholic churches alike, as well as to the state."

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers

In a study of Victorian sexual attitudes, Nancy F. Cott notes that nineteenth-century views of female sexuality were decidedly dichotomous: "notions of women's inherent licentiousness persisted, to be wielded against women manifesting any form of deviance under the reign of passionlessness."¹ Christian belief preached that because she was a daughter of Eve, the female was more prone to excess passion than the male, and her rational control was weaker. According to Ian Watt, as the eighteenth century began to witness a redefinition of virtue in primarily sexual terms, female chastity became the model for human morality.² Cott suggests that woman's role as a moral yet passionless agent is reflected in the etiquette manual for young women which emerges as a prescriptive genre during the period. Howard Gadlin views this visible repression of female sexuality as a vehicle for desexualization, something desired by men and women for different reasons: "Men wanted to desexualize relationships to maintain their domination;

¹Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women, eds. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Peleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 163. See also Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

²Ian Watt, "The New Woman: Samuel Richardson's Pamela," The Family: Its Structure and Functions, ed. Rose L. Coser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964) 281-82.

women wanted to desexualize relationships to limit male domination."³

Nineteenth-century Canadian fictions by writers like Richardson, Kirby and Parker reflect, through the image of female desire, this battle between a male wish for domination and an equally strong female desire for some form of legitimate expression. Contemporary critics such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva reveal in their writings the notion that desire or pleasure has in the past been viewed as a male tradition: woman has not possessed a tradition that permits her to speak openly of her desires, that allows her to take pleasure seriously.⁴ This has led feminist theorists such as Patricia Yaeger and Nicole Brossard to suggest that women writers need to emancipate

³Howard Gadlin, "Private Lives and Public Order: A Critical View of the History of Intimate Relations in the U.S.," Massachusetts Review 17 (Summer 1976): 318.

⁴See Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975) and Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). See Also Rosalind Coward, Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today (London: Paladin, 1984), and Bernard P. Prusak, "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin? Pseudepigraphal Myth and Christian Origins," Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) 89-116.

desire by inventing "terrorist texts"⁵ as a subversive, second language. Only by opening a text to strangeness can the dominant discourse be dispersed and feminine desire be reinstated. However, it should be noted that this strangeness is not absent from nineteenth-century texts written by men or women; it simply manifests itself in covert forms. Richardson's *Matilda Montgomery* (The Canadian Brothers) and Kirby's *La Corriveau* (The Golden Dog) are two strangely desiring women. They instigate dangerous liaisons in which their victims become powerless pawns. Through these women, both Kirby and Richardson inscribe the disruptive powers of the feminine within their texts.

One figure of strangeness and deviant power in nineteenth-century Canadian fiction is that of the sorceress, a magic woman who casts spells and influences fate. From the Latin sors, meaning lot or fate, a sorcerer is believed to control the destinies of chosen individuals through the supposed use of an evil supernatural power or witchcraft.⁶ In early literary texts she is associated with

⁵Patricia Yaeger, Honey Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 3. See also Nicole Brossard, The Aerial Letter, trans. Marlene Wildeman (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1988).

⁶See Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England (1971; rpt. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984) 517-558 for a history of witchcraft in England. He distinguishes witchcraft or "image magic" from sorcery or the "use of poison" (520). In both instances, however, the

the power of exorcism, magic, fear, special wisdom or illuminism, transgression and ludic mastery.⁷ In a study of the origins of sentiments and social institutions, Robert Briffault suggests that "supernatural power is woman's means of enforcing her authority; it is her substitute for physical force. Her power is that of pronouncing curses, casting spells."⁸

Jules Michelet, in a study of medieval superstition, views the sorceress as a natural progression, an extension of the classical sibyl: he suggests that whereas the sibyl

malicious actions of these magic women render them anti-social and reprehensible. Damage is done by these occult agents in a number of ways: through touch, or physical contact (woman as a contagious agent); through emanation on fascination (the power of the female gaze); through pronounced curses or malediction ("forspoken"); or through technical aids (magic potions, poisons, etc.).

⁷In Chaucer's House of Fame (1262) the sorceress is one who exorcises demons. In Mallory's Arthur (1470-85) fear of the sorceress' powers is emphasized. In Milton's Samson Agonistes (1671) the sorceress is a female who violates the laws of God and man. In George Eliot's Adam Bede (1859) it is a witch-woman who always wins games with Christian men.

⁸See Robert Briffault, The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions, 3 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1927) and Thomas Wright, Narratives of Sorcery and Magic, 2 vols. (1851; rpt. Detroit: Grand River Books, 1971). Like Briffault, Wright views sorcery as a sexually political act. He suggests that it is often woman's only means of vengeance or retaliation when other more legitimate means are found wanting.

foretells the future, the sorceress makes it happen.⁹ The sorceress' visionary powers are superseded by her ability to evoke, to conjure, to guide destiny. This is the role that Kirby's La Corriveau plays in The Golden Dog. She is a creator in that she fashions future events. Nature is the source of her power. From the natural world she gleanes a knowledge that empowers her to either heal or destroy.¹⁰ It is this close conspiracy with nature that renders her suspect and excluded by a civilized social order. Michelet dates sorcery from the beginnings of Christianity and the genesis of family life as it is known today. He suggests that this magic woman is a visible manifestation of the Church's protest against that which is natural. Church doctrine of original sin teaches that the world had become so corrupt by the Fall of Adam and Eve that there could be no longer any virtue in it. Nature then came to epitomize

⁹Jules Michelet, Satanism and Witchcraft: A Study in Medieval Superstition, trans. A.R. Allinson (New York: The Citadel Press, 1939).

¹⁰Woman in the past did not have access to institutions of learning as did men. Therefore any knowledge she gained had necessarily to be gleaned secretly and from unsanctioned sources. There was also, of course, a taboo concerning women and knowledge implied by the Judaeo-Christian tradition which incriminated Eve's curiosity and pursuit of knowledge in man's fall from grace. In Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément suggest that the sorceress thus "heals against the Church's canon" (5).

everything that man must struggle to rise above. Michelet also implies that at a time when Christianity emphasized man as a creature of society rather than nature, there were corresponding changes occurring with regard to man's group organizational patterns. In early societies it was common practice to live communally, with allied families forming a single household, a situation which lent little personal protection or care for women. True family life, Michelet contends, came into existence with the creation of "a separate hearth,"¹¹ leading at the same time to the existence of the separate roles of wife and mother.

Regulated by both church and family, and despairing against the restrictions of her lot, the sorceress, in revolt against the authority of the church fathers, turns back to the voices of the ancient gods and goddesses. Her secret adherence to paganism, her response to an irrational world, invest her with some measure of control and power. While her abnormal actions place her outside the margins of society and make her an outlaw, they also endow her with a means of enacting changes within it. Rejecting the position church and family would impose on her, she chooses to image her own position, neither exclusively in nor outside social limits. Joseph Campbell in his study of various mythologies supports this view of the sorceress as an autonomous being

¹¹Michelet 22.

and an agent of change.¹² Unlike the hysteric Ellen Halloway who moves steadily toward stasis, and who acts out her frustrations but eventually loses herself in madness, the sorceress is more akin to the shaman whose power comes from mysterious and often unsanctioned sources. Refusing to be chastised like Eve for a feminine desire to know and to name, the sorceress aspires to rename and to possess that which society denies her.

Supporting Michelet's portrayal of sorcery as a female response to changing attitudes toward her and nature, Cixous and Clément view the sorceress' actions as "a radical overstepping"¹³ of the feminine. At the conclusion of Wacousta Ellen, mad woman and vanishing prophetic, fails to return to a structured world following her own overstepping of social boundaries and her journey into a labyrinthine world. She is eclipsed by the chthonial world; her fate, in Wacousta, remains unknown. The madness that contributes to her exclusion and eventual disappearance is, in time, transferred matrilinearly to her grand-daughter, Matilda. However, unlike Ellen who remains outside society, Matilda chooses to exist in a state of estrangement, in the gap or

¹²Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (1959; rpt. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970) 309-311.

¹³Cixous and Clément, The Newly Born Woman 39.

space between society and nature where her difference is experienced as pleasure rather than merely despair.¹⁴ Whereas Ellen's madness signifies a denial of desire, Matilda's presence is a continual celebration and manipulation of it.

In The Canadian Brothers, Richardson's sequel to Wacousta, Matilda is inheritor of the female's dark demonic powers and a kindred spirit of another Canadian witch, La Corriveau, la sorcière of William Kirby's The Golden Dog (1877) and Phillippe Aubert d'Gaspé's Canadians of Old (1863). This transmission of female knowledge from one generation to the next connects both Matilda and La Corriveau with an elusive community of women and reaffirms their medial status within their respective texts. In reaffirming their links with powerful ancestral shades, these women demonstrate how female stories, even when forced underground, still manage to circulate and empower those who do not resist them. Names, as well as stories, are transmitted across Canadian texts.¹⁵ Matilda's name links

¹⁴Dennis Duffy, Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 50. Duffy suggests that Matilda Montgomery in Richardson's The Canadian Brothers functions as a mediator between garrison and wilderness (50).

¹⁵Other examples of this transmission of names to create intertextual resonances are Bogle Corbet's Urseline; Catharine and Catherine in Traill's Canadian Crusoes and Hart's St. Ursula's Convent; Holmes' Belinda and Brooke's Arabella in The History of Emily Montague; Emily in Brooke's

her to the prophetic and half-crazed Scarlet Lady, Matilde in Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1895). Kirby's fictional sorceress is based on the historical La Corriveau, the St. Vallier Lafarge who was hung for the murder of her husband in 1763. The story of her execution, recorded by French historian J.M. LeMoine,¹⁶ provides an important subtext in Kirby's historical romance. Her story also serves to remind the reader of those women in North America who were executed for witchcraft, La Corriveau's ancestral shades who failed to escape the "red gown" (burning at the stake) of the Puritans,¹⁷ and of other powerful female figures in France who influenced political direction. As a sorceress, La Corriveau is associated with secrecy, subterranean passages, suppressed passions, malignant mutterings, dangerous liaisons, and acts of perversion. Unlike the hysteric whose grievances are publicized, the

The History of Emily Montague and Amélie in Kirby's The Golden Dog. This transmission of names does, of course, extend beyond nineteenth-century literature.

¹⁶See James MacPherson LeMoine, Picturesque Quebec: A Sequel to Quebec Past and Present (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1882) 259, and his article "Marie-Josephte Corriveau, a Canadian Lafarge," Maple Leaves (Quebec, 1863). Also Luc Lacourcière, "La Corriveau," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) Vol. III, 142-3.

¹⁷William Kirby, The Golden Dog (1877; rpt. Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1969) 391.

witch conceals her anger and her abnormality behind an elaborate web of deceit.

In The Golden Dog La Corriveau's powers, like Ellen's have been passed from grandmother (La Voisin) to mother (Marie Exili) to daughter (Marie-Josephte). She hides her subversive activities behind an outward show of benevolence and the ordinary art of a rural fortuneteller. Sensing her strangeness and malevolence, the Indians call her "the old medicine woman."¹⁸ As "weird woman"¹⁹ she is both feared and revered by the canotiers of the St. Lawrence: her sudden appearance evokes prayers and expressions of piety among them. Poor habitant girls seek her advice when in trouble or perplexed, but men also turn to her, believing that she has the power to tell things past, present and future. The narrator emphasizes the caution with which La Corriveau is approached by all. Not only is she believed to possess knowledge of the wickedness of the world, but it is forbidden by the authorities (i.e. the Church) to consult her. Therefore most of her consultations necessarily take place covertly outside the limits of the law.

¹⁸Kirby 339.

¹⁹Kirby 341.

In her physical appearance, La Corriveau conforms to the stereotypical witch with a "black evil eye."²⁰ Repeated allusions to her "terrible"²¹ visage connect her to Hecate, the Greek goddess of the underworld and associate of the dead. Despite her advanced years, La Corriveau is a commanding presence:

She was tall and straight, of a swarthy complexion, black-haired and intensely black-eyed. She was not uncomely of feature, nay, had been handsome, nor was her look at first sight forbidding, especially if she did not turn upon you those small basilisk eyes of hers, full of fire and glare as the eyes of a rattlesnake.²²

She is likewise associated with sinister animal imagery: her hands are like "talons"; her step quiet and "tiger-like"; her smile as "cruel as a wildcat"; and her body inhabited by "satyrs and dragons."²³ These images suggest her destructive powers and the evil passion which rages

²⁰Kirby 326.

²¹Kirby 341, 345, 424, 421.

²²Kirby 340-41.

²³Kirby 342, 347, 351, 335.

half-concealed within her. With her menacing aura she represents the venomous nature of woman.²⁴

Her marginalized position in society is evidenced in her reclusive dwelling, a "stone wigwam"²⁵ deep in the dark pine woods. Matilda Montgomery, the witch woman of Richardson's The Canadian Brothers, occupies a similar structure, a stone building resembling a temple "closely bordering upon the forest."²⁶ La Corriveau lives away from the community in a "deep hollow out of sight of the church."²⁷ Her stone house is gloomy with narrow windows and an uninviting door. Likewise, La Corriveau's one friend, a crone by the name of Mère Malheur, also occupies a small house built of uncut stones, hidden under the shadows of a cliff. La Corriveau's stronghold of evil and the supernatural is surrounded by a wall of stones and a plot of

²⁴See Margaret Hallissy, Venomous Woman: Fear of the Female in Literature (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); John Widdowson, "The Witch as a Frightening and Threatening Figure," The Witch Figure, ed. Venetia Newall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 200-220, and N.M. Penzer, Poison-Damsels and Other Essays in Folklore and Anthropology (London: Sawyer, 1952).

²⁵Kirby 339.

²⁶John Richardson, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War, introd. Carl F. Klinck (1840; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 153.

²⁷Kirby 340.

grass consisting of "deformed" and noxious weeds.²⁸ Her house appears to be a prison, designed to prevent her contagious presence from infecting the community or the forest which touches her house on one side. Unlike the hysteric, Ellen Hallway, whose madness pushes her beyond the limits of legitimacy or acceptability, La Corriveau has, of her own accord, assumed a distant position from the community. Her lack of regard for tradition and authority is revealed in her passionate response to the mention of things sacred. She spits at the name of God; shows disrespect for all things holy; and seeks to corrupt and destroy that which is innocent and pure. She is associated with acts of ambivalence (the gathering of mandrakes in the forest and the giving of milk to weary women travellers)²⁹ and perversion (the aid that she brings to Angélique is intended to cause Caroline's death). Her love of games

²⁸This description of La Corriveau's place of habitation bears a remarkable resemblance to that of another scarlet woman, Hester Prynne of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1850). Banished by the intolerant Puritan community, she lives in a small cottage within the shadow of the forest. The soil surrounding her house is sterile and unproductive.

²⁹Kirby 417.

("mora")³⁰ also signifies her lack of regard for God as an ordering or controlling agent.

La Corriveau serves a figurative as well as a mimetic function in the text. Her nocturnal visit to Angélique's house begins a chain of events that affect and infect the lives of all the characters. Like the poisons that she conceals in her secret cabinet, she infiltrates revered spaces to desecrate and destroy. Her portentous arrival in Quebec begins a "high carnival of death"³¹ that is foreshadowed in the tolling of the convent bells, the plaintive howling of the dogs, and the sound of the wind sighing in the night. It is Angélique's passion for power, her demand that female desire be fulfilled, that propels her to enter into an unholy covenant with La Corriveau. When Angélique fails to turn away from the angel who administers death in the guise of a gift, she too becomes part of the sorceress' tradition. Her fate is sealed by the "secret compact of blood"³² that binds her to the witch and to a sinister world of darkness.

Obviously Kirby's sorceress, like the historical La Corriveau, epitomizes the underside of female nature, woman

³⁰Kirby 341.

³¹Kirby 347.

³²Kirby 394.

as a disruptive, destructive force, and as a contagious agent in society. Despite attempts to regulate or exclude her, she is an insidious presence capable of erupting to enact change, perhaps even revolution. As a subversive agent, she undermines the various structures of authority within society (church, state, family) by transmitting or transferring her powers to other audacious, desiring women. Her relationship with the beautiful Angélique des Meloises confirms Kirby's contention that woman is polysemic, characterized more by multiplicity than simple opposition. The enigma of woman is observed by a number of male characters within the text, including the seemingly all-powerful Intendant, Bigot: "Surely woman is a beautiful book written in golden letters, but in a tongue as hard to understand as hieroglyphics of Egypt."³³ The ambivalence of female power is also acknowledged by the intrusive narrator as he surveys the lovely Angélique who possesses "terrestrial witcheries like those great women of old who drew down the very gods from Olympus, and who in all ages have incited men to the noblest deeds, or tempted them to the greatest crimes."³⁴

³³Kirby 173-4.

³⁴Kirby 22.

While Ellen's madness estranges her from society, and La Corriveau's inherited magic shapes individual destinies, Matilda Montgomery's power in The Canadian Brothers is practised to serve her own needs somewhat within a social setting. She is an agontkon, an Algonquin word meaning one who casts spells or curses, a sorceress.³⁵ Related to the Greek agonia, this term connects the sorceress with a struggle or contest which inevitably involves the opposing forces of goodness and evil, purity and desecration. Agontkon is also associated with agony, the great mental or physical pain experienced during the struggle, and agon, Greek for an assembly, implicating an audience to witness the events. These radically transgressive women -- La Corriveau, Matilda Montgomery and Parker's Scarlet Lady-- become the motivating forces within their own narratives. They assume dominant positions within their struggles and relegate their victims to object/abject positions. Wronged by some member of the opposite sex or misused by society, they use the power of their sexuality to even the score.

As sorceress, Matilda renounces a victim position in her quest for a dynamic site of power. As descendant of Ellen Halloway and daughter of Jeremiah Desborough (both of

³⁵Joseph François Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times, eds. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth Moore (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977) Vol. I, 238.

whom are border-crossers, outcasts, and prophets of doom and despair), Matilda has inherited not only the obligation to fulfil the curse against the De Haldimar family but also the power to direct the fates of Gerald and Henry Grantham, the last descendants of the De Haldimar line. The violence associated with Ellen (i.e. her madness, her insane prophecy and her death in childbirth) is also bequeathed to Matilda. This legacy of violence is manifest through her demonic powers and a willingness to resort to murder in order to achieve personal vengeance. Through Matilda's suicidal death scene, where she inflicts violence against herself, there resonates the agonizing screams with which Ellen in Wacousta, in a previous act of aggression, sundered the silence between fort and wilderness. However, whereas Ellen's uncontrollable break with community reveals a moral demand for atonement, Matilda's fracture is for self-gratification, to satisfy her own desire for retaliation. The despairing actions of both women are occasioned by betrayal: Ellen by De Haldimar and Matilda by Forrester who seduces and then abandons her. Both men are punished by a woman for a common trait they share, skepticism, a basic lack of faith in feminine power or ability. Their devaluation of the feminine contributes to their deaths.

The drama of Richardson's "prophecy fulfilled" is enacted along the wild borderland separating Canada and the American colonies during the War of 1812. This political

upheaval serves as the background to Matilda's movements across geographical and psychological boundaries. In the tradition of her Canadian foremothers, Matilda is a border-crosser, a subversive revolutionary. Despite the danger such mobility involves, Matilda knowingly, actively transgresses designated lines of demarcation. Her movements are systematic and logical rather than erratic and spontaneous as were those of Ellen Halloway. In contrast, Matilda outwardly identifies with a sane world; hence she carefully restricts her movements within the perimeters mapped by society. Her power lies not from overtly challenging existing authorized structures but by covertly subverting or eluding them. In other words she enacts rupture, undermines order while appearing to uphold the law.

Like Oucanasta, Matilda is also a medial figure,³⁶ one who assists others in times of difficult passage or transition. Yet Matilda is no redemptrix;³⁷ her power is destructive and demonic rather than restorative and healing. She acts as an accomplice to Jeremiah Desborough, her traitor-father who pretends loyalist sentiments while committing acts of treason against Canada. Whereas Oucanasta's crossing of borders tends toward reconciliation

³⁶See Chapter II "The Medial Feminine and Her Ancestral Shades."

³⁷See Chapter III "Redemptrix or Female Savior."

and restructuring, Matilda's maneuvers are deconstructive and dismantling. She forces those who observe her to re-examine woman as sign. Strongly confident of her own signification, she constantly shifts position within the text so that Gerald is required to reassess his perceptions of her. He is never sure whether she is mid-wife, mediatrix, or malignant agent whose mission in life is to conquer and destroy.

When captured by British soldiers led by Gerald Grantham, Matilda executes the first of several subtle inversions within the text. Although technically she is Gerald's prisoner of war, with a single gaze, she bends him to her will until it appears "that the conqueror and the conquered had exchanged positions."³⁸ This fascination or strange power that she exerts over Gerald in the opening scene signifies what is to be Matilda's dominant position throughout the narrative. Unlike Ellen, Matilda refuses to be framed. Whereas the war between Canada and the United States is the linguistic subject of the narrative, the female's seduction of the male (another inversion) furnishes the fabula, the deep structure of the text.³⁹ In most of

³⁸Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 57.

³⁹See Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). Bal identifies three layers within a narrative: text, story and fabula. Text is the "finite, structured whole composed of language signs.... A story is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner.

her scenes or more accurately her stagings, Matilda manipulates the action, out-maneuvers her victims, and places herself as subject at the centre of the action. When Gerald begins to entertain a company of friends with the story of a disguised stranger who attempted an assassination, Matilda intervenes in the narrative. By questioning several of Gerald's suppositions, she alters and expands the possibilities of his story. She deconstructs his narrative and forces Gerald to confront the vantage point of the assassin, and she suggests a moral dilemma the reverse of that formerly considered by the external observer of the action. The hypothetical questions that she proposes construct the possibility of another narrative -- a view of the world according to a woman wronged. Her interrogation of Gerald and her frequent interruptions create a subtext, an alternative to his gospel narrative.⁴⁰

In the gap which precedes the narrative of the novel, Matilda fulfills the typical nineteenth-century role of woman as object. Having naively entered a clandestine relationship with Forrester (whose name suggests confusion and an unruly nature), she is punished for her impropriety

A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events" (5).

⁴⁰See Chapter I "Other Cartographers," section ii entitled "Gospel Narratives."

by an erotic fall. Finding her in the arms of a stranger, Forrester mistakes Matilda's disguised father for a Negro servant. Believing she is involved in an unnatural alliance, Forrester abandons Matilda, adding insult to injury by slandering, "blackening" her reputation. In The Canadian Brothers Matilda rejects this wrongfully imposed role of the seduced female and chooses instead to become subject of the narrative, the seducer.⁴¹

Simone de Beauvoir identifies woman as enchantress, fascinating and casting a spell over man, as "the most ancient and universal of myths".⁴² This erotic power of the

⁴¹Ann Jones, Women Who Kill (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980) suggests that women rarely kill strangers; usually their victims are intimates. She also suggests that poison is woman's usual weapon; this female preference for poison Jones relates to woman's dislike of violence. La Corriveau's actions do not conform to this pattern. She exceeds the limits of feminine action when she first poisons and then stabs her victim. Also Caroline, La Corriveau's victim, is relatively a stranger to La Corriveau. The witch is, hence, motivated by her love of evil and a desire for power and domination.

⁴²Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (1949; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1974) She writes:

In the societies where man worships these [female] mysteries, woman, on account of these powers is associated with religion and venerated as priestess; but where man struggles to make society triumph over nature, reason over life, and the will over the inert, given nature of things, then woman is regarded as sorceress.... Now, woman is not fully integrated into the world of men; as the other, she is opposed to

female has not always been perceived negatively, or viewed exclusively as a destructive force. De Beauvoir implies that only in a society that devalues nature is woman's power seen as demonic and destructive. She suggests that earlier societies, which acknowledged and paid tribute to the female mysteries, tended to image the female as magical and to accord her a privileged position. However, in a world governed by the father and the law, the female becomes object or Other, rather than subject. As other, Matilda, a desiring subject is refused the posture of priestess or holy woman. Hence she is relegated to the questionable posture of siren or seductress. In retaliation for her betrayal by a humanistic, Christianized world, Matilda resorts to paganism in order to reclaim power. The stone temple, in which Gerald last locates her and in which Matilda dies, is dedicated not to the glory of God and man but to the demonic forces of darkness and disruption. Within the narrative, Matilda is never associated with the domestic space, but with a sacred space she has constructed for herself. The house or the home, with which she would have normally been

them. It is natural for her to use the power she has, not to spread through the community of men and into the future ... but, being apart, opposed, to drag the males into the solitude of separation... (185-186).

connected, was defiled by Forrester when he failed to place his faith in her.

Besides the inversions that Matilda evokes, there are numerous signs which create an aura of strangeness, of eccentricism around her, indicating her other-worldly quality. One such sign is the imagery of veils, shrouds, and shadows⁴³ which signifies her desire for secrecy and concealment. This is also another example of her tendency to reverse or subvert male expectations. Veils would normally serve to create a seductive aura, to enhance female mystery. Matilda employs these feminine strategies to create mystery but also to conceal her true identity so she can perform acts of espionage. Through actions and words, Matilda reinforces the notion Gerald and others have formed of her, that she is a mysterious riddle, a palimpsest text which the male gaze cannot fathom. With elliptical replies and veiled promises, Matilda creates and sustains a powerful enigma. She gives ambiguous clues regarding her feelings, leaving them for Gerald to interpret as he will. These signs function to elicit conflicting responses toward Matilda -- thus she resists consensus or closure within the text. Various characters hold different views of her; she is perceived as witch, devil, angel, enchantress, and

⁴³Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol II, 154, 155, 197 and 203.

savior. When Henry Grantham watches as Matilda sucks the poison from Gerald's wound (he has been bitten by a rattlesnake), he sees her as "the generous preserver of that brother's life to whom his own boundless debt of gratitude was due." Immediately, however, his feelings undergo another reaction: "he scarcely could persuade himself she was not the almost vampire and sorceress that his excited imagination had represented."⁴⁴ Despite the multiple responses Matilda evokes, there is one common response to her presence. She creates in others a sense of foreboding, a dread of the unknown, and in Gerald's case, a profound belief that she will remain forever indecipherable.⁴⁵ As witch, Matilda controls and directs Gerald's behavior as she seeks to discipline and punish those who have wronged her. Even in death, shrouded in the folds of her cloak, she escapes male or moral censure by refusing to repent for her crimes.

Matilda's voice is another powerful instrument that she uses to control, direct and disguise the plot of the

⁴⁴Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 219-220.

⁴⁵See Widdowson, "The Witch as Frightening and Threatening Figure." Because she is capable of evoking fear, the witch is a particularly potent force in society. Widdowson suggests that, as a sinister and malevolent figure, the witch serves a number of social functions: she is associated with discipline and prohibition; and she serves to sustain a complex system of control.

narrative.⁴⁶ Like her physical appearance, her voice also is associated with ambivalence and transformation. Its very cadence poses a contradiction. It is "deep but femininely soft"⁴⁷ connoting simultaneously power and passivity. Alternately she withholds her voice, discouraging Gerald with her silences, her apparent reserve and disinterest. Then at appropriate moments she tantalizingly offers it to insinuate a love she does not feel, to promise an intimacy she has no intentions of establishing. When Gerald first stumbles upon Matilda, disguised in a black cloak, as she prepares to assassinate Forrester, he is unable to reconcile

⁴⁶See Montague Summers, trans. and introd., The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger (New York: Dover Publications, 1971). Supernatural power was believed to be connected to woman and her tongue. Kramer and Sprenger explain why superstition is chiefly found in women:

For some learned men propound this reason; that there are three things in nature, the Tongue, an Ecclesiastic and a Woman, which knows no moderation in goodness or vice; and when they exceed the bounds of their condition they reach the greatest and the lowest depths of goodness and vice. When they are governed by a good spirit, they are most excellent in virtue; but when they are governed by an evil spirit they indulge in the worst possible vices (42).

⁴⁷Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 36. In Macousta Richardson also equates feminine power with the voice. Madeline's "principal power lay in her voice, -- the beauty, nay, the voluptuousness of which nothing could surpass" (296).

the maniac laugh which she utters with the controlled and confident discourse of the Matilda he loves.⁴⁸

This wild subversive laughter connects Matilda to Ellen Halloway and suggests that the grandmother's madness is contagious. Affected adversely by the violence done to her by Forrester, Matilda's mad desire for revenge creates agony for all those with whom she comes in contact. While Forrester for some time manages to elude her, eventually he, as well as Gerald, falls victim to her. In her demand for total revenge, Matilda recalls Wacousta's manic obsession to eradicate De Haldimar's complete family. She also resembles her pseudo-Indian ancestor in the pleasure she derives from playing psychological games. As ludic agent, Matilda plays with Gerald's emotions and toys with his affections. Having finally exacted her revenge, she displays her ludic talent by cheating both Gerald and the hangman by taking her own life.

⁴⁸See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968). Bakhtin observes that literary history tends to transmit only the official culture of ruling classes, and that the voice of the people is often ignored. He suggests that laughter, the essential nature of the popular voice, is basically revolutionary. Characteristically, laughter is universal, unrestrained and related to unofficial, unrecognized truths. Expressed in curses and abusive words, parody, and spectacle, laughter is able to degrade and undermine established powers: "Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth" (94).

When at Gerald's insistence, Sambo, a long-time servant, returns with him to Ellen's grave to recall the tragic circumstances connecting the madwoman to Gerald's family, Sambo imagines that the face in the window of a nearby cottage is that of Wacousta. The surfacing of so much pain and sorrow causes Sambo's mind to become afflicted. Thus, indirectly, Matilda manages to exert her evil influence on the last connecting link between Gerald and Henry and their departed parents. Henry believes that Sambo's mental breakdown is caused by Gerald's lack of consideration for a beloved and loyal servant. The resultant argument leads to an alienation between the brothers. Sambo's mental collapse represents Matilda's ability to contaminate those with whom, even indirectly, she comes in contact. Gerald, likewise, as a result of this encounter, undergoes a change of personality. He becomes secretive, insensitive, incommunicable, turns to drinking, and isolates himself from everyone. Eventually he even rejects the moral code by which he has lived when Matilda entices him to murder Forrester, a man to whom he rightfully owes his life.

Matilda's perverse powers over others extend beyond mere female charm or evil influence. When Gerald is bitten by a poisonous rattlesnake, she employs a secret knowledge of herbs (known at that time only to the Indians) to prepare

an antidote.⁴⁹ In Venomous Woman, Hallissy suggests that the image of poison is directly related to the male's fear of the female. It represents female power, provided by a forbidden knowledge, to deceive and destroy man. Poison acts as a moral metaphor for female subversion. It enables her, through the use of an insidious equalizer, to control male and female relationships. Sinned against and betrayed by men, women like Matilda resort to the mystery of sorcery in their secret battle for domination and control. This need for revenge is facilitated by a secret knowledge of magic potions and poisons. Matilda's restorative powers associate her with the powawer,⁵⁰ a person in which the North American Indian placed great faith. A powawer was a conjurer who functioned as physician, orator and divine oracle. In this instance Matilda functions ambiguously as venefica: she is at once both a maker of deadly potions,

⁴⁹Michelet records the sorceress' use of solanaceae (herbs of consolation), poisonous herbs which acted as antidotes. Because of the Church's ban on such medicines, women who employed these means in order to heal were referred to as "ministers of death" and their actions were punishable by death. Briffault, The Mothers also notes "the secret of the witch is knowing the plants that bring about the desired result; and this is the sum and essence of witchcraft" (486). For a discussion of woman as healer, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirde English, Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers (New York: The Feminist Press, 1973), and Muriel Joy Hughes, Women Healers in Medieval Life and Literature (1943; rpt. New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968).

⁵⁰See Lafitau, Customs of the American Indian.

and a healer, a knower of remedies. Besides her ability to heal Gerald, Matilda spars verbally and competently with him, and she correctly predicts and fulfils the prophecy surrounding the fate of the De Haldimar family. In effect, she restores Gerald to life only to later rupture and suspend that particular family line. As powawer, Matilda rejects the social mapping of the nineteenth century that would relegate her to a private, domestic sphere where she would be expected to remain mute, submissive and inactive. Like Ellen's hysteria, Matilda's actions suggest the inherent weaknesses in the social code she had been expected to live by. Through explosive terror tactics and spectacular performances, these women undermine the legitimacy of such codes.

Whereas Ellen acts spectacularly to indicate her resistance to specific structures, Matilda performs more subversively and less dramatically. As she pledges herself to curing Gerald, her voice acquires a melodious sound. With ease, she lulls the injured and subsequently vulnerable man into a full state of confidence. She likewise extends her power to inspire assurance in those who anxiously witness the scene. As she quietly takes charge of a potentially fatal situation, Matilda in true redemptrix fashion, appears to fulfil her promise to restore Gerald to health. Despite the fact that she saves his life, her methods (i.e. sucking the poison from his arm and applying

the secret remedy) evoke mixed feelings in the observers. They cannot decide whether Matilda is a "beneficent angel" or "vampire and sorceress."⁵¹ These actions cast her in the ambivalent role of magician-priestess. She saves Gerald's life but only because she intends to use him later to avenge the wrongs done to her by Forrester. This picnic scene in the woods reverberates with biblical overtones of man's fall from grace. In this instance, Matilda, as an American Eve, appears to heal rather than to afflict man with her knowledge. However, below the surface, she is already preparing for Gerald's permanent and tragic fall.

Matilda's subversive nature is also indicated by Richardson's use of hair, a sign that serves an erotic function in the text.⁵² Unlike Oucanasta who renounces her sexuality in order to remain virginal (i.e. woman apart or alone), or Ellen whose body reveals woman broken or

⁵¹Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 220.

⁵²See Elizabeth G. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," PMLA 99.5 (October 1984): 936-954; and Wendy Cooper, Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism (New York: Stein, 1971). Gitter refers to "a long literary tradition of golden-haired ladies -- a tradition that gathered peculiar force and intensity in the latter half of the nineteenth century" (936). She suggests that, rendered immobile, "the larger-than-life woman who dominated the literature and art of the [Victorian] period used her hair to weave her discourse" (936). Hence hair, as a symbol, represents man's tendency to mythologize, to fix the female; whereas woman utilizes this physical feature to empower woman, to generate an energy and vitality independent of the male.

shattered, Matilda's sexuality as an erotic element is emphasized throughout the narrative in order to image her power and influence over male characters. Prior to the twentieth century, long hair was the convention for women. It was seen as the ultimate token of femininity. It signified the female power to command male desire. Light or fair hair was associated with virginal, or chaste females; dark hair with the seductress. In Wacousta Ellen, with "her long fair hair ... wild and streaming,"⁵³ expresses the undoing of innocence. Oucanasta is the one female character for whom Richardson does not identify hair as sign, an indication that she is somehow outside gender differentiation. It is her mysterious presence, not her sexuality, that legitimizes her power and position in the text.

Matilda's hair is "black, glossy and of eastern luxuriance, and seemingly disdaining the girlishness of curls, reposed in broad Grecian bands, across a brow, the intellectual expression of which they contributed to form."⁵⁴ This description, while focusing attention on Matilda's extravagant exterior, implies by the qualifier "seemingly" the need to reassess what appears self-evident.

⁵³Richardson, Wacousta 153.

⁵⁴Richardson, The Canadian Brother Vol. I, 58.

Reference to the east also suggests that Matilda possesses an element of exoticism, a strangeness that at once attracts and repels.⁵⁵ Matilda is foreign in so much that she is from another country; she is also unlike any woman that Gerald has ever known before. Her strangeness, her difference from other female characters, and her exotic sensuousness clearly identify her as other. When asked where she came by her knowledge of medicine, she replies ambiguously that she has lived "a charmed life."⁵⁶ This charmed life and her ability to exercise an Indian act of healing associate her with another Other, the indigenous female with her valuable knowledge of herbs.

The adjective "glossy"⁵⁷ pertains as much to Matilda's manner as it does to her hair. Outwardly she is smooth and polished, presenting an image of culture and refinement.

⁵⁵See Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Random House, 1978). Said suggests that literary texts have created and perpetuated the mythology that the Occidental is associated with rationality whereas the Orient is associated with maniacal irrationality. He identifies in western discourse the stereotype of the Eastern Other who is often characterized by defeat, distance, delight and danger. See also Terry Goldie, Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

⁵⁶Richardson, The Canadian Brother Vol. I, 220.

⁵⁷Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 220.

Inwardly she is filled with rage and hatred. Dark and impenetrable, she resists Gerald's attempts to penetrate the aura of mystery with which she consciously surrounds herself. Matilda is not to be penetrated or appropriated. "Glossy" is also a derivative of the noun, gloss, from the Greek glossa, meaning the tongue. As a noun, it refers to a translation inserted between the lines of a text. Throughout the narrative, Gerald tries to unearth the secret of the mound on which he first witnesses Matilda's aborted assassination attempt. The gloss that would clarify these events to him is held by Sambo, Gerald's life-long servant, and by Matilda, both of whom for different reasons, are reluctant to reveal the secret. The past is only unveiled toward the end when Matilda, dying, informs Gerald of his auxiliary role in the plot and of his connection to Ellen Halloway.

Gloss also serves as a verb, meaning to interpret falsely. Gerald consistently misinterprets Matilda's palimpsest messages and deceptive signals. His misconceptions are ironically linked to Matilda's exoticism. The east, with which she is associated, traditionally evokes the notion of life and renewal. As the direction in which the sun rises, it is the place of dawning light and righteousness. Contrary to Gerald's expectations, Matilda does not brighten his world, although ironically she does eventually expand his knowledge of it. She tempts Gerald to

abandon the code of morality and lofty ethics by which he has lived, and to adopt her own code of retribution. Her magical influence has a sinister effect on him. As a result, he ends his days in darkness and despair.

As a form of vestimentary communication,⁵⁸ Matilda's clothing functions as another deceptive sign of character. Despite the simplicity of her dress -- "plain white muslin"⁵⁹ and dark cloaks -- Matilda lacks the implicit innocence or youthfulness. She is always presented as womanly, never as girlish. Always composed and in total command of any situation, Matilda refuses to allow feeling or sentiment to interfere with her plans. Appearing simple and straightforward on the surface, she is a character of strange complexities. Her single-mindedness is suggested by Richardson's use of architectural imagery to describe her. He refers to marbles statues, to Praxiteles, to abstractions -- allusions which suggest that Matilda is cold and classically beautiful but lifeless: "eminently calculated to inspire passion, but seemingly incapable of feeling

⁵⁸Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1967) 26-27. Barthes identifies clothing as a system of communication: clothes as written about, clothes as photographed, and clothes as worn.

⁵⁹Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 57.

it."⁶⁰ This too is a delusion. It is a great passion that motivates Matilda from beginning to end. Unlike Ellen or Oucanasta who are largely connected to the natural world, Matilda moves between the world of nature and the world of art, with its suggestion of illusion, seduction and deceit.

Full of contradictions and inconsistencies, Matilda is most often referred to in terms of paradox and reversal. In many ways she is the inverted, abnormal image of Ellen Halloway, her foremother. Ellen represents feeling and emotion out of control, heart over head. Matilda appeals to human emotion, to eros, while at the same time she plots to destroy love. Ellen rejects completely her own community to enter an alien world of nature. Matilda utilizes the natural order for destructive purposes; it empowers her in the social world. Actually she has no true kinship with either social or natural world. Her covenant is solely with a pagan god of revenge. Ellen attempts redemption by calling on God and man to restore truth and justice to a fallen world, yet she fails and falters into madness. Matilda is a more radical and infinitely more dangerous version of the madwoman. Her madness is disguised by her competency, by an iron resolve not to falter or fail. She is guided by satanic principles rather than by any code of morality.

⁶⁰Richardson, The Canadian Brothers Vol. I, 58.

The desire that Ellen expresses is, in Wacousta, denied or suppressed, or at best, evidenced in the uneasy union between Madeline and Frederick. In The Canadian Brothers this desire emerges in the monstrous love that Gerald has for Matilda and the demonic desire that she has for vengeance. Ellen's repressed desire leads to a lack of resolution, an inability to re-enter human culture. Matilda's desire expressed exceeds the limits of human culture. Her actions, which displace humility and forgiveness, eventually place her outside its borders. Her behavior fails to conform with "normal" patterns agreed upon by a rational society.

Despite these differences, Richardson's Matilda and Ellen (as well as William Kirby's La Corriveau and Mère Malheur, and Gilbert Parker's Scarlet Lady) share a common struggle -- to inscribe the feminine into an otherwise exclusively male discourse. More so than these other magical women, Matilda manages to make woman the controlling subject of the text, and to achieve visibility in public places. These female figures also attempt to revise, reverse, foreground, to turn upside down scripts that either exclude or falsely represent them. Hence they contribute to the creation in these narratives of other scripts or subtexts which challenge the central narrative, the enumerated text.

Their stories occupy a middle ground, a place where woman generates enough energy to become active rather than

simply acted upon. Matilda, more than Ellen, through paradox and acts of inversion, resists the polarities or binary oppositions which traditionally constitute male narratives. Her refusal to accept Forrester's treatment, and her questioning of Gerald's suppositions indicate the existence of female narratives, stories previously untold. These stories which break to the surface of Richardson's dominant narratives, are part of the "symbolic illusive web"⁶¹ which connects all women to a body of knowledge silenced or covertly voiced in many nineteenth-century novels. To the question is there a woman's body in the text?⁶² Richardson's narrative replies that there is not one but many. Seduced by the fiction of romantic love and forced to adopt alternate personae, Ellen and Matilda both pay exacting prices for revolt -- madness and death. However, their tragic fates are preceded by spectacular

⁶¹See Nina Auerbach, "The Communal Eye," Communities of Women: an Idea in Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 3-33. Men are knit together by certain codes, rituals, shared loyalties, etc. that are usually explicit. Auerbach observes that women, too, are part of communities in which codes may be hidden or buried. Female power must consist of establishing and making visible female loyalties, rituals and shared experiences.

⁶²See Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Silverman suggests that "the body functions as an unconscious signifying network, as it works to disintegrate logic and thwart cognition" (61). See also Mary Jacobus, Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 83-110.

performances, moments when both women force their viewers to reassess the maze of deception that society has constructed.⁶³

Matilda's suicide is her final triumphant act of transgression for it violates acceptable religious, moral, and social codes. This unnatural act (suicide as taboo) enables her to weave her own destiny or moment of death, and is a continuation of her radical actions throughout the novel. As a symbolic gesture, it represents free will over determinism and, hence, it emphasizes Matilda's autonomous position as subject rather than object within her own narrative. Her death is hard and violent; she does not seek a traditional female form of suicide. This act of aggression implies a refusal to die passively for love, in self-surrender, or due to illness.

As a gesture, a suicidal act may function to affirm identity or to erase it. In The Canadian Brothers, it stamps or fixes Matilda's story permanently in the mind of the reader. Her action is also a political gesture for it is directly linked to power and the need for self-control. Only when Matilda has accomplished her goal does she choose

⁶³See Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978). Daly writes: "Within a culture possessed by the myth of feminine evil, the naming, describing, and theorizing about good and evil have constituted a maze/haze of deception. The journey of women becoming is breaking through this maze-springing into free space, which is an a-mazing process" (2).

to die. In demanding and exacting revenge, she rejects traditional female values such as self-abnegation, forgiveness, and humility. Instead, she defiantly assumes a firm stance against these female mythologies and refuses to surrender voluntarily to social forces. As Margaret Higonnet observes in her study of female suicide, "The only way for a woman to attain a stage of wholeness is to move beyond the body."⁶⁴ Such a radical shift involves the high cost of self-assertion. At the end of The Canadian Brothers, the Grantham brothers are dead and, with Matilda's radical intervention, Ellen's prophecy is finally fulfilled. Unlike in Wacousta, in The Canadian Brothers Richardson employs closure and a dysphoric plot, one that ends in death rather than marriage or synthesis.⁶⁵

Kirby's La Corriveau and Richardson's Matilda epitomize male anxiety regarding female agency. They are particularly

⁶⁴Margaret Higonnet, "Speaking Silences: Women's Suicide," The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 79.

⁶⁵See Rachel Blau Duplessis, Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). She suggests that in nineteenth-century fiction "the rightful end, of women in novels was social -- successful courtships, marriage -- or judgemental of her sexual and social failure -- death. These are both resolutions of romance" (1). See also Nancy Miller, The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

frightening for they refuse to conform to the nineteenth-century view of woman as a morally superior agent, as the angel in the house. Both women are demonic rather than angelic; they are also unfemininely aggressive, violent and destructive. They do not live to serve society or significant others; they simply serve themselves.

CHAPTER VI

**Spiritual Fortress Inviolate:
Falling into [W]holiness**

"This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin -- it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat."

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex

"The [spiritual] woman appears here to advantage, as the person capable of refining or ennobling the man who is in love with her."

Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women

"'Holy Virgin' was the title of harlot-priestesses of Ishtar, Asherah, or Aphrodite. The title didn't mean physical virginity; it meant simply 'unmarried.' The function of such 'holy virgins' was to dispense the Mother's grace through sexual worship; to heal; to prophesy; to perform sacred dances; to wait for the dead; and to become Brides of God."

Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's
Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets

"Mary and the Lady shared one common trait: they are the focal point of men's desires and aspirations."

Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater"

Whereas the sorceress seizes her pleasure by magical and subversive means, the female who functions as sacred space is seemingly stripped of her sexuality and denied desire. Barbara Walker suggests that because of man's inherent fear of female power -- which is often manifested by her materiality -- her body -- he is compelled to use two expedients to overcome his anxieties regarding female presence, namely disparagement and idealization.¹ These opposing strategies are evident in the manner in which nineteenth-century writers depict women in their fictions. In The Flesh Made Word Helena Michie notes a paradox regarding Victorian notions of the female body as literary construct.² She observes that in male texts women occupy uneasy, shifting spaces at the intersection of the body and its representation. At this juncture, they become metaphors for the unknowable even as they become fixed by convention or literary mimesis.

Once viewed as a period associated with repression, silence and prudery, the Victorian era has recently been reassessed by a number of critics as a transition period which led to a more open articulation of the sexual, and

¹Barbara G. Walker, "Virgin Birth," The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983) 1048-51.

²Helena Michie, The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

hence of the feminine.³ Nina Auerbach suggests that the period's preoccupation with images of woman as victim and queen, angel and demon tends to emphasize the female's underlying mythic and erotic power. In The History of Sexuality Michel Foucault theorizes that between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as attitudes toward sexuality became more restrictive, a single locus of sexuality emerged as it was forced to move out of the public (visible) sphere and into the home.⁴ Illicit relationships not sanctioned by society were expelled, silenced or forced to go underground. Restricted to the confines of the conjugal family, sex (and woman) was regulated; its purpose began to be perceived as utilitarian rather than pleasurable. Women who resisted this prohibition, who transgressed social codes regarding sexual behavior, became marked women. Their bodies, signs of danger and revolt, were at odds with the official ruling body. Denied any

³See Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964); Martin Meisel, Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983); Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); and Françoise Basch, Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

⁴Michel Foucault, trans. Robert Hurley The History of Sexuality, Vol. I (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

avenue of free or normal sexual expression, these female outlaws were either ritualistically excluded from society or transformed into an image that society felt it could comfortably accommodate.

In William Kirby's The Golden Dog (1877) and Gilbert Parker's The Seats of the Mighty (1896) paradoxically the transgressive woman, as well as the fallen woman, are represented as spiritual fortresses or sacred spaces. Although both writers attempt to erase the female's erotic powers and to depict her as inviolate, feminine desire erupts to collide with restrictive male notions of womanhood. Kirby and Parker inscribe the feminine at the same moment that they appear to disparage or idealize woman. Fearful that expressing her desire will endanger the life of Moray, her secret lover, Alixe Duvarney (The Seats of the Mighty) resorts to subterfuge and staged performances in order to bring down the seats of the mighty. Both Caroline De St. Castin in The Golden Dog and Matilde, the Scarlet Woman in The Seats of the Mighty, although banished to the outlands for their unfortunate erotic falls, ascend to new heights as, generating awe, they move from socially imposed postures of stasis and abasement to the pinnacles of apotheosis. Even though these women remain childless and exist outside legitimate social relationships, ironically in

their depictions, they represent divine maternity, holy womanhood.⁵

Caroline, though immobilized by her desires, eludes narrative definition. Kirby resorts to such labels as "belle Gabrielle," "Angel of Sorrow," "Blessed Madonna," "stranger," "Queen Vashti," "Venus Victrix," and "lost and found lady"⁶ in an attempt to fix her identity. As other, her only unchanged position is as Acadienne, child of a border people who themselves moved between marginality, neutrality and domination.⁷ Parker's Matilde, the Scarlet Woman, also defying fixation, eludes the repeated attempts by male characters to name or frame her. To the evil Doltaire, she is madwoman, lost angel, and virtue defiled. The anxiety which she generates is reflected in the refusal

⁵See Alan Richardson, "Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine," Romanticism and Feminism, ed. Anne Mellor (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988) for a discussion of how, in the movement from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, male writers drew on memories and fantasies of identification with the mother in order to colonize the conventionally feminine domain of sensibility. Richardson suggests that men began to reclaim feminine qualities in a number of ways: in memories associated with the mother's body; in a return to the mother as subject; in focusing on Mother Nature as a maternal and nurturing landscape; in evoking mythic female figures such as Diana who combined the maternal and the erotic; and in the use of the romantic emblem of a nursing mother.

⁶Kirby 66, 68, 226, 169, 72, 457, and 169.

⁷See Naomi Griffiths, The Acadians: Creation of a People (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1973).

by Bigot, the powerful Intendant, to even acknowledge her violently intrusive presence. Stripping her of her sexual identity, he deliberately mis-identifies her as a male opponent. In order to survive and subvert these repressive, destructive male powers, Alixe, Carolyn and Matilde retreat from the manipulative workings of the world of men and employ sanctity as a special female strategy. These female retreats are not to be viewed as female passivity. Revered as sanctuary, they are free to disrupt male politics that intend to render them victims. Unlike the simplified or stereotypical idealized woman who occupies much of nineteenth-century British fiction, these Canadian female characters function as deviant figures who startle and demand close scrutiny. Though appearing disembodied and dismembered, and occupying marginalized positions within the text, these women direct attention to the body as a privileged site of prophecy and feminine knowledge.

A significant number of feminist critics speculate that it was in the transition from the classical era to the Christian period that woman began to experience a loss of divinity, a diminution of her mythic powers.⁸ Unlike male-

⁸For a structuralist interpretation of the Christian construction of female character, see Mieke Bal, "Sexuality, Sin, and Sorrow: The Emergence of Female Character (A Reading of Genesis 1-3)," Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed., The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 317-337. See also Rosemary R. Ruether, ed., Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), and Elaine H. Pagels, "What

centered Christianity, pagan religions combined sexuality and maternity (one of the original sources of woman's power) for a more realistic depiction of femininity. Although the early church fathers attempted to obliterate all traces or tracks of the mythical mother and to appropriate her powers, the strength of her attraction is evident in the tenacious image of fertility embodied, although radically altered, in the Christian myth of the virgin birth. As a dismembered goddess, devoid of sexuality, the Virgin Mary functions as a protective force, an advocate and intermediary between God and man.⁹ Refusing to be suppressed, the Great Mother (i.e.

Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," The Signs Reader: Women, Gender and Scholarship, eds. Elizabeth Abel and Emily K. Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 97-107. Pagels suggests that the God of Israel would not share his power with a female divinity. She suggests this absence of feminine symbolism of God distinguishes Judaism, Christianity and Islam in contrast to the world's other religious traditions. Recently discovered gospels (Gospel of Thomas, Secret Book of John, Gospel to the Hebrews, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Mary Magdalene and Wisdom of Faith), secret gnostic texts which challenge the orthodox Christian community, suggest a different pattern of sexual attitudes. They present a description of God in both masculine and feminine terms. Traditional Christian texts, authorized by the Church, suppress the feminine goddess, a Divine Mother initially characterized by eternality, mystical silence, the holy spirit, and wisdom.

⁹See Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," Suleiman, ed., The Female Body in Western Culture 99-118, and "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini," Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) 237-270. For a re-examination of the Virgin Mary, see Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Cult of the Virgin Mary (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), and Mary Daly, Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). For a

the holy virgin of Ishtar) resurfaces in the image of Mary to illustrate man's contradictory need to both separate and reunite with the feminine. Walker and others suggest that humanity's inner and uncontrollable demand for a mother is reflected in a religious history that indicates a recurring tendency (that defies determined suppression) to worship a mother goddess.¹⁰

As Simone de Beauvoir astutely notes, however, the Virgin Mary is simply the inverse aspect of Eve, the temptress -- Christianity's first wilful, fallen woman, and mother to the human race.¹¹ Whereas Mary is the mediatrix of man's salvation, Eve is his damnation. Mary accepts the reclusive space of the sanctuary; Eve, transgressing, exits

nineteenth-century analysis, see Anna Jameson, The Legend of the Madonna (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1867). This is one of the earliest and most comprehensive studies of the Virgin Mary as she is represented in the fine arts. The introduction traces the origin and history of the effigies of the Madonna.

¹⁰See Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia. Walker writes "The impossible virgin mother was everyman's longed-for resolution of Oedipal conflicts: pure maternity, never distracted from her devotion by sexual desires" (1050). In "Stabat Mater," Kristeva suggests "the representation of virgin motherhood seems to have crowned society's efforts to reconcile survivals of matrilinearity and the unconscious needs of primary narcissism ... with ... the nascent exchange economy and ... of accelerated production, which required the addition of the superego and relied on the father's symbolic authority" (115).

¹¹Simone de Beauvoir, trans. H.M. Parshley The Second Sex (1949; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1974) 159-185.

from the garden that would contain her and creates a wilderness around her. One woman is venerated, the other is desecrated. While Mary remains forever inaccessible, Eve is freely entered, defiled, violated. Several critics have observed the overpowering presence in nineteenth-century fiction of Eve's daughters, those unruly feminine characters in need of discipline. Auerbach describes these fallen women as "mute, enigmatic icons,"¹² defiant figures exiled, ostracized, cast out from the female's conventional family-bound existence. Auerbach views woman's erotic fall and exclusion in terms of a paradox: only by falling out of favour could the heroine discover a realistic space in which to function and grow. Her separation from a dominant and often intolerant community provides her with the means to achieve knowledge, power and transformation. Despite the fact that she is often presented pictorially as a prone, static figure, she does, in the act of falling, create the conditions which permit mobility and metamorphosis. Unable to re-enter traditional female circles because of a communal fear of contagion,, she is free to construct alternate positions, and to adopt varying postures. While the angelic, law-abiding woman is confined to the house, to a private domestic sphere, the fallen woman can initiate

¹²Auerbach, Woman and the Demon 155.

journeys, form new and unusual alliances, cross boundaries, enter dangerous, uncharted territory.

In Charles G.D. Roberts' The Heart of the Ancient Wood (1900), scarlet woman Kirstie Craig creates her own sacred space following her stoic flight from a restrictive community. With singular ceremony, she enters a world where silence becomes equated with [w]holiness and unlimited possibilities. In contrast to masculine characters like Richardson's De Haldimar and Galt's Bogle Corbet, who are intimidated by silence, transgressive feminine characters in Canadian fiction actively and fearlessly seek solace in the voluminous wilderness.¹³ Kirstie, whose self-imposed exile connects her to Hawthorne's Hester Prynne¹⁴ fears the evil tongues of the Settlement much more than the unbroken

¹³There is a long tradition in Canadian literature of women who embrace the wilderness. It extends from the early writings of Catharine Parr Traill and Anna Jameson to Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, Margaret Atwood and Aritha van Herk. The female's journeys are both literal and imaginative. In Ethel Wilson's Swamp Angel (1954) Maggie Vardoe journeys into the interior of British Columbia to escape the nightly humiliations of an unhappy marriage. There she contributes to the development of an alternate community. She becomes a savior figure to the Gunnarsens, as she helps them heal the rift in their marriage, a rift caused by Haldar Gunnarsen's physical disability and Vera Gunnarsen's frustrations and jealousies. As a typical Canadian character, Maggie functions as cartographer, mid-wife, mediatrix, redemptrix, ex-centric, and diviner. She is empowered by the ancestral wisdom conveyed to her by Nell Severance, an extra-ordinary magic woman.

¹⁴See Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter: A Romance (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850).

silence of the ancient wood. Like Hawthorne, Roberts describes his female protagonist in lofty terms: she enters the green woods at the head of a small procession. Clinging to her hand is five-year-old Miranda, her elfin daughter. Kirstie Craig is depicted as "tall, erect, strong-stepping, long-limbed." She wears a "vivid scarlet kerchief tied over her head."¹⁵ Her flight into exile is the result of the community's harsh judgement of her. The Settlement views her as "a freak of a mad woman."¹⁶ Like Hester, Kirstie too is associated with nature, free-will, independence, strength, and competency. The seven-year gap which marks Kirstie's mysterious husband's disappearance corresponds to the seven-year period covering the narrative of The Scarlet Letter. The fairy-tale motif in The Heart of the Ancient Wood is also present in Hawthorne's narrative as a subtext.

A woman of few words, Kirstie's inner silence merges with the stillness of her remote forest home. Within the protective circle of the green world, she and her daughter Miranda begin to construct a new life, free from the destructive influence of the outside. Annis Pratt examines the images of desire for authentic selfhood found in the woman's bildungsroman: "These images so often involve a

¹⁵Charles G.D. Roberts, In The Heart of the Ancient Wood (New York: Lippincott, 1900) 30.

¹⁶Roberts 32.

special world of nature that they describe a green-world archetype, and the figure of Eros who inhabits this world we have correspondingly identified as the green-world lover."¹⁷ The three feminine archetypes that Pratt perceives in women's writings, the green world, the rape-trauma, and growing-up-grotesque, are also evident in Roberts' The Heart of the Ancient Wood, a novel which focuses on young Miranda's female development from child to adulthood. Ironically it takes a fall from grace (a marriage to a mysterious stranger who disappears), for Kirstie and her daughter to discover a happier existence and a more humane fellowship with the furtive kin of the forest.

Their arrival in the wilderness is prepared for by Dave Titus, a neutral and indifferent lumberman who seems, like his son, young Dave, poised tenuously between the ruin in the Settlement and the revelation which unfolds later in the forest. Likewise, Miranda's subsequent return to the Settlement is heralded by her green world lover, the lumberman's son. However, before young Dave can serve as an appropriate suitor for Kirstie's strange daughter, he must separate himself from the destructive world of man. He

¹⁷See Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982) 16.

travels to a wild northern region where "his mind grow[s] large, and quiet, and tolerant among the solitudes."¹⁸

In The Heart of the Ancient Wood (1900) Roberts presents the civilized world from the unaccustomed perspective of the outcast and the alien inhabitants of the forest. Here, so-called social man is the intrusive and dangerous element whereas the animal must needs be ever watchful. The description of the forest in the opening chapters relates the inhabitants of the natural world to the feminine. Aware of man's intrusive presence, the animals are silent, prudent, reticent, and self-effacing. These are all characteristics traditionally associated with the female in the nineteenth century. However here they are presented as survival strategies. Into this cautious, watchful world comes Kirstie and her daughter. There, the wilderness transforms them, and erases the sorrowful lines etched in Kirstie's face because of her contact with the Settlement. The woods prove to be a place of escape as well as a dynamic site of healing and restoration.¹⁹ For Miranda it becomes

¹⁸Roberts 132.

¹⁹See Beauvoir, The Second Sex. Examining passages from the works of several women writers like Colette and Mary Webb, Beauvoir suggests that the natural world of fields and woods provides the adolescent girl with a splendid refuge: "she finds in the secret places of the forest a reflection of the solitude of her soul and in the wide horizons of the plains a tangible image of her transcendence; she is herself this limitless territory, this summit flung up toward heaven; she can follow these roads that lead toward the unknown future..." (341).

much more -- a special place of initiation. Her mysterious gift of communication allows her to establish a "puzzling kinship"²⁰ with the voiceless inhabitants of the natural world. Her dress having been buried, the only remaining sign that connects her with the outside world is the scarlet ribbon she continues to wear. This color is a trace of Miranda's relation to Kirstie, who entered the forest wearing a scarlet kerchief.

While she possesses her mother's courage and independence, Miranda also has a special power that enables her to explore the wilderness without fear of peril. Simply by the strange power of her gaze, she is able to subdue and divert attack by ferocious animals. Having been educated solely by her mother, Miranda learns to trust her own perceptions, to rely on "eyes that see everything and cannot

²⁰In Archetypal Patterns Pratt observes that a "kinship between woodswomen, Indians, and nature's magical powers occurs frequently" (18) in women's fictions. In "Affairs with Bears: Some Notes Towards Feminist Archetypal Hypotheses for Canadian Literature," Gynocritics/La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoise Women, ed. Barbara Godard (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987) 157-178, Pratt identifies the female's immanent approach to nature as "a kind of animistic reciprocity between being of woman and being of rock, tree, and beast" (162). Roberts' youthful female protagonist possesses this "puzzling kinship" (47) with her animal friends.

be deceived."²¹ She is perhaps the youngest of a long line of female seers in Canadian fiction. Vision or insight rather than prophecy is her forte. The curious instability of her vanished father seems to have left no lasting imprint on Miranda. His absence, neither missed nor mourned by the child, is amply filled by Kirstie and, later, by Kroof, a mother bear who nurtures and instructs the young girl during her lengthy stay in the forest.²² It is Kroof that provides Miranda with a more intimate knowledge of the forest. She teaches the child that "the very price of life itself was the ceaseless extinguishing of life."²³ This revelation of the destructive side of nature (Miranda witnesses a scene of blood and violence when Kroof kills and eats, in front of her, a freshly slain hare) is also related to the scarlet color Miranda exhibits. Initially before she reviews the brutality of life, the ribbon symbolizes "an ineradicable

²¹Roberts 37. This gift of fascination links her to the magical women of Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power."

²²See Annis Pratt, "Affairs with Bears." Pratt suggests bears may often replace men as green-world lovers. They appear as alternatives "to societally acceptable suitors, husbands, and lovers" (173). I suggest that in The Heart of the Ancient Wood Kroof functions as a maternal rather than an erotic figure for Miranda.

²³Roberts 124.

ineradicable strangeness of spirit"²⁴ but following this encounter, it signifies a link between community and wilderness. The boundaries separating them are beginning to blur.

Under the protective eyes of her medial guides, Kirstie and Kroof (mother and pseudo-mother), Miranda's coming of age takes place. Whereas Kirstie deliberately separates her daughter from the hostile world of the Settlement, Kroof provides her with a sortie or entry into an equally alien space and eventually guides her back to the Settlement. This freedom to explore dangerous places endows Miranda with an altered and more expansive perspective. Her perception parallels that of the animal world. It allows her to see what others cannot, and it distances her from the dangers in the woods. Having experienced both worlds, the civilized and the natural, Miranda comes to occupy a privileged middle site. She learns to focalize, to adjust, so that her view converges, as near as possible, with that of man and animal. She watches and records, she functions as spectator and participant, but never consents to become spectacle or performance under the controlling or fixing gaze of others.

As Miranda grows freely into womanhood, the locus of the woods widens to accommodate intrusive agents from the outside, forces which eventually lead to her return to the

²⁴Roberts 148.

world of men. One such agent is young Dave, the catalyst which creates the reaggregation between mother and daughter and community. Before Miranda will accept the young man from the outside as a husband, a certain taboo must be violated. When Kirstie took up residence in the woods, she adopted, for herself and her daughter, a vegetarian diet. As Miranda begins to oppose Dave's expressions of love for her, Kirstie's health begins to decline. It is restored only when, without the knowledge or consent of the women, Dave accidentally shoots Kroof's cub while attempting to procure meat for Kirstie. Angered by her loss, Kroof attacks Dave and Miranda is forced to shoot the bear in order to save her lover's life. These related acts symbolically conclude Kirstie and Miranda's period of exclusion from the community and enable them to return on a different basis. Distressed by the death of Kroof and her cub, Dave abandons hunting and trapping. Miranda, finally humanized, is unable to "go back to her mystic and uncanny wildness."²⁵

Roberts' text does not reinforce Atwood's notion of woman as passive victim, or nature as holy terror. Away from the destructive influence of the community, Kirstie and Miranda, with Kroof's assistance, create an alternate female community based on strength, strangeness and respect for man

²⁵Roberts 256.

and beast. Man is permitted entry into this select and reclusive community but only on feminine terms. With ease, both Dave and his father adjust to accommodate the diversity which they encounter in the woods. Here nature and woman are foregrounded and man, if he fails to respect the rules of the forest, is banished. Because Dave and his father are both betwixt and between community and wilderness, they have no difficulty accepting the strangeness of feminine space. Roberts describes Dave Titus as "neither quite of the forest nor quite of the open."²⁶ When his son meets Miranda after she has grown into womanhood, he tries to explain to her his relationship with the natural world: "... it's the only kind of life I can live -- 'way in the woods, with the shadows, an' the silence, an' the trees, an' the sky, an' the clean smells, an' the whispers you can't never understand."²⁷ When journeying through the forest becomes perilous to the men due to the presence of timber wolves, Old Dave is given "magic merchandise,"²⁸ a token from Miranda that allows him untroubled entry. Likewise, when two surly, mutinous lumbermen seek out Kirstie's cottage with harmful intent, their beastly behavior is punished by

²⁶Roberts 4.

²⁷Roberts 160.

²⁸Roberts 129.

Kroof. They are driven from the woods, too terrified ever to return.

The Heart of the Ancient Wood celebrates rather than negates the feminine; the title of the text itself suggests a return to the Great Mother, and the primacy of intuitive knowledge. When characters enter, and learn to rely on the darkness, the wilderness has much to teach them. The "crimson-fireweed"²⁹ which Miranda presents to Kirstie as a gift when they first arrive in the forest acts to seal the covenant they have re-established with the lost mother. This process of renaturalization reminds them of the inappropriateness of worshipping false idols. To Kirstie, Frank Craig "seemed little less than a god"³⁰. Miranda absorbs the mystery of her mother and the instincts of the animals she befriends. Both women acquire new knowledge of themselves as well as a new awareness of the woods. This knowledge empowers both women within the wilderness and promises to sustain them in their eventual return to the outside world.

In The Seats of the Mighty, as in many other nineteenth-century Canadian fictions (i.e. Richardson's Wacousta and The Canadian Brothers), Gilbert Parker also

²⁹Roberts 34.

³⁰Roberts 42.

neglects to sustain the image of the potent father. Many of the self-assumed authority figures are rendered impotent, stripped of power by the subtle actions of subversive women.³¹ Parker's dramatis personae consists of a significant number of powerful women: Madame La Pompadour (Antoinette Poisson) who rose from humble origin to become mistress to Louis XV of France; Madame Cournal who influences the powerful Intendant Bigot in New France; Mère St. George, Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent; Madame Duvarney (Alixé's mother) a woman of courage, who spars verbally with Doltaire; Alixé Duvarney who plays dangerous, flirtatious games with Doltaire in order to gain access to Robert, her lover; and Babette, the peasant woman who, while maintaining an appearance of neutrality, assists Robert in his flight from the French authorities.

The sacred as well as profane presence of the female undermines the kingdom of the male. In Parker's fictional world, women instigate revolution, manipulate powerful monarchs and band together to affect change within the dominant order. Misused by powerful French officials in New France, Matilde, Parker's Scarlet Woman, has no loyalty to the corrupt government. Her acts of treason suggest that her sympathies lie, not so much with the scarlet body of

³¹Gilbert Parker, The Seats of the Mighty (1896; rpt. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1902).

British power, as with Alixe Duvarney and any other individual wronged by destructive systems. When Moray is thrown into prison, Matilde shelters Alixe within her magical circle of madness where she is mysteriously protected from the evil Doltaire who relentlessly pursues her. It is Matilde's own strangeness that enables her to move unmolested through the flaring violence of Quebec streets. Because she is female, a peasant girl, and a madwoman as well, her presence appears irritating to Bigot the French Intendant, but not especially threatening. Under the guise of holy woman, she reappropriates the power denied her by the court where as a young girl her innocence had been corrupted.

Like her kindred spirit, Alixe, whose innocence is also threatened, Matilde functions as an agent of reversal and disruption. Refusing to be silenced by men in power, she resorts to the use of non-official languages to express truths not sanctioned by Bigot and his aides. Her prophetic discourse is mysteriously subversive: she speaks in riddles (sibylline utterances), parables (messianic and oracular), and prophecies, and quotes biblical scriptures to lend her discourse authority. When Moray meets her on his way as a prisoner to the Intendant's palace, Matilde is chanting in the shadows of a building. Her voice overlaps with the pealing of bells, the shouting of the people and the singing of the liturgy from within the Church of the Recollects:

"That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us.... That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear.... To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the ways of peace."³²

As Moray addresses her, Matilde shifts from biblical text to parable:

"There were two lovers in the world ... the Mother of God forgot them and the devil came. I am the Scarlet Woman ... I made this red robe from the curtains of Hell --.'"³³ Then momentarily recognizing a fellow-prisoner, she issues a warning and a prophecy to Moray: "they will not kill you: they will keep you till the ring of fire grows in your head, and then you will make your scarlet robe, and go out, but you will never find It -- never. God hid first, and then It hides.... It hides, that which you lost -- It hides, and you can not find It again."³⁴

The style of her utterances which are, in fact, simply dynamic exaggerations of the fearful mutterings of an intimidated populace, is marked by repetition, fractured syntax, ellipsis, metaphor and obliquity.

³²Parker 29.

³³Parker 30.

³⁴Parker.

Having transformed shame into sanctity, Matilde functions as a medial figure as she moves between Alixe and the world of the men at court. She uses her hard-gained knowledge secretly as well as overtly to challenge and rebuke corrupt officials. Serving as a public conscience, she informs the populace and exposes corrupt political leaders. In her open confrontations and her explicit attacks on Bigot, she identifies evil as existing within the walls of the city. She strips away, however fleetingly, the pretentious masks these men wear and she names what lurks beneath the surface of wealthy gentility. As a prophetic figure, she points to the future, while exposing the myths of the past and the reality of the present. Possessing inexplicable powers, she distributes talismans to those in need of protection.

A highly complex and powerful figure, Matilde, as lawless agent and visionary, exemplifies the life-blood of nationhood. Her presence emphasizes the need for insight and vigilance during the dark days when Quebec was under seige. The short-sightedness of others, indicated by their refusal to acknowledge or heed her portentous warnings, leads to chaos and destruction. As Quebec burns and British troops march inside its walls to claim it for the English, Moray leaves the fallen city to find Alixe. He journeys through the crimson landscape (behind him flares the fires of the city, ahead there is the brilliant red of the

autumnal maples) to the giant stones of the Valdoche Hills, where "Mighty Men"³⁵ and mighty women remain standing. This is the site of Tall Calvary, Matilde's place of refuge outside the city. Moray suggests this spot is associated with "the fabled ancestors of the Indian races of the land."³⁶ Within this sacred place, Moray finds Alixe, whom Matilde has concealed safely in a cave. The last image with which Moray concludes his narrative is that of Matilde's scarlet figure "winding in and out among the giant stones"³⁷ distributing wooden crosses. In this final scene Parker deliberately associates women with organic time (eternity) as well as with a significant historical moment.

Under the watchful gaze of Matilde, the old order is destroyed by forces within as much as by the British intruders. Abandoned in its hour of need by the mother country and betrayed by its own leaders, Quebec society must begin to rebuild. As imaged in the small circle of characters gathered at the Tall Calvary outside the city, the community which will emerge from the rubble will not be unified and cohesive: it must necessarily, given the players, be fractured, discontinuous and mosaic, a

³⁵Parker 375.

³⁶Parker.

³⁷Parker.

combination of English, Scottish, French and Indian. The intervention and assistance provided by secondary female characters often contribute significantly to the genesis of community as it emerges at the end of many nineteenth-century novels. The movements of female characters in Wacousta ultimately lead to a notion of community based on openness and diversity. The unions contracted in the novels of Rosanna Leprohon reflect the wedding of characters possessing different cultural backgrounds. The same holds true in Catharine Parr Traill's Canadian Crusoes.³⁸ Like its inhabitants whose origins are diffuse, the new community will not identify its genesis through one continuous link to the past but through diverse traces of those who contribute to its continual existence.

Matilde's contribution to community is imaged in the various positions she assumes as well as in her language. Having been once locked up by Eigot, she wisely guards her identity in order to avoid recapture. Instead of exhibiting fear or passive humility, she perversely uses male disparagement (she is a fallen woman) to command attention

³⁸See Jessie Bernard, The Female World (New York: The Free Press, 1981). Bernard characterizes the female world as essentially kin and locale-based, performing an integrating function. Culturally it is characterized by its love and/or duty ethos, a world which emphasises humanitarianism. Bernard observes that some sociologists view the female world "as analogous to ethnic groups" (23). The female shares, with the member of any ethnic group, characteristic cultures, customs, traditions, and mores.

and assume an authority denied her by society. Her red gown, a symbol of sedition and a sign of feminine defiance, is fraught with multiple resonances. It connotes illegitimate female desire, the shame which accompanied her defilement, the barely repressed anger of the peasants who revolt against Bigot's misuse of power, the threat of British conquest, and the apocalyptic fires which burn at the beginning and end of the narrative. Matilde's scarlet gown also signifies her connection to, rather than a separation from, those other reckless women who abandon morality and lose respect. In a dramatic night-scene in the streets, this connection is affirmed. Following his escape from prison, Moray watches as Matilde weaves her way through the fires burning in the streets. Coming upon a circle of revelling soldiers and young women, Matilde

took an iron crucifix which hung upon her breast and silently lifted it above their heads for a moment ... her wild beauty was almost tragic. Her madness was not grotesque, but solemn and dramatic. There was something terribly deliberate in her strangeness.³⁹

As she leaves the subdued group, she gives each person a tiny wooden cross, while whispering "stray phrases gathered from the liturgy, pregnant to her brain, order and truth

³⁹Parker 304-05.

flashing out of wandering and fantasy."⁴⁰ Such scenes as this lead the populace to revere her: "it was said that her red robe never became frayed, shabby, or disordered."⁴¹ Hence as a scarlet figure, she occupies shifting spaces as she mysteriously appears and disappears.

Matilde carefully stages her dramatic appearances to draw attention to her autonomy. She makes her first appearance against the backdrop of a sky red with fire. As the peasants burn the granaries and the cathedral bell tolls in the distance, Matilde appears on the Heights above the group and addresses the tyrant Bigot who is responsible for their continuous misery and oppression. Standing prophetically on a rocky crag with her hair hanging free, she directly accuses Bigot of lying to the populace. Her accusation disturbs him as he is forced to witness her ability to command the attention of the angry crowd. As she disappears, she issues a warning to the people to be wary of one whom God has cast out: "'François Bigot is a liar and a traitor! Beware of François Bigot! God has cast him out.'"⁴²

⁴⁰Parker.

⁴¹Parker.

⁴²Parker 19.

In this scene, the effects of Matilde's impressive performance are not restricted to the incitement of the peasants or the disruption of Bigot's contemptuous address. Much later, Doltaire who was a silent witness to her explosive scene, sketches a portrait of Alixe displaying a "look which comes to women bitterly wise in the ways of this world."⁴³ As Moray looks at the portrait, he observes with mounting apprehension "that the whole painting had a red glow: the dress was red, the light falling on the hair was red, the shine of the eyes was red also."⁴⁴ The impression of color which Doltaire gives to the portrait is obviously evoked by his memory of "that lady-bug Matilde"⁴⁵ as she stood outlined by the fire of the granaries. As Alixe enters into an association with the revolutionary Matilde, she becomes like her protector, a dangerous and insidious force. Her liaison with Moray, a British spy imprisoned by the French for treason, likewise places her in perilous positions.

Matilde's next dramatic appearance involves even more risk. When Moray's trial for treason is being conducted in an open courtyard of the Château, the site of Matilde's

⁴³Parker 142.

⁴⁴Parker.

⁴⁵Parker 143.

defilement or erotic fall, she fearlessly and defiantly disrupts the court proceedings. Through the silence which follows the governor's sentencing of Moray to death, a voice shatters the stillness. Standing in the shadows of a balcony she reverses the sentencing: "Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! He is guilty, and shall die! François Bigot shall die!"⁴⁶ Her emphatic judgement, which later proves prophetic, again shifts the focus of attention from Moray to the true enemy -- a corrupt Intendant at court. Unable to accept the power of this female presence, Bigot identifies the intruder as male and the Governor, in agreement, claims it must be "some drunken creature."⁴⁷

Whether Matilde's madness is real or feint, it provides her with a political power that enables her to openly defy established authority and to assist others who are unable or unwilling to commit such acts of extravagance. Having escaped the prison-house of the Château, she uses her madness to achieve and maintain mobility as she moves unobstructed in and out of prohibited places. She selects her own moments of entry and exit; reveals and conceals her presence by shadows, dark cloaks and veiled threats. She uses her dramatic entries and exits to create maximum

⁴⁶Parker 101.

⁴⁷Parker.

effect; her postures or stances divert attention from powerful figures when it suits her purpose to command the populace; at other times she focuses close attention on the same powerful figures. As Moray stands before the court without counsel or witnesses and is sentenced to death for an act of espionage, Matilde disrupts the proceedings and reverses the sentencing: "Presently out of the stillness the Governor's voice was heard condemning me to death by hanging, thirty days hence at sunrise. Silence fell again instantly, and then a thing occurred which sent a thrill through us all. From the dark balcony above us came a voice, weird, high, and wailing."⁴⁸ Matilde over-rides the verdict and announces instead the guilt of the Intendant. As this act of intervention shows, she can, at will, centre or decentre public attention. Her unregulated and secretive movements undermine Bigot's authority. While he can seemingly command the orderly ranks of soldiers and quiet the unrest of the peasants, he cannot quell one solitary, fallen woman. Rejecting the shame implied by Bigot's disparagement of her, Matilde manipulates the masculine label of shame so that she comes to represent instead sanctity, privilege and female authority.

Choosing to occupy commanding positions of elevation, she, on several occasions, inverts traditional male

⁴⁸Parker 101.

symbolism. She is neither lady confined to a tower, nor maiden who awaits her lover. The balcony and the rocky crag emphasize her moral integrity and spiritual transcendence. Through spatial imagery, she is presented as woman triumphant. As a peripheral figure, she uses her expulsion as an instrument to work against a masculine world that seeks to silence her. Matilde acts as a militant redemptrix infiltrating the market-place to infuse others with her mysteries. Having been violated and then discarded by powerful men, she actively recreates another identity, while perversely hiding behind an image imposed on her by society. However, Matilde's assumed role as savior does entail some loss of self; it necessitates renunciation, not of the world but of feminine desire. In order to be a participant in the momentous drama unfolding in New France, she must negate sexuality and embrace inaccessibility.⁴⁹

⁴⁹See Patricia Jewell McAlexander, "The Creation of the American Eve: The Cultural Dialogue on the Nature and Role of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century America," Early American Literature 9.3 (Winter 1975): 252-266 for a discussion of the transition in the perception of women as sexual, self-sufficient and active partners to pure, pious, domesticated and venerated figures. Despite an intense cultural debate regarding woman's proper role, which ranged from a conservative to a radical perspective, ultimately the conservative strain in American thought came to define the proper female role. What emerged was, according to McAlexander, the cult of the ideal woman, an inspiring though restrained American Eve.

In William Kirby's The Golden Dog Caroline De St. Castin exemplifies the penalty exacted for female desire.⁵⁰ Unlike Matilde who is reclaimed and empowered following her erotic fall, Caroline achieves transcendence through exclusion and eventually through death. Cloistered within a secret chamber of the château Beaumanoir, she is depicted by Kirby as a sorrowing Madonna or chaste retreat. This tendency to sanctify women who contract unauthorized relationships with powerful men is epitomized in the allusion to Louise de la Vallière, the mistress of Louis XIV. Kirby refers to her portrait which "may still be seen in the Chapel of the Ursulines of Quebec, where the fair Louise is represented as Ste. Thais kneeling at prayer among the nuns."⁵¹ Despite her clandestine and unsanctioned affair with the Intendant Bigot, Caroline occupies a privileged site within the text. In his valorization of Caroline, by associating her with other royal courtesans, Kirby emphasizes the abuse of male power, but also the

⁵⁰William Kirby, The Golden Dog: A Romance of Old Quebec (1877; rpt. Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1925). I have chosen to use the Toronto: Musson Book, 1925 edition which consists of 55 chapters rather than the abridged edition published by McClelland and Stewart, 1969 which consists of 47 chapters.

⁵¹Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets 989-90. Thais was the famous harlot and legendary Alexandrian courtesan supposed to have been converted to Christianity.

prominent positions occupied by women in the past. With her physical presence and the sexuality associated with the female body both negated, Kirby represents Caroline as a fallen angel concealed inside a desecrated house. Venerated, however, even by those who know of her affair with Bigot, Caroline's revered presence evokes the spiritual mother who continues to exist within the heart of the besieged city.

Despite this privileged representation, Caroline simultaneously occupies the position of other and outcast. As ex-centric she differs radically from other central characters in a number of ways: she is an Acadienne daughter of a mixed marriage between a French father and an Indian mother; to Angélique des Meloises who fights to secure a promise of marriage from Bigot, Caroline is the other woman; to Bigot's male acquaintances, she is the mysterious lady of the forest and his beautiful courtesan; to Bigot, she is exotic, alien and desired because of her strangeness. Raised in a natural environment that in no way prepares her for dealings with powerful men and women at court, she is seen only in relation to significant others. Without an appropriate medial figure to guide her, Caroline becomes a victim of the fatal attraction between the sexes. Like Richardson's Ellen in Wacousta, Caroline's story is partially told by others. She exists in the rumors which circulate through the city and in the gossip at court.

Angélique des Meloises narrates the story of this lost and found child of the forest as if it were a fairy tale and Caroline were an enchanted heroine.⁵² A tribe of Indians hunting with Bigot in the forest of Beaumanoir accidentally come across a young woman asleep under a tree. With a kiss Bigot awakens her and leads her to his château. And so Caroline moves from fairytale to legend.

Kirby begins his narrative by recalling some of the great and powerful women associated with the French regime: Madeline de Verchères, Marie de l'Incarnation and her Ursuline sisters of Quebec, Louise de la Vallière, La Corriveau, and Madame de Pompadour. Then mythical, biblical and literary women enter the litany: Queen Vashti, Venus Victrix, Heloise, the Virgin Mary, Diana, Leonardo's Madonnas, and Rosetti's blessed damozel. Infiltrated by these feminine ancestral shades, the narrative is structured around the lives of several unusual women. Amélie de Repentigny represents the cloister and the beauty of the natural world. This motherless young woman is educated at

⁵²The legend "Caroline, or the Algonquin Maid," by Amédée Papineau is included in J.M. LeMoine's Picturesque Quebec: A Sequel to Quebec Past and Present (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1882) 473-475. Joseph D'Baron de St. Castin was reputed to be a powerful Abenaki chief, the son of Jean Vincent and Pidianske, an Abenaki woman. The Abenakis were a loose alliance of tribes in Maine and New Brunswick. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were allies of the French. The baron's Indian mother, Pidianske, was baptized and renamed Marie-Matilde.

the Ursuline convent and protected by her guardian aunt, the rich and powerful feudal Lady Tilley. When Amélie's betrothed's father is killed by her reckless brother, Amélie enters a convent where she eventually dies sorrowing.⁵³ Angélique des Meloises, Amélie's schoolmate, is associated with the secular space of the besieged city and the political intrigues at a corrupt court. She fails to marry Bigot when he suspects her of arranging Caroline's murder. Instead he promises her in marriage to his associate, De Pean. Angélique marries and outlives her husband while simultaneously becoming the recognized mistress of Bigot during the rest of his stay in New France.⁵⁴ The most enigmatic character is Caroline De St. Castin whose life and death remain the unsolved riddles of the text. The mystery surrounding her disappearance contributes to the transformation of Caroline into legend. Moving between the shadowy forest and the subterranean reaches of the château is the sinister La Corriveau, Angélique's intrusive agent of

⁵³History records a similar story of a Madeleine de Repentigny who in 1719 lit a flame in the Ursuline chapel in Quebec. This flame still burns there. See Marie-Emmanuel Chabot, "Marie-Jeanne-Madeline Legardeur De Repentigny," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) Vol. II, 385.

⁵⁴LeMoine, Picturesque Quebec also mentions this inamorato of the Intendant (34).

death.⁵⁵ These four central characters who eclipse the presence of politically powerful men are all based loosely on historical women who lived in New France prior to the English conquest. Their abilities, individually or collectively, to undermine authority, recall the prominent positions real women occupied in French Canada and the contributions they made to Canadian society and letters.⁵⁶

Initially Caroline is characterized by absence. She is hidden within a secret chamber and her identity is carefully guarded. Only Bigot and an aging housekeeper, Dame Tremblay, have access to Caroline's rooms which are reached by way of a secret panel concealed in the wall of the drawing room. Her elusive presence is indicated in the whispered gossip that eventually reaches the ears of Angélique, whose name belies her character. When Caroline's

⁵⁵La Corriveau is dealt with in Chapter V "Magic Women and Female Power" as both an historical as well as a fictitious figure.

⁵⁶See Veronica Strong-Boag, "Cousin Cinderella," Women in Canada, ed. Marylee Stephenson (Toronto: New Press, 1973) "The heroic and socially respected role of the religious woman and emphasis on la survivance has ensured that the historical record of French-Canadian women has been better kept than that of their [English-Canadian] counterparts" (263). See also Quebec Women A History, eds. Micheline Dumont, et al., trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987), particularly "The Heroic Period" and "Unsung Heroines" 17-51, and Canadian Women: A History, eds. Alison Prentice et. al. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1988), "French Women in the New World" 41-64.

presence within Bigot's house is finally confirmed, Angélique is forced to take drastic measures to erase one who, although invisible and silent, poses an obstacle to her royal ambitions.

Victimized by both Bigot and destructive women like Angélique and La Corriveau, Caroline becomes a bound figure. Forced to flee from her father's home because of her act of transgression, she seeks refuge with Bigot which eventually becomes the site of her destruction. Like Acadia, the province he conquered and lost, Caroline is seduced and ultimately betrayed by a man who is equally uncommitted to either country or woman. Caroline's lack of power is evident in a restricted discourse that is not heard outside the walls of her secret rooms. Resorting to continuous weeping and praying, she passively assumes a posture of abjection dictated by a morally restrictive world. Invariably she is imaged in prone positions: kneeling; prostrate; keeping cruel vigils throughout the night; eventually laying "like a dead angel slain in God's battle."⁵⁷ When she speaks with Bigot, she is questioning, resigned, appealing and repetit'ive. She uses short fractured sentences uttered in a low plaintive tone. Her complete isolation from family and friends, symbolized by the romantic aeolian harp which she plays, renders her even

⁵⁷Kirby 423.

more vulnerable to the insidious forces which seek to destroy her.

However Caroline, unbeknownst to herself, is not completely powerless. Sanctity is the source of a strength she fails to utilize. When Bigot visits her during a bacchanalian feast with the intention of summoning her to the great hall, she advises him to forsake his immoral ways and to use his influence for the good of others. Her advice momentarily transforms Bigot. He recognizes the wisdom of her words but fails to heed the implicit warning that her speech contains. Caroline's separation from the public world also holds for her the possibility of power. When Bigot's drinking companions demand that she appear at their wild orgy, she refuses to be a spectacle for the male gaze. Like the biblical queen Vashti with whom she is explicitly equated, Caroline refuses to comply with their wishes and in so doing exposes Bigot to the ridicule of his male friends. She is not banished from the château for this wilful act, but like her biblical counterpart she later disappears without a trace.

Caroline's death takes place on a stormy autumnal night on the Eve of St. Michael. It is foreshadowed in a strange dream she has of captivity and salvation. When she allows the evil Mère Malheur to interpret her dream, Caroline begins a series of sinister connections which culminate in her nocturnal assassination. Like Shakespeare's Desdemona

before her, Caroline sings a minne-song of sorrow and loss, and dresses for her final death scene in a snow-white dress. In death her innocence is marred by the blood from La Corriveau's hands. Not satisfied with poisoning Caroline, the demonic La Corriveau stabs her twice following her death, as a gesture of outrage toward her unblemished beauty.

Caroline's burial chamber reflects the lack of reality associated with her. Like a "fairy queen"⁵⁸ she is entombed in an aesthetically constructed apartment with frescoed ceilings and richly tapestried walls. Her relationship with Bigot has estranged her from the natural world of Acadia and the wilderness world of her mother's people. No longer a child of the forest, she has become an object, valued only for her strange beauty. Like the other women in the text, she is imaged in iconic terms with "long black hair," "a Madonna-like face," "a pale complexion" and "chiselled features."⁵⁹ In his depiction of Caroline, Kirby demonstrates the tendency on the part of nineteenth-century male writers to fetishize the female body. In a society characterized by the powerful presence of the Virgin Mary, and reliant on woman's reproductive powers to reinforce a

⁵⁸Kirby 67.

⁵⁹Kirby 67-79.

French-Catholic presence, Caroline serves as an ambiguous image of passivity and dominance. Having violated what was becoming a rigid code of female sexual conduct, Caroline fails in her role as guide or mediatrix between the materiality of the world of man and a higher spiritual realm. Yet despite her fall, Kirby refuses to condemn her. By transferring blame to Bigot and to sinister women like Mère Malheur and La Corriveau, he manages to venerate and reinstate the feminine. The cost, however, for Caroline and other angelic women is an absolute erasure of female desire. At the end of the narrative, the holy women are dead and the defiant female agents, Angélique, Mère Malheur, and La Pompadour still reign triumphant. This death of innocence signifies the victory of the corruptive forces in the new world which contribute to the defeat of the French by the English. The greatest foe, suggests Kirby, exists within the walls of Quebec.

Roberts, Kirby and Parker all use the image of a lawless woman as the focal point of their narratives. They then proceed to show how a morally marginalized figure can usurp the male seat of power through a special feminine sanctity. Roberts's individualistic Kirstie chooses to enact her own ritual of exclusion rather than accept the implicit censure of the community. Wilfully she chooses an outsider as her husband and, when he vanishes, she rejects the Settlement as a suitable site to raise her young

daughter. In doing so she denies that that particular model of community constitutes the centre of her world. Within the shadows of the forest she single-handedly constructs a new centre, a female community which accommodates, even celebrates, diversity and strangeness. She also reaffirms the notion of woman as both margin and centre that other extra-ordinary characters gravitate toward. Roberts' In the Heart of the Ancient Wood celebrates intuition and female mobility. It is a female bildungsroman which describes Miranda's coming of age under the protective guidance of powerful female agents, both human and non-human.

Parker also explores female movement from centre to margin, but he deliberately blurs the boundaries which other writers clearly distinguish. His lawless women, Alixe and Matilde, employ subversive as well as openly defiant strategies in their attempts to out-manuever mighty men. More so than Kirstie Craig, Kirby's revolutionary women take graver risks and stage more explosive scenes to disrupt a male-centered world. Like Parker, Kirby explores the possible consequences of dangerous liaisons between powerful men and seemingly compliant women. However, in The Golden Dog, Kirby even while exploring female multiplicity resorts to the more stereotypical images of women; they are either angelicized or demonized. The line separating the two is clearly established. What all three writers suggest through their depiction of these fictitious women is that behind the

masculine mask of presumed power is a feminine force which consistently rises above exclusion, containment and marginalization.

By reclaiming these fallen women in their fictions, nineteenth-century Canadian writers recreate sacred spaces for these strange, though never totally estranged, figures. These desiring women, who are so much equated with the pinnacle of male aspiration, exhibit a moral superiority which enables them to restore order and to provide cohesion. As the nineteenth century comes to a close and women begin to move into the market-place, a non-domestic world of work, there is an increased interest in debating the "proper sphere"⁶⁰ of the female. The notion prevalent during the

⁶⁰See Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), a collection of documents which show how women came to be recognized as persons in Canadian society. Cook and Mitchinson describe the socio-economic changes that took place during the latter part of the nineteenth-century and examine how those changes radically altered the structure of the country. Between Confederation and the Great War new territories joined the dominion, immigrants flocked to western Canada, industrial and urban growth began to exceed the agricultural economy in both population and prosperity. These changes created "regional unrest, class tension, ethnic conflict, and intellectual questioning" (2), which in turn deeply affected the position of women in Canadian society. "Technological innovation and industrial growth impinged upon women's traditional realm, the home" (3). As women began to clamor for more political power and to gain more visibility, the question "what constitutes the proper share for woman?" (5) was asked more and more frequently. During the early years of settlement and pioneering, women shared responsibilities within the family. With increased urbanization and industrialization, "role differentiation was accentuated" (5). Men moved out of the home, away from the settlement to pursue work; women remained isolated within the home and

period is that woman, because of her dual role as domestic stabilizer and the mother of nations, should somehow embody both power and purity. As a moral and spiritual agent, she is hence bound to the community by a complex system of obligations and responsibilities.⁶¹

One of the earliest Canadian novelists to consciously explore the dangerous implications, for woman, of female idealization is Lily Dougall. In The Madonna of a Day (1895), Dougall suggests that the valorization of the female and the myth of woman as sacred space are falsely constructed and disseminated through orthodox religion (she refers specifically to the teachings of St. Paul)⁶² and romantic literature (she cites the example of Shelley's

became more responsible for instilling the moral values within the family. Any woman who moved out of this position and into the market-place was viewed as abdicating her responsibility to morally and spiritually improve society from within her proper sphere.

⁶¹Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, although a fallen woman, forges a new contract with the same society that ritualistically excluded her for her act of transgression. These obligations to the community help to redeem her so that, in turn, she can administer to the needs of the community. Throughout the narrative she evolves from the abject status of fallen woman to the elevated position of sister of mercy.

⁶²Lily Dougall, The Madonna of a Day (New York: D. Appleton, 1895) 267.

Moon).⁶³ Through the dramatic adventures of her heroine, Mary Howard who exemplifies the "fin de siècle woman,"⁶⁴ Dougall undertakes in her fiction a study of man's tendency to perceive woman in restrictive and iconic terms. She also examines woman's complicity in these actions. The ambivalent response of Dougall's protagonist reveals the social and personal conflicts generated by the changing roles of women which take place between the mid and late nineteenth century.

Despite the fact that as a "new woman"⁶⁵ Mary Howard speaks a confident feminist discourse, her language betrays her inability to abandon conventional attitudes. In an animated discussion with a male missionary and fellow-traveller,⁶⁶ Mary, a journalist,⁶⁷ insists on her

⁶³Dougall 21.

⁶⁴Dougall 17.

⁶⁵Dougall 13.

⁶⁶During the late-nineteenth century, women became more mobile; as travellers, they are more than merely mental cartographers (see Chapter I "The Other Cartographers"). Mary Howard and her female companion are worldly travellers -- they have just returned from a newspaper assignment in the East and are now journeying eastward across Canada. Female mobility is also a feature of Dougall's earlier novel, What Necessity Knows (1893). Sissy Cameron, a wilful and independent young woman, refuses the stasis of life in the wilderness when she conceals herself in a coffin designed to hold the corpse of her father. In this bizarre vehicle, she journeys to a nearby settlement, changes her name, and establishes a new life for herself. Dougall suggests that it is the actions of dynamic women like Sissy

emancipation from the traditional images of women, while using phrases that cause him to question her commitment to a new identity. In a language riddled with religious significance -- "name of heaven," "holy joy," "bear witness," "holy terror"⁶⁸ -- she confidently insists on her break with the past. Unlike women of the twentieth century, Mary has not yet procured a new language, vocabulary, or set

Cameron, alias Elizabeth White, and Sophia Rexford that will reform the world.

⁶⁷Journalism was one male-dominated profession which women were beginning to infiltrate by the end of the century. As a fictional journalist, Mary recalls historical women such as Cora Hind who, in 1881, applied for a job on the Free Press in Winnipeg. One of the most famous journalists of the period was "Kit" Coleman (Kathleen Blake Watkins Coleman) who conducted a woman's page ("Woman's Kingdom") under the pseudonym "Kit" in the Toronto Mail and Empire. In 1898 she travelled to Cuba to cover the Spanish-American War. In 1906 she described the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake. Coleman is said to be the first woman war correspondent in the world. Other women journalists of the period include Mary Ann Shadd Cary who edited the Provincial Freeman in Toronto from 1854 to 55; Mme. Josephine Marchard of the Le Coin du Le Journal of Françoise, 1902 to 1909; Sara McLagan who published the Vancouver World and became the first woman newspaper publisher in Canada. For discussions regarding women journalists in Canada, see Isabel Bassett, The Parlour Rebellion: Profiles in the Struggle for Women's Rights (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975) 154-159 and 87-89; Barbara Freeman, "'Every Stroke Upward': Women Journalists in Canada, 1880-1906," Canadian Woman Studies 7.3 (Fall 1986): 43-46; Alison Prentice, et al., eds., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 130-134; and Margaret Whitridge, "The Distaff Side of the Confederation Group: Women's Contribution to Early Nationalist Literature," Atlantis 4.1 (Fall 1978): 30-39.

⁶⁸Dougall 13-17.

of images to name her newly acquired status.⁶⁹ Nor is she yet secure in the novel position she has optimistically assumed as rightfully hers.

The tenuousness of Mary's position, even within her own mind, is revealed when, on a journey east from Vancouver, she sleepwalks or "falls"⁷⁰ off the train somewhere in the vicinity of Eagle's Pass. Wrapped in a long length of blue silk veiling which she had purchased during a trip to Persia, Mary wanders into an isolated male camp to seek shelter for the night. She is guided into the camp by a

⁶⁹See Dale Spender, Man-Made Language (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). It is only in this decade that women are acquiring a language which relates to the realities of their lives. Spender suggests that only by examining language can we find out how patriarchy functions. Ironically just as language creates our world, it also has the capacity to restrict our world. Spender writes: "In order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling. Naming is the means whereby we attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence.... By assigning names we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world" (163). Like Spender, many feminist critics focus on the politics of language: how it constructs female silence, creates dominant and muted discourses; and how subversively women can speak from these silences. For other discussions of language and gender, see Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley, eds., Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance (Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1975); Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980); Tillie Olsen, Silences (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1978); and Barrie Thorne, Cherie Kramarae (Kramer), and Nancy Henley, eds., Language, Gender and Society (Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1983).

⁷⁰Dougall 25. The fall is the beginning of her epiphanic "awakening" which occurs in the mountains.

brilliant light in the sky. As she makes her dramatic entry late on Christmas eve, she disrupts an already riotous, carnivalistic group of men in the midst of their drinking and gambling. Overwhelmed by the mysterious arrival of "the Howly Mother,"⁷¹ the men fall to their knees in adoration at the sight of the "coloured image"⁷² of the Madonna. Robbed momentarily of her voice by the cold, Mary is unable to refute the men's drunken allegations that she is indeed the holy mother incarnate: "the men saw nothing but a silent, gentle girl, and she perfectly fulfilled their ideal, such inarticulate undefined ideal as they had of the Queen of Heaven."⁷³ Although a very theatrical character, one who enjoys the staging of performances in which she plays a starring role, Mary is unprepared for the forcefulness of the men's reverent response.

During her brief stay with the men, she occupies a curious position as she comes to experience the "double existence of actor and spectator at once."⁷⁴ With this dramatic and dual role thrust upon her, and aware of the

⁷¹Dougall 34.

⁷²Dougall 23.

⁷³Dougall 37.

⁷⁴Dougall 75.

potential dangers surrounding a single woman stranded in an all-male world, Mary decides to impersonate her holy namesake. She astutely realizes that the men's delusions are her only weapon against their crude natures, that disguise or subterfuge is her sole means of escaping unharmed.

However, not all of the twelve men who gather around her are deceived by Mary's ploy. Hamilton, the leader of the group, and Handsome, his deformed dwarf companion, suspect the farce that is being staged before them. Sensing their suspicions, Mary covertly plans to escape during the night -- only to stumble into another all-male abode, a navy of Chinese workers who do not greet her with the same respect. Mary is rescued from any harmful intent by the timely arrival of Hamilton who informs her that he, like the Chinamen, is "not under the impression that [she] fell from the sky."⁷⁵ Cynically he suggests a more prosaic explanation for her sudden appearance.

Her mysterious appearances before those two camps (representatives of eastern and western cultures), generate conflict among the men. The Chinese insist she is a witch, the men from the other camp protest that she is an angel. Hamilton offers to resolve the issue and to ensure her safety by marrying her: "A man's woman, she is what you

⁷⁵Dougall 102.

call sacrée but a woman who is no man's wife, ah, it is for the holy saints to help her."⁷⁶ Hamilton is not motivated solely by regard for Mary's personal safety -- on her arrival he glimpsed an expensive diamond she later took pains to conceal. Outraged by his strange and not strictly selfless code of honour, Mary perversely resorts to her only remaining weapon. She turns the male myth of woman upon them. Assuming the role of a suffering and passive female, she preaches eloquently to them of the holiness of love and marriage. Through a combination of religious rhetoric and feminine wiles, she vanquishes Hamilton and his men. She also manages to banish any doubts that Handsome may still have regarding her reputation and social position. Her words affect a powerful transformation as Handsome rejects his wicked ways and begins, like the other men, to kneel in adoration, worshipping Mary as a holy woman.

Having used sanctity to acquire power over Handsome, Mary conspires with him to escape from the camp and to seek sanctuary at a nearby railway station. Their flight on horseback from Hamilton and the mutterings of the men take on the dimension of a fairy-tale as Handsome and Beauty united, "travel through the heart of the kingdom of

⁷⁶Dougall 134.

solitude."⁷⁷ When she attempts to bestow on him the magical ring as a reward for chivalry, Handsome emphatically declines her offer. His belief that Mary is perfect has changed him from a grasping, greedy villain to a generous, courtly prince.

On her return to civilization, Mary quickly forgets the knowledge, both practical and spiritual, that came to her as a result of her wanderings through the wilderness. Like the "new woman" that she professes to be, she "talk[s] tall"⁷⁸ to those who question her regarding her fall and subsequent adventures. Restored to the community, her love of theatrics returns in full force.

In the final scene, Mary resumes her interrupted conversation with the travelling missionary and her own male companion, Charlie. To Charlie's statement that "a woman ought to be religious,"⁷⁹ Mary replies that piety is simply a response that men demand because of their lofty expectations, and that any religion that valorizes womanhood is demeaning to the female species.⁸⁰ It is this pious and

⁷⁷Dougall 212.

⁷⁸Dougall 253.

⁷⁹Dougall 263.

⁸⁰Dougall.

idiotic "rubbish that ... is enough to make every sensible woman a free thinker in religion, in custom, and everything else."⁸¹ She uses as an argument the fact that she had to resort to deception, that she had to foster delusions of piety in order to command the unruliness which man, alone and within himself, could not command. She describes this male idealization of woman as one example of the many rules and regulations that men make for women to uphold and live by. She ends her diatribe by chastising men for equating the "new fangled notions in a woman ... with loss of goodness."⁸²

This conversation is suddenly interrupted by riotous sounds outside. From the elevated position of her window, Mary watches a group of drunken men and shrieking women -- a scene when includes a now unrestrained Handsome. This sight serves to emphasize the abject misery of a world in which women, like Mary abdicate their responsibilities as moral agents. Suddenly made aware of her own shortcomings -- a lack of nobility as a new woman, and a failure to continue to provide moral leadership for the betterment of mankind -- Mary reassesses what she once referred to as "idiotic, and

⁸¹Dougall 260-61.

⁸²Dougall 263.

transcendent mythologies."⁸³ The missionary who instigated this discussion convinces her that the evolution of moral consciousness depends on upholding the lofty ideals which woman can embody.

The narrative concludes on the final day of the year, as Mary relinquishes her worldly views of womanhood and accepts, as a sign of a new stage in her personal development, a special obligation to redeem man from his fallen state. Just as Mary deconstructs the myth prevalent toward the end of the century that somehow the emergent new woman is heartless and without principle, she also challenges "men's idiotic and transcendent mythologies"⁸⁴ perpetuated by writers and preachers alike. In the place of these erroneous views, she proposes a compromise: "The holy woman has her place, not only in the church or at the hearth, but in the market-place, in the court of law, in the chambers of government."⁸⁵ This new feminine ideology expands female horizons, encourages mobility, and emphasizes woman as a public as well as domestic agent. In The Madonna of a Day, Dougall brings together in her female protagonist many of the strains of thought that contribute to the

⁸³Dougall 13.

⁸⁴Dougall.

⁸⁵Dougall 265.

special kind of feminism that emerges in Canada late in the nineteenth century. This is a maternal feminism⁸⁶ which has

⁸⁶See Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914," A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1980s-1920s, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979) 15-45. Roberts examines how the 'new woman' at the turn of the century seemed to challenge all the traditional notions regarding woman's position in society. In essence, she represented "a revolt against uselessness" (15) and a search for a meaningful existence beyond the restricted realm of home. Roberts suggests that "the potential of the 'new woman' was never realized" (15). As a twentieth-century philosophy of progressivism replaced a nineteenth-century democratic radicalism, "women reformers narrowed their vision from an interest in labour, spiritualism, suffrage, and citizenship to a professionally circumscribed role, based on an extension of 'maternal' abilities" (15). See also other articles in Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim. Also, Canadian Women on the Move 1867-1920, eds. Beth Light and Joy Parr (Toronto: New Hogtown Press and The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1983). Light and Parr suggest that "most women involved in the reform movement initially perceived their participation in reform work as an extension of their domestic role as wife and mother and entered the social purity campaigns as good moral influences" (6). For an examination of the emergence of the French-Canadian working mother during the period, see D. Suzanne Cross, "The Neglected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in 19th Century Montreal," The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 66-68. Also consult Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp-Clark Pitman Ltd., 1986). For an analysis of socialist feminism in contemporary Canada, see Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada, eds. Nancy Adamson, Linda Brickin, and Margaret McPhail (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also Veronica Strong-Boag, Introduction, In Times Like These, Nellie L. McClung (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) vii-xxii. Strong-Boag suggests that Nellie L. McClung, activist and social reformer, "personified Canadian feminism" (vii). The reform movement that swept Canada late in the century coincided with the Social Gospel movement. The suffragists were linked with "a semi-evangelical nationwide crusade to purge Canadian society of its immoralities and make it a beacon to the rest of the world" (viii). This

its roots in our spiritual foremothers, Marie de l'Incarnation and Madeleine de la Peltrie; in the competency and far-reaching visions of backwoods pioneers like Moodie and Traill; and in the mysticism of the Huron's Ataensic, the woman who fell from the sky.⁸⁷ This seems appropriate when we recall that the genesis of Canada as a nation began under the auspices of the Virgin Mary and other female saints.⁸⁸

crusade focused on temperance, urban renewal, social welfare, and female suffrage. McClung and other feminists of the time "viewed motherhood as a sacred trust; they held the traditional views of "female moral superiority and maternal responsibility" (viii). They felt that "only women had the spiritual and moral resources to reform society" (ix).

⁸⁷ See Father Gabriel Sagard, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons, ed. George M. Wrong (1632; rpt. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939) 169; S.R. Mealing, ed., Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: A Selection (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963) 44; and Conrad E. Heidenreich, "Huron," in Handbook of North American Indians: Northwest Vol. 15, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978) 368-388. Heidenreich discusses the significance of ataensic, a powerful spirit associated with the moon, who had fallen out of the sky to become the mother of mankind. It was she who made men die, who was in charge of their souls, and who continuously tried to undo the works of iouskeda, her grandson, a spirit identified with the sun (373).

⁸⁸ Mealing, Jesuit Relations 103.

CONCLUSION: 'THE COUNTRY IN WHICH [S]HE LIVES'

"... a man [must] stop thinking of a woman as a colony for him to exploit and [allow her to] become instead 'the country in which he lives."

Alberto Manguel, Other Fires: Short Fiction by Latin American Women

From the arrival of Gudrid and Freydis in the eleventh century to the closing years of the nineteenth century, important changes occurred regarding woman's position in society and in how woman was imaged in Canadian writing. Even though it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that women became a majority of the Canadian population, "long before the arrival of the Europeans they were major participants in the creation of their communities."¹ The extent of female participation is acknowledged by many early Canadian writers, male and female. In The History of Emily Montague (1769) Frances Brooke recognizes Madeleine de la Peltrie, the founder of the Ursuline convent, as the mother of Canada, and one "to

¹Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., Introduction, Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1986) 4.

whom the very colony in some measure owes its existence."²

It was, in fact, the patronage and assistance of French women like Jeanne Mance, Antoinette de Pons, Marie de l'Incarnation and Madeleine de la Peltrie that led to the establishment of the first social and religious institutions in Canada. The legacies of these women were especially significant to the women who immediately followed them. As shown in the works of Rosanna Leprohon, Susan Frances Harrison and Julia Catherine Hart,³ these religious women (who were radical as well as conservative) provided role models for generations of Canadian girls.

These ideal women were not the only female agents to contribute to the genesis of community in Canada. The historical revisionism of Sylvia van Kirk and Eleanor Leacock⁴ has helped to bring the indigenous woman out of

²Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, ed. Mary Jane Edwards (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1985) 17.

³See Rosanna Leprohon, The Manor House of De Villeraï: A Tale of Canada Under the French Regime (1859-60), ed. John Robert Sorfleet, Journal of Canadian Fiction 34 (1985) and Antoinette De Mirecourt or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing, ed. John C. Stockdale (1864; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989); Susan Frances Harrison, The Forest of Bourg-Marie (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1898; and Julia Catherine Hart, St. Ursula's Convent: or The Nun of Canada (1824; rpt. Sackville: Mount Allison University, 1978).

⁴See Eleanor Leacock, "Women, Power and Authority," Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development, eds. Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock and Shirley Ardener (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) 107-135, "Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization," Rethinking Canada, ed. Strong-Boag and Fellman 7-22, and "Women in

Canada's shadowy past and to show how she played a crucial role in frontier life. Her presence provided the ideal of a bi-racial community, an ideal imaged in the mixed unions described in a number of nineteenth-century works -- John Richardson's Wacousta (1832), Catharine Parr Traill's Canadian Crusoes (1852), and G. Mercer Adam and A. Ethelwyn Wetherald's An Algonquin Maiden (1887). The Indian woman represents the process of accommodation that took place as the European entered a world where collaboration was necessary for survival. The attraction that she held for many pioneer women was equally strong and evident in the journals and letters of women like Anna Jameson and Catharine Parr Traill.

Fascinated by the mobility and freedom of the female indigene, European women like Brooke's Arabella Fermor and

Egalitarian Societies," Becoming Visible: Women in European History, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) 11-35; and Sylvia van Kirk, "Thandadeltur," The Beaver (Spring 1974): 40-45, 'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), "The Role of Native Women in the Fur Trade Society of Western Canada, 1670-1830," Rethinking Canada, eds. Strong-Boag and Fellman 59-66, "'Women in Between': Indian Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada," out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History, eds. Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988) 49-56, and "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society," The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol. I, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 27-48.

Truill's Catharine are tempted to "turn squaw."⁵ Barbara Godard suggests that by following the examples of the native woman, heroines in Canadian novels "discover a new intersubjective relationship with nature" which enables them to make contact with a forgotten matrilineal tradition of lost mothers, and which helps them to break down the boundaries between "human and natural orders."⁶ Under the guidance or influence of the native woman, a process of renaturalization is able to occur. This acknowledged need for and acceptance of Indian mediation explains the image of the Indian woman as mediatrix/redemptrix in early Canadian writing -- an image which first appears in the journals and log books of male explorers as diverse as Alexander MacKenzie, Alexander Henry and Samuel Hearne.

As contemporary historians begin to turn the lens on Canada's past so that it brings the lives of girls and women into clearer focus, a different view of frontier life emerges -- no longer can it be perceived strictly in

⁵Brooke, History of Emily Montague 49; and Catharine Parr Truill, Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains, ed. Rupert Schieder (1852; rpt. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986) 16.

⁶See Barbara Godard, "Voicing Difference: the Literary Production of Native Women," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Alberta: Longspoon/Newest, 1986) 87-107, and Terry Goldie, Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

masculine terms. In Bogle Corbet (1831) John Galt describes a model of a Canadian community in the making. It is a community in which women play multiple roles. Galt's narrative includes a number of memorable women: Bogle's wife, Urseline, whose practical domestic knowledge makes her more at home in Canada than her husband, who drifts off into reveries and falls off his horse; and the virago, Janet Foddie whose services were invaluable to the settlement -- she was "one of the most motherly luckies we had, and howdie besides."⁷ As the community begins to take shape, Galt recognizes an essential difference in male and female expectations: "the husbands have thought only of making property, the mothers of feeding their young."⁸ The model of community that Galt attempts to impose on his men is challenged and openly rejected by dissenting members of his group. When Galt refuses to relinquish lots which are closer to the constructed roads, Angus M'Questein reminds him that all the wild country had been taken from the

⁷John Galt, Bogle Corbet (1831; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 104. See The Scottish National Dictionary, 10 vols., eds. William Grant and David D. Murison (Edinburgh: The Scottish National Dictionary Association, 1965) Vol. 6, 149-50. A luekie is defined as 1. a familiar form of address to an elderly woman; it often implies a midwife, 2. a wife or married woman, 2. 2.) a landlady, the hostess of a tavern, 2. 3.) a witch, hag, or sorceress, 3. grandmother. A howdie is 1. 1.) a midwife or woman who performed other kinds of sick nursing, 1. 3.) a rough-mannered woman.

⁸Galt 67.

Indians, who have the best right to the land, if any body has a right."⁹

As Strong-Boag and Fellman point out, women in Canada collaborated with men "as associates, subordinates, and superiors."¹⁰ Female acts of insubordination are likewise recorded in our fictions through subversive characters such as William Kirby's Angélique des Meloises and La Corriveau (The Golden Dog 1877), Gilbert Parker's Alixe Duvarney and Matilde (The Seats of the Mighty 1896), and John Richardson's Matilde Montgomery (The Canadian Brothers 1840) and Oucanasta (Wacousta 1832). These fictional figures suggest that women responded to life in the new world both collectively as well as individually. Their presence ensured the survival of family, community and tradition, all of which were subject to change. They helped to create a female culture rooted in friendships, close relational ties, and a society open to members from other cultural groups. Banding together in the wilderness, they collectively celebrated female ceremonies, often small and private ceremonies, that enabled them to resist stasis and to endure change.

⁹Galt 73.

¹⁰Strong-Boag and Fellman, eds., Rethinking Canada 2.

Following the English conquest of 1763 there seems to be some restriction with regard to female heroics and mobility. It would be toward the end of the nineteenth century before women would once again, in significant numbers, enter the public arena to raise their voices for change. In the intermediary period, woman generally occupied the domestic sphere. She was directly associated with the household, "not so much the place from which the other family members went off to lead their real lives, as the centre to which they returned again and again from their periodic excursions to the periphery."¹¹ The private journals of women like Anne Langton, Anna Leveridge, and others provide important information about the daily lives of women in Canada -- they record the loneliness and the hardships, but also the joys and the rewards. They also provide us with "life-lines"¹² to the past: "the very texture of these documents testifies to the role of women in recording events, keeping in touch and selecting information to be passed on to succeeding generations."¹³ However as

¹¹Strong-Boag and Fellman 67.

¹²See Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds., Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

¹³See Margaret Conrad, "'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History," Rethinking Canada 70, and "Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950," The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol. II,

these personal epistles reveal, the relationships which developed between pioneer women and the land were not without conflict. Not all women were equipped to survive in the wilderness or on lonely pioneer farms. And a network of assistance was not always readily available. There were undoubtedly many casualties, female and male, as indicated by fictional figures such as Richardson's hysteric, Ellen Halloway, and John Galt's melancholic, Bogle Corbet.

The Conquest also created a shift from a Catholic to a largely Protestant society, a change which also affects how women were now imaged in nineteenth-century literature. The sorceress and the witch come to represent a malignant female agency, and voices of prophecy and power, mysticism and magic are forced to go underground. The Catholicism of New France had been much more tolerant of mysteries and miracles than Protestantism would prove to be. In her correspondence with family and friends in France, Marie de l'Incarnation relates the story of a young religious woman of the convent who was beset with demons. Discreetly these devils were exorcised without any alarm or disruption within the community.¹⁴ At the same time, women suspected of

eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985) 41-60.

¹⁴Joyce Marshall, ed. and trans., Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967) 365-368.

witchcraft were being relentlessly persecuted in the Puritan New England area. The extent of anti-Catholic sentiment is suggested by the controversial publication of Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal by Maria Monk in 1836.¹⁵ The shocking revelations contained in this work ensured that it would be a best seller.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century there is a renewed interest in mystery and intuition, but now these forces are more directly associated with the secular or the natural world. The wilderness becomes not only a place for exploration but also the site of epiphany. It is also there that closer links are forged between man and the animal world. It is during this period that animal tales become popular. Marshall Saunders' Beautiful Joe (1894) was so popular it reached the enormous sale of fifty thousand copies in less than two years. It was also translated into a number of other languages. Charles G.D. Roberts explores in his works the complex relationship between women and animals, a theme that contributes to the shaping of modern and contemporary writing by women in Canada. In The Heart of the Ancient Wood (1900) and The Forge in the Forest (1896) the wilderness is actively entered and explored by strange and self-sufficient women. A kinship with the

¹⁵See Maria Monk, Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal (1836; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1977).

animal world, particularly with bears, provides female protagonists with visionary powers and wilderness survival skills. Perhaps this renaturalization of women in fiction is related to the notion of woman's moral superiority. It may also reflect anxiety regarding the changes resulting from industrialization and the shift toward urbanization in Canada.

That a woman need not be restricted to the domestic world in order to improve the quality of life in a rapidly changing Canadian community is explored by Lily Dougall and Sara Jeannette Duncan. These two late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers depict female protagonists that break away from traditional female roles. Dougall's The Madonna of a Day (1895) and What Necessity Knows (1893) both focus on women who occupy positions outside the home. In the fictions of Dougall and Duncan, female protagonists are unusual travellers as well as the tellers of stories. These intrepid women take grave risks, initiate strange journeys, and insist on a female right to choose. This tendency toward exploration and self-assertion remains a powerful component of female culture during the twentieth century as it undoubtedly did from the early years of settlement in Canada. As women became involved in the paid labor force and began to participate more in public activities, there emerges that old confidence and strength that characterized women's voices during the early years of

exploration and settlement in Canada. As Alison Prentice et al. suggest, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods of great change, times when "women's lives were marked by an intriguing interplay of continuity and change."¹⁶ Accompanying the changes which took place "in times like these,"¹⁷ the voice, vision and performance of the fugitive feminine continued to infiltrate our literature and our culture.

¹⁶Alison Prentice, et al. eds., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 113.

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