

The University of Manitoba

The Dominion of Women:

The Relationship of the Personal

And the Political

In Canadian Women's Literature

by

Wayne Fraser

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

No literary scholar has yet surveyed the connection of feminism and nationalism in Canadian literature. Historians, likewise, have ignored this relationship, often discarding in their exploration of women's literature precisely that which is most valuable for a study of nationalism: the individual's personal experience. But recently, both historians and literary critics have called for examination of the connection, expressed by women writers, between Canada's development as an independent state and the state of their female contemporaries.

The study focuses on fifteen such works which treat important historical periods or events in the two-hundred-years of English Canada's history, 1766 to 1976. Employing conventions of the courtship novel, Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague gives a distaff view of the British conquest of New France. Using their marriages as metaphors, Anna Brownell Jameson in Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, Catharine Parr Traill in The Backwoods of Canada, and Susanna Moodie in Roughing it in the Bush offer, respectively, Radical, Tory and Reform views of the colony's desire, expressed in the 1837 rebellion, for home-rule. The nation's movement from imperialism at the turn of the century is embodied in the

advances of the New Woman in Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist, Nellie McClung's Purple Springs and Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese. The breakdown of institutional marriage in Ethel Wilson's Hetty Dorval and Swamp Angel reflects the re-arrangement of Canada's alliances before and after World War II. The Canadian nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s is explored in the context of the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement by Margaret Laurence in The Stone Angel, The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners and by Margaret Atwood in The Edible Woman, Surfacing and Lady Oracle.

The chronological structure of the dissertation and the use of sociological, psychological, feminist, political and historical commentary establish the connections between nationalism and feminism. But the central concern is literary; the novelists built, quite deliberately, their characters, settings and plots on these two forces. They read from the personal to the political, and vice versa, using the conventions of women's literature to portray both sexual and national politics.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter One: "A husbandman as far as theory goes": The Distaff View of Colonization	11
Chapter Two: "The home has expanded until it has become the whole state": Imperialism to Emancipation	86
Chapter Three: "Nothing and no one could complicate life here": Isolationism in the Novels of Ethel Wilson	155
Chapter Four: "A Canadian theme . . . just as much a personal theme": Margaret Laurence, Canada and the 1960s	204
Chapter Five: "To refuse to be a victim": Anti-Americanism in the early novels of Margaret Atwood	262
Chapter Six: "Still fighting the same bloody battles as always": <u>The Diviners</u> and <u>Lady Oracle</u>	313
Conclusion	378
Bibliography	385

Introduction

"Perhaps history would not be so lop-sided if we could hear her story as well." Following this directive from the Women's Liberation Movement, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, in "Nationalism, Feminism and Canadian Intellectual History," argues that, by ignoring the role of women in Canadian intellectual history, historians--mostly male--have seriously limited their understanding of nationalism. She discovers many similarities, for example, in the "nationalism and feminism in French Canada at the turn of the twentieth century": "both [minorities] . . . clearly stated a superiority to the Anglo-Saxon or male world around them. . . . Both . . . promised to cleanse, purify and rectify society."¹ Trofimenkoff maintains that a new and valuable understanding of Canada's intellectual history might emerge from consideration of the relationship, in Canada, of nationalism and feminism. Yet she acknowledges that examination of the role of women in the development of nationalism is difficult due to the fact that "until relatively recently women did not leave tracts for study, did not write, and therefore by implication did not think" (p. 16). In fact, there is such a "written record," for what Trofimenkoff overlooks is literature by early Canadian women.

Other historians have not ignored this material but unfortunately, in making use of it, they have discarded precisely that which is most valuable for a study of nationalism: namely, the personal element. Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague, for example, has been valued by social historians essentially for its descriptive scenes of life in Quebec at the time of the Conquest. Anna Jameson's journals likewise have been appreciated mainly for their portraits of Indians and settlers in Upper Canada in 1836-37. Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie have been studied primarily for their contribution to our understanding of pioneer life in the backwoods of Canada. Ignoring the distinctively feminine elements of this literature, these historians effectively transformed "her story" into history.

Moreover, in assuming that the personal dimension is irrelevant to historiographical concerns, such researchers have failed to recognize the basic contention of the Women's Movement: that "the personal is the political," a contention which accounts for the more than purely metaphoric use of political language to describe and protest against the position of women. An extremist version cries, "housewives are political prisoners."² A more reasoned approach is to be found in Betty Friedan's 1963 analysis of The Feminine Mystique which distinguishes

the subject of her study--American housewives of the 1950s--from the women who "want careers, higher education, political rights--the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for."³ The very title of Kate Millet's 1969 Sexual Politics emphasizes the political focus of her analysis of male-female relationships. And so subversive is Germaine Greer in 1970 that she hopes her polemic, The Female Eunuch, will encourage women, "the true proletariat, the truly oppressed majority . . . [to engage in] revolution."⁴

Likewise, many analysts of woman's psychology and literature have used the political language of colonialism to describe woman's position in a male-dominated society. Karl Stern, in his 1965 The Flight from Woman, notes that "for millennia women have suffered atrocious forms of social and legal injustice. It is no exaggeration to say that they have been, and often still are, the victims of a kind of interior colonialism."⁵ Rosalind Miles too, in her 1974 Fiction of Sex, concludes that nineteenth-century women writers "embodied in their fiction the imposed social attitudes of the dominant sex. Women writers were more influential even than men in keeping other women in a carefully defined and rigidly restricted place. To borrow a metaphor from political philosophy, their colonization by male supremacists was complete: they policed each other."⁶

If the colonialist metaphor is apt for the condition of women in general, it is particularly appropriate for Canadian woman--for her country itself has struggled under the bondage of imperialism. Canada was established as a colony of Great Britain and her parliamentary government, with the Crown of England at its head, retains traces of colonialism to the present day. Canada as an economic colony of the United States is an equally accepted concept; it has been much discussed since World War II, for instance during the pipeline debate of 1955. What may not have been noticed by Canadians at large was the effect of our political and economic structures on our culture. As early as 1943, Northrop Frye reviewed Canadian literature and found that it suffered from what he defined as "the colonial in Canadian life," the artist's compulsion "to seek a conventional or commonplace expression of an idea."⁷ [As well, W. P. Wilgar in 1944 discussed what he concluded was the "Divided Mind in Canada": in order for artistic production to emerge in Canada, the artist "must begin to evaluate actualities, to find a personal integrity, and to decide what he wishes to preserve from the culture of the Old World and from the strong movements of the New."⁸ The colonial mentality of Canada has for some time been known to have shaped Canadian literature.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there is a special

immediacy to Margaret Laurence's use of the colonialist metaphor in her contribution to a collection of essays entitled A Political Art. In addressing the implicit question as to whether her novels are "political," Laurence maintains that "writers of serious fiction are almost always . . . consciously or unconsciously, expressing their own times"; by creating individualized characters who live in a specified time and place, the novelist provides "social commentary at a grassroots level."⁹ Giving examples from her own experience, Laurence compares the struggles of Canadian and African writers to find their own "voices," to articulate their own experiences, rather than expressing the cultural norms of ascendant imperialist powers: "I was from a land . . . which in some ways was still colonial. My people's standards of correctness and validity and excellence were still [in 1957] largely derived from external and imposed values; our view of ourselves was still struggling against two other cultures' definition of us" (pp. 22-23). Laurence then connects her developing understanding of Canada as a Third World nation, a colony, with her growing awareness of "the dilemma and powerlessness of women [within Canadian society], the tendency of women to accept male definition of ourselves, to be self-deprecating and uncertain"; "to me the parallels seem undeniable" (pp. 23-24). Laurence's very "political"

response to her analysis of these two forms of colonization was to choose, for her novels, "the theme of independence which was both political and inner" (p. 22).

Following Laurence's lead, my purpose in this study is to examine the connection between the twin forms of colonialism experienced by the Canadian woman writer. Specifically, I want to explore the interrelationship between the various reflections by women writers on the political development of the country and on the state of women in their times.

The study focusses on fifteen major works written by ten women over the course of the two-hundred-year history of English Canada, 1766 to 1976. The texts have been chosen partly on the basis of their literary sophistication and recognized cultural significance and partly on the basis of their coincidence with or treatment of important historical periods or events. Thus the study begins with an examination of Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769), which is set at the time of the Conquest and is the first novel to be written about Canada. Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, Traill's The Backwoods of Canada, and Moodie's Roughing it in the Bush, which frequently have been discussed by both literary critics and historians, all comment on the 1837 Mackenzie rebellion. The conjunction, at the turn of the century, of

imperialism and the women's suffrage movement is examined by Sara Jeannette Duncan in The Imperialist (1904), Nellie McClung's Purple Springs (1921) and Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925). Ethel Wilson's Hetty Dorval and Swamp Angel take place in the Depression and the post-World War II era. Finally, the impact of the new nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s and the Women's Liberation Movement are explored by Laurence in The Stone Angel (1964), The Fire-Dwellers (1969) and The Diviners (1972) and by Margaret Atwood in The Edible Woman (1969), Surfacing (1972) and Lady Oracle (1976).

The chronological structure of the study reflects my concern with the way the rise of feminism parallels and contributes to the growth of nationalism. Accordingly, secondary sources include socio/psychological and feminist studies, on the one hand, and political/historical commentary, on the other. At the same time, it should be emphasized that my objective is to provide neither a history of the development of nationalism nor a comprehensive study of the emergence of feminism. My concern is with what the primary texts in question have to say on these two matters and with the way the authors of these works read from the personal to the political and vice versa. In pursuing this connection, I hope also to explain why Canada has such a great proportion of

distinguished women writers--why in many ways the Canadian literary domain has become "the dominion of women."

Endnotes

¹ Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Nationalism, Feminism and Canadian Intellectual History," Canadian Literature, 83 (Winter, 1969), 8.

² Jerry Rubin, We Are Everywhere (New York, 1971), p. 109.

³ Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York, 1963), p. 11.

⁴ Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (London, 1970), p. 22.

⁵ Karl Stern, The Flight from Woman (New York, 1965), p. 14.

⁶ Rosalind Miles, Fiction of Sex (London, 1974), p. 62.

⁷ Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden (Toronto, 1971), p. 134.

⁸ W. P. Wilgar, "Poetry and the Divided Mind in Canada," in The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English 1914-1945, ed. George L. Parker (Toronto, 1973), p. 317.

⁹ Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: the Novelist as Socio-political Being," in A Political Art, ed. W. H. New (Vancouver, 1978), pp. 15, 16.

Chapter One

"A husbandman as far as theory goes": The Distaff View of
Colonization

In the first Canadian novel, Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1769), land and woman are connected from the outset as areas open for male colonization. Thus, Ed Rivers, the male protagonist, informs his friend in England, John Temple, that he has chosen Lower Canada over New York for his new home because he has heard that "it is wilder and . . . the women are handsomer." He hopes in Canada to become "lord of a principality which will put our large-acred men in England out of countenance. My subjects indeed at present will be only bears and elks, but in time I hope to see the human face divine multiplying around me; and in thus cultivating . . . I shall taste one of the greatest of all pleasures, that of creation, and see order and beauty gradually rise from chaos."¹ His language reveals that beneath his central position in the creation of "order and beauty" lies the assumption that the "divine" is masculine. Nor are the sexual connotations of colonization and "cultivation" missed by his licentious friend who responds to his letter with ribald humor: "Indeed! gone to people the wilds of America, Ned, and multiply the human face divine? 'tis a

project worthy a tall handsome colonel of twenty-seven . . .
. excellent . . . for colonization: prenez garde, mes
chères dames" (p. 20).

Frances Brooke was well acquainted with men such as Rivers. When she published her novel, Canada was politically a colony, indeed only the northern part of the vast holdings of British North America, newly won after the Seven Years' War with France. The Peace of Paris in 1763 had transferred the "St. Lawrence Colony" of New France to British control, and "Quebec," as it was reⁿamed, was officially a British colony under military rule. Brooke came to Quebec City in 1763 to join her husband, John Brooke, who was Chaplain of the Garrison and who also held a political post, Deputy of the Auditor General of Quebec. They remained five years and Brooke was acquainted with officers of the occupying army and members of the colonial administration. Their stay in Quebec overlapped the governorship of General Murray and his successor, Guy Carleton. Recent archival research has discovered that the Brookes were not popular with Murray, but seemed to be so with Carleton. Murray found them "meddlesome"; Lorraine McMullen has surmised from the evidence that the differences with Murray were political.²

There was a good deal of political tension during Murray's time as Governor. The policy at the time of Conquest called for the anglicization of Quebec: the Royal

Proclamation of 1763 had instructed Murray to establish institutions of law and government "as near as may be agreeable to the Laws of England."³ Such intentions also included the establishment of the Church of England over the existing Roman Catholic. Governor Murray, however, had become sympathetic to the French Canadian desire to maintain their religion, language and civil code of law; his sympathy was in part a reaction to the pressures put upon him by English traders who had entered Quebec from the American colonies with the hope of gaining control of the new markets. The traders wanted British laws and customs in operation in order to give themselves an economic advantage. They petitioned the King, charging that Murray was not "acting agreeable to that confidence reposed in ^[him] by your Majesty" by encouraging the French "to apply for Judges of their own National Language."⁴ Murray for his part called them "Licentious Fanaticks" in his report and urged that the Canadians, "who are perhaps the bravest and the best race upon the Globe," be granted "priveledges" [sic] of religion.⁵ It was his feeling that safe-guarding French institutions would ensure loyalty to the Crown, especially if there was rebellion from the American Colonies. Murray was recalled, however, and Carleton was despatched to implement the orders of the Royal Proclamation.

Some critics place Frances Brooke squarely on the side

of the English Traders. Mary Jane Edwards, for example, in her introduction to The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English: Beginnings to 1867, notes that interest in the new colony in England contributed to the novel's success and that "views about Quebec expressed in the novel are important . . . because they catch some typical eighteenth-century British thinking about the future of this North American colony."⁶ Edwards sees these views as being endorsed by Brooke herself, just as in a more recent article she states that Brooke "earnestly hoped that Carleton would encourage [the] establishment [of English law, religion and language] and win the Canadians to their use."⁷ Moreover, McMullen, in a more extensive study of Brooke's life and works, points out that the Brookes were of "the English Party" and she advances the convincing case that John Brooke himself was the model for the character of William Fermor, whose letters in the novel are the most descriptive and political, presenting clearly the case for anglicization. McMullen surmises that "as the daughter and wife of Anglican clergymen, Frances Brooke would be in accord with the views expressed by Fermor."⁸ Closer examination of the novel reveals, however, that Brooke was sharply critical of the prevalent attitudes of the day.

She had been so earlier in her career. W. H. New has examined Brooke's "first publishing enterprise, a 37-issue weekly periodical called The Old Maid (1755-56)"; under a

nom-de-plume, "Mary Singleton, Spinster," Brooke created fictitious correspondence between Singleton and other "old maids."⁹ Through this format, New observes, she was able to use "sentimental literary conventions to argue wryly with certain social conventions," and having analyzed her techniques of characterization and her "social analysis and comment," he concludes:

By taking the province of love and the commonwealth of women as her overt topic, Mrs. Brooke does not abandon all discussion of her politics and ideas; instead, she uses what was in her own day a conventional sentimental subject and format to explore social and political attitudes that would otherwise not have been regarded as within her jurisdiction. . . . The Old Maid shares with The History of Emily Montague a concern for political commentary and a commitment to female independence--to such an extent that one can fairly assert that the novel had its thematic origins in the periodical.

(p. 11)

The overt subject matter of the novel is love. Written in the "new" form of the epistolary novel, The History of Emily Montague consists of letters among the principal characters in Quebec, as well as friends and family in England. The primary plot concerns Col. Ed Rivers' courtship of the young lady of the title, who first must extricate herself from a promise of marriage to George Clayton. There are two romantic sub-plots: Emily's coquettish friend, Bell Fermor, pursues the attentions of many men, but finally settles on Officer Fitzgerald; Rivers' licentious friend, John Temple, is reformed through

his association with Rivers' tender sister, Lucy. As befits a romantic comedy, there are obstacles to be overcome before the marriage of the principal characters can take place. In Brooke's novel, the barriers to the marriage of Rivers and Emily are broken after they return to England; all three couples marry and settle down in England.

The novel, throughout its history, has been valued primarily for the characters' descriptions of garrison life in Lower Canada,¹⁰ but as New has suggested, this novel of sensibility has ironic and political undertones. Bell Fermor, socialite friend of the title character, notes that "the politics of Canada are . . . complex and . . . difficult" and dismisses them with the assertion that "no politics [are] worth attending to but those of the little commonwealth of woman" (pp. 86-87). Carl F. Klinck, in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition, makes the mistake of equating Bell's opinion with that of Brooke,¹¹ but Brooke knows that the two dominions are intimately connected. The language of Rivers' first letter betrays the attitude of an imperial conqueror. The vanity and avarice behind this male attitude to colonization are exploded by Brooke, and in the process the domestic plot of the work is raised to the level of political commentary.

That the attitude of the men in power is inadequate becomes clear in Brooke's ironic characterization of

Rivers. Enamoured by his first meeting with Emily Montague, Rivers rhapsodizes on her beauty and sensibilities, and in his letter to Temple pronounces: "I am a philosopher in these matters, and have made the heart my study" (p. 30). Rivers' tendency to philosophize about matters of the heart was earlier deflated by Temple himself in response to Rivers: "on the subject of friendship . . . I deny that it gives life to the moral world; a gallant man, like you, might have found a more animating principle[:] O Vénus! O Mère de l'Amour!" (p. 21). Rivers might well describe his "lovely Emily like Venus amongst the Graces" (p. 31), but he is too obtuse even to recognize that Emily loves him. Watching Emily in company with her fiancé Clayton, he interprets her behavior as a sign of love for this man; he writes his sister, "she loves him; I observed her when we entered the room: she blushed, she turned pale, she trembled, her voice faltered; every look spoke the strong emotion of her soul I hate this man for having the happiness to please her" (p. 53). Months later, as her marriage to Rivers draws near, Emily is still trying to convince him that she was flustered because of his presence, not the presence of her former fiancé:

You tell me, my dear Rivers, the strong emotion I betrayed at seeing Sir George, when you came together to Montreal, made you fear I loved him; that you were jealous of the blush which glowed on my cheek, when he entered the room: that you still remember it with regret; that you still fancy I had once

some degree of tenderness for him, and beg me to account for the apparent confusion I betrayed at his sight.

I own that emotion; my confusion was indeed too great to be concealed: but was he alone, my Rivers? can you forget that he had with him the most lovely of mankind?

(p. 254)

Rivers' questionable understanding of the heart is paralleled by his unsuitability as a successful settler in Canada. During the early stages of his enterprise he reports to his sister his "pleasure of cultivating lands here" and declares that he is not "ill-qualified for this agreeable task: I have studied the Georgicks [sic], and am a pretty enough kind of a husbandman as far as theory goes: nay, I am not sure I shall not be, even in practice, the best gentleman farmer in the province" (p. 32). At first Rivers' reference to the pastoral poem of Virgil seems to be a little joke on Brooke's part. A Latin poem written in 29 B.C. describing agricultural techniques suitable for Italy does not seem an adequate manual for settlement in the Canadian wilderness.

When one considers the political origins of the Georgics, its regional characteristics and its portrayal of women, Brooke's ironic intent takes on wider implications. The Georgics were written following a succession of civil wars in order to help rebuild the country by enhancing the role of the farming peasants. The text was addressed, however, not to the people who would actually do the

farming, but to the landowners themselves, the educated classes. Furthermore, the Georgics were first translated into English by Ogilvy in 1649, the year ending the Civil War in England: thus Brooke's mention of them in a narrative dealing with the end of the Seven Years' War becomes applicable, especially when one considers that the Georgics were used as a tool to rebuild an empire, to propagate the view of an ideal state onto the recently annexed Egypt. Finally, as J. W. Mackail explains in his Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today, to approach "the Georgics as though they were a technical treatise on husbandry, a handbook for farmers, is to miss their whole meaning. . . . What they were designed to do . . . was to embody . . . an ideal, an imaginative vision, that of a life at peace with itself and in harmony with nature."¹² Rivers' misreading of Virgil and Emily are early indicators of his misunderstanding of the requirements of farming in colonial Canada.

The Georgics are often called the most English of all translated poems, and no doubt Rivers knew them through Dryden's famous translation. Thus, Rivers' literary model for husbandry becomes in Brooke's handling of it an expression of his imperialistic intent; as a gentleman landowner he will cultivate a garden grounded in a model from the "old age" (p. 32). The uselessness of applying

methods suited to the Italian countryside in the harsh seasonal climate of the Canadian wilds undercuts Rivers' stated intentions and his ignorant pretensions. Further, when one considers that in the story of the Georgics the rape and death of a woman caused the infertility of the land, the reader can begin to see Brooke's feminine and political colors. The British attitude, epitomized by Rivers, cares only for the consolidation of power, and thus ignores in like fashion feminine sensibility and the reality of the Quebec landscape.

In this light, the connotations both of marriage and of agriculture in Rivers' choice of the word "husbandman" suggest that he is inadequate as a farmer and as a lover; in other words, he is "a husbandman [only] as far as theory goes." Rivers' ideals of colonization are out of touch with the world around him, whether that world is North America or England or the "empire" of women (p. 23). New correctly argues in his "Frances Brooke's Chequered Garden" that Rivers lacks self-identity and an awareness of reality: "He is a gentleman farmer ... but by being the gentleman foremost he always stops short of the real thing."¹³

In addition to her ironic qualifications of Rivers' perceptions and postures, Brooke extends her discussion of imperialism in her characterization of the two major women in the novel, Emily Montague and her friend Bell Fermor.

Emily is the fitting object of Rivers' adoration, for she is strictly conventional in attitude and behavior, acting always with precise propriety and excessive sensibility. In love with Rivers from "the moment I saw [him]" (p. 249), she is totally submissive to his will. Her only demonstration of a spirit of independence is early in the novel when she decides to break her engagement to the boring, condescending Clayton, despite the social pressure she is under to fulfil the obligations of her engagement. We have here that policing of women and interior colonization noted by Miles and Stern. In the social world of the British garrison, Major Melmoth's wife, at whose country home the principal characters often gather, attempts virtually to imprison Emily within the rules of propriety. She reproves Emily "with pain" for being so "quicksighted to [Clayton's] failings than is quite consistent with that tenderness, which . . . he has a right to expect " (p. 87). Commenting on Emily's reasons for breaking the engagement, Mrs. Melmoth patronizingly puts her in her place: "Though I approve your contempt of the false glitter of the world, yet I think it a little strained at your time of life: did I not know you as well as I do, I should say that philosophy in a young and especially a female mind, is so out of season as to be extremely suspicious". Emily defends herself against this pressure by asserting that "no one but myself can be a judge" (p. 88). However, once free

from her engagement to Clayton, she becomes completely subservient to Rivers; she repeats to him, "I have no will but yours" (pp. 179, 259). The extent of her "interior colonization" is measured by her willingness to give up all personal considerations, even of marriage to him, to ensure Rivers' happiness and good fortune: "my tenderness for you fills my whole soul, and leaves no room for any other idea. Rank, fortune, my native country, my friends, all are nothing in the balance with my Rivers" (p. 180).

The characterization of Emily acts, in the scope of the novel, as a mirror of Canada under British domination; consideration of Emily's "history" suggests that Brooke intends it so. Emily was raised by her uncle for seven years in France, taken to England for the remainder of her childhood, and finally to Canada, whereupon her uncle died. At the novel's close her long-lost and presumed dead British father appears to reward her not only with a fortune, but also with a husband, by co-incidence Rivers. She is thus, throughout her four-year stay in Canada, between fathers. Rivers early in the novel reported that there was no society in the colonies, "it being a kind of interregnum of government" (p. 19). Edwards has perceptively deduced that Rivers is specifically referring to the end of Governor Murray's time in Canada and the advent of the new Governor, Guy Carleton.¹⁴ But considering that the Seven Years' War had ended in 1759,

and that the "Most Christian Majesty" of France "cedes and guarantees to his said Britannick Majesty, in full right, Canada" by the Treaty of Paris in 1763,¹⁵ the wider implications of Rivers' remark and of Emily's portrait become clear. During Emily's brief four years in Canada, she is in hiatus, awaiting confirmation of her engagement to a British gentleman; during the period of the novel's action, the land of Canada is likewise in hiatus, awaiting consolidation of British rule.

Brooke does not intend, however, that Emily's final self-effacement should be the paradigm of future political arrangements. She criticizes the attitude of both the colonial and the colonized through the comments of Emily's friend, Bell Fermor. As others have noted, it is Bell who gives life and vitality to the world of the novel and who functions as "a foil for the extreme sensibility of the principal characters."¹⁶ She continually mocks both Rivers and Emily for their conventionality and foolish idealism. Emily declares her love for Rivers in terms of self-negation: "I love him--no words can speak how much I love him. My passion for him is the first and shall be the last of my life I have no pleasure but in Rivers' conversation, nor do I count the hours of his absence in my existence" (pp. 153-54). Bell, in contrast, denies such sentiments for herself: "I love, at least I think I do; but, thanks to my stars, not in the manner you do. I

prefer Fitzgerald to all the rest of his sex; but I count the hours of his absence in my existence; and contrive sometimes to pass them pleasantly enough" (p. 154). At the novel's end, when both couples marry in England, it is Bell's sceptical comments on Emily's marriage which overshadow Rivers' final remarks concerning their blissful future: "It is your great fault, my dear Emily, to suppose your love a phoenix, whereas he is only an agreeable, worthy, handsome fellow, comme un autre. . . . You should remember, my dear, that beauty is in the lover's eye; and that, however highly you may think of Rivers, every woman breathing has the same idea of the dear man. . . . Our romantic adventures being at an end, my dear; and we being all degenerated into sober people, who marry and settle; we seem in great danger of sinking into vegetation . . . (p. 313). The first two phrases which Bell emphasizes mark her keen sense of irony, just as the third correlates marital and geographical settlement. Bell's diction implies that this particular colonial male and his colonized female, who were originally going to settle in the backwoods of Canada, are suited at best for a life in the old country, not the new. Edwards concludes that "Brooke removes her characters from Canada and presents an essentially ambiguous view of its politics" because "she feared [Carleton] wouldn't--possibly knew he couldn't"--establish British social codes in Quebec.¹⁷ The

comments of Bell Fermor suggest rather that Brooke doubted he should.

Bell's viewpoint is given further credence in the novel by her changing reaction to the landscape of Canada. McMullen speaks of "the alarm with which [Brooke's] protagonists view the coming of winter" but cites only Bell's responses as examples (pp. 41-42); McMullen leaves the impression that all of the characters change their attitudes as Bell does. Bell's reaction is actually and definitely contrasted to those of the protagonists. Emily seems oblivious to the natural world around her, so caught up is she in her own sensibility and her love for her Rivers, rather than the natural rivers. For his part, Rivers sees the country only as a means of satisfying his pride and avarice: "This colony is a rich mine yet unopen'd; I do not mean of gold or silver, but of what are of much more real value, corn and cattle. Nothing is wanting but encouragement and cultivation I rejoice to find such admirable capabilities where I propose to fix my dominion" (p. 33). Nor throughout the course of the novel does he ever alter in his colonial attitude to the country. In contrast, as New has correctly argued in his "Chequered Gardens," Bell "throughout the book cultivates her landscape and . . . recognizes Canada for what it was--a wilderness garden with its own pleasures, its own advantages, its own prospect of danger and

development, not a simple balance to cultivated civilization, nor a few acres of snow to be summarily dismissed" (p. 35). Not only is Bell lively and open in matters of the heart--unlike Rivers and Emily--but also she is free enough to learn to appreciate the Canadian landscape and French society for what they are. On her departure for England, she alone of the major characters expresses "regret which I had no idea I should have felt, at leaving the scenes of a thousand past pleasures [She has] even a ~~st~~strong attachment to the scenes themselves, which are infinitely lovely, and speak the inimitable hand of nature which formed them" (pp. 235-36).

In the last third of the novel, which stands in ponderous contrast to the lively Canadian section, the difference between Bell and the other transplanted characters demonstrates that all is not well in the conventional world of England. There, all obstacles to the marriage of Rivers and Emily are slowly but finally resolved. Yet Rivers still doubts that Emily loves him and in their marriage and subsequent housekeeping arrangements they create and artificially maintain a contrived social world. Emily will make, she declares, a "wilderness" of flowers on the estate, and, dependent on his father-in-law's money, Rivers trusts that his "dear groupe [sic] of friends [will] have nothing to wish, but a continuance of [their] present happiness" (p. 316). New

perceptively observes in "Chequered Gardens" that the masquerade party at the novel's end signifies that the major characters "in happily accepting the life they are living as the best of all possible worlds are living with masks across their eyes, while Bell [who does not attend], living in the same community, remains conscious of the rigours they choose to ignore" (p. 36). As already noted above, Bell's fear of marital boredom undercuts Rivers' final hopes of social happiness. His jest to Bell, "I must teach you to love rural pleasures" (p. 314), suggests his own discomfort and points out his own ignorance of nature in contrast to Bell's acquired knowledge in Canada about love and society. He and Emily will live in a world of their own creation, supported by the conventions of their society; Bell lives in the same society but acknowledges its artificiality.

The novel unmaskes such conventional views of nature and human nature and shows how they do not transfer well to the harsher world of the North-American continent. Being colonial in the sense of accepting the conventions of British society is shown to be inadequate in the experience of life in Canada. The attitude of domination seen in Rivers and the response of total submission seen in Emily are not positive bases for marriage, or for the British take-over of New France. Historically, of course, exposure to the situation in Quebec did force the questioning of

those accepted colonial standards. The Quebec Act of 1774 actually reversed the policy set forth by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and instituted in great part the very recommendations of Gov. Murray for the maintenance of French language and religious rights. Although historical evidence seems to suggest that Brooke supported the anglicization of Canada along with her husband, the evidence of the novel implies that perhaps, like Bell, Brooke was less than convinced by conventional opinions. At any rate, the novel provided her with a forum in which to question those issues.

* * * * *

Another British woman who came to Canada with just such criticism in mind was Anna Brownell Jameson. She came for a nine-month stay in December 1836, out of a sense of duty to her estranged husband, the current Attorney General of Upper Canada, in order to help him further his political career. Clara Thomas has done extensive, invaluable research on Jameson, pointing out that she "was a respected authoress with a large circle of friends and acquaintances, very much a part of the literary life [in England] of her day."¹⁸ In 1838 she published in England a three-volume diary of her stay, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada.

Marian Fowler's more recent biographical exploration, The Embroidered Tent, expands our picture of Jameson's

literary life by considering the nature of her marriage. Her relationship with Robert Jameson had always been a stormy one; after only five days of marriage, they went their separate ways.¹⁹ Both Thomas and Fowler maintain that Jameson came to Canada not just out of a sense of duty to her husband, since married men gained political preferment more readily than separated men, but in the hope of "settling their marriage" one way or another.²⁰ She gave up much by coming. She had seven books to her credit, two of which were feminist in intent; before her voyage to Canada, she had been living independently in Europe for two years. In the opening entry of her Journal, she records her "regret for what I have left and lost."²¹ Her husband, on the other hand, seems to have gained the benefit of her visit: in the spring of 1837, he became Canadian Vice-Chancellor. In a letter to a friend, Jameson comments that "he has much power."²² Both Thomas and Fowler have noted that Jameson's unhappiness with her husband is "externalized" in her writings.²³ Fowler, in particular, advances the thesis that the gloom of the "Winter Studies" is in part caused by the misery of Robert, whereas the exhilaration of the "Summer Rambles" stems from her decision to leave the marriage (p. 159). What neither biographer has noted, however, is that Jameson projects her marital tensions onto her portrait of the political situation in Upper Canada.

Her book was well-received, primarily because of its timely publication; in 1838, there was great interest in the state of the Colonies because of the recent rebellions in 1837 in both Upper and Lower Canada. Jameson quite probably capitalized on this interest, for she mentions in the opening sentence of her preface the "difference of opinion" and "animosity of feeling" surrounding "the country to which [the journal] partly refers" (I, p. v) and offers no convincing reason why the book has been rushed into print. Furthermore, the time span of the diary is significant and consciously determined by Jameson: the diary is dated December, 1836 to late September 1837. The rebellion in Upper Canada, led by William Lyon MacKenzie, occurred on Dec. 4, 1837. Jameson had left Canada in the autumn of 1837, but had been in New York until January of 1838 awaiting her separation papers from Robert, so she had been in North America at any rate at the time of the rebellion and she does refer to "the late revolt" in her preface.

Jameson's journal coincides with the political tensions rising toward the violent confrontation, and she summarizes the salient features in Volume I. In the spring of 1836, the autocratic Governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, had clashed with the Reformers of the Executive Council and they resigned (I, pp. 146-48); Head dissolved the Legislature. In the ensuing election, Head actively

campaigned on the Tory side, which won resoundingly. During the time of Jameson's stay in Canada, the Reform Movement was frustrated in its inability to effect any change in the administration of the Colony. The main thrust of its platform was that the Governor should follow the advice of the elected representatives of the people, especially in matters of local concern, a principle which Jameson coyly gives support to when she concludes her summary: "as far as I can understand . . . the government of this province is not derived from the people who inhabit it, nor responsible to them or their delegates" (I, p. 148).

Throughout this turbulent period of Canadian history, Jameson's husband was deeply involved in the Colonial administration, rising to the head of the judiciary. If Frances Brooke had been acquainted with the British authorities at the time of the Conquest because of her husband's position, Anna Jameson was even more so, being as she was a prominent and important social figure, "the Chancellor's Lady." Indeed, she reports that she has "seen both sides" of the political argument (I, p. viii). One can only conjecture whether Jameson had read The History of Emily Montague, but comparison is certainly possible between the political intent of this work of fiction and Jameson's diary. In Emily Montague, Brooke brought into question many of the assumptions and values of colonial

rule, even using her husband as a model for a character who advocates anglicization. Jameson's husband is conspicuous in Winter Studies and Summer Rambles by his absence; Jameson was under pressure to do or say nothing which would embarrass or endanger Robert's position (I, pp. 35-6). But, unlike Bell Fermor who declares that "no politics is worth attending to, but the little commonwealth of woman," Jameson forthrightly states: "I am not one of those who opine sagely, that women have nothing to do with politics" (I, p. 104). Fowler's conjecture that Jameson felt much jealousy of her husband's position, particularly in light of all she sacrificed to come to Canada, seems quite valid in light of the outspoken views in the published diary.

Despite her disclaimer in the preface that she has "abstained generally from politics and personalities," she gives a damning summary of the Administration's abuse of the Colony (I, p. xi). Frances Brooke used the coyness of a coquette in her characterization of Bell Fermor in order to introduce an ironic viewpoint into her novel; Jameson employs in her journal similar self-effacing irony. By asserting that politics "are foreign to my turn of mind and above my capacity" (I, p. xi), she is able to make the following contradictory statement: "these notes . . . written in Upper Canada . . . have little reference to the politics . . . of that unhappy and mismanaged . . . country" (I, p. viii). She draws attention to the fact

that the "breaking out of the late revolt" has "abruptly and painfully awakened" some "sympathy now," but concludes that neglect "has too long existed" (I, p. ix). With such a damning indictment serving as the introduction to her book, it is little wonder she could report in a letter to a friend that her husband was "much displeased."²⁴

Certainly the bulk of her journal avoids direct reference to "politics and personalities," but she does describe the political parties in Volume I, as well as the Prorogation of the House by Governor Bond Head in March of 1837, adding her own commentary on certain Acts of the Legislature. She concludes her summary with the comment that she was "never able to make out . . . to my own satisfaction . . . whether I am Whig or Tory or Radical" (I, pp. 104-05). The overall focus of the journal, however, suggests where her sympathies lie.

Her position as "Chancellor's Lady" is the focal point of her questioning. Thomas has made clear in Love and Work Enough that Jameson's prominent social status was founded on a false marriage and that she felt conscious of playing a definite role for the sake of her husband's career (p. 126). To be her husband's "lady" requires her to give up independence and literary fame. Colonized as she is by the dominant power of her husband, she astutely analyses the colonial tensions of Upper Canada. In the first volume, she pictures herself hemmed in by "domestic matters" (I, p.

259) and "this relentless climate" (I, p. 171); but "while imprisoned" she is unable to "seek the companionship and sympathy which stand aloof" (I, p. 172). Fowler has documented how Jameson's husband ignored her and treated her coldly once she arrived in Toronto. Jameson writes her father: "Mr. Jameson is just the same and . . . therefore we are . . . as hopelessly separated as ever He has done nothing to make the time tolerable to me, but this not from absolute unkindness, but mere absence of feeling."²⁵ She uses similar language of separation and frustration when describing the relationship of the colony to the British administration: "Upper Canada [was] resentful and repining under the sense of injury, and suffering from the total absence of all sympathy on the part of the English government with the condition, the wants, the feelings, the capabilities of the people and country" (I, pp. viii-ix). She postulates that separation of the provinces may "render more secure the subjection . . . to the British crown," but may also perpetuate "jealousies . . . divided interests, narrowed . . . resources, [and poor] improvement" (I, p. 104). Her feminine interest in relationships, painfully sharpened by her estrangement from her husband, makes her conscious of political manipulation.

With several ironic phrases, she reveals her awareness of and disdain for the dominant position of the men in power. When describing the Prorogation of the House, she

points out that "my proper place was . . . among the wives of the officials" (I, p. 152). In advocating a bill to make "women solely answerable for the consequences of their own misconduct--misconduct, into which, in nine cases out of ten, they are betrayed by the conventional license granted to the other sex," she argues that "our masters and legislators" should make this "first step towards our moral emancipation" (I, pp. 155-56). When "the Legislative Council thanked his majesty's government humbly and gratefully for [its] . . . paternal regard," she praises the elected House of Assembly who, "on the contrary," are striving for "the advancement of true learning and . . . liberty" (I, p. 158).

On one occasion, for example, she tries to "rouse [herself] to occupation" despite the climate and her enforced idleness by involving herself in the important issue of the Clergy Reserves. Land was held by the Crown for the maintenance of the Clergy, but there was continual agitation over whether the money raised was to maintain the Church of England or to be divided proportionally among the several leading denominations. Jameson details for her readers the various sides to the issue, "a question momentous for the future welfare of the colony, and interesting to every thinking mind" (I, p. 30). Her position on the matter demonstrates her concern for education and she sees a way of being useful in the

situation: "The strange, crude, ignorant, vague opinions I heard in conversation, and read in debates and the provincial papers, excited my astonishment. It struck me that if I could get the English preface to Victor Cousin's report (of which I had a copy) printed in a cheap form, and circulated with the newspapers, adding some of the statistical calculations . . . it might do some good--it might assist the people to some general principles on which to form opinions. . . . I thought--I hoped--to obtain for it a favourable reception" (I, p. 35). However, in an oblique reference to her husband and his fellow officials, she notes that "cold water was thrown upon me from every side"; her involvement is seen as "interference" and deemed "visibly distasteful" (I, p. 36). She abandons "my project," but feels "more good-for-nothing than ever--more dejected." Open involvement in political and social matters is denied her by the propriety of her social position.

Consequently, her journal becomes her outlet, her forum for reform. She does make social and political commentary, primarily by focussing on the position of women as she perceives it in her personal explorations of the country. "The condition of women in any community," she maintains, "is a test of the advance of moral and intellectual cultivation in that community" (III, p. 300). Her frustrations in the role of Chancellor's Lady cause her to

lash out against the "petty colonial oligarchy" (I, p. 98) which dominates the society and produces "conventionalism in its most oppressive and ridiculous forms" (I, p. 106). Her stay in Canada sharpens her appetite for independence and, consequently, her feminist views.

As Fowler rightly points out, Jameson had "no use for those conventions which make up the female stereotype of her society" (p. 153), but the passage from "Winter Studies" which she quotes as evidence is also notable for its political language. Jameson's argument that "women need in these times" to be "self-governed" is a political challenge to those in power--the "men" whom she sarcastically labels "our natural protectors, our lawgivers, our masters"--for it is they who "cultivate" these "qualities which they pretend to admire in us" and "make them . . . the staple of the womanly character" (I, p. 203). This diction echoes that in Brooke's novel when Rivers sets out to "cultivate" both the wilderness and its women, and it emphasizes that, like Brooke, Jameson poses an alternate perspective to that of the colonizing male. "It is dangerous . . . [and] wicked," she asserts, "to bring up women to be 'happy wives and mothers' . . . as if for women there existed only one destiny." Since "thousands of women are not happy" in their colonized position as "wives and mothers," women must cultivate instead the "active energies of . . . the intellectual

faculties" which will "enable [them] to find content and independence when denied love and happiness" (I, pp. 206-07). The last phrase suggests the personal anguish which fires Jameson's political stance.

Jameson's travels in Canada and observations of the positions of pioneer and Indian women provide further evidence for her arguments. During her "Summer Rambles" she spends some time in the company of Indian women. When she compares their "hard . . . lot" with that of civilized women, she nevertheless concludes that Indian women are "in no false position" (III, p. 303). When Jameson lists the advantages of Indian women, she implies not only the unjust treatment of women in Christian society, but also the unkind attitude of her own husband: "she is sure of protection; sure of maintenance, at least while the man has it; sure of kind treatment; sure that she will never have her children taken from her . . . sees none better off than herself" (III, pp. 302-03). Furthermore, the hardships and degradation pioneer women face as settlers' wives are the results of the unrealistic expectations of their men. "In deference to the pride of man," she complains, "a want of cheerful self-dependence, a cherished physical delicacy, a weakness of temperament [are] falsely deemed . . . essential to feminine grace and refinement." Such socially inculcated characteristics are "altogether unfitting . . . for . . . the active out-of-door life in

which she must share and sympathise." "A woman who cannot perform for herself and others all household offices, has no business here," declares Jameson. But the settlers themselves "declare that they cannot endure to see women eat, and . . . speak of brilliant health and strength in young girls as being rude and vulgar" (II, pp. 153-54). Throughout Jameson's studies of the position of women in the colonial world, she develops the theme that "there is no salvation for women but in ourselves: in self-knowledge, self-reliance, self-respect, and in mutual help and pity" (I, p. 118); in much the same way, the Reformers of the time were calling for "Home-rule" and "responsible government" for Upper Canada.

Jameson's identification with the political aspirations of the colony are manifested in her erotic description of the Canadian landscape. As Fowler notes, "men destroy the wilderness, and Anna, seeing the land as female, mourns the ravishment of its beauty" (p. 169). Although Fowler asserts that "Anna Jameson is the first Canadian . . . to eroticize" the land, Frances Brooke had already drawn attention to the sexual implications of man's cultivation of the Canadian wilderness. But Jameson's language is more direct. In several passages she identifies with the landscape, but particularly that part of the wilderness being destroyed by men. "A Canadian settler hates a tree," she notes, and then compares the "two principal methods of

killing trees in this country" with the "two ways in which a woman's heart may be killed in this world of ours" (I, pp. 96-97). She likens the education of women to the process of dwarfing a tree "into an ornament for the . . . drawing-room" (II, p. 157). A woman's soul, she asserts, is not "a plot of waste soil, in which you shall sow what you like" (II, p. 156). Just as Bell Fermor in Brooke's novel learned about natural behavior by her contact with Canada, so too does Jameson come to realize that "we have gone away from nature, and we must . . . substitute another nature" (I, p. 203). "Better the wilderness . . . that forest, that rock yonder, with creeping weeds around it," she cries, than the artificial conventions of colonial society (II, p. 156-57).

Her forthright statements on the "Woman Question," as Thomas has argued in Love and Work Enough, "overstepped the fine-drawn line between permissible criticisms of the education of and role assigned to her sex and the highly suspect field of feminist propaganda. . . . She had dared to compare the lot of the European and the savage woman and to find the latter, in some cases, occupying the more honest and honoured position. Such radicalism could not be ignored" (p. 141). That it was not ignored is indicated by one male reviewer of the time:

No one reading these "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles" can possibly disentangle the outbreakings of the journalist's disappointed

hopes and wounded feelings . . . from the enthusiast's constant resolution to represent any arrangement of the position and duties of her sex what-~~so~~-ever,--even that where the Squaw is the Red Man's drudge in field and wigwam . . . as more equitable and to be desired than that existing according to the present system of European civilization. Mrs. Jameson has thus rendered it impossible for anyone answering her in her capacity of advocate, to refrain from also inquiring into her personal stake in the cause she pleads.²⁶

The reviewer recognized both the political implications of the journal and the personal dimensions of these "outbreakings" for a "more equitable" position than woman has in "the present system." The feminist and political "causes" which Jameson "advocates" in the journal actually do derive from and express her frustrations with the restrictions of matrimony; her call for social reforms for women stems from her personal desire for independence and freedom. That the reviewer should criticize Jameson's views by employing phrases alluding to the "outbreak" of 1837--led by the editor of the Colonial Advocate--reveals just how threatening Jameson's journal was to her male-dominated, imperialistic society.

Like Frances Brooke, Jameson offers a feminine perspective on social and political issues to counter the prevailing views of the men in power. Essentially, this feminine approach is personal, or individual. She begins her journal by asserting that she "know[s] no better way of coming at the truth, than by observing and recording

faithfully the impressions made by objects and characters on my own mind--or, rather, the impress they receive from my own mind" (I, p. 3). Her preface explains that the "original character" of the "journal form of writing" requires as its structural principle "personal feeling, on which the whole series of action and observation" depends. She defends in essence a feminine way of writing, in contrast to a "flat, heavy, didactic" masculine style (I, p. vii). The masculine attitude which would dismiss the personal tone of the journal, demonstrated by the reviewer quoted above, prevailed in later editions. The editors of the 1943 Nelson text, for instance, explain that "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles, as originally published, contained much material irrelevant to her travels."²⁷ They astutely hypothesize that "her unhappy marriage may have contributed to the extensive moralizing in which she indulged," but ignore the importance of this motivation and eliminate "such portions," while preserving "the real meat of the volume." Indeed, they produce what they want, "an excellent combination of readability and historical value," but in favoring the "historical," the editors have missed the central focus of the journal, and, ironically, the more profound political implications.

Fowler interprets Winter Studies and Summer Rambles as a record of the ending of Jameson's marriage and her embarkation into independence. In fact, Jameson's

rhetorical question, "can you imagine the position of a fretful, frivolous woman, strong neither in mind nor frame, abandoned to her own resources in the wilds of Upper Canada?" (II, p. 134), reflects upon her own position, for she displays both intellectual and physical strength and she uses the resources at hand to come to know Canada and herself. With the springtime, she journeys for two months, learning to appreciate the land and its people. Indeed, the record of her first view of Niagara Falls in the "Winter Studies" volume, when she was depressed and lonely, conveys her great disappointment at the scene (p. 86); when she records her second sighting in the "Summer Rambles" she is so impressed by the vitality mirrored in Niagara that she "could have . . . joined the dancing billows in their glorious . . . mirth" (II, pp. 53-54). Her "rambles" end abruptly with her return to "my own house in Toronto"; the pride of the possessive, in addition to her quiet pride upon completing her "wild expedition," contrasts sharply with her sense of imprisonment in Robert's house after her arrival in Canada.

Jameson was to leave Canada and her marriage almost immediately after the end of these "Rambles." She returned to her independent life in Europe, becoming an outspoken advocate of Women's Rights. At the same time, in Canadian politics, the brief rebellion in December made Britain aware of the problems to be addressed in the colonies.

Some measure of self-government was granted, ending the "petty colonial oligarchy" which held power in the country. Over the next decade, the principle of "responsible government" was gradually realized. Thus Jameson's stay in Canada coincided with the rising resistance to and reform of the political abuses of the Colonial Office. Sensitive to her own lack of power in relation to her husband's position in both the administration and their marriage, she is able to offer subtle and accurate analysis of the Colony's desire for the right to control its own affairs. Her journal records her movement away from her restricted position as the wife of the Vice-Chancellor toward an identification with the aspirations of the people of Canada. When, near the end of her overland journey she hears of the accession of Queen Victoria, Jameson declares that the monarch's "youth and sex are . . . in our favour"; Canada, "young like herself--a land of hopes," will mature, Jameson prays, under the "quick perceptions and pure kind instincts of the woman" (III, p. 263). Fowler suggests that "the glaring anomaly" of this event "probably made Anna realize that the time for stronger words [on the Woman Question] had come" and, simultaneously, that it was time for permanent separation from Robert (p. 172). Jameson also sees in the change of monarchy hope for the Reformers in Canada, for she expects the young Queen to provide the "knowledge . . . judgement

. . .[and] sympathy" needed to prevent "the loss of one of her fairest provinces" (I, p. x). There is no way of knowing if Queen Victoria ever read Jameson's advice, but recent research has indicated that the young monarch, along with her consort, took interest in the affairs of Canada and was at great pains to receive the most accurate reports on political issues requiring her decisions.²⁸

While Frances Brooke might speak ironically when Bell Fermor states that "no politics [is] worth attending to but those of the little commonwealth of woman," Anna Jameson has been more forthright: "I am not one of those who opine sagely, that women have nothing to do with politics" (I, p. 10). Jameson's artistic efforts, therefore, extend some aspects of Brooke's creativity, while differing in one major way. As Brooke used scenic description for thematic development and characterization, Jameson too weaves her observations of Canada into her primary thematic concern with woman's place in society and displays by her growing identification with the landscape her acceptance of her own independence. Both Bell Fermor and Jameson respond positively to the freshness and liberty of the rugged, young, unformed country. But whereas Brooke works through her fictional characters and her plot to offer her criticism of politics and love, Jameson puts herself forward as the heroine of her narrative. The epistolary novel of Brooke finds its correspondence in Jameson's

journalistic structure. The author, in other words, becomes both narrator and subject. Despite the difference in generic mode, Brooke exposes the falsity and cruelty beneath the colonial attitude and Jameson openly calls for reform in the colonial structure of society.

* * * * *

Commenting on pioneer settlers' wives, Anna Jameson mentioned in passing that she "never met with one woman recently settled here who considered herself happy in her new home and country"; but she qualified her castigation by adding that she had "heard of one, and doubtless there are others, but they are exceptions to the general rule" (II, p. 133). That exception might well have been Catharine Parr Traill, for in 1836 she published The Backwoods of Canada, a collection of letters addressed mostly to her mother in England which records her adaptation to the rugged life demanded of settlers over the course of her first three years in Upper Canada. Traill and her husband emigrated to Canada in 1832, as did her brother, Samuel Strickland, the year before and her sister, Susanna Moodie, shortly thereafter; they were part of the great wave of British immigrants in the 1830s who were to influence profoundly the political development of Canada. The unique contribution of Traill to our understanding of this period lies in her seemingly calm and rational adjustment to life in the backwoods while yet adhering to British codes of

gentility.

From the War of 1812 on, but especially in the 1830s, a large number of emigrants arrived in Canada, and Upper Canada in particular. Carl F. Klinck notes in his article on the "Literary Activity in the Canadas, 1812-1841" that "when that decade ended, the settlers from Britain would outnumber those of North American origin, and the English-speaking residents of the combined Canadas would match the total of those who spoke French." In this way, he concludes, "Upper Canada remained a unique island in the American 'Old Northwest'--retaining British rule, keeping up cultural relationships with the Old Land, and possessing a governmental system which would be adjusted (after a small rebellion) to provincial responsibility."²⁹ Although Klinck's conclusion is correct, his parenthetical remark slides over the period of unrest leading to the 1837 rebellion, which was largely a clash of cultures, of a British colonial perspective against American republicanism. Donald Creighton explains in his historical account, Dominion of the North, how the "new colonists . . . were for the most part, poor . . . and completely alien to [the] pioneer tradition" of North America. "The settlers of good family and breeding," he also notes, did not fare much better in the "unfamiliar and hostile environment [where they were] surrounded by Americanized neighbours who robbed them and watched their misfortunes

with malevolent satisfaction."³⁰ One of the loudest voices of dissent came from one of these emigrants, William Lyon Mackenzie, who turned to "the example of America in 1776 . . . [for] an excellent and salutary lesson to the statesman . . . with regard to . . . irresponsible government"; Mackenzie sought "the independence of Canada from the baneful domination of the Colonial Office."³¹ He saw in "the principles of the [American] Constitution" the political solution to the control of Upper Canada by the Family Compact, the very "colonial oligarchy" which Jameson had criticized. When the Reformers won the election in 1834, the Tory reaction of the next two years created the climate for open rebellion.

The political struggle between the Radical and Tory extremes of American independence and British colonialism is played out in the language and themes of Traill's book. Traill is divided, as are many of her contemporaries, between admiration for American ingenuity and loyalty to British conventions. For example, she praises "the Yankees, as they are termed," for being "the most industrious and ingenious . . . never at a loss for an expedient."³² She notices that even the "old settlers . . . acquire" American resourcefulness. Nevertheless, she qualifies her admiration by adding that "if I dislike them it is for a certain cold brevity of manner" (p. 293). When a citizen of Ohio inquires why the Traills chose to settle

in Canada rather than the more prosperous and civilized regions of the United States, her response is that "British subjects preferred the British government; and, besides, they were averse to the manners of his countrymen" (p. 293).

Traill's loyalty to the British system and her gentility go hand in hand; throughout the text she extols the advantages of adaptation to Canadian life, even advocating the necessity of changing opinions and habits, yet she endeavors to demonstrate that "conforming to circumstances"--a phrase she repeats countless times--does not entail the abandonment of British standards. Clara Thomas in her introduction to the New Canadian Library edition concludes that The Backwoods of Canada "provides . . . a portrait and a record of the woman Catharine Parr Traill . . . wished to be--a pioneer gentlewoman."³³ Certainly Traill "wished to be . . . a pioneer gentlewoman," yet she is not like Ed Rivers in The History of Emily Montague who, in his desire to be a "gentleman farmer," places more emphasis on the role of the gentleman than on the practical activities demanded by the role of the farmer. Thomas is correct to assert that Traill was "superbly equipped for her role [and] eminently successful in it" (pp. 41-42), but while Traill displays the resourcefulness and ingenuity she so admires in her "Yankee" neighbours, she is at pains to assert her class

and national origins. "It is considered by no means derogatory," she assures her reader, for "the wife of an officer or gentleman to assist in the work of the house, or to perform its entire duties. . . . In these matters we bush-ladies have a wholesome disregard of what Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so thinks or says. We pride ourselves on conforming to circumstances: and as a British officer must needs be a gentleman and his wife a lady, perhaps we repose quietly on that incontestable proof of our gentility, and can afford to be useful without injuring it" (pp. 270-71). Traill may structure her book to display her adaptation to life in North America, but she does not want to be mistaken--like some of the "old settlers"--for an American. "For all its roughness," she asserts, "I love Canada" (p. 310).

Jameson's journal covers the months just before the rebellion, and the sexual politics of her work demonstrate clearly that her sympathies lie with the calls for reform. At the same time, although the dates of Traill's letters cover July 1832 to May 1835, she makes no direct reference to politics, even though the events of 1834 and 1835 were so full of unrest. The closest she allows herself is a brief summary of the benefits of building the Trent canal system in order "to open a market for inland produce." She notes that the "project has . . . been under the consideration of the Governor" and acknowledges that "it presents some difficulties and expense" (p. 258). The

disinterest of the Colonial Government in "allowing the colonists the management of their internal concerns" was the chief point of contention between the government and both Reformers and Radicals.³⁴ Traill, however, refuses to enter the debate, leaving the matter "to abler persons than myself to discuss at large the policy and expediency of the measure" (p. 258). Those "abler persons" are undoubtedly male--she ends her discussion of the "progress" of the "settled townships" with the apology that "all this . . . might afford subject for a wise discussion between grave men, but will hardly amuse us women" (p. 259). Unlike Brooke or Jameson, Traill declines to enter the male realm of politics, especially to offer criticism.

When Brooke characterized the "pretty . . . husbandman," Ed Rivers, she did so to portray the unsuitability of his and others' colonial attitudes; Traill, in contrast, emphasizes successful, and practical husbandry, completely embracing her role as pioneer wife and finding fulfilment in "the routine of feminine duties and employment" (p. 1). She agrees with the description of the condition of pioneer women which Jameson had provided: they are "always pining . . . are discontented and unhappy. Few enter with whole heart into a settler's life" (p. 105). But unlike Jameson, who attributes woman's condition to the impractical definition of femininity required by men, Traill "prefers honestly representing facts in their real

and true light, that the female part of the emigrant's family may be enabled to look them firmly in the face . . . and, by being properly prepared, encounter the rest with . . . high-spirited cheerfulness" (p. 2). The all-encompassing detail of the companion-piece to Backwoods, The Canadian Settler's Guide, published twenty years later in 1854, underlines Traill's focus on practical housewifery as the means for successful husbandry in Canada.

So much does Traill enter her role as settler's wife that, as she explains in the preface to The Settler's Guide, she is willing "to abandon the paths of literary fame" if she can "render a solid benefit" to women who "through duty or necessity are about to become sojourners in the Western Wilderness."³⁵ Traill eschews to write "a work of fiction" like Brooke's or "a mass of personal adventure" like Jameson's, in favor of "collating my instruction into the more homely but satisfactory form of a Manual of Canadian housewifery." Jameson's rebellious statements on the position of women stemmed largely from her own needs; Traill's works, on the other hand, have a noticeably detached tone, a lack of personal feelings and details. Her brief allusions in books published late in her life to "hours of loneliness, and hours of sorrow and suffering"³⁶ suggest that she, too, wrote out of personal necessity. But rebellion against her "lot" (p. 310) is not her solution; "occupation within-doors" (p. 105) becomes

her means of surviving the demands of settlement.

Traill's personal trials have been the subject of much speculation in Canadian criticism despite the near absence of emotional references in her work.³⁷ Fowler speculates quite convincingly that Traill focusses her attention on running the household because of her growing fears of her own emerging strengths, especially in light of her husband's growing weaknesses (p. 76). Literary critics have often mentioned the Traills' success as pioneers, attributing Mrs. Traill's calm, rational tone to her positive experience of settlement in the backwoods.³⁸ The Traills were not as successful as earlier scholars believed however, nor, more importantly, as Traill herself implies. Traill notes, for example, the growth of the "family assets," while omitting the fact which Fowler discovered that "their existence was such a struggle that by 1835 Thomas wanted to give up, advertising their property for sale in the Cobourg Star" (p. 76).

Just as Robert Jameson was conspicuously absent from Jameson's journals, so too is Thomas Traill from his wife's book. Moreover, the references to him that do exist reflect his weaknesses and poor adaptation to life in the backwoods. On board the ship to Canada, Traill admits the "monotony" of the voyage, but suddenly says: "I really do pity men who are not actively employed: women have always their needle as a resource against the overwhelming

weariness of an idle life; but where a man is confined to a small space, such as the deck and cabin of a trading vessel, with nothing to see, nothing to hear, nothing to do, and nothing to read, he is really," she concludes, "a very pitiable creature" (p. 9). Shortly after their arrival, when Traill is "struggling with mortal agony" against cholera, she receives the care she needs "from the females of the house," who must as well "soothe the anguish of my poor afflicted partner," who is healthy but helpless (p. 43). Again, two years later, when the entire family is "confined to our beds with ague," Traill and her baby recover "in a fortnight's time"; on Thomas Traill, however, the illness hangs "during the whole of the summer, and [throws] a damp upon his exertions and gloom upon his spirits" (p. 300). In an attempt to explain her husband's depression, Traill attributes his condition to "the certain effect of ague" and notes as well that her "dear child" has also remained "very pale and spiritless." Her justification of her husband only damns him further, for the fact that the baby is male implies that Thomas Traill is as weak as a child. In contrast to such examples of masculine weakness, the "prompt assistance" of Traill's sister and sister-in-law during their illness points out the nurturing strength of women. In the book as a whole, Traill distorts the portrait of her husband, both obscuring and indirectly suggesting his weaknesses. Her concluding

remark, that her "husband is becoming more reconciled to the country" (p. 311), glosses over that he has been unreconciled and that he is not yet adjusted to their new life. Traill's obfuscation flies in the face of fact; Fowler records the steady decline of Thomas Traill in fortune and in health until "in 1857, when a fire completely destroyed [their farm], Thomas went into a deep depression from which he never recovered, dying the following year" (p. 84).

If The Backwoods of Canada reflects male weakness, it nevertheless reveals female strengths. The "prospect" of the "loneliness of the backwoods" which defeats so many women "does not discourage [me, for] I know I shall find plenty of occupation within-doors, and I have sources of enjoyment when I walk abroad that will keep me from being dull" (p. 105). In addition to her own portrait, the book is filled with example after example of women who display not only courage and strength but also kindness and charity. During her travels to the backwoods, she repeatedly divides the women they meet into those who nurture and those who do not, giving high praise to those women who do. For example, she notes how some servant girls in taverns give aid to the weary travellers far beyond the requirements of their duties. She notes "the accomplished daughters and wives . . . milking their own cows, making their own butter, and performing tasks of

household work that few [British] farmers' wives would . . . condescend to take part in" (p. 182). The Canadian Settler's Guide offers several examples of "female heroism"; women whose husbands are ill or dead carry on the work of the farm in addition to running the home and caring for the children.³⁹ Finally, near the end of The Backwoods of Canada, Traill describes a model family. The woman is the source of its health, peace and prosperity: the "neatly dressed matron, of lady-like appearance" is working at the "large spinning-wheel . . . [which] occupied the centre of the room." All of the children's clothing was "the produce of the farm and their mother's praiseworthy industry." The "good sense, industry, and order" of the "little household" are attributed by Traill to the woman's "prudence" (pp. 272-73). The woman in this family portrait, symbolically located at the heart of the scene, stands as an icon of Traill's theme of "good housewifery" as the solution both for the loneliness and despair experienced by so many of the immigrant women and for the welfare of the settlers' families.

The Backwoods of Canada was written, Traill says in the preface to The Canadian Settler's Guide, "with the view of preparing females of my own class more particularly, for the changes that awaited them in the life of the Canadian emigrant's wife" (p. xviii). There is, however, tremendous irony in her method of "preparing females." Her contention

that women had the strength and ingenuity--if they willed--to accomplish numerous practical tasks, certainly released women from some of the restrictions of genteel femininity which Jameson criticized. She was able to declare that "I prize and enjoy my present liberty in this country" from "the fetters that etiquette and fashion are wont to impose" upon women in England (p. 269). But having thus on the one hand celebrated freedom for women to participate actively in the enterprise of settlement, she then confines their activity to the sphere of the home and does so by employing rhetoric which enforces the wife's subservience to her husband. To recall Miles's observation, Traill "polices" other women.

I have noted how she repeats that a woman may be useful without endangering her reputation as a lady. But she repeatedly admonishes those "repining" women that they must "bear with cheerfulness the lot we have chosen" (p. 310). She describes the "qualifications of a settler's wife" by evoking biblical, imperial and patriarchal ideals: "Like the pattern of all good housewives described by the prudent mother of King Lemuel, it should be said of the emigrant's wife, 'She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff' 'She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness'" (pp. 181-82). The emigrant's wife should practise "a cheerful conformity to circumstances" and do "her duty in the state

of life unto which it may have pleased God to call her" (p. 182). Traill repeats such pious admonitions in her "introductory remarks" to The Canadian Settler's Guide (pp. 4, 12). Inevitably, submission to God involves submission to one's husband. In a passage wherein Traill expresses the need for a book such as The Backwoods, she summarizes her main theme, which is to emphasize "our duties and the folly of repining at following and sharing the fortunes of our spouses, whom we have vowed . . . to love 'in riches and in poverty, in sickness and in health.'" "Too many [women] pronounce these words," continues Traill, "without heeding their importance"; "their faithfulness" may be put to the "severe test" of "quitting home, kindred, and country . . . but the truly attached wife will do this, and more also, if required by the husband of her choice" (p. 284). And Traill reinforces her prescription for other women with her own example. In a sentence which alludes to Thomas Traill's discontent, Traill asks rhetorically, "have I not a right to be cheerful and contented for the sake of my beloved partner? The change is not greater for me than him; and if for his sake I have voluntarily left home, and friends, and country, shall I therefore sadden him by useless regrets?" (p. 105). Both Jameson and Traill address the position of women on the basis of their marital relations, but whereas Jameson advocates independence for women because she desires it personally, Traill insists on

the subservience of women to counteract her own husband's loss of stature.

The sexual politics underlying Traill's "good housewifery" suggest the wider political ramifications of The Backwoods of Canada. The very strengths she manifests and which she calls on other women to display, "ingenuity and expediency," are the ones she admires in the "Yankee" settlers. Several times in her book she praises Canada as a "country where independence is inseparable from industry" (p. 271); the emigrant comes "with the view of realizing an independence . . . that he had not the means of settling in life in the home country" (p.269). Consequently the very qualities needed for settlement in Canada and the prime motivation cause the settler to lean to the American way of life, to emulate those qualities of the Yankees which guarantee success. But because Traill does not wish to be mistaken for an American, she places heavy emphasis on her British roots, and her genteel British manners, both of which distinguish her from Americans. Perhaps because her circumstances in the backwoods call up her strengths and reveal--despite her half-hearted protestations to the contrary--the weaknesses of her husband, Traill, conservative as she is in international politics, calls also for the subservience of woman in the settler's life. Traill fears the very qualities of independence which she so clearly exemplifies and advocates, and she represses her

fears beneath her conventional sexual and political views.

In the light of Traill's personal motivations, it is not surprising to learn that she vehemently supported the Loyalists during the Mackenzie Rebellion. To a later edition of The Backwoods of Canada (1842) Traill added two final chapters, one of which is entitled "The Mackenzie Rebellion." In this penultimate chapter of the new edition, Traill recounts the events of the rebellion and its effects on her family during the month of December, 1837. She also reveals her political position. The "men of all ages and degree" who answered the "summons" of the government "from every part of the country" are, in Traill's assessment, "anxious to prove their attachment to their Queen," and as well to "the established government, by whose laws they were protected."⁴⁰ Upon hearing that "the party of rebels under their chief leader is . . . flying before the loyal militia," Traill praises God "who has confounded the malice of the enemies of our adopted country" (p. 329). Traill's conclusion is that the rebellion is "uncalled for" (p. 341).

Most of The Backwoods, as already noted, is dominated by a cool, rational tone, so it is important to remark the vehemence of her invective against Mackenzie's attempt "to stir up the Americans . . . to tear from us our Government and laws, and force us to become a free and independent people." She continues sarcastically: "Surely our freedom

would be a blessed gift so obtained!! And with the traitor Mackenzie for our President our independence were most honourable and admirable!! God forbid we should change our dependence on a gracious Sovereign to become the tools and victims of the most despicable of rebels" (p. 335). In a longer paragraph she continues in the same language to repudiate Mackenzie and the Americans and emphasize that "the Canadian population . . . [is] opposed to change," and content with "our dependence" on "the Mother Country": "shall we like ungrateful children, while yet dependent on her for support, withdraw ourselves from her arms?" (p. 339). Her fierce assertions of sexual and national dependence clearly indicate that Traill was emotionally ambivalent about the personal and political independence to be found in Canada.

That ambivalence is suggested by the references to the men and women of her family during the days following the rebellion. Although the subheading for the chapter mentions that "Mr. Moodie [her brother-in-law] and Mr. Traill Join the Forces to oppose Mackenzie" (p. 320), her description of these two "gallant volunteers" (p. 331) intimates, with the irony that characterizes her ambivalence toward men, that Mackenzie had nothing to fear from them. Each time Traill mentions her brother-in-law, she refers to his "lameness from a recent fracture of the small bone of his leg" (p. 326); despite the fact that he

is "unfit for moving," he is stubbornly "resolved" to "join the rest of his brothers in arms" (p. 328). Little is said of her husband, except for her worry for his safety; but while Traill assumes the two of them are in Toronto, her husband arrives unexpectedly at the door, explaining that he had proceeded no further than Port Hope. He departs the next day for another "meeting of the Volunteers," but having "fallen and sprained his ankle, so severely as to be unable to get further on his way home," he sends for someone to come and fetch him. He is "so hurt as to require assistance to dismount from his horse" (p. 333). In contrast to these two ineffectual men, she and her sister, Susanna, cope with the homesteads and children. Despite her statements of worry for the absent men, Traill and her sister "made a merry party . . . [as they] chatted merrily away" in the oxsleigh, "not a whit less happy than if we had been rolling along in a carriage with a splendid pair of bays" (pp. 229-30). Such a sleigh-ride "through the thick woods after a heavy snowfall," continues Traill, "is one of the greatest treats this country affords me" (p. 330). "Enjoying quiet day[s]," "preparing for . . . tea," Traill presents herself as a composed and content lady awaiting the return of her "gallant" (p. 331).

One can conclude only that Catharine Parr Traill was unwilling to acknowledge the total implications of her own "facts." She retreats into the sanctity of home and

country, rather than declare herself independent of her husband or of England. Following the passionate outburst against Mackenzie and his rebels quoted above, Traill offers up a prayer of thanksgiving to the male Deity of Christianity for the prospect of the new year and prays to "be contented with our lot whatever it may be" (p. 336). Only symbolically does Traill come close to voicing her complex feelings regarding independence. She describes a "great American hawk . . . in pursuit of one of my geese"; "painfully interested for the safety of my goose, I could not help admiring the graceful evolutions of her assailant . . . rising slowly again higher and higher." She admires the hawk for being "calm and collected as though he disdained to exhibit fear or annoyance" (pp. 336-37). The hawk is, of course, both American and male; the goose, female. Traill will not allow her masculine strength to assert itself ^{at expense of} (over) her femininity; in fact, she uses it to control her emotions and to rationalize her subservient dependence. She quashes any thoughts of independence as severely as she castigates the rebels of 1837.

Traill's control of her feminine impulses manifests itself, finally, in her response to the Canadian wilderness. Bell Fernald, in The History of Emily Montague, sees the possibility of a more natural basis in human relationships through her contact with the Canadian landscape. Anna Jameson, too, from her journey through the

Canadian wilderness and her contact with Indians, gained the courage to leave her marriage for an independent existence. Catharine Parr Traill, however, responds to the natural world around her with the rational eye of a scientist. "As much of the botany of these unsettled portions of the country is unknown to the naturalist, and the plants are quite nameless," remarks Traill, "I take the liberty of bestowing names upon them according to inclination or fancy" (p. 120). Fowler suggests that Traill "relates to wilderness rationally, not emotionally"; "paranoid with fear" at the immensity of the forests, Traill "focus[es] on the close-up view, and . . . make[s] room in her world only for the small, pretty features of the Canadian landscape: birds, butterflies, flowers, those that she can fit within her English embroidery-frame" (p. 73).

The power of naming is, of course, a traditionally masculine attribute; it declares man's dominion over nature. To **the** same effect, it affords Traill a means of controlling the unknown about her, just as she controls her feminine nature and her patriotism. In later life, Traill published botanical texts on the flora and fauna of Canada, for which she gained public recognition and official commendation. Carl Ballstadt notes that these works "are the culmination of the urge to explore and to name Canadian phenomena which Traill first declared in The Backwoods of

Canada." Having examined these, Ballstadt notes in Traill's later essays "a degree of ambivalence about the impact of settlement and cultivation on the Canadian forest [She laments] the disappearance of the flora and fauna that settlement destroys."⁴¹ It was, nevertheless, a settlement she applauded and helped to accomplish.

Like Anna Jameson, Traill remarks that "man appears to contend with the trees of the forest as though they were his most obnoxious enemies" (p. 197); but unlike Anna Jameson, Traill does not condemn masculine destructiveness nor identify with the ravaged landscape. Her feminine intuition perhaps expresses itself in the first months of settlement as she pleads with "the choppers to spare . . . a few pretty sapling beech-trees." The outcome is revealing; "only one . . . was saved from destruction in the chopping" and it is burnt by the heat of the sun. "It now stands," concludes Traill, "a melancholy monument of the impossibility of preserving trees thus left." Thereafter, Traill abandons such feminine delicacy and bows to the dictates of the "useful" expediency of "preserving a grove of trees" on their land in order to "draw out the old timbers for fire-wood" (p. 199). This movement from what could be called a feminine to a masculine perspective reflects the intensification of repressive and conservative values in her responses to sexual and political issues and to the landscape. Recognition of this shift, nevertheless,

remains less central to an understanding of Traill than the observation of her ambivalence and what appears to be her ignorance of her own contradictions.

* * * * *

Susanna Moodie followed her sister, Catharine Parr Traill, to the backwoods of Canada with her husband, J. W. Dunbar Moodie, to take up the land granted him as a half-pay officer. Although the sisters settled at the same time and in the same area, Moodie's published account in 1852 of her settlement, Roughing It in the Bush, records an experience and temperament very different from Traill's. Moodie's stated purpose in writing the book is the opposite of Traill's who wishes her book to be "a handbook for emigrating"; Moodie, in contrast, hopes that "these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family [at least] from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes, by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada."⁴² Moodie's account bristles with rage and indignation at her "lot" in Canada. Consequently, Moodie's writing style is emotional, personal and histrionic, as opposed to the sure, measured pace and impersonal manner of Traill's history.

The differences in style and consciousness derive from two very different personalities and experiences. Previous scholars have attributed Moodie's attitude to the fact that the Moodies failed miserably at farming while the Traills

succeeded.⁴³ We now know that the Traills were not as successful as The Backwoods of Canada implies. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that the Moodies were still failures in comparison; bad management of finances, ill luck, natural disasters and mounting debt reduced them to a hopeless situation. The two women hold different perspectives on their roles on the family farms. As noted, Traill sees practical housewifery as the crux of her task and sets about learning it and then instructing other immigrant women in the craft of good housekeeping. Moodie, on the other hand, learns such tasks quite unwillingly and often only out of necessity. Although she copes well when she eventually does labor in the home and on the farm, she is slow to adapt, to accept the change from her former genteel station in life. Moodie in no way follows Traill's example or instruction.

That Roughing It in the Bush was written with her sister's book in mind cannot be doubted. As Carl F Klinck points out in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition, "thousands of readers in England knew the farm life of the Otonabee woods before Mrs. Moodie wrote about it, because her sister's Backwoods was so popular as to be a handbook for emigrating gentlewomen."⁴⁴ Allusions to The Backwoods of Canada in Roughing It in the Bush highlight Moodie's antagonistic attitude. In her introduction to the first edition, she deliberately echoes the title of her

sister's book, addresses its audience and counters its theme: "what the Backwoods of Canada are to the industrious and ever-to-be honoured sons of honest poverty, and what they are to the refined and accomplished gentleman, these simple sketches will endeavour to portray."⁴⁵ The uncapitalized phrase, "backwoods of Canada," is repeated often throughout her book, but most pointedly in Moodie's concluding remarks which contain some of her most vicious comments about the life of a settler in Canada. "I have given you a faithful picture of a life in the backwoods of Canada, and I leave you to draw from it your own conclusions," she claims, and then continues by stating concisely her conclusion: "To the poor, industrious workingman it presents many advantages; to the poor gentleman, none!" (p. 562). There is only one explicit reference to Traill as "the author of The Backwoods of Canada" (p. 514). However, in an earlier scene, just after the Moodies first arrive in the backwoods, Traill appears "to escort [Moodie] through the wood." "Timid . . . with only my female companion in the vast forest," Moodie nevertheless feels it necessary to keep "my fears to myself, lest I should be laughed at." Traill, "who had resided for nearly twelve months in the woods,"⁴⁶ is wearing "Indian moccasins" and is "quite independent"; Moodie, on the other hand, new to the backwoods and no doubt dressed according to British fashion, "stumbled at every step" (p.

292). Throughout her time in the backwoods Moodie indeed "stumbled at every step," and, perhaps out of her bitterness toward her life in Canada, she harbors some jealousy toward her sister who adapted so well to that same life. Her inclusion of an anecdote which ridicules a botanist's interest in "lichens . . . [and] all sorts of rubbish . . . insignificant plants that everybody else passes by without noticing" would seem to be a deliberate attempt to belittle her sister's interest and fame as a botanist (p. 236). Finally, it is not insignificant that the title is dedicated to Moodie's sister in England, Agnes Strickland, "Author of the Lives of the Queens of England."

In her preface and throughout her book Moodie makes clear that her emigration to Canada is "determined" by her husband (p. 88). Nor does she, like Traill, resolve "to be cheerful and contented for the sake of my beloved partner,"⁴⁶ but rather stresses "the hurry and bustle of a sudden preparation to depart" (p. 88). Only one month before their departure, her husband goes to a lecture about emigration to Canada; one of her sisters suggests that he "is possessed with the . . . mania" to emigrate. "Little dreaming that I and mine should share in the strange adventures" of emigration, Moodie replies to her sister: "Nay, God forbid! . . . I am certain [he] will return quite sickened with the Canadian project" (p. 77). In a later, more reflective passage, she explains that on "the

last night . . . at home" she would not have emigrated "had it still been in my power" (p. 242). Instead, she had "bowed to a superior mandate, the command of duty." She explains that her husband's "half-pay . . . is too small to supply the wants of a family and . . . maintain his original standing in society" (pp. 242-43). She acknowledges his economic point of view, that the "inclination" to marriage is "an act of imprudence in over-populated England" and "emigration must be the result" (p. 243). "The sacrifice," she recalls him saying, "must be made, and the sooner the better. My dear wife, I feel confident that you will respond to the call of duty; and hand-in-hand and heart-in-heart we will go forth to meet difficulties" (p. 244). Moodie hides from him that she is "reluctant to respond to my husband's call."

Part of her reluctance stems from the "energy and strength" she witnessed in her own family, whose members had used their "literary attainments" to overcome the loss of their father's wealth, "without losing aught of their former position in society" (pp. 244-45). Moodie implies that her husband is too proud to do as she and her family did, "turned their backs upon the world, and upon the ephemeral tribes that live but in its smiles." Her account of their departure stresses that her husband lacks the "self-denial" and "high resolve" which would enable him to provide for his family in England.

These weaknesses also render him quite unfit for the task of emigration. If Thomas Traill was unsuccessful in the backwoods of Canada, J. W. Dunbar Moodie was an even more pronounced failure. Fowler points out that Mr. Moodie "didn't suffer from [Thomas] Traill's deep depressions, but he had a physical handicap: his left arm was partially paralyzed from an old wound and almost useless. . . . [As well] Moodie was quite as inept as Traill in financial matters" (p. 122). Mrs. Moodie expresses her frustration at the disappointment of his hopes and promises in comments about the inadequacies of the "gentleman farmer" to be a settler, comments which are not at all flattering to her husband. She describes him as the "lover of ease-- . . . the poet, the author, the musician, the man of books, of refined taste and gentlemanly habits" (p. 244). Frances Brooke's theme that the gentleman is unfit for Canada, reinforced by Traill's narrative, is furthered by Moodie's concluding statement:

The gentleman can neither work so hard, live so coarsely, nor endure so many privations as his poorer but more fortunate neighbour. Unaccustomed to manual labour, his services in the field are not of a nature to secure for him a profitable return. The task is new to him, he knows not how to perform it well; and, conscious of his deficiency, he expends his little means in hiring labour, which his bush-farm can never repay. Difficulties increase, debts grow upon him, he struggles in vain to extricate himself, and finally sees his family sink into hopeless ruin.

(p. 563)

Moodie is more openly critical than Traill of her husband and more rebellious against the patriarchal conventions of marriage which demand obedience from the woman. As a result, although she is far from an activist, she has much more in common with Brooke and, especially, Jameson, than she does with her "independent" sister.

The narrative of Roughing It in the Bush unfolds within a political framework, as do the works of all three women. Its time span corresponds to the dates of Moodie's arrival to and departure from the backwoods, 1832 to 1839; unlike her sister, she not only covers the time of the 1837 rebellion but actually incorporates the uprising into the structure of her story, arguing that "the revolution . . . was about to work a great change for us and for Canada" (p. 467). Like Jameson, Moodie identifies with the rebellious spirit of 1837. Moodie writes, of course, with the benefit of hindsight, so that although at the beginning of "Outbreak," the chapter dealing with the rebellion, she notes that "buried in the obscurity of those woods, we knew nothing, heard nothing of the political state of the country," subsequent events make her realize "the abuses that had led to the . . . position of things" (pp. 467, 472). In her preface to the 1871 edition of Roughing It, she reveals the extent of her political awareness: "the insurrection of 1837 . . . gave freedom to Canada. . . .

It drew the attention of the Home Government to the many abuses then practised in the colony, and . . . ultimately led to all our great national improvements."⁴⁷ In the companion volume to Roughing It, concerning her life in Belleville, Life in the Clearings, her political sentiments appear to lie with the Reformers. "The Tory party," she remarks, "branded . . . every conscientious and thinking man who wished to see a change for the better in the management of public affairs . . . with those discontented spirits who had raised the standard of revolt against the mother country." "In justice" she defends Mackenzie and his followers, pointing out that they rebelled "not without severe provocation . . . towards the colonial government and the abuses it fostered."⁴⁸ Michael A. Peterman, in his recent biographical article on Moodie, has concluded that the Moodies were "progressive and reformist" in their politics, as is indicated by the fact that they named one of their sons Robert Baldwin in honor of the Reform politician who was the principal architect of the responsible government instituted in 1848.⁴⁹ Although Moodie "own[s] that [in 1837] my British spirit was fairly aroused," so much so that she composed some "loyal staves" in order to "serve the good cause" (p. 472), she becomes after "that great day of the outbreak" (p. 468) an advocate of reformist politics, very unlike her sister who in 1842 was to add her loyalist and repressive views of the

rebellion to the text of The Backwoods of Canada.

Consequently, what is important to note in the chapter "Outbreak" is that it records how Moodie becomes politicized. Most of the chapter on the 1837 rebellion which Traill added to her book relates the facts of the conflict and reveals her passionate loyalty to England. In contrast, Moodie mentions few facts about the rebellion; instead, she focusses on how she "breaks out" in order to gain independence from her oppressive situation: "To remain much longer in the woods was impossible, for the returns from the farm scarcely fed us, and but for the clothing sent us by our friends from home, who were not aware of our real difficulties, we should have been badly off indeed" (p. 484). It is ironic that the only way Mr. Moodie is "enabled to liquidate many pressing debts and to send home from time to time sums of money to procure necessaries" is to abandon farming and re-enter the military; he joins the "regiments of militia . . . formed to defend the colony," after the rebellion, against attack from the United States (p. 474).

During his absence of several months, Mrs. Moodie displays a notable development in her husband-less role; she and her old servant, Nellie, run the farm successfully. In the early stages of her experience of "bush life," she had great difficulty with her servants; now, "the good old Jenny" is a friend (p. 486). Unlike her husband who was

swindled by several business arrangements, Moodie makes satisfactory deals with her neighbors: "by lending my oxen for two days' work, I got Wittals, who had no oxen, to drag me in a few acres of oats, and to prepare the land for potatoes and corn" (p. 480). "Our garden was well dug and plentifully manured," Moodie brags, because she and Nellie bring the manure, "which had lain for several years at the barn door, down to the plot in a large Indian basket placed upon a hand-sleigh." Presumably, her husband had been too busy all those years to see to this mundane task. Since they "did not know how to use" the guns in the house, Moodie utilizes her female talents to invent a trap for ducks "by braiding" strips of bark. During the summer there is even an incident when Moodie borrows a kettle--a reverse of the borrowing episodes of earlier chapters--and, even though the pot breaks, the situation turns to her advantage when she sells her daughter's toy to mend the broken pot and to purchase a new one: "in exchange for the useless piece of finery, we had now two kettles at work" (p. 477). After her husband returns in August, Moodie proudly points out that "the harvest was the happiest we ever spent in the bush. We had enough of the common necessaries of life. A spirit of peace and harmony pervaded our little dwelling" (p. 486).

She also puts her feminine, genteel talents to work to gain financial independence. It is "just at this period

[that] I received a letter from a gentleman, requesting me to write for a magazine [the Literary Garland], just started in Montreal, with promise to remunerate me for my labours" (p. 475). Before this time, ironically, she had "never been able to turn my thoughts toward literature during my sojourn in the bush" because "when the body is fatigued with labour . . . the mind is in no condition for mental occupation." Now, even though she is running the farm as well as the house, she "no longer retired to bed when the labours of the day were over [but] sat up and wrote (p. 476). The "new era in my existence" which has "opened up" echoes her family's use of literary talents to overcome financial difficulties which she mentioned earlier. She also adapts another genteel feminine talent to her purpose: "Besides gaining a little money with my pen, I practised a method of painting birds and butterflies upon the white, velvety surface of the large fungi, that grow plentifully upon the bark of the sugar-maple. . . . These, at one shilling each, enabled me to buy shoes for the children" (p. 479). "I actually shed tears of joy," she exclaims, "over the first twenty-dollar bill I received from Montreal. It was my own; I had earned it with my own hand; and it seemed . . . to form the nucleus out of which a future independence for my family might arise" (p. 476). She gains confidence and strength over the course of this chapter as she usurps her husband's role as breadwinner.

The most significant act of rebellion in the chapter, however, is Moodie's letter to the Lieutenant-Governor explaining their situation and asking "him to continue my husband in the militia service, in the same regiment in which he now held the rank of captain, which by enabling him to pay our debts, would rescue us from our present misery" (p. 485). She knows that "the act I had just done would be displeasing to . . . my husband . . . proud and sensitive as he was." Nevertheless, she "felt resolutely determined to send it." Her confession, "the first secret I ever had from my husband was the writing of that letter," implies that this secret was not the last. It is, after all, successful: from this covert action comes her husband's appointment as Sheriff of Hastings County and their removal from the bush to Belleville. Mr. Moodie remains ignorant of the source of his good fortune; he "looked upon it as a gift sent from heaven" (p. 544). When Moodie "return[s] thanks to God that night for all His mercies to us," and adds that "Sir George Arthur [the Lieutenant-Governor] was not forgotten in those prayers," she is clearly aware that her rising power is in contrast to her bumbling and ineffectual husband.

From reluctant but dutiful wife of an emigrant, Susanna Moodie has developed into a resourceful, independent settler. She has overcome the limitations of genteel femininity and of genteel social prejudices to run

effectively both home and farm and to establish a literary career. But the most significant aspect of the record of her experience in Roughing It is her political evolution. Through her own rebellion in 1837 against male domination, she succeeds in extricating herself and her family from debt in the backwoods. While Peterman perceptively notes that "the pattern of adaptation, of learning through experience [in Roughing It] . . . is consistent with the Moodies' middle-class values, [and] their radical politics," he goes on to argue that "the emotional energy of the text seems often to contradict" this prevailing pattern (p. 89). Moodie however recognized the connection between her personal development and that of the country, for she incorporated the political rebellion into the very thematic and structural climax of the book. In doing so, Moodie openly dissents from the conservative and reactionary views represented by her sister. Like her sister, she "conforms to circumstances" in the backwoods, and, again like Traill, maintains her monarchical ties to England. But very much unlike Traill, her voice becomes, as Robert L. McDougall has noted, that of the Moderate Reformers, "those who sympathized with Mackenzie's quarrel but refused to back the extreme republican measures he eventually proposed."⁵⁰ One of the few passages of "emotional energy" in Traill's book was directed against Mackenzie and his followers; Moodie's Roughing It, on the

other hand, incorporating as it does the Mackenzie rebellion into the very fabric of the work, exudes the kind of spirit of action and independence which would lead Canada toward "Home-rule." Contrary to David Jackel's recent attempt to see "the real strengths of our British inheritance" in Traill,⁵¹ it is Moodie's Roughing It which best mirrors the unique adaptation of the British political tradition to the backwoods of Canada.

Endnotes

¹ Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague (1769; Toronto, 1961), p. 17.

² See Mary Jane Edwards, "The History of Emily Montague: A Political Novel," in Beginnings, ed. John Moss (Toronto, 1980), p. 25; Lorraine McMullen, "Frances Brooke," in Canadian Writers and their Works, ed. Robert Lecker, Jack David, Ellen Quigley (Toronto, 1983), p. 26.

³ "The Royal Proclamation 1763," in A source-book of Canadian history: selected documents and personal papers, ed. J. H. Stewart Reid, Kenneth McNaught, and Harry S. Crowe (Toronto, 1959), p. 49.

⁴ "Petition of the Quebec Traders, 1764," in Pre-Confederation: Canadian Historical Documents Series, ed. P. B. Waite (Scarborough, 1965), p. 50.

⁵ "Murray to the Board of Trade, October 29, 1764," in Pre-Confederation, p. 50.

⁶ Mary Jane Edwards, "Introduction," The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English: Beginnings to 1867 (Toronto, 1973), p. 2.

⁷ Edwards, "A Political Novel," p. 23.

⁸ McMullen, "Frances Brooke," p. 40.

⁹ W. H. New, "The Old Maid: Frances Brooke's Apprentice Feminism," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2

(Summer 1973), 9.

¹⁰ McMullen gives a critical overview of Brooke in Canadian Writers and their Works and notes that from the nineteenth century until the early 1960s, "Canadian critics saw the novel's portrayal of Canadian life as its main value, dismissing it artistically." Not until the 1961 publication of the New Canadian Library edition with its introduction by Carl F. Klinck do we get "our first critically perceptive evaluation" (p. 32). As pointed out in the text of my study, New first introduces a study of Brooke's feminism in 1973.

¹¹ Klinck, "Introduction," The History of Emily Montague, p. viii.

¹² J. W. Mackail, Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today (New York, 1963), p. 63. See also T. F. Royds, "Introduction," in The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil, trans. and introduction by T. F. Royds (London, 1907), pp. vii-xv, and Jacques Perret, "The Georgics," in Virgil: a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Steele Commager (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), pp. 28-40.

¹³ W. H. New, "Frances Brooke's Chequered Gardens," Canadian Literature, 52 (Spring 1972), 36.

¹⁴ Edwards, "A Political Novel," p. 22.

¹⁵ "The Treaty of Paris, 1763, in Pre-Confederation, p. 48.

¹⁶ Hazel Mews, Frail Vessels (London, 1969), p. 73.

New, especially, develops Bell's ironic function in his "Frances Brooke's Chequered Gardens."

17 Edwards, "A Political Novel," p. 23.

18 Clara Thomas, Our Nature, Our Voices (Toronto: 1972), p. 11.

19 Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent (Toronto, 1982), p. 143.

20 Clara Thomas, "Journeys to Freedom," Canadian Literature, 51 (Winter 1972), 13; Fowler, p. 146.

21 Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (1838; Toronto: Coles facsimile edition, 1972), pp. 2-3.

22 Fowler, p. 153.

23 Cf. Fowler, p. 145 and Clara Thomas, Love and Work Enough (Toronto, 1967), p. 130.

24 Thomas, Love and Work Enough, p. 128.

25 Fowler, p. 150.

26 "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," British and Foreign Review, VIII (1839), 134-35. This unnamed review is quoted in Thomas' Love and Work Enough, p. 140, but Thomas stresses that the editor of the Review at the time was John Kemble.

27 Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, ed. James Talman & Elsie Murray (Toronto, 1943), pp. vii-viii.

28 Ged Martin, "Queen Victoria and Canada," American

Review of Canadian Studies, 13 (Spring 1983), 215-33.

²⁹ Carl F. Klinck, "Literary Activity in the Canadas, 1812-1841," in Literary History of Canada, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto, 1976), Vol. 1, p. 151.

³⁰ Donald Creighton, Dominion of the North (Toronto, 1957), p. 217.

³¹ William Lyon Mackenzie, The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, ed. Margaret Fairley (Toronto, 1960), pp. 340, 351.

³² Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada (1836; Toronto: Coles facsimile ed., 1980), p. 292.

³³ Clara Thomas, "Introduction," C. P. Traill, The Backwoods of Canada (Toronto, 1966), p. 7.

³⁴ Mackenzie, p. 341.

³⁵ Traill, "Preface," The Canadian Settler's Guide (1854; Toronto, 1969), p. xviii.

³⁶ Traill, Studies of Plant Life in Canada (Ottawa, 1885), p. 2.

³⁷ Thomas devotes only three brief paragraphs to Traill after lengthier discussions of Jameson and Moodie in her "Journeys to Freedom." She comments that Traill "simply walked past--or through--the dragons which beset the others" (19). Thomas' qualification hints at depths in Traill's persona which other critics have explored. William D. Gairdner ("Traill and Moodie: The Two Realities," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1 (Spring 1972),

35-42) is led to ask "how, for a woman dependent on reason, the paradoxes so apparent to others . . . were resolved" (p. 37). Gairdner comes to "regard these searchings for botanical justification a result of her wish to evade" (p. 36).

³⁸ Clara Thomas is the chief perpetrator of this distinction in her early biographical article of "The Strickland Sisters" in The Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto, 1966), pp. 42-73.

³⁹ Traill, Settler's Guide, pp. 24, 114-15.

⁴⁰ Traill, The Backwoods of Canada (1842; Toronto, 1929), p. 332.

⁴¹ Carl P. A. Ballstadt, "Catharine Parr Traill," in Canadian Writers and their Works, p. 181.

⁴² Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush (1852; Toronto: Coles facsimile ed., 1980), p. 563.

⁴³ This difference has its roots in the portrait Traill presents of her family's increasing prosperity and the repetition of calamities found in Moodie's account. However, T. D. MacLulich, for example, compares the two sisters and reaches a conclusion opposite to what I propose in this study. "Mrs. Traill sees that the genteel ideal must be modified," says MacLulich, "but Mrs. Moodie holds fast . . . to her concept of social class [There is no] indication that Mrs. Moodie has herself become a

changed person" ("Crusoe in the Backwoods: A Canadian Fable?" Mosaic, 9 (Winter 1976), 124).

⁴⁴ Carl F. Klinck, "Introduction," Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush (Toronto, 1966), p. xii.

⁴⁵ Moodie, "Introduction to the First Edition," Roughing It in the Bush (Toronto, 1966), p. xviii.

⁴⁶ Traill, Backwoods, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Moodie, "Canada: a Contrast," Roughing It in the Bush (Toronto, 1980), p. 9.

⁴⁸ Susanna Moodie, Life in the Clearings (1853; Toronto, 1959), p. 35.

⁴⁹ Michael A. Peterman, "Susanna Moodie," in Canadian Writers and their Works, pp. 89, 91.

⁵⁰ Robert L. McDougall, "Introduction," Life in the Clearings, p. xix.

⁵¹ David Jackel, "Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Traill, and the Fabrication of a Canadian Tradition," The Compass, No. 6 (Spring 1979), 20.

Chapter Two

"The home has expanded until it has become
the whole state":

Imperialism to Emancipation

"You cannot mean to tell me," asks Hugh Finlay, the young Scots Presbyterian minister in Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), "that . . . my sincere and devoted friendship for Miss Murchison has been in any way prejudicial--." Dr. Drummond, his senior colleague, understands and completes his sentence: "To her in the ordinary sense? To her prospects of marriage and her standing in the eyes of the community? No, Finlay. No."¹ The conflict between Mr. Finlay's and Miss Murchison's "friendship" and "the ordinary sense" of relationships between the sexes acts as the romantic sub-plot in Duncan's novel of imperial and colonial politics. As such it highlights the attempts of many Canadian women in the first two decades of the twentieth century to redefine the partnership between men and women. Adelaide Hoodless founded the First Women's Institute in Brantford in 1897, dedicated to educating women in matters of food and hygiene. The Women's Christian Temperance Union crusaded not just for temperance but also for the moral reform of

society and was an early advocate of women's suffrage as a means to achieve their ends. Involvement in "the Woman Question" naturally led to political campaigning for the rights of female enfranchisement and the right for women to hold public office. Women openly challenged their position in Canadian society, and with it, conventional relationships with men.

During the same period, the position of the young Dominion of Canada within the Empire was evolving. From the 1890s onward, Canada strove to resist Great Britain's rising desire to tighten its imperialistic holdings into a stronger, centralized federation. Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1895, was for the next decade an enthusiastic proponent of the concept of imperialism. The country's twentieth-century Prime Ministers, Laurier and Borden, however, each in his own way slowly moved the nation away from its colonial status and onto the road of national independence. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook note in their study of Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed that when Chamberlain proposed "something in the nature of an Imperial Council, sitting permanently in London and acting as permanent advisers to the Secretary of State for the colonies," Laurier remained wary of "any detailed plan of . . . organization which would impose on the Colonies fixed . . . obligations."² Donald Creighton concludes in his Dominion of the North

that "Laurier supported, and often led, the other colonial prime ministers in their defence of colonial autonomy against imperial centralization."³ From the turn of the century to World War I, Canada steadily declared her intention to remain detached from but concerned with England's international affairs.

Sara Jeannette Duncan in The Imperialist directly addresses this political issue, and there is some significance in the very fact that a woman at the turn of the century chose to write on such a decidedly political theme. Women were certainly changing their image during the last two decades of the nineteenth century; the New Woman, what Earl Wasserstrom defines as "independent, assertive young ladies . . . competent in love,"⁴ at first shocked society, then came to represent the best the west had to offer. Duncan aspired to be one such liberated woman; her early career in journalism and her success as a novelist, playwright and travel writer attest to the degree of her success. Born in Brantford, Ontario, in 1861, she was a journalist with the Washington Post in 1885, and became the first woman hired in the editorial department of the Toronto Globe in 1886. While in Washington, she covered the Suffragist Convention, and in her report not only revealed her sympathies for female suffrage, but also her impatience with conventional women who are content with their present subservient position in society. "It is a

supreme moment in a woman's existence," she claims, "when she commits herself to suffrage for her sex. It marks the temporary and hard-won victory of her intelligence over her instinct."⁵ But having successfully established her journalistic career, Duncan gave it all up in 1891 to marry Everard Cotes, a British civil servant living in India. The pull between "intelligence" and "instinct" became a significant factor in Duncan's own life and in her portrait of women in The Imperialist. One can speculate on the psychological cost to Duncan of her marriage on the basis of The Imperialist, for in it she tries hard to reconcile the conflict between the aspirations of the New Woman and the traditional bonds of matrimony.

The novel focusses primarily, however, on the title character, Lorne Murchison, a young lawyer who enters politics as an advocate of closer ties between Canada and England. But unlike many of his fellow citizens, he is not motivated by economics; rather, his vision is of "the moral advantage . . . to keep[ing] up the relationship" with England. Canada in his estimation is "young and thin and weedy," whereas "the very name [of England is] great . . . rich with character and strong with conduct and hoary with ideals" (p. 98). The reader early suspects Lorne's political and cultural colonialism because of his choice of Dora Milburn as his fiancée: Dora, a proper young lady with neither intelligence nor character, is rather

reminiscent of Dicken's character in David Copperfield. Her allegiance to established forms of feminine behavior contrasts directly with that of the independent-minded female protagonist, Lorne's older sister Advena, whose very name suggests the New Woman. "Bookish and unconventional" (p. 45), Advena eventually finds both freedom and fulfillment with her love, Hugh Finlay, the young immigrant Scots preacher who slowly rejects his old country values and embraces the new nation and the possibilities of forging new identities, both personal and national. As the young Dominion rejects the colonial subservience implied by the concept of imperialism, Lorne loses both his seat in Parliament and Dora, while Advena and Hugh overcome the barriers to their love and move to the Canadian West.

When introducing the various members of the Murchison family, the narrator admonishes, "we must take this matter of names seriously" (p. 17), thereby focussing our attention on the political significance of her characters. The Murchison family, like the majority of the townspeople, are fervent Liberals. The two younger sons are named after Alexander Mackenzie, federal Liberal leader in 1874, and his contemporary, Oliver Mowat, the Ontario Liberal leader. Neither son, comments the narrator, "could very well grow up into anything but a sound Liberal . . . without feeling himself an unendurable paradox." With no intended sense of paradox, on the other hand, Lorne is named after Canada's

Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne, as "a simple way of attesting loyal spirit." Lorne's mother has "more particular motives" for his name: "The Marquis of Lorne . . . was the son-in-law of a good woman, of whom Mrs. Murchison thought more . . . for being the woman she was than for being twenty times a Queen" (pp. 16-17). In the act of naming the sons after Canadian Liberals and "the Royal representative," the national and the imperial sentiments of the family and the novel find expression. And it is the clash of these political forces which occupy the main plot of the novel. Lorne's naming presages his own passionate attachment to the principle of Empire espoused in the novel by Wallingham, Duncan's thin disguise for Chamberlain. The Liberals in the novel, however, as in history, move slowly away from the imperial cause in favour of national autonomy. The sons' names reflect the country's divided sense of allegiance.

Moreover, "the matter of names" points up the patriarchal nature of this society. Great attention is given to the names of the sons in the hope of "doing well" for them; their christening is described as a "rite" (p. 17). "Politics were," after all, "accepted as a purely masculine interest" (p. 189); only the male offspring are named after political figures, because only the men will occupy positions of importance in society. The insignificance of the daughters' naming is suggested by the

fact that the narrator deals with the subject in one sentence. Mrs. Murchison dismisses the matter just as quickly; because Advena "was named after one grandmother," the next girl, "to make an end of the matter," was named after the other (p. 16). That they are named after family "relations," particularly grandmothers, emphasizes the social expectation that they continue to fill woman's place in the home. Abigail, the second-eldest daughter, "had taken no time at all to establish herself; she had almost immediately married" (p. 45). "Elgin society," comments the narrator, "shaping itself . . . to ultimate increase and prosperity, had this peculiarity, that the females of a family, in general acceptance, were apt to lag far behind the males" (pp. 45-46). When the narrator emphasizes that "the young men were more desirable than the young women [because] they forged ahead, carrying the family fortunes" (p. 46), the economic basis of this sexist society is highlighted. "Increase and prosperity" in a patriarchal society necessitate that the woman is defined by her biological and domestic functions.

The economic, political and sexist dimensions of Canadian society are likewise evoked by Duncan's use of Elgin as the name for the town. Not only was Lord Elgin a patriarchal figure and a good colonial administrator, but also his crowning achievement was the negotiation with the United States of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. It is

precisely this economic factor which Lorne in his zealous idealism refuses to countenance. The election campaign allows Duncan to introduce various points of view on "the subject of the day" and Lorne's final speech touches on the finest in the imperial argument. "Imperialism is intensely and supremely a national affair," he says, summing up many an imperialist's belief that "the centre of the Empire must shift . . . to Canada" (p. 229).⁶ He recalls that "the northern and strenuous half" of the continent did not "throw overboard" the "precious cargo [of] our heritage"--"the ideals of British government" (p. 230). The problems of American annexationist threats and of "trade relations" between England, Canada and the United States are accurately introduced: "The imperial trade idea has changed the attitude of our friends to the south. They have small liking for any scheme which will improve trade between Great Britain and Canada, because trade between Great Britain and Canada must be improved at their expense" (p. 231). Carried away by his rhetoric, Lorne dismisses too glibly the wider population's interest in the "balance of trade." "We cannot calculate," he maintains, "in terms of pig-iron, or . . . any formula of consumption" (p. 232). "The whole stamp and character" of Canada, in Lorne's view, has been "acquired in the rugged discipline of our colonial youth, and [is to be] developed in the national usage of the British Empire" (p. 232).

As Alfred Bailey and Joseph M. Zezulka have both pointed out in their recent historical considerations of the novel, the political arguments in The Imperialist indicate that Duncan was thoroughly familiar with the various sides of the issue of her day expounded by men such as Sir George Parkin and Sir Andrew MacPhail; both Parkin and Goldwin Smith, the latter a powerful voice for stronger ties with the United States, are referred to in the novel (p. 200).⁷ However, Bailey and Zezulka maintain on the basis of the historicity of the novel that Duncan was an imperialist at heart. Bailey concludes his examination of "The Historical Setting of Sara Duncan's The Imperialist": "one can only suppose that while her reason and experience led her to conclude that [imperialism] was the embodiment of an impossible ideal, it was one to which her own heart was not altogether a stranger" (p. 140). Zezulka equates Duncan with a leading proponent of imperialism, Stephen Leacock, stating "both . . . [were] ardent nationalists" (p. 145). In book-length studies of Duncan's life and works, Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire and Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan, Thomas E. Tausky and Marian Fowler, respectively, more perceptively acknowledge that Duncan does not take sides in the novel on the question of imperialism. Tausky notes that "there are whole pages on the social structure of Elgin, but nary a sentence of authorial opinion about imperialism"; Fowler

agrees that Duncan is "consciously ambivalent about Imperialism."⁸ Tausky does conclude, however, that "the reader of The Imperialist does . . . gain the impression that Sara favours imperialism" (p. 161).

All four critics overlook the satirical intent of the romantic sub-plots. Tausky discusses Lorne at great length and mentions Advena only briefly; Fowler too focusses primarily on Lorne and devotes only a paragraph to the manner in which Advena's "abstract idealism . . . capitulate[s] to emotion" in the relationship with Hugh (p. 260). They do not realize that, as does Brooke in The History of Emily Montague, Duncan raises the love affairs to the level of political commentary. "Politics and love are thought of at opposite poles," muses the narrator, but then goes on to reveal that she does not hold to this popular assumption: in Lorne's case they are related since his "exalted allegiance" to the cause of imperialism stemmed "in part [from] a half-broken heart" (p. 261).

The extension of Lorne's misguided love for England is his love for Dora Milburn. Coming from a home which mimics British propriety, Dora is the embodiment of colonial femininity: she is conventional and commonplace. Her reaction to Lorne's rising political fortunes is selfish and frivolous; when he announces that he has been invited to join a trade delegation to England, Dora is piqued that he should forget "the regatta coming off the first week in

June, and a whole crowd coming from Toronto for it. There isn't another person in town I care to canoe with, Lorne, you know perfectly well" (p. 98). She insists on keeping their proposed engagement a secret because "an engaged girl has the very worst time. She gets hardly any attention, and as to dances--well, it's a good thing for her if the person she's engaged to can dance" (pp. 145-46). While Dora "make[s] little tentative charges of extravagance in his purchase" of an engagement ring, the narrator comments that Lorne "did not stop to condone her weakness; rather he seized it in ecstasy [for] it was all part of the glad scheme to help the lover." As Lorne sits "elated and adoring," the narrator concludes the scene by calling him "the simple fellow" (p. 145). After Lorne loses his seat in Parliament, he learns that Dora has engaged herself to marry the arrogant, vacuous British gentleman, Hesketh. The narrator again wryly notes that "Mr. Hesketh's engagement to Miss Milburn was the most suitable thing that could be imagined or desired" (p. 268). Dora and her socially inculcated femininity are as unworthy of Lorne's devotion as the ideal of imperialism.

In direct contrast to Dora and her feminine behavior stands Lorne's sister, Advena, whose characterization and complex, yet positive relationship with Hugh Finlay act as counterpoints to Lorne and his futile engagement. Advena is presented as an independent-minded person who "would

hide in the hayloft with a novel; she would be off by herself in a canoe at six o'clock in the morning; she would go for walks in the rain on windy October twilights and be met kicking the wet leaves along in front of her 'in a dream' (p. 45). Her mother cannot imagine how Advena will be "fit for the management of a house" (p. 32); Advena's disinterest in "good housewifery" renders her "[un]fit to be a wife" (p. 104). "By taking the university course for women at Toronto, and afterward teaching . . . to the junior forms in the Collegiate Institute," Advena "justified her existence [and] placed [herself] outside the sphere of domestic criticism" (pp. 32-33). Her interest in books and her position as teacher are termed "shortcomings" by her mother (p. 33). "She'd much better make up her mind," concludes Mrs. Murchison, "just to be a happy independent old maid" (p. 104). The characterization of Advena as a New Woman and her profession as a teacher are indicative of the changes taking place in Canadian society since the time of Jameson, Traill and Moodie with regard to the social position of women. Mrs. Murchison is the perfect embodiment of Traill's definition of the good housewife, but Advena resists any attempts by her mother to be "policed" into the role.

Nevertheless, despite Advena's independent status, women in 1904 had neither the franchise nor the legal status of equality with men and Duncan uses the

relationship which develops between Advena and the newly-arrived Scots preacher, Hugh Finlay, to explore and challenge the traditional patriarchal relationship between the sexes. Coming as he does from the "old" country, Hugh has inherited patriarchal "ideals about women . . . he saw them . . . concerned with the preservation of society, the maintenance of the home, the noble devotions of motherhood" (p. 106). Whereas Mrs. Murchison has been unsuccessful in indoctrinating Advena, Hugh is well-trained by his "widowed and frugal and spare" Aunt Lizzie, who "had presided over his childhood and represented the sex to his youth" so carefully that he is in "a reasonable disposition to acquiesce" before leaving for Canada to her "skilful exhibition" on the "merits" of a woman "five years older than Hugh" to be his wife (p. 107). Conditioned as he is, it is a great surprise for Hugh that "the chief interest of his life [in Elgin], the chief human interest, did lie in his relations with Advena Murchison." Advena, for her part, understands him immediately, and patiently waits for her love to be reciprocated. Hugh and Advena come to discover that "the steps they took together lead somehow to freedom" (p. 70).

Influenced as she is by the writings of Henry James and William Dean Howells, Duncan is aware of the political implications of her variation on the international theme.⁹

"If anyone had told Mr. Hugh Finlay, while he was pursuing

his rigorous path to the ideals of the University of Edinburgh, that the first notable interest of his life in the calling and the country to which even then he had given his future would lie in his relations with any woman, he would have treated the prediction as mere folly" (p. 106). Like Ed Rivers, Hugh comes to Canada with set attitudes to the country and to its women, but unlike Rivers, Hugh finds his views changing because of his "companionship" with this Canadian version of the "heiress of all the ages." In their first conversation, during which Hugh expounds that "the world is wrapped in destiny, and but revolves to roll it out," he experiences a "sudden liberation with her," and, after Advena's promptings, realizes that he is "a moralizer" (p. 71). In a later conversation, however, Hugh has dropped his old-world sense of destiny and inspires Advena to recognize that "there is something in a fresh start: we're on the straight road as a nation England has filled [her future] up" (p. 110). At the conclusion of their first conversation Hugh takes "the road to the north which was still snowbound," while Advena goes "into the chilly yellow west" (p. 71). Later, when Hugh persists in honoring his ties to Scotland, when his pathway remains "snowbound" by an arranged marriage, he contemplates going "to British Columbia" where "those mining missions would give a man his chance against himself" (p. 184). The significance of the western

province of Canada for Hugh's venture is not missed by the reader; Hugh, like the country of his adoption, will seek a compromise of his old-world values in the new world.

Advena maintains, however, that "we can do it here" (p. 184). Advena, in her own way, is as idealistic as her brother; but where Lorne's attachment is basically to conservative values, Advena, in her attempt to continue her "companionship" with Hugh not only outside marriage but also despite his pending marriage to another woman, struggles with him "to realize and to explore . . . their alliance" (p. 180). Although their attempt to maintain a platonic friendship proves impossible and even earns some ironic comments from the narrator, Duncan is able to portray a man and a woman striving for a relationship beyond "the common type" (p. 181). Their relationship had grown through "evenings together" "talking about . . . books and . . . authors (p. 103); but after "they had come to full knowledge" of their love for each other, they are reduced to talking "like tried friends of every-day affairs" (p. 180). "One might think," comments the narrator, "that Nature, having made them her invitation upon the higher plane, abandoned them in the very scorn of her success to . . . human commonplaces" (pp. 180-81). Their domesticated evenings by the fire--"he always brought [his pipe] with him, by her order, and Advena usually sewed" (p. 181)--may be comical, as they attempt to resist

"the currents from the heart" while developing a "friendship of ideas . . . a friendship of spirit" (pp. 183,184); but the true measure of what they are denying is indicated by the remark that "something lately seemed lost to them of that kind of glad [literary] activity" (p. 184). Only the humorous intervention of Dr. Drummond can release Hugh from his firm resolve to marry Miss Cameron, but not before Advena rushes "into the full blast of the veering, irresolute storm" (p. 248) to throw herself "at his feet in a torrent of weeping, clasping them and entreating": "I know now what is possible and what is not!" (p. 250). Unlike her brother, Advena comes to admit that "their struggle" had been an attempt "to establish the impossible," that "she had preferred an ideal to the desire of her heart" (p. 250).

Advena and Lorne are crucial, not only to the changing relationships between the sexes, but also to the political theme of the novel. Both Advena and Lorne, the narrator makes clear, are idealistic human beings, but their idealism attaches itself to vastly different poles. Advena's intellectual development takes her "outside the domestic sphere," outside the conventional role of housewife mirrored by her mother and sister. Consequently, her relationship with Hugh, defined as it is by their mutual interest in literature, is one between equals, a "companionship." That she finally "pulled [her ideal of a

platonic relationship] down to foolish ruin" (p. 250) does not diminish the heroic attempt she has made to forge a relationship with a man beyond the bounds of convention. Lorne, on the other hand, clings to his outmoded ideals in politics and love. It is instructive to note, as Zezulka correctly points out (p. 149), that Lorne and Dora always meet within-doors, whereas Hugh and Advena frequently meet out-of-doors. Lorne is walled in by convention, whereas Advena is "outside"; it is only when Advena and Hugh try to deny the consummation of their passion that their relationship becomes stale, "absorbed by homely matters" (p. 182). When they are free to marry, they accept "the charge of the . . . Mission" and take their companionship in love to the unformed west. Lorne remains locked in the imperial sphere; that he remains behind the times is indicated by the fact that he is not sent "to the House." His political colleagues force him to withdraw from the election because he "didn't get rid of that save-the-Empire-or-die scheme" (p. 262). The intransigence of his attitude is suggested by his curt reply, "I shall never get rid of it." Out of step with his countrymen, Lorne has no sense of progress: he has only the old ideal of British imperialism.

Duncan has developed her political theme, then, as Brooke did, by contrasting the love relationships in her novel. Duncan's concerns, however, are not limited to

issues of Canadian politics and women. As Zichy has noted, in her early journalism Duncan expressed her belief that a "national literature cannot be wholly evolved from within . . . but to give it growth, variety and comprehensive character, it has to be fed from without" (p. 39). As mentioned above, Duncan acknowledged the influence of the American school of realism, referring specifically to James and Howells. Wasserstrom explores the phenomenon that "the American girl embodied her society" (p. 126), paying close attention to the leadership of James. He concludes, for example, that "James in the international plot showed how devotedness [as wife and mother] deprived [women] of the capacity for freedom" (p. 128). With the publication of her first novels, A Social Departure. How Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves (1890) and An American Girl in London (1891) to the later Canadian Girl in London (1908), Duncan explores her interest in James's "international theme." Like James, Duncan explores the contrast of old and new world cultures by using a young woman as the prime focus of study. Duncan's writing is certainly influenced "from without," for not only does Duncan live with her husband in India during her writing years, but also only one of her novels is actually set in Canada. That one novel is The Imperialist, structured as we have seen according to the international theme of her other works. Using techniques of the American analytical

school of realism, she is able to achieve her goal, which is, as she explains in a letter to Lord Lansdowne, to present the "colonial view" of the Empire question. The international theme and the domestic setting allow her to articulate "Canadian sentiment."¹⁰

Richard Chase correctly notes in his study of The American Novel and its Tradition that for James "the great thing is to get into the novel not only setting but somebody's sense of the setting."¹¹ Point of view is the central development of James's theory of fiction. In order to capture in a novel an "air of reality," to present "the illusion of life," James wrote, it was necessary that the novel present not facts but someone's interpretation of facts: "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life."¹² Critics of The Imperialist seem to overlook or to underestimate the fact that life in Elgin is described through the eyes of an unidentified character, not of the author. For example, Zezulka asserts that "Duncan's style emphasizes telling rather than showing," and refers to "Duncan's bemused and frequently astringent intrusions [which] are clearly intended to guide the reader's response to Elgin society" (p. 147). Tausky feels that "Duncan chooses to communicate information through an impersonal and omniscient narrator" in "the method of the great eighteenth and nineteenth century English novelists" (p. 84). The frequency with which

Tausky interchanges the term "narrator" and the author's name reveals that he too makes no differentiation between them.

It is important to realize that the narrator who relates all the events and interprets the thoughts and actions of the characters seems to be an inhabitant of the fictional town and is present at many but not all of the story's events. "There is a party at the Milburns' and some of us are going," interjects the narrator (p. 46; emphasis mine). This person is clearly not omniscient nor impersonal, and constantly reminds the reader that the novel is a report of what has been seen and heard. For example, the description of the Murchison home is punctuated by such phrases as "Mrs Murchison often declared," "Mrs Murchison often wished," and includes the interjection, "I must, in this connection, continue to quote the mistress [of the house]" (p. 29). Furthermore, when Lorne impulsively abandons his prepared campaign text to give an impassioned plea for the cause of imperialism, the narrator asks rhetorically, "who knows at what suggestion, or even precisely at what moment, the fabric of his sincere intention fell away?" and then offers in answer the views of others who were present: "Bingham does not; Mr. Farquharson has the vaguest idea; Dr. Drummond declares that he expected it from the beginning, but is totally unable to say why" (p. 228). "I can get nothing more out

of them," she concludes, even at this climactic moment reminding the reader that the novel is a personal impression of events and of opinions.

This use of a persona as the center of intelligence is essential for Duncan's purpose, which, again as she tells Lansdowne, is "to present the situation as it appears to the average Canadian of the average small town."¹³ As indicated by the example above, the narrator, like a newspaper reporter--and one recalls Duncan's beginnings as a journalist--polls the opinions of other citizens and consequently provides a spectrum of responses to the issue of imperialism. The narrator is able to place each event, each character, within the context of alternative perspectives. Unlike the English novelist who, as Chase explains, absorbs "a wide range of experience into a moral centrality and equability of judgement" (p. 2), Duncan explores "a wide range of experience," but, by using the persona, imposes no ultimate authorial judgement. "My book offers only a picture of life and opinion, and attempts no argument," claims Duncan to Lansdowne.

However, as Duncan's narrator notes, "those who write . . . transcribe themselves in spite of themselves" (p. 69). Duncan's political feelings are not to be found by equating the author and the persona, but by examining the structure of the novel. The new womanhood of Advena and Hugh's growth in the new world contrasted with Lorne's stagnation

and the commonplace femininity of Dora establish Duncan's political, and by extension her literary, values. As long as old-world conventions, political or romantic, are imported to Canada, Duncan knows, the nation and its people will be as static and conventional, as colonial, as Lorne and Dora. "So long as Canada remains in political obscurity," she writes in an article on "Colonialism and Literature," "so long will the leaves and blossoms of art and literature be scanty and stunted products of our national energy."¹⁴ In her biographical consideration of the creation of The Imperialist, Fowler concludes that Duncan had come to perceive "how unsuitable, for any Canadian, are American and British [environments] Canada must not be imprinted with the 'stamp and character' of the American republic, but with Canada's own peculiar stamp and character. Nor must Canada slavishly follow British patterns" (p. 254). Canadians, in their politics and their literature, must break from the British pattern, just as Hugh liberates himself from his ties with Scotland and as Advena frees herself from society's expectations for young women.

Not only have recent scholars ignored the political implications of this love story but also, as Tausky reports, critics at the time offered "almost universally hostile reviews." Tausky concludes his survey: "a point of view that underlies all the . . . hostile comments [is

that] politics and 'romance' should not be mixed, especially . . . by a lady author" (p. 267). The Globe reviewer dismisses the novel's "political passages" because "that half of the population which is disenfranchised takes but little interest in politics, and it is a rule to which there are few exceptions that even when our sisters and wives make a conscious effort to compass the mystery, their success is but partial. That is about all that could be said . . . of The Imperialist" (p. 270). It is perhaps instructive that only the New York Times perceived the satire of the "attitude of the ladies of Elgin" and of "the English imperial idea" (pp. 268-69), but even this favorable review persisted in keeping the two areas apart. Duncan's perceptions seem to have been ahead of their time.

The positive reception by an American, moreover, reminds us that Duncan employed the "international theme" of the American school of realism in The Imperialist in order to tackle the major national issue facing Canada in 1904, whether or not to draw closer her ties to Great Britain. By using American literary models, perhaps Duncan inadvertently touched a sore nerve among Canadian nationalists: the increasing fear of American domination of Canada. It was only after World War I that Canada came to recognize the continental concerns of her national interests; in 1904, there was distrust after the Alaska boundary dispute of American annexationist intentions.

Fear of America became strong enough that when, in 1911, Laurier and his Liberals campaigned on a platform of increased reciprocity with the United States, they were soundly defeated. Although suggesting closer ties with the United States was far from her purpose, Duncan did reflect the coming shift of the nation's feelings toward increased independence--the imperialist of the title, contrasted to his forward-looking sister, is definitely at odds with his community. Introducing Advena as a "new woman" in her "novel of today," Duncan foreshadows the emancipation of Canadian nationalism from British imperialism; whether Canada could avoid American characteristics remained as problematic in her future as was the "new" relationship developing between men and women.

* * * * *

The controversy over imperialism and the question of Canada's national status found issue, between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I, in two international incidents, the War in South Africa and the Alaskan Boundary dispute. Brown and Cook succinctly describe the way the Boer War polarized national opinions: "English-Canadian nationalists . . . wanted Canada to participate as an equal in the war, and to prove that equality by assuming full responsibility for Canadian troops in South Africa. French-Canadian nationalists wanted Canada to prove her equality of nationhood by refusing to participate at all"

(p. 41). Canada did send troops to Africa in response to the will of the English-speaking majority, but Laurier appeased others by claiming that, "in future, Canada shall be at liberty to act or not to act, to interfere or not interfere, to do just as she pleases, and that she shall reserve to herself the right to judge whether or not there is cause for her to act."¹⁵ After the Alaska boundary was settled by a joint Anglo-American tribunal in favor of the United States' claim, Canada saw herself, in Creighton's words, as "the duped victims of American and British imperialist power politics"; Laurier began to press for "the treaty-making power . . . to dispose of our own affairs . . . in our own way, in our own fashion, according to the best light that we have" (p. 410). Before World War I, then, Canada began to redefine her relationship to the Empire and to the United States by pressing for greater autonomy in international politics.

At the same time Canada experienced tremendous internal expansion and prosperity. As Creighton notes, "the period from 1896 until the beginning of the war of 1914-18 saw the third and greatest migration of peoples which had ever come to British North America. . . . The most spectacular feature of this last migration was, of course, the peopling of the western prairies" (p. 410). In 1905 two new prairie provinces were created and "the centre of gravity of the Canadian population was moving rapidly westward" (p. 411).

The constitution of the Canadian population also began to alter with this expansion, as the most recent immigrants came from Slavic and Scandinavian countries. These peoples brought with them no innate loyalty to the British system, but an intense desire for the right to maintain their own ways of life.

One political demand which stemmed from these two factors sought the extension of the franchise to women; Scandinavian women formed the first women's suffrage organization in Manitoba as early as the 1880s. Catherine Cleverdon notes in the preface to her pioneering study of The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada that the growth of the Canadian prairies was accompanied by the expansion of the suffrage movement. "Pioneer communities were invariably the first to enfranchise women," she notes. "On both sides of the border the feeling generally prevailed that women as well as men had opened up the country, had shared the experiences of settling a new land, and were therefore entitled to a voice in making the laws."¹⁶ Nevertheless, while Manitoba was the first prairie province to grant female suffrage in 1916, the women there had to struggle, as did Canada against her traditional masters, in order to gain the rights of equality.

Nellie McClung must be included in any literary study of feminism and nationalism, for she was personally active in the suffrage movement in Manitoba and later in politics

as a member of the Alberta Legislature and as a Canadian delegate to many international conferences such as the League of Nations Conference of 1938. As well as two very readable autobiographies, four novels and several volumes of sketches, short stories and poems, she wrote a series of essays on feminism and social ills, In Times Like These (1915). Although well-known for her first novel, Sowing Seeds in Danny, her third novel in the Pearlie Watson series, Purple Springs (1921), is most relevant to this study for it presents a young woman's initiation into adulthood against the backdrop of the battle for suffrage in Manitoba, events which closely resemble those in which McClung took part.

Nellie McClung was an outspoken critic of many social ills, notably intemperance and the sufferings of women and children it caused. In one of her essays in In Times Like These, she attacks the Government's lack of health care "on the border of civilization, where women are beyond the reach of nurses and doctors."¹⁷ She couches this attack in political language, describing, for example, the "toll of colonization" paid by such "brave women" when "august bodies of men" can ignore "delegations of public-spirited women" yet "pour out money like water" when "a duke or prince comes to visit our country." Such imperial disregard could not exist, she argues, if women were allowed a greater part in the decision-making processes of

the country: "Our national policy is the result of male statecraft" (p. 19), whereas women would avoid imperialism and war and use public funds for internal improvements.

Her futuristic fantasy of such female "statecraft" in Purple Springs dramatizes the way in which an entire province is revitalized through the heroine's nurturing justice and good sense. McClung describes the novel in her autobiography: "the struggle for the vote in Manitoba became the background for this, the third and last of my Pearlle Watson stories. It is a work of fiction, but the part relating to the Women's Parliament is substantially a matter of history, although the characters are imaginary, of course."¹⁸ McClung's characterization of the men in power reflects the chauvinism and resistance to change of Premier Roblin and his Conservative government, who in 1914 declared that "wifehood, motherhood and politics cannot be associated together with satisfactory results."¹⁹ Such arguments enabled the men of Manitoba to retain social dominance and such specifically male customs, as McClung and the Women's Christian Temperance Union argued, as the maintenance of barroom drinking which was so detrimental to women and children. Set against the actual battle for suffrage in 1914, the novel's "imaginary" part rings a bell of emancipation, for women and for the nation.

The plot of Purple Springs centers on the political renewal brought about by Pearl Watson as, over the course

of three months, she "grows up." Having been spurned in love by the local country doctor, Horace Clay, she finds self-expression in social involvement, first as a school teacher, then as a suffragette. In a Mock Parliament, wherein the women in power wait on a delegation of men petitioning for the right to vote, Pearl's satire of the Premier stirs up public opinion in favor of the vote for women, and the ensuing election defeats the government and brings about great promises of change. Furthermore, the blind arrogance of the Premier himself is broken and, through Pearl, he is reunited with his estranged daughter-in-law and grandson. They move to Purple Springs where the reformed Premier stirs the community to a renewal of good fellowship. The community has matured wonderfully, as has Pearl who is reunited, somewhat anticlimatically, with Dr. Clay. The plot, then, functions as a demonstration of the conflict between the masculine values engrained in social and political customs and the feminine desire for justice and equality.

These opposing forces in the novel are established by the chapter, "The Innocent Disturber," in which Pearl, invited to speak to her community as its "favorite son" because of her successful year at the Normal School in the city, answers the chauvinistic comments of Mr. Steadman, the MLA for the region. Mr. Steadman is characterized by the narrator's description as well as by his name: there is

"a well-fed, complacent look about him . . . which left no doubt that he was satisfied with things as they were--and would be deeply resentful of change. There was still in his countenance some trace of his ancestors' belief in the Divine right of kings!"²⁰ Just as Ed Rivers assumed that divinity is masculine, the male antagonists in Purple Springs invoke religious authorities to support their argument for male domination. The Premier of the province himself pronounces, "Women are weaker than men . . . God made them so. He intended them to be subject to men. . . . It sounds well to talk about equality--but there's no such thing. It did not exist in God's mind, so why should we try to bring it about? . . . women are subject to men, and always will be" (p. 222). The men use religion to keep women in their place, and that place is the "sacred precincts of home" (p. 97). In her role as "queen of the home," woman becomes "the bulwark of the nation"; "her very helplessness is her strength," for she supposedly can "influence her husband's vote--her son's vote" (p. 96). The "queen's" power is, in the society of this novel, inevitably determined and limited by that of the "king."

In response to the religious basis of the masculine argument for superiority, McClung laces Pearl's language with biblical and spiritual references, invoking Christian analogies to argue for equality for women. After the collapse of her romantic dream of becoming "queen" in a

traditional, male-dominated marriage, Pearl fills the void with "a new sense of responsibility" based on her affirmation that "it is a good world . . . God made it, Christ lived in it--and when He went away, He left His Spirit. It can't go wrong and stay wrong. The only thing that is wrong with it is in people's hearts, and hearts can be changed by the Grace of God" (p. 74). Her status becomes that of a biblical prophet, as McClung alludes to "the vision which came to Elisha's servant at Dothan"; "the horses and the chariots of the Lord" presumably now support Pearl's mission. Referring to the Old Testament (Ezekiel 37:1-14), a newspaper reports that if Pearl Watson got into Parliament, "there would sure be . . . a rustling of dry bones" (p. 108). When she is urged by a desperate woman to eschew marriage in order to be free to "talk about . . . the vote," Pearl answers, "Wherever two or three gather, Pearl Watson will rise and make a few remarks" (p. 135). With this direct allusion to Christ's mission, the movement for female franchise is raised to the level of gospel truth. Finally, the protagonist's name itself suggests that her qualities and her battle for equality are "pearls of great price."

Not only does McClung reverse the masculine religious argument in favor of enfranchisement, but also, with Pearl as her mouthpiece, she undercuts man's traditional sanctification of woman's domestic sphere as "the bulwark

of the nation" by extending the boundaries of home-care into politics. Pearl argues that "one of the reasons that the world had so many sore spots in it was because women had kept too close to home" (p. 103). With their recently-awakened "social consciousness," women now "were beginning to see that in order to keep their houses clean, they would have to clean up the streets." The vote would allow women "to do their share, outside as well as in." Pearl further extends this domestic metaphor when she envisions "Canada . . . like a great big, beautiful house that has been given to us to finish" (p. 104). In a 1914 speech on "The Social Responsibilities of Women," McClung argues that "politics is only public affairs [Women] are affected by what goes on outside of the four walls of home,--the home has expanded now until it has become the whole state. The work has gone out of the home and women have had to follow it."²¹ Like many turn-of-the-century feminists, McClung asserted that motherhood is basic to woman's nature, but rather than being a criterion for the exclusion of women from politics, "organized motherhood," a term she used to describe the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, is the "agency whereby men are made better and Christ's kingdom extended."²²

McClung was apparently more concerned with reform than aesthetics; her novel is primarily political in purpose.

Consequently Purple Springs is replete with political language which casts men as imperial powers and women as rebels. Thus the Premier of the province is known as "the Chief" and a party bag-man as "King-maker" (p. 156). George Steadman, the MLA who retains "his ancestors' belief in the Divine right of kings," senses after his first encounter with Pearl that she is a "radical . . . a fire-brand, and incendiary" (p. 106). When news of his besting at her hands reaches the opposition newspaper, Steadman is "as quick to see the import of it as King James was to smell gunpowder on that fateful November day when the warning letter was read in Parliament" (p. 193). And in the forum of a home-spun tableau, Pearl plays the role "of a foolish old king, who thought he could command the waves to stand still" (p. 195), foreshadowing her satirical portrait of the Premier in the Woman's Parliament. The tableau depicts the "arrogance and pride" of the king overcome by the "revolution . . . [of] wave after wave" (p. 196). The water imagery recalls Steadman's frightened reaction to Pearl's words: he "found his soul adrift on a wide sea, torn away from the harbor that had seemed so safe and land-locked" (p. 106). The revolutionary language of McClung's politics underlines Pearl's feminist challenge to "male statecraft."

The rising action of the novel is structured around the cases of two women whose situations are designed to

illustrate the unjust treatment of women by men acting within their legal rights. Pearl's involvement with each woman brings her into more intense battle with the government--male--forces. Mrs. Paine has no legal means to stop her husband from selling their home and forcing her and her children to live and work in a public house. Mr. Paine has the financial power to sell, for his profit, the farm which has prospered primarily because of his wife's efforts. Mrs. Paine's plight typifies the legal status of Manitoban women in McClung's time which Savage documents as that "of infants. . . . In theory (and sometimes in practice) the father could put his children up for adoption or assign them to guardians without his wife's consent. He might also sell the family home or will it away without a thought of his wife's well-being" (p. 78). McClung's rebellion against such "blatantly unjust" and old-world laws is perhaps reflected by her allusion through the woman's name to Thomas Paine, the American dissenter who at the time of the American revolution combined political and religious language to advocate what Henry F. May has called in his study of The Enlightenment in America, "a new and profoundly important interpretation of the colonial struggle."²³ At the moment when the farm transaction is about to take place, Pearl appears and gives a moving speech about the injustice and unkindness of Mr. Paine's action; all the men present are moved by both her arguments

and the gentle manner of her presentation. The buyer refuses to purchase the farm and Mr. Paine's love for his wife is re-awakened. Reform is possible, at least in McClung's fantasy, for this victim of "just" social structures.

The second woman Pearl is able to help is Annie Gray who, along with her ten-year-old son Jim, has been ostracized from the community of Purple Springs because of the unfounded rumor that the boy is illegitimate. McClung uses her story to illustrate the irony that "only the unmarried mother has the absolute right to her child" (p. 264). Annie Gray was married, but she suppresses this fact in order to regain custody of her child from her father-in-law, the Premier, who has threatened to send the boy to school in England despite her objections: "He told me I had nothing to say about it, he was his grandson's guardian. Jim [her husband] had made a will before he left home, making his father executor of his estate. He told me the father was the only parent the child had in the eyes of the law, and I had no claim on my boy" (pp. 260-61). When Pearl publicly sides with Annie by lodging in her home, the parents of the community protest by keeping their children from school. Forced from her teaching post, Pearl refuses the bribe of a government job and accepts the request of the suffragettes that she take part in a mock Parliament. Her political actions bring down the Premier's government

and persuade him that his daughter-in-law is one of the many "women who had suffered from the injustice of the law and men's prejudice" (p. 306). The "broken old man" confesses "the evil he has done" and is reconciled with his family; again, feminine justice triumphs simultaneously in the home and the political "house."

But the very ease with which Pearl achieves victory in the political world betrays the element of fantasy in her characterization. Pearl spurns such traditional female occupations as "tatting and . . . eyelet embroidery" in favor of "social duties . . . [and] leadership": "there were neighbourhoods to be awakened and citizens to be made" (pp. 101-02). Again, McClung interjects that "if Pearl Watson had not had a taste for political speeches and debates; if she had read the crochet patterns in the paper instead of the editorials, and had spent her leisure moments making butterfly medallions for her camisoles, or in some other lady-like pursuit, instead of leaning over the well-worn railing around the gallery of the Legislative Assembly, in between classes at the Normal, she would have missed much" (p. 228). Having created a woman who, in her avoidance of "the Woman's Page" of the newspapers, is not "normal," McClung then invests her heroine with maternal strength; the oldest girl in the Watson family, she is "often left to mind the swarm of boys while her mother was out working" and she accomplishes the "strenuous task of

keeping her young brothers . . . happy" through "the wealth of her quickened imagination" (p. 3). No household task is too difficult or onerous for Pearl, "she's that light-hearted and free from care" (p. 23). Duncan ridicules Dora's femininity in favor of Advena's; McClung, in rejecting conventional femininity, creates a prodigy of feminine power.

McClung endows her heroine not only with feminine nurturing powers but also with "brains" and, more significantly, the traditionally masculine weapon of wit. Pearl ridicules Mr. Steadman's views on the rights of women: "I am sorry Mr. Steadman is not in favour of women voting, or going to Parliament, and thinks it too hard for them. It does not look hard to me. Most of the members just sit and smoke all the time, and read the papers I have seen women do far harder work than this" (p. 100). Yet McClung repeats several times that Pearl's attack is delivered with "the friendliest motive," "in her guileless way" (p. 100). At the climax of the novel her fantastic ability enables Pearl to mimic the Premier's physical gestures and rhetorical style so successfully that she becomes the toast of the town and guarantees the defeat of the government in the coming election. McClung is attempting to present Pearl as a complex and subtle combination of masculine and feminine strengths, but one might argue that the apparent necessity of re-inforcing

Pearl's feminine strengths with masculine ones undercuts the story's political themes.

The problems in Pearl's characterization are amplified by the structural inconsistencies of the novel. The political battle of the sexes takes place within the framework of a courtship novel. The first two chapters build up the romantic expectations of the young Pearl, and the reader, as she awaits the appointed day, her eighteenth birthday, when Dr. Clay has indicated he will propose marriage. But because Clay learns he is seriously ill--the disease is never specified--he chivalrously sets Pearl free, but without explaining why. She understands intuitively that "he was suffering, there was a bar between them--for some reason, he could not marry her" (p. 57). The denouement of the novel resolves this dilemma, but it is an uneasy ending for a novel so stridently feminist in its statements. Having witnessed Pearl's strength in the male realms of wit and logic, it is disconcerting for the reader to see that Pearl "gets her man," mainly through conventional feminine wiles. She calls Dr. Clay to pull a splinter from her brother's foot when there is no real need for a doctor; operation completed, Pearl's sister arranges for Pearl to be alone with her beau. When Pearl assumes a masculine assertiveness and asks Clay directly to explain his failure to propose marriage, he confesses his love and his illness but nevertheless remains chivalrous and

patronizing: "I cannot let you bind yourself to me until I am well again" (p. 331). Pearl continues in her masculine manner and takes the initiative of proposing: "I'll just marry you without being asked." She sanctions her behavior by once again using religious language to defend her equal status: "The covenant between you and me was made before the foundations of the world. You're my man. I knew you the moment I saw you. So when I say, 'I, Pearl, take you, Horace,' it's not a new contract--it's just a ratification of the old. It's just the way we have of letting the world know. You see, dear," she concludes forcefully, "you just can't help it--it's settled" (p. 331).

But McClung has not successfully realized a consistent characterization in Pearl for, resorting again to coquettish wile, she "rub[s] her cheek against his shoulder, like a well-pleased kitten" when Clay is threatened by her claims of independence: "These new women can get to be so independent--they are uncomfortable to live with" (p. 334). Pearl's coquettish response undercuts the image of her assertive, independent nature, just as she is cute and cloying as she submits herself to Clay's status as "breadwinner": "I'll let you pay every time--I'll just love spending your money" (p. 334). No doubt McClung was attempting in the happy resolution of the love story to answer the oft-repeated charge against the principle of sexual equality that, if women "were independent in the

eyes of the law, independent economically . . . they would not marry" (p. 222). In order to demonstrate that equality does not threaten the homes of the nation, McClung gives Pearl love and marriage. But Pearl's coyness and subservience stand at odds with the forcefulness of her personality and convictions and therefore with the novel's central themes as well. The last chapter is entitled, "Nothing Too Good to be True," as if McClung were acknowledging the impossibility of her happy ending. The character of Pearl, who never makes a mistake, is likewise much "too good to be true."

The uncomfortable resolution to the story and the idealistic characterization of Pearl point out the problems not only of McClung's art but also of her feminism. The novel suffers from the unresolved conflict, quite understandable in such a time of change, between the propaganda for the cause of women and the belief that woman's nature is fulfilled in motherhood, hence in marriage. The suffrage movement strove for the right to vote, for legal equality with men; on this level, McClung's feminist heroine is developed as the rational proponent of the rights and powers of women, successful in the political arena because she can outwit the men in argument. Certainly enfranchisement altered the conventional sexual roles and relationships, just as Duncan had predicted in The Imperialist; women were no longer the legally-held

colony of a male-dominated society. Still, even leaders such as McClung continued to comply with male expectations of the status of wife. Consequently, the fictional leader, Pearl, can and does act like a "kitten." Purple Springs, no doubt unwittingly, portrays some of the difficulties of liberation. Ultimately, the novel raises a question similar to Duncan's: how will the conventional relations between the sexes continue to function? In 1921, the answer is not known and the new alliance is uneasy.

Just as the relations between men and women underwent their awkward adjustments, Canada's international affairs also caused apprehension in the post-war years. Because of her tremendous contribution to the war effort, Canada demanded, and finally won, separate representation at the Peace Conference and the right to sign the treaty as an autonomous nation. Prime Minister Borden was led to comment sardonically, "Canada got nothing out of the war except recognition."²⁴ But the constitutional challenge of the Dominion's new status was postponed until the first post-war Imperial Conference in 1921, where the question of the feasibility of a common imperial foreign policy dominated discussions. Carl Berger sums up this development: "the First World War killed . . . the appeal of imperialism. . . . Canadian foreign policy after 1921 stressed status rather than responsibilities and guarded autonomy against any kind of imperial co-operation" (p.

264). But with her national status ratified only by membership in the newly-founded League of Nations, Canada had to operate in an international arena before adequate redefinition of her relationship within the Empire could be clarified and before the social unrest and problems of a post-war society could be solved at home. Her turn-of-the-century status had definitely altered during the first two decades of the twentieth century, but her future course remained unclear.

While Duncan's assumptions about the direction Canadian nationalism should take were clearly presented, the structure of McClung's novel reveals the more common sense of ambivalence. The courtship plot which frames Purple Springs aligns the book with the British literary heritage. But the conventions of that plot are quickly abandoned and ignored through most of the novel and are only awkwardly resolved in the final chapter. Through the body of the novel, McClung plays with her reader's expectations of a sentimental love story; for example, Chapter XI is entitled "Engaged," but the engagement referred to is not of marriage but of Pearl's appointment as a teacher. As the chapter ends with Pearl trying to brave the heartaches of unrequited love and face her new public role with courage, McClung seems to imply that the reader must set aside traditional expectations of what constitutes both a novel and a young heroine.

Indeed, the central plot focusses on Pearl's fight against the political "machine." The propagandistic nature of this section derives from such novels of sentimental social protest as Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. As Leslie Fiedler notes in his seminal study of the American literary tradition, Love and Death in the American Novel, "the spirit of social protest and the causes with which that movement occupied itself" offered fresh material for the sentimental novel in America: "The campaign against liquor is, of all reforming movements, the one most easily adapted to the demands of traditional Sentimentalism and the image of the Suffering Woman."²⁵ Social activist as she was, McClung turned to this American genre to dramatize her cause, just as the Women's Equality League and other suffrage organizations turned to the example of American women in the fight for political equality. But if Pearl uses an American political slogan to call upon every "man or woman" to use "fair dealing" in order to make foreign-born citizens "think well of Canada," she also defines the task to be that of "a Master Builder in this Empire" (p. 104). The framing device, like the rhetoric of monarchical loyalty, suggests that McClung is fearful about the implications of what she is advocating.

The chief concern of both Duncan and McClung, one might conclude, is the theme of political change, specifically, the increasingly prominent role of women in society. Both

authors use the "new woman" as a metaphor for a changing nation, a change both see as progressive. Nevertheless, neither author explores the psychological makeup of her heroine in any depth. The Imperialist focusses on the title figure, Lorne, while the heroine's movement to freedom is in a secondary position; Advena, kept as she is at a distance by the narrator, does not become a fully-realized character. Purple Springs, on the other hand, brings a young woman to the forefront, but the author's propagandistic concerns make of Pearl a mouthpiece for Women's Rights; she becomes a caricature of the new woman. And because her chief talent is argument and her venue politics, she is more convincingly masculine than feminine. This unconvincing portrait concludes with Pearl, having singlehandedly overthrown a government and having won social equality for women, subjugating herself in marriage. Both Advena and Pearl end up in the subservient position of wife; neither writer has answered her own novel's challenge to the conventions of marriage. The ironic result is that the changes in status for these women, as for the nation, come about only partially. Each novel suggests that the relationship between the sexes should be one between equals, but the wider implications of that change, as with Canada's sudden elevation to autonomy within the Empire without constitutional amendment, have not been adequately explored. In light of the times in

which Purple Springs was written, the tension between the courtship framing device and the political themes reflects the conflicts, felt by many, between woman's traditional subservience to men and the radical changes in society as a whole after 1917 when women gained legal rights and a voice in the running of the country.

But if Duncan's novel was ahead of its time in mirroring Canada's disenchantment with imperialism, it perhaps elicited hostility from Canadian reviewers because of the American nature of the work. In 1904, after the settlement of the Alaskan boundary, the United States was distrusted by the vast majority of Canadians; there still existed some fear not just of annexationist intentions but also of American republicanism. Like Duncan, McClung saw in the United States not only a country which had successfully thrown off its colonial status and succeeded in altering society through its suffrage movement, but also, by the time she published Purple Springs in 1921, Canadians too viewed the relationship with the United States as increasingly more important than that with Great Britain. For example, Canada placed the continental concerns which she shared with the United States above the interests of her imperial allies during the 1921 discussion of the renewal of the Anglo-American alliance. And in 1923 she was to insist on negotiating and signing the Halibut Treaty with the United States without British

representation. It is possible that McClung had doubts about the growing partnership with the republic to the south. Certainly during World War I, as Savage reports, when the federal government passed a Wartime Election Act disenfranchising "most men who had come to Canada from 'enemy' countries," McClung supported the bill, because she had become "concerned about the 'moral tone' of the Canadian electorate . . . [since] the public-spirited English-speaking men had enlisted, leaving the indifferent 'foreign' element behind" (p. 134). Like her novel, then, McClung is divided between the past and the future, the British and the American.

* * * * *

There were many aspects of Canada's situation after World War I which called for intensive analysis. During the twenties, Canada experienced economic expansion and increased prosperity. Wheat, the primary product of the prairies, continued to be the staple of the national economy, but the twenties saw a widening exploitation of Canada's natural resources, namely in the areas of pulp and paper and mining. "Wheat had proved itself to be a force in favour of national unity," notes Creighton, "but the new staples almost seemed to encourage the unfortunate process of regional division" (p. 477). While the Imperial Conference of 1926 turned to the questions of constitutional definition of dominion status, many under-

lying problems of social and regional disparity were not addressed by Ottawa. Thus, by the end of the twenties, when the world depression of the 1930s began, Canada found herself unprepared to handle both economic and natural catastrophes. Even at the time it was apparent that poor farming techniques--inadequate crop rotation and the lack of mixed farming--existed in part because of the high price for wheat and the understandable but lamentable greed of farmers for higher profits.²⁶

The appearance of Martha Ostenso's first novel, Wild Geese (1925), portraying as it does man's fundamental alienation from nature in pursuit of increased productivity, foreshadows the destruction to come unless he learns to respect the balance of the natural world. Wild Geese has as its primary conflict the battle between the sexes, but this battle becomes one of elemental forces, the domineering will of the male opposing the powerful passions of the female, what Mrs. Rix Weaver calls the struggle between the Logos and the Eros principles: "if an attempt is made by Logos to remodel Eros in his own image, feminine values fall into the limbo of the lost, and real feminine values look too much like nature with all its mysterious irrationalities and its dark forces."²⁷ Caleb Gare's domination of his wife, children and land is the action of a man who has been unable to come to terms with his own self, particularly his own Eros-ruled unconscious. Gare

fears just such irrationality in the world about him: "Disease--destruction--things that he feared--things out of man's control."²⁸ The last phrase is doubly significant, since the natural world is perceived to be not just out of control, but out of mankind's and, more particularly, male control. Gare's fear of chaos causes him to bind his family and his land to the will of his exploitative greed. The imbalance enforced by Gare on his community is corrected through the awakening to femininity first of his daughter, Judith, then of his wife, Amelia.

To what extent Ostenso managed to reconcile, in her own life, the conflict between Logos and Eros would be a fruitful area of biographical research. It is interesting to speculate, on the basis of the limited information available and the novel, that Ostenso herself was torn between her intellectual proclivities and more instinctual desires. This interpretation of the novel is invited by Ostenso's brief comments on the origins of the novel, quoted by Clara Thomas in her article, "Martha Ostenso's Trial of Strength"; Ostenso says that on "the frontier of that northern civilization" she witnessed the "stark" quality of "human nature . . . unattired in the convention of a smoother, softer life" with which she was more familiar.²⁹ If Lind Archer, the school-teacher in Wild Geese, is Ostenso, thinly disguised--as suggested by Stanley S. Atherton's information in "Ostenso Revisited"

that both author and character taught for a summer in a one-room school in Hayland, Manitoba, and that Ostenso modelled the character Judith on the daughter of the family with whom she boarded³⁰--then the attraction of the educated and conservative Lind for the sensual and strong Judith suggests the possibility of an author struggling with the two sides of her own nature. But in addition to this information, one could also speculate on the basis of Ostenso's relationship to the man who would become her husband, Douglas Dirkin; Ostenso met Dirkin in 1919, but did not marry him until 1944. Atherton describes Dirkin as "the Canadian academic and author who became Ostenso's mentor," noting that there was "careful collaboration" between them on her third novel, The Young May Moon (p. 63). Wild Geese can be read, then, as an intellectual young woman's exploration of her instinctive self.

The conflict of male and female forces in a rural setting returns us to the themes of the works examined in chapter One. Jameson portrayed the land as feminine in order to suggest the destructive consequences of masculine misappropriation of power. Brooke too was critical of the selfish greed of the colonizer. Traill and Moodie in their statements, echoing Jameson, regarding "how a settler hates a tree," delineated the masculine antipathy to the natural world which he considers in the way of his material success. These writers explored male attitudes to

colonization at their very inception. Ostenso's novel, it is important to realize, is set in a Manitoban farming community which has emerged from the pioneer stage. The farmers are established on their lands, have several fields cleared and in production, and are planning more expansion for their operations. Ostenso explores the psychological ramifications of the relationship between settler and landscape at this more advanced stage of settlement. Her characterization of Gare and of his attitude toward "his land" reveals the spiritual self-destruction of such determination for economic success.

Caleb Gare is presented throughout the novel as a man at war with all that is natural. One recalls the nineteenth-century writers' observations on the enmity between the settler and the tree which stands in the way of his plans for economic success. On one section of Gare's land stands "the muskeg and a dried lake-bottom . . . bottomless and foul" (p. 14); the area is a "sore to Caleb's eye" because he cannot control it, cannot bring it under his possession. His cultivated land is described in imagery which suggests wildness held in check by Gare's possession. His fields are "tame" but "the oats . . . stirring like a tawny sea . . . [and] the acres of narrow woodland stretching . . . like a dark mane upon the earth" (p. 13) represent the uncontrollable natural force lurking beneath the surface of the land. Ostenso emphasizes Gare's

possessive attitude by the constant repetition of the phrase, "his land." The most haunting image of the novel pictures Gare out at night, alone, prowling "to assure himself that his land was still all there": "Far out across the prairie a lantern was swinging low along the earth, and dimly visible was the squat, top-heavy form of a man. It was Caleb Gare. He walked like a man leaning forward against a strong wind." The darkness and the silhouetted figure suggest the eerie, primordial quality of his atavistic claims.

Gare struggles "against some invisible obstacle." The first description of him in the novel, emphasizing his "top-heavy form," implies that the obstacle is within his own soul. His "towering appearance," "his tremendous shoulders and massive head" (p. 5) suggest that Gare rules not only his world through force of will and brute strength, but also his psychological disproportion, for "the lower half of his body . . . seemed visibly to dwindle." Gare is perhaps sexually maimed, less than the man he should be. His fear of the irrational realm of Eros is appropriately the source of his control of his wife, "that little folly of hers . . . a son born out of wedlock" (p. 15). The knowledge of Amelia's illicit love maddens Gare with jealousy:

Amelia had loved the boy's father, that he knew. The knowledge had eaten bitterly into his being when he was a younger man and had

sought to possess Amelia in a manner different from the way in which he possessed her now. In that earlier passion of the blood he had found himself eternally frustrated. The man who had been gored to death by a bull on his farm in the distant south had taken Amelia's soul with him, and had unwittingly left bearing in her body the weapon which Caleb now so adroitly used against her. His control over her, being one of the brain only, although it achieved his ends, also at moments galled him with the reminder that the spirit of her had ever eluded him.

(p. 16)

Gare's inability to share erotic passion with Amelia and to accept her erotic past has driven him to his inhuman state. His response is to control, to possess, to negate the power of passion by subjugating it to his will.

Inevitably, Gare's relation with the land, which Ostenso portrays as feminine, is sensual: "Caleb would stand for long moments outside the fence beside the flax. Then he would turn quickly to see that no one was looking. He would creep between the wires and run his hand across the flowering, gentle tops of the growth. A stealthy caress--more intimate than any he had ever given to woman" (p. 171). But this feminine force is daemonic, sucking the very life-blood from Caleb who "was absorbed with the process of growth on the land he owned, lending to it his own spirit like physical nourishment." He sees his relation to the land on the heroic level, but it is a masculine definition of heroic, for he tries to deny the natural life-cycle: "While he was raptly considering the

tender field of flax--now in blue flower--Amelia did not exist to him. There was a transcendent power in this blue field of flax that lifted a man above the petty artifices of birth, life, and death. It was more exacting, even, than an invisible God. It demanded not only the good in him, but the evil, and the indifference" (p. 171). Gare's spiritual deficiency results from his inability to understand nature, represented not only by woman but also by the landscape as woman: his attempt to control feminine "nature" brings about his own destruction.

It is significant that the time period of the novel is not only after the first stages of prairie settlement, but also after World War I. Thomas points out that prior to the publication of Wild Geese Ostenso produced The Far Land, a book of poems about "the death-in-life of the spirit of man and his terrible isolation" (p. 40). Thomas compares one of the poems to A. J. M. Smith, but a more fruitful comparison of Ostenso's "Wasteland" would be with Eliot's post-war poem which shares the same name and similar themes and imagery. Atherton has made it clear that Ostenso was well-read as a young student of literature (p. 58), but whether she was influenced by Eliot or whether she produced from her own observations poetry and fiction dealing with the spiritual poverty of post-war society must remain speculation. What is safe to say is that Ostenso moves beyond the politics of Duncan and the didacticism of

McClung to explore the modern Canadian psyche.

During the 1920s, with increased trade between Canada and the United States and an expansion of industry and mining operations financed by American investment in Canada, such social examination was even more appropriate. Berger in Sense of Power notes that imperialists at the turn of the century had become wary of the "industrial state" as witnessed by the example of the United States: "it stood as a warning of what Canada might become if men of conscience did not denounce the irresponsibility of business and correct the short-range views of politicians" (p. 174). World War I and its aftermath caused some Canadians to question "the definition of individual merit and national progress in terms of dollars and cents and the identification of government with the broker state mediating between . . . mainly economic interests" (p. 203). But the imperialist solution of closer ties with the Empire was no longer appreciated in post-war Canada; in the face of increased prosperity and the growth of national autonomy, such esoteric questions about the kind of society Canadians wished to build were largely ignored, until the economic and natural consequences became all too apparent in the 1930s.

In light of this economic mismanagement of natural resources, it is significant that Ostenso embodies the force working against the masculine abrogation of power in

Caleb's "wild-locked" daughter, Judith. McClung had argued the equality of women on the basis of religion; Ostenso argues on the basis of nature. The imagery describing Judith echoes that presenting Caleb's tame fields. Judith's wildness is barely under control: "Her hair . . . wild-locked and black . . . shone on top of her head with a bluish lustre" (p. 2); she is "strangely beautiful . . . like some fabled animal--a centaress, perhaps" (p. 9). Her "wild-locked" nature seeks freedom and expression in "something apart from the life" of her father's world (p. 216). And she extends her resistance to male domination to her affair with her neighbor, Sven Sandbo. Before she will allow Sven to kiss her, Judith wrestles with him: "Her limbs were long, sinewy, her body quick and lithe as a wild-cat's. . . . She slid through his arms and wound herself about his body, bringing them both to the earth. . . . Then something leaped in Sven. They were no longer unevenly matched, different in sex. They were two stark elements, striving for mastery over each other" (p. 117).

As this human relationship is discovered and expressed in terms of her interaction with nature, so too Judith finds her sense of femininity in the very wilderness Gare seeks to tame: "she threw herself upon the moss under the birches, grasping the slender trunks of the trees in her hands and straining her body against the earth . . . here was clarity undreamed of, such clarity as the soul should

have, in desire and fulfillment. Judith held her breasts in ecstasy" (p. 216). Nature and what is clearly "natural" sexuality provide meaning and joy: Sven appears to her at this moment "as a god, out of space." They also free her from her father's "unnatural" oppression. The novel's original title, "The Passionate Flight," refers most certainly to the lovers' escape from Gare and Oeland; their passionate affair, out of wedlock, releases the natural forces against Gare, for after witnessing its consummation he begins the open persecution which leads to her rebellion. Judith, then, along with the fields, are Ostenso's symbols of nature, against which she defines male oppression.

Indeed, the climax of the novel records "nature's" resistance to and triumph over this "unnatural" man. When Judith announces her planned flight, Amelia, realizing her daughter's pregnancy, awakens to a consciousness from which she has long been dead: "a terrific, incognizable world had opened upon her" (p. 329). Judith represents "another, clear, brave world of true instincts" (p. 332). And Amelia, remembering her own youthful, sexual past, joins the rebellion of "nature": "Judith--Judith. Herself over again. Judith must go. Enough to have one life ruined. Not Judith's, too" (p. 334). Amelia determines to "outwit Caleb" (p. 331) and when he learns of Judith's escape, Amelia's resistance breaks his power: "Cold realization

came upon him suddenly. . . . She had broken him. Broken him in the crisis. Something crumbled within him, like an old wall, leaving bare his spirit" (p. 345). The destruction of his male power, perhaps ironically, restores his "natural" understanding: "His sanity came back to him, the cold clear sanity that had been gone from him during the years of his hatred Shame and self-loathing broke upon him over-poweringly" (pp. 345-46). Judith's and Amelia's resistance is repeated as nature completes Gare's downfall. "Blind with sight," he lunges out of doors where he sees the forest fire racing to destroy his crops. In a mad, vain attempt to save his precious flax-field, he meets his end in the quicksand of the muskeg. The earth, presented as it has been throughout the book as female, reaches up to pull him into a final embrace: "Now silky reeds were beginning to tangle themselves about Caleb's legs . . . something seemed to be tugging at his feet Water was oozing into his shoes and pushing up about his ankles . . . the strength of the earth was irresistible . . . the insidious force in the earth drew him in deeper . . . the over-strong embrace of the earth" (pp. 351-52).

Ostenso's novel demonstrates that Gare's fear of change, of "things out of man's control," produces a spiritual, psychic crippling not just in himself, but in the entire community within his power. Written as it was during a time of shattering global change, when the old

imperial organization of England and the Empire was in the process of redefinition, when Canada became acutely aware of the importance of her relations with the United States in the development of her future, and when Canada moved from reliance on agriculture as the basis of her economy to expansion and exploitation of her mineral resources, Wild Geese sounds a familiar warning note about the destructiveness inherent in a male-dominated society's lust for material gain. When the oppressive masculine power of Logos is brought into balance with the feminine principle of Eros, "the world of true instincts" should reshape the community. But in the restoration of the "natural" characters and the community, simplistic as it may be, Ostenso posits a hope of psychic balance, very much needed in the post-war world.

However, there are some complexities, some unanswered questions posed by the novel's denouement. Although Ostenso's themes are profoundly deeper than the social status of women, the prime issue which inspires McClung, she concludes her book, like McClung, on a simplistic and sentimental note: Amelia invites neighbors into her home for coffee and cake; Gare's son, Martin, draws up "a plan for the New House" (p. 353); the Bjarnasson family invites the Gares to fish once again in their lake. Furthermore, Ostenso glosses over a brief reference in the closing chapter of the novel that Judith and Sven are "in the city"

and "very happy" (p. 353); nothing is mentioned of their domestic arrangements, but the reader must pause to wonder, especially when Judith's passionate longing had called out to Sven for them "to be different, not like people round here . . . or even in the town. . . . We're going away, across the ocean, maybe" (p. 217). That they move no further than Winnipeg suggests the problem of adjusting romantic passion to work-a-day reality, a problem encountered by Hugh and Advena, Pearl and Horace. Achieving a balance between passion and intellect in a sexual relationship is as problematic to Ostenso as it is to Duncan and McClung.

Moreover, Judith and Sven are not the only set of lovers. Lind Archer, who has come to the region as its school-teacher, falls in love with Mark Jordan, Amelia's illegitimate son, who has been educated by priests away from this community. As the novel opens, one senses that the point of view through which the Gare family is presented is that of Lind; indeed, perhaps Ostenso's original intention was to focus on Lind and Mark as the major characters. But as the conflict between Gare and Judith develops, Ostenso leaves Lind and Mark in the background, bringing them to the fore only to facilitate plot development or to comment on the characters and action. These characters, educated and civilized as they are, stand in marked contrast to the more primitive major

characters.

Ostenso's presentation of this intellectual couple suggests the sterility in such rational, controlled relationships. For instance, Mark is in the community doing farm work as a means of relieving the "nervous disorder" brought on by "over-work" in his studies of architecture which he "had gone into . . . seriously after the war" (p. 16). Significantly, the only references which pinpoint the time period of the novel as post-World War I occur in the introduction of Mark Jordan to the novel. It is the war which has maimed him--like Gare he is "sick" (while all the women in the novel are strong). Moreover, Jordan's "nervous disorder" manifests itself in his relationship with Lind Archer. Their relationship, which develops mainly through intellectual conversation, originates from their mutual loneliness for someone of like background. But their chaste love affair never manifests itself beyond hand-holding and gentle embraces. They are sentimental lovers: he is protective of Lind and she depends on his strength. Although their ordered, conventional love may seem in Judith's inexperienced eyes to represent "part of the thing to which she belonged" (p. 132), the outcome of the novel implies that Mark and Lind, with their intellectuality, lack the strength of the others' "passionate flight." Judith's rebellion frees Mark and Lind, for with Caleb's death Amelia's secret that Mark

is her son born out of wedlock will never be revealed--Mark and Lind may leave Oeland to be married in peace. Their marriage, one might suspect, would be threatened by the taint of the kind of out-of-wedlock, "natural" passion which Judith and Sven share. Not only are Mark and Lind unaware of the danger to which they were exposed, but also they remain ignorant of Mark's true, "natural," parentage.

Ostenso, then, has created two love affairs, neither of which is completely successful for the lovers nor entirely convincing to the reader. The plot of her third novel, The Young May Moon, moreover, suggests that Ostenso was never able to resolve the dilemma. Clara Thomas and Atherton, comparing Wild Geese with The Young May Moon, find Ostenso developing similar themes in both novels.³¹ One important difference, however, is that the bulk of the later novel focusses on the efforts of Marcia Vorse to live independently, raising her child on her own after rebelling against both her husband who refused to communicate with her or gratify her desires, and her mother-in-law who embodies a harsh, life-denying religious code of behavior. Marcia succeeds, as did Hester Prynne before her, in achieving the esteem of the community for her nurturing services. This independent woman, however, quite unsatisfactorily reverts in the final chapter to her former subservient position as a wife when she accepts the profession of love given her by the aloof, demanding local

doctor, who claims that they have been denying their mutual need for love with another human being. It seems that Ostenso, like Duncan and McClung, relies on a romantic solution for the dilemma of her heroine, rather than accepting the full implications of her revealed strengths of character. All these passionately strong female characters are forced to fall back on the traditional relationship with men. But with her two very different heroines in Wild Geese, Ostenso had at least approached alternatives.

If we recall that it was in a remote Manitoban community that Ostenso first recognized the primitivism which inspired her novel, then the setting of her novels may indicate how Ostenso pursued her topic. Thomas and Atherton both assert that Wild Geese and The Young May Moon are the only two of Ostenso's novels set in Canada,³² but there is little in the settings of either novel to distinguish them from the northern plains of the United States, the settings of her other novels such as The Mad Carews or O River, Remember!. Clara Thomas's speculation that the setting of Young May Moon is "a composite, but certainly Manitoban" (p. 50n) overlooks the obvious fact that Ostenso deliberately obscures any distinctively Canadian setting. Thomas asserts that Young May Moon draws on the "little towns" of Ostenso's childhood (p. 43); but if that is the case, the setting would be based on the six

towns of her childhood years in Minnesota and South Dakota. Ostenso lived only six years in Canada, from age fifteen to twenty-one, after which time, in 1921, she returned to the United States. Her long publishing career was launched there; Wild Geese received the prestigious Dodd Mead, Famous Players-Lasky award for "the best first novel by an American author." Ostenso's literary influences were American and it was the United States which provided the market for her romances. Ostenso and her work are, apparently, not Canadian.

How do both fit into this study then? After all, equality, on the basis of the "natural" claims of heroines and countries, challenges conventions, but the only literary solution Ostenso can offer is romantic, and this idealism, avoiding social realism as it does, limits her heroines to the awkwardly conventional. But Canada too, having developed her "natural" resources, did not easily achieve the status of nationhood. Her insistence on equal representation at the Paris peace talks, a right earned by her substantial war effort, caused, as Brown and Cook note, "problems within imperial circles and among the allies" (p. 286). Moreover, while constitutional questions dragged on through the 1920s, Canada's economic development and prosperity became more dependent on the American economy, further curtailing her traditional imperial links. Thus when Ostenso sounds an "international" note, suggesting

that the prairie experiences on either side of the 49th parallel have much in common, she gives artistic voice to the contemporary political claim that Canada must accept her "natural" alliance within the North American continent.

But if Canadians saw in the United States a nation which had successfully overcome colonial status, Canada was nevertheless wary of the repercussions of democratic republicanism, particularly, as Berger explains, the extension of the franchise not only to women, but also to "foreign" citizens (pp. 155-57). Ostenso's exploration of the political ramifications of settlement are in the tradition of Brooke and Jameson, but her resolution in American ideology is in contrast with Duncan and McClung. Duncan and McClung saw in American experience a political and literary mode for developing Canada's national identity while yet retaining her distinctive links with the Empire; Ostenso portrays no difference between the American and Canadian prairie experiences and even in her own career presages the growing absorption of Canada into the American political system. One wonders, however, when reading the novel published in the year of her marriage, O River, Remember!, filled as it is with nostalgia for the bygone days of the Red River caravans and developing as it does the portrait of a woman whose greed and lust for land corrupt her "natural" maternal affections, whether Ostenso came to despair of the possibility of establishing a "world

of true instincts" within a system irrevocably founded on the economic exploitation of nature.

Endnotes

¹ Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Imperialist (1904; Toronto, 1971), p. 160.

² Public Archives of Canada, Minto Papers, Chamberlain to Minto, 2 March 1900; Laurier memo, 9 April 1900, quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto, 1974), p. 43.

³ Donald Creighton, Dominion of the North, p. 396.

⁴ Earl Wasserstrom, Heiress of All the Ages, (Minnesota, 1959), p. 82.

⁵ Duncan, "Woman Suffragists in Council," in The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English: 1867-1914, ed. Mary Jane Edwards, Paul Denham, George Parker (Toronto, 1973), p. 181.

⁶ Carl Berger summarizes the imperialist contention that a federated empire would naturally find its centre in Canada in his Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914 (Toronto, 1970), pp. 61-66.

⁷ Alfred G. Bailey, "The Historical Setting of Sara Duncan's The Imperialist" and Joseph M. Zezulka, "The Imperialist: Imperialism, provincialism and point of view," both examine Duncan's references to leading figures in the imperialist debate in Beginnings, ed. John Moss, pp. 139, 145.

⁸ Thomas E. Tausky, Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist

of Empire (Port Credit, 1980), p. 161; Marian Fowler, Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan (Toronto, 1983), p. 259.

⁹ Claude Bissell noted Duncan's indebtedness to James in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of The Imperialist. More recently, Francis Zichy's biographical article in Profiles in Canadian Literature 1, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto, 1980) quotes pertinent passages from Duncan's journals on the modern novel. The opening sentence of Duncan's first novel, A Social Departure. How Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves (New York, 1890), refers directly to James.

¹⁰ Letter to Lord Lansdowne, Jan. 8, 1905, in Fowler, p. 269.

¹¹ Richard Chase, The American Novel and its Traditions (New York, 1957), p. 23.

¹² Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in The American Tradition in Literature, ed. Bradley, Beatty & Long (Norton, 1967), pp. 1279, 1267.

¹³ In Fowler, p. 269.

¹⁴ Zichy, p. 39.

¹⁵ As quoted in Creighton, p. 402.

¹⁶ Catherine L. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada (Toronto, 1950), p. 46.

¹⁷ Nellie McClung, In Times Like These (1915; Toronto, 1975), pp. 87-88.

- 18 Nellie McClung, Clearing in the West (Toronto, 1935), p. 45.
- 19 Record of the Roblin Government, 1900-1914 (Winnipeg, 1914), pp. 168-70.
- 20 Nellie McClung, Purple Springs (Toronto, 1921), p. 93.
- 21 McClung, in Candace Savage, Our Nell: A Scrapbook Biography (Saskatoon, 1979), p. 82.
- 22 McClung, in Savage, p. 48.
- 23 Henry F May, The Enlightenment in America (New York, 1976), p. 162.
- 24 Brown and Cook, p. 287.
- 25 Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1975), pp. 262, 263.
- 26 A. C. Stewart (Minister of Highways, Saskatchewan) in a letter to R. B. Bennett, May 26, 1931, stresses that the deplorable conditions of the land "would not be so bad" if the farmers had "engaged in mixed farming to any extent." Quoted in The Dirty Thirties, ed. Michiel Horn (Toronto, 1972), p. 96.
- 27 Mrs. Rix Weaver, The Old Wise Woman (New York, 1973), p. 80.
- 28 Martha Ostenso, Wild Geese (Toronto, 1925), p. 76.
- 29 Clara Thomas, "Martha Ostenso's Trial of Strength," in Writers of the Prairies, ed. D. G. Stephens

(Vancouver, 1973), p. 40.

³⁰ Stanley S. Atherton, "Ostenso Revisited," in Modern Times, ed. John Moss (Toronto, 1982), p. 58.

³¹ See Thomas, p. 48 and Atherton, pp. 63-64.

³² See Thomas, p. 43 and Atherton, p. 58.

Chapter III

"Nothing and no one could complicate life here":

Isolationism

in the Novels of Ethel Wilson

On her way to Buckingham Palace for an audience with Queen Victoria, Topaz Edgeworth, protagonist of Ethel Wilson's The Innocent Traveller (1949), is chided by her brother for her boisterous enthusiasm: "I do wish, Topaz . . . that you would try to control yourself, and--er, conform a little. You really sound very Colonial sometimes."¹ Topaz, who had emigrated to British Columbia twenty years earlier, defends herself by redefining the word "colonial": "'Colonial!', You don't know what the word means! You say the word as if it were something to be ashamed of! . . . I'm Colonial and I'm proud of it. . . . those who left this country as colonists and established colonies in the New World have a deal more to be proud of than you who stayed at home and were comfortable . . . a deal too comfortable" (pp. 229-30). Despite Topaz's challenge to accepted conventions about colonials, the narrator makes it clear that Topaz's definition does not arise from personal experience: "You would have thought that [Topaz] had hewn down the forest and raised the home . . . and planted the garden herself" (p. 230). The irony of

Topaz's fiery defence of colonialism is further enhanced by the chapter's title, "Apotheosis"; the crowning moment of Topaz's vivacious but nevertheless shallow existence is her thirty-minute audience with the Queen, a reward for having established in Vancouver "a branch of a Needlework Guild . . . with Royal encouragement" (p. 133).

Topaz has remained throughout her entire life, even on the frontier of Canada, just as "comfortable" as her brother, and her colonialism conforms just as much to convention as does his imperialism. Although she feels tremendous exhilaration when "at last . . . the open country . . . stretched before her, exciting her with its mountains, its forests, the Pacific Ocean, the new little frontier town, and all the new people" (p. 122), she lives a life of "unlimited leisure" in a closed circle of genteel women who pass their time deciding on new carpets for their church, lunching at the Hudson's Bay Lunch Room, and "sending knitted garments to the Queen of England." Despite her loud protests to the contrary, Topaz is a conventional British citizen and woman: she is loyal to her Queen, to her culture, and to her socially-defined femininity. Instead of being an adventurous colonial breaking new ground, as she protests, she maintains an imperial outpost for Queen and country in Canada.

Ethel Wilson's comedy centers on the eccentric behavior of this exuberant colonial, a woman who lives to be

one hundred, and who even to the end never stops talking with excitement about a wide variety of topics. But the comedy is really a satire, albeit a gentle one, with political undertones. Despite all her humorous vitality and her eccentricities, Topaz is revealed as a shallow, undeveloped human being; any depth of emotion remains hidden from her. Certainly the reader enjoys her flaunting of social codes for women, as, for instance, she "would invade the privacy of the gentleman's smoking-room" (p. 109). But even though she defends her actions by asserting that, once "you've come to Canada, you know, you . . . have to be less conventional," her unconventionality remains superficial. The narrator compares Topaz to a "water-glider" skimming "unencumbered" and unaware of the "dreadful deeps below"; Topaz's "joy of living was daily renewed in her and was seldom checked by things, people, or events" (p. 104). For her entire one hundred years, Topaz is cared for by other people, from her parents and her siblings to her nieces; never having to concern herself with making serious decisions, she remains dependent, colonized.

Near the end of her life, she compares her virginal state to the situation of her married grand-niece, Rose: "It isn't everyone who can love for seven years . . . Unrequited," said Aunty complacently. . . . "You and your happy marriages! Any simpleton can do that" (p. 253).

But Wilson shows Topaz's failure in Rose's reflection that her aunt's "vitality had been preserved and untroubled by [a] lack of awareness of the human relations which compose the complicated fabric of living" (p. 255). If Wilson, in The Innocent Traveller, pokes gentle fun at nineteenth-century ideals of female behavior and identity, she also demonstrates how trapped Topaz is by British conventions, how incapable she is of normal development in the open country of British Columbia. In one brilliant chapter, Topaz comes into contact with the "terrible enclosing night" of the rain forests (p. 193); she flees the natural surroundings in fear, speechless for the only time in her life. Topaz remains forever a colonial, sexually ("satin white until the day of her death" [p. 193]), socially ("a civilized although not a conventional being" [p. 59]), and politically ("the Royal Family moved through her life with banners streaming" [p. 89]).

As early as 1930, Ethel Wilson began fictionalizing the biographical and autobiographical material which is the basis of The Innocent Traveller.² This book, recording the rise of both the city of Vancouver and the new nation, gently satirizes the Victorian sensibility so prevalent in Wilson's own family during the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth.³ The very names of this city and province emphasize their British inheritance. Along with Brooke and Jameson, Wilson questions the transplanting

of imperialistic values to the new world, but her ironic tone is closest to Duncan's turn-of-the-century novel about nineteenth-century imperialism. Although the irony of The Innocent Traveller is primarily directed at Topaz, the book reveals as well Wilson's admiration for the vitality of such women who, like Traill and Moodie, can adapt to unforeseen circumstances. But the social conventions of these British women, like the imported British forms of government designed "to serve and protect," also can limit full development and stifle the creation of new social and political modes. Along with Brooke and Jameson, Wilson contrasts superficial British convention, embodied in this novel by Topaz's "surface" experiences, with the rugged wilderness setting to suggest the inadequacy of British traditions in the new world.

Published in 1949, Wilson's fictional attempt at redefining the meaning of "colonial" complements the official investigations into the nature of Canada, most notably the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences. The Innocent Traveller marks the passing of an era and heralds Canada's constitutional emancipation from colonial status onto the world stage as an independent Dominion.

Ethel Wilson's career also parallels Canada's political and cultural development. Ethel Davies Bryant was born in South Africa of British parentage in 1887; orphaned at 10,

she was sent to live with maternal aunts in Vancouver, although she returned to England for her formative education. As recent research by Irene Howard indicates, Ethel Bryant was raised in a strict, religious household fervently British in political and cultural orientation.⁴ In 1921 she married Dr. Wallace Wilson and spent the next twenty years supporting his career; as she describes herself in a biographical essay, "Cat among the Falcons," she "did not contemplate a future in this occupation [of writer]--life as it was seemed already full."⁵ Wilson thus began writing late in life, in 1930, at the same time that Canada gained national autonomy with the Statute of Westminster, 1931. Yet the fact that her first story appeared in 1937 in a British publication, the New Statesman, because she knew of no Canadian publishers, indicates the persistence, despite constitutional independence, of Canada's cultural colonialism. Then, just as Canada's growth toward political independence was delayed during World War II, so too was Wilson's young writing career interrupted by war work. But after the war, Wilson turned to intensive writing and her canon of five novels appeared between 1947 and 1956, a time corresponding to a heightened nationalism in Canada. Her collection of short stories was published in 1961, as Canada entered an unprecedented period of literary and cultural nationalism.

While The Innocent Traveller, evoking the early years

of Canada's development, paid particular attention to the British and Victorian ethos out of and by which the country was formulated, Wilson's first published novel was Hetty Dorval (1947), which focusses quite specifically on the 1930s, from the time of the Statute of Westminster to the outbreak of World War II. The Statute of Westminster in 1931 was the culmination of the long struggle, begun by Laurier and continued by Borden, for independent national status. Yet many constitutional issues needed resolution, most notably the division of jurisdiction between the federal government and the provinces. The Depression had sharpened the inequities among the various regions of the country and also forced the nations of the world into more isolationist, protectionist stances. When Mackenzie King was swept back to power in 1935, he had only begun to address the complexities of Canada's exercise of her new status on the international front when Canada was swept into the war against Hitler's Germany. The years from 1930 to 1950 forced Canada to face the difficulties of establishing independent international relations at a time of war and at a time when she had not yet solved major conflicts within her own community. Consequently, in the post-war years Canada continued to operate in complex international affairs while trying to resolve her domestic arrangements.

The young Canada sought her way in an increasingly

complex international scene; Wilson's narrator-protagonist from Lytton, B. C., Frankie Burnaby, is forced to think and act on her own in Europe when her personal relationships are threatened. A bildungsroman, Hetty Dorval spans Frankie's seven years' growth from a naive country girl of twelve to a young woman of nineteen residing in Europe to broaden her education. Frankie's initiation into the complex world of adulthood circles around the title character, a "woman of no reputation,"⁶ who resides for a short time in Lytton when Frankie is twelve. Frankie meets Hetty by coincidence at each successive stage of her development: in Vancouver at fourteen, on a boat to England at sixteen, and finally in London at nineteen. As a twelve-year-old, Frankie falls under Hetty's "spell of beauty and singing and the excitement of a charm that was new" (p. 21); her visits to Hetty's bungalow meet with the disapproval of her parents and she is forbidden to visit again. Her parents send her away to school, first to Vancouver and then to London. In London, Frankie lives with the Tretheways; for Richard Tretheway she feels the first pangs of love, and for Molly, his younger sister, motherly solicitude. When these two meet Hetty, Frankie, "watching them succumbing to the flowing slow-spoken charm of Hetty Dorval," resolves to protect them from "that ensnaring business of Hetty's" (p. 65). Frankie's confrontation of Hetty is interrupted by the revelation

that Hetty's lifelong housekeeper, Mrs. Broom, is Hetty's mother. At the novel's end, Hetty goes on her way to yet another opportunistic marriage, while Frankie is forced to accept the complexities within herself and in human relationships. Frankie cannot keep Richard and Molly innocent any more than she can keep herself innocent; her simplistically moral confrontation of Hetty is foiled by the complexities of European "relations." While Hetty is capable of protecting herself in a new alliance, the more passive Frankie, like Canada after the war, can only recognize and accept the complexities of relationships to others.

The novel is not overtly political, but as W. H. New notes in his concluding remarks to the 1981 Ethel Wilson Symposium, "there is more politics in Ethel Wilson's work than we have commonly recognized."⁷ The novel ends with reference to the German occupation of Vienna on March 14, 1938; since Frankie is twelve at the novel's beginning, the timespan of the book is 1931-1938, from the Statute of Westminster to the first of Hitler's acts of aggression which precipitated World War II. Written and published after the war, the novel makes three specific references to the imminent conflict. Two brief references connect Hetty to the atmosphere in Europe of impending doom. Immediately before the chance meeting with Hetty in London, Frankie comments that "there was great uneasiness everywhere in the

public and private mind, and the word 'War' underlay everybody's thoughts" (p. 62). Furthermore, when she hurriedly returns from Paris to warn Richard of the dangers of romantic entanglement with Hetty, Frankie refers to the "impending feeling" of war in London. She has a "pre-vision of craters, rubble and death" and notes that "the skies above London were still empty" (p. 75). Such ominous forebodings remind the reader that the narrator, the adult Frankie, speaks with a post-war consciousness. In a similar vein, the Canadian reader would take particular notice of Frankie's passing mention of Dieppe, where Canadian war losses were so great.

The most extended reference to the war is the final paragraph of the novel. Hetty travels with her latest male conquest, Jules Stern, to Vienna; the closing sentences connect her with the siege of that city: "Six weeks later the German Army occupied Vienna. There arose a wall of silence around the city, through which only faint confused sounds were sometimes heard" (p. 92). The ambiguity of the ending is typical of the book as a whole--does one associate Hetty with the besieged or the besieger? Beverly Mitchell argues that "the reader must infer . . . Frankie's terrible awareness of the fate of a woman named 'Hester' in company with the Jewish-sounding 'Jules Stern' in a country occupied by Nazis."⁸ Desmond Pacey, on the other hand, sees the novel as "a microcosm of the whole human world

prior to the Great War"; the connections between Hetty and war suggest to Pacey that "the irresponsible individualism of Hetty Dorval, multiplied a million times, precipitated that conflict."⁹ Further examination of the sexual politics in the novel, however, reveals that Wilson uses the event of war as a metaphor which validates both these apparently contradictory readings.

The key to the political dimension of the novel is discovered in its landscape description. Frankie observes that her "genius of place is a god of water. I have lived where two rivers flow together" (p. 56). Early in the novel she portrays the point at which "the clear turbulent Thompson River joins the vaster opaque Fraser" (p. 6). Her description of this scene is often quoted, as by Pacey, as an example of Wilson's "rich sense of place" (pp. 50-51)¹⁰; it is perhaps more noteworthy for its metaphorical diction. The joining of the rivers is likened to "a marriage" (p. 7). The qualifying commentary reflects the adult Frankie's attitude to the conventional relationship between the sexes: "as often in marriage, one overcomes the other, and one is lost in the other"; "the expanse of emerald and sapphire dancing water joins and is quite lost in the sullen Fraser The Fraser receives all the startling colour of the Thompson River and overcomes it, and flows on unchanged to look upon but greater in size and quality than before" (p. 7, emphasis mine). The subtlety

here reverses patriarchal society's assumption that the male identity overcomes the female's in marriage; the female in fact, as the metaphorical language suggests, "receives" and thereby subsumes the male. This reading is supported by Wilson's naming of the Lytton minister the Rev. Mr. Thompson; coming "to pay a call" to Hetty Dorval, he is quite vanquished by her "weapon of lightness" (p. 20). Frankie's "genius of place" is a geographical metaphor of sexual politics.

This view of relationships, wherein the male is consumed by the female, is represented most clearly in the career of Hetty Dorval, as she glides unchanged from one liaison to another. Although she is known in Lytton as Mrs. Dorval, her "husband" is not with her and an unidentified man joins her only once in the course of her stay. Later, Frankie's mother reports that Hetty had left an affair with a married man for "a rich oil man . . . who set her up . . . in British Columbia where the riding was good and then for some reason she up and left him" (p. 72). Hetty next marries an aged Englishman, General Connot, for "security" (p. 52). After his death she sets her designs on young Richard Tretheway, but at the novel's end she goes off instead, as noted earlier, with Jules Stern to Vienna. Hetty "receives" men into her life, and each time goes on "unchanged."

Such a reading of the novel apparently posits Hetty as

a "bad woman" despite Wilson's assertion to Mitchell that "I never wrote about 'bad' women" (p. 74). Wilson's comment could be considered the denial of Victorian prudery were it not for the fact that Hetty's sexual relations are not the only examples Frankie has to come to terms with. Her parents have what appears on the surface to be a healthy, even an ideal, relationship, but The Innocent Traveller cautions the reader to be wary of surface appearance. Indeed, it is in this portrait of Frank and Ellen Burnaby that Wilson subtly introduces the ironic complexity of her novel. Frankie's parents "had a hard and hard-working life" operating a ranch and they "set and maintained the family standards in an exacting loneliness" (p. 8). Ellen Burnaby's unique qualification as a ranch wife, that she "had been at the Sorbonne," is commented on by Mrs. Dunne, the landlady of Frankie's boarding house in town: "I always think it is so wonderful of a woman like your mother, who's been at the Sorbonne . . ." (p. 8). She allows her incomplete sentence to give the impression that Ellen is admirable for sacrificing herself, her intelligence and her education, to her husband and the ranch.

In the two brief scenes where they appear together, however, Ellen Burnaby is presented as the controlling force in the marriage. Frank Burnaby is emotional and volatile during the confrontation with Frankie over her

secret visits to Hetty, while Ellen is the calming voice of reason. Frank "exploded" and spoke "sharply" and "jumped up and began to stride up and down the room"; Ellen, on the other hand, "interposed . . . speaking to Father . . . 'Darling, let's hear what Frankie has to say'" (p. 32). Because he seldom appears in the novel, Frank is kept, insignificant, distanced from the reader. In his last scene, he is openly manipulated by his wife; visiting the bungalow where Hetty Dorval had lived, Ellen "fell in love with the bungalow . . . whirled round and her eyes sparkled. . . . 'Give it to me, Frank! I want it! I adore it! Let's have it!'" (p. 46). Frankie observes the politics of the scene: "Father played right into her hands." She notes her mother's manipulations: "I knew exactly what she was doing" (p. 47). The following Christmas, when Frankie and Ellen are in London, Frank cables, "Happy Christmas to both my girls stop hope you will like your bungalow Ellen all my love" (p. 48). When Frank dies a short time later, Ellen, controlling her grief, displays no emotion. She writes Frankie in London that she "was well, that she knew what she had to do, and that I was on no account to change the plans that they had made for me. She might even join me in a little while" (p. 61). Sister Marie-Cecile, a former teacher of Frankie's in Lytton, writes also and describes the death scene. The final words spoken between Frank and Ellen allude to

Donne's "The Good-Morrow," the second epigraph of the novel. Ellen tells the dying Frank, "Nothing can ever part you and me, Frank. We shall always be together wherever we are, my dear love" (p. 61). Sister Marie-Cecile concludes that Frankie's parents "have between them the perfection of human love" (p. 61).

Surely Wilson intends some irony here, for not only is the man dead, but also it is a nun who pronounces this statement about a subject she cannot know about from personal experience. Moreover, Frankie's vision of the scene pictures her "mother leaning over my father in the immortal attitude of love" (p. 62). The Pieta iconography suggested here places the woman in a permanently dominant position. In the marriages of Hetty and Ellen, then, love and destruction are closely interwoven. Marriage as a symbol of human interaction becomes a dangerous game, wherein one identity--in this novel, the male--inevitably loses.

The novelists examined in Chapter II all reflect the challenges to the conventional relationship between men and women prevalent in the first quarter of this century; the advent of independent women began a change in the balance of power between "man and wife." Both Duncan and McClung reveal the difficulties of men and women who treat each other as equal partners when they approach marriage--that traditional, patriarchal institution. Ostenso's Judith is

the first female character in this study to break away from the restrictions imposed by her male-dominated society; she finds power in a sexual relationship outside marriage, but then Ostenso can take her no further than domestic residence with her mate and child in Winnipeg. Hetty Dorval, on the other hand, is the first novel in this series to contain a "woman of no reputation," let alone to focus upon such a woman as the title character. Moreover, as I have indicated, both Hetty's transient relationships with men and the more traditional marriage of Ellen reveal the ascendancy of women's power over men.

The challenge to patriarchal conventions in the novels discussed in previous chapters has, in Hetty Dorval, become a more general assault on men. Social events in the years between the First and Second World Wars explain the shift in sexual politics mirrored in Wilson's novels. From the First War women gained the vote, employment outside the home and the freedom of the 1920's "flapper" period. The Depression years sent men from home in search of work, leaving women to usurp the prestige of their place as heads of the family. By the end of the 1930's, Betty Friedan points out, women's magazines portrayed an image of New Woman, "less fluffily feminine, so independent and determined to find a new life of her own."¹¹ Friedan's comment that "there was an aura about [the New Woman] of becoming, of moving into a future that was going to be

different from the past," is applicable in retrospect not only to the changing relationships of men and women, but also to the changes in Canada's former alliances. With the Statute of Westminster Canada started to go her own way but in the troubles of the 1930s, she was as yet untried, "of no reputation," only just sensing her power. The independent and isolationist Prime Minister King, like Hetty, did not want life complicated by the affairs of others; both King and Hetty were nevertheless caught up irrevocably by another World War.¹² The new imperative for Canada, for Canadian women, as for Hetty, is to assess their new powers and the complications of an independent place in international affairs.

The epigraph from Donne's "Meditation XVII" sets the central thematic development, the desire for isolation, against the necessity of community. The generally-accepted interpretation of the novel is that Frankie is forced to choose between the isolationism of Hetty Dorval and the social responsibility impressed on her by her parents, most notably her mother.¹³ Frankie's thoughts upon her arrival with her mother in England support this reading: "Any positive efforts that one could discern on the part of Hetty were directed towards isolating herself from responsibilities to other people. She endeavoured to island herself in her own particular world of comfort and irresponsibility. ('I will not have my life complicated.')

□ But 'No man is an Iland, intire of itself' said Mother's poet three hundred years ago" (p. 57). Frankie's confrontation of Hetty in the penultimate chapter, sparked as it is by her protective love for Richard and Molly Tretheway, is seen as her acceptance of responsibility for others and her rejection of selfish opportunism such as Hetty's. In this sense, Desmond Pacey is correct to read the novel "as another version of the classic confrontation of innocence and experience . . . in which Innocence meets Evil in the disguise of Beauty, is temporarily enchanted thereby, is made wise by Parental Wisdom, and succeeds finally in cheating Evil out of another victim" (p. 54). But such an allegorical interpretation ignores, as Pacey intimates but does not pursue, the subtle complexities analyzed above, the complexities which contain Wilson's explorations of the political dimensions of her story.

Frankie is forced to grapple with the complexities of relationships which develop beyond isolationism and with her own femininity as the result of her involvement with the Tretheways and Hetty. If one keeps in mind the destructive violence inherent in Donne's "Meditation XVII," a destruction which breaks up unity, then Frankie's friendship with the Tretheways of Cliff House must be read as an allusion to "a promontorie . . . as well as . . . a manor of thy friends." Donne's "Meditation" is echoed in Frankie's diction as she describes "the harmony and

confidence of our lives together, whether we were apart, or whether we were all together in Cliff House by the sea" (p. 60). Hetty is the force which threatens to tear apart "the integrity of Cliff House . . . and leave wreckage behind" (p. 75). If Hetty represents the "irresponsible individualism" which precipitated the world conflict, if she is, in other words, connected with Germany's seige of Vienna at the novel's end, then Frankie's defence of her British cousins takes on the aura of international political struggle.

Just as Canada's participation in the World War was complex, as she strove to serve the British Commonwealth while maintaining national integrity and unity, so Frankie's motivations for defending the Tretheways are mixed: "I told myself, 'Oh no, it was not Richard whom I was warning off Hetty, but Richard for Molly.' . . . I shut firmly away any personal concern about Richard." She then adds the qualification, "Perhaps" (p. 68). When Hetty accuses her of being "in love with Richard . . . [and] very jealous," Frankie counters: "I truly believe you're as selfish as a human being can be, and my friends at Cliff House are too good to be made unhappy by you" (p. 79). But Wilson again undercuts Frankie's altruistic self-image by having Frankie conclude with the childish taunt: "So there!" Frankie's foray into the complex world of adult relationships has cost her emotional pain, for "take it

whichever way you like, Rick was going to be very unhappy--and so was I, as far as I could see" (p. 85). Also, and more significantly, she has had to compromise her own innocence and integrity by becoming like Hetty in order to save her friends from this "menace." She becomes aware that "inexperienced as I was . . . I had more force than I had given myself credit for" (p. 74). She decides to use Hetty's own weapon against her: "The strength of Hetty's silence would be this--that her friend . . . or lover or antagonist would waste himself in emotion and talk, and Hetty would remain serene and unwasted." She succeeds at Hetty's own game for during the confrontation Frankie observes that "there was not the making of a quarrel . . . in the room and . . . neither Hetty nor I appeared angry. We both waited in silence for the other" (p. 79). It is at this point that "the hidden mine of Mrs. Broom" explodes, ominously connecting Frankie to the war-like violence possible in her future; even "comfortable safe ones" like Frankie can encounter sordidness and shame "in a dirty foreign place" (p. 83). Frankie has learned much about her own manipulative capacities, her own destructiveness, and the complications involved in human love.

Both Hetty Dorval and The Innocent Traveller demonstrate that beneath the comfortable veneer of community may exist latent selfishness, even evil. A supportive community allows the insular, self-concerned

innocence of Topaz to thrive. Donne's "Community," from which Wilson derives the third epigraph for Hetty Dorval, actually implies that "good is [not] as visible as green," that it is impossible to segregate the "good or bad" in women. And no such dichotomy is found in Wilson's portraits of women. The characterization of Ellen Burnaby, for example, is connected with that of Hetty Dorval: when Ellen expresses the desire to buy Hetty's bungalow because "Nothing and no one could complicate life here," Frankie recalls Hetty's similar assertion, "I will not complicate my life!" (p. 47). At the end of the novel Frankie too echoes the desire for isolation from other peoples' invasions as she tells Hetty, "I've got my own life to live and I don't want ever to see you again"; Hetty responds, "I understand exactly It is preposterous the way other people . . . complicate one's life. It is my own phobia, Frankie, and I understand you . . . so well" (p. 91). Neither isolation nor community can, it seems, be clearly distinguished as either good or bad. Complexity in relationships is as inevitable as complexity in individual characters.

Set in the 1930s, but published in 1947, Hetty Dorval suggests the rapid maturation Canada underwent as she was forced out of her isolationist stance onto the international stage. The Spanish Civil War and the rise to power of Nazi Germany signalled the increasing complexity

of the involvement of the "world" in "war" and indeed all international affairs. A measure of Canada's position is reflected by the attitude of then Prime Minister Mackenzie King who, according to Donald Creighton's The Forked Road, "disliked the intrusion of external affairs" (p. 68). Nevertheless, Canada was inevitably involved in, and made aware of, the darker destructive forces in the world and in herself. Her first battle of the war, Hong Kong, "a dirty foreign place" (Hetty Dorval, p. 83), brought shattering defeat and the suspicion of misuse by the British. Then in 1945 the Gouzenko case shocked Canadian naivety into acceptance of the fact that an ally was operating a most sophisticated spy network within her borders. Finally, Canada's wartime commitment, while upholding the dignity and heritage of the British Commonwealth, proved as well her capacity for destruction. Even the development of nuclear energy in Canada during the war carried with it sinister implications, as nuclear power was perverted to construction of the bomb and the nuclear age dramatically altered international relations. In order to defeat the enemy it seemed necessary to adopt "foreign" means of violence, to enter the complicity of evil.

Alexandra Collins has argued tenuously that Wilson's thematic links to four American women writers--Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather and Ostenso--demonstrate "her sense of Canada as a new

country."¹⁴ But more basic than thematic similarities to American writers is the structural parallel: in Hetty Dorval Wilson uses, as did Duncan before her, the "international situation" of the Jamesian novel. A Portrait of a Lady particularly comes to mind because of the similarities between the relationships of Frankie and Hetty and of Isabel Archer and Madame Merle: an older friend turns out to be a "menace." Hetty Dorval, like A Portrait of a Lady, places an innocent girl from the new world in an old-world setting; Frankie Burnaby of Lytton, British Columbia confronts her values and heritage in England. Moreover, as does Duncan's The Imperialist, Hetty Dorval brings a character--in this case, a woman of the world--to the colonial backwater of Canada, thereby revealing the provincialism and parochialism of that frontier community. For example, when the Rev. Mr. Thompson, in whom Frankie as a child sees a "burning sort of goodness and directness" (p. 20), comes to "pay a call" on Hetty Dorval, the reader can easily perceive beneath his "directness" a very narrow-minded "sort of goodness," as he fishes for information about Hetty's "husband" and "home" (p. 18). Beverly Mitchell argues persuasively that the novel reveals not the "menace" of Hetty Dorval, but the destructiveness of gossip and hear-say; Hetty Dorval is condemned more by rumors of her reputation than by acts she has committed (pp. 80-83). In England, attempting, out of

an inherited sense of responsibility, to rid the community of the reputed "menace" of Hetty, Frankie begins to examine the complexities of her motivations. This examination provides the vehicle of the thematic complexities of the novel for--to recall Mitchell's observation--when Frankie watches Hetty depart for Vienna, she sees the evil in what she has done. Such a reading brings this discussion of the novel full circle, for Hetty Dorval can be associated not just with the beseiger, but also with the beseiged. Through the structure of the international novel and the consistent point of view, Wilson adopts an American formula to explore the Canadian mentality as it is juxtaposed to the European, in general, and the English, in particular.

Moreover, Wilson's novel, like Duncan's, suggests that conventional relationships between the sexes, and by implication between nations, have altered. When Frankie ponders "the affaire Hetty," she "could not imagine what new relation would exist between mother [meaning Mrs. Broom] and daughter"; but Frankie's immediate recollection of her own mother, "who had been the unconscious or subconscious cause of my intervention," implies that that relationship also will be affected (p. 86).

Just as Frankie Burnaby became aware of the darker complexities of her identity and her relationships while confronting the "menace" abroad, so Canada during and immediately after World War II became conscious of her

separate identity as a nation and at the same time of the complexities in international relations. Canada's military contribution during the war was outstanding, as it had been during the Great War; after the fall of France, Canada was the largest nation aiding Britain against the German attack. The Commonwealth of Nations stood alone against Germany. Sacrifices such as those at Dieppe measured the courage and force of Canadians, but during the final stages of the war when the United States and Britain were managing the war effort, Canada began to sense that she was merely a pawn in a game run by others. When Roosevelt and Churchill met on the Prince of Wales off Newfoundland in 1941, Canada was not even invited to participate; Creighton concludes in Dominion of the North that such exclusion shattered Canada's cherished role as "mediator . . . of Anglo-American co-operation" (p. 525). Shaken by such treatment by her two closest allies and the revelations of Gouzenko about a third, Canada took her place in the international forum, joining the United Nations and NATO, mistrustful even of her allies. She strove to be a voice of moderation and conciliation in an international scene rapidly deteriorating into the suspicion and tensions of "cold war." Perhaps there is no better symbol of Canada's precarious position than the completion of Confederation in 1949 when Newfoundland became the tenth province of the Dominion; Canada was now at long last a nation ad mare

usque ad mare, but Newfoundland brought uncomfortable ties with the United States who had a ninety-nine year lease of armed forces bases on the island. Even Canada's closest neighbor could be a "menace."

Perhaps as always in her history, it was out of a sense of self-preservation against the powerful influence of the United States that Canada at this time became concerned with her national identity. In 1946 the Canadian Citizenship Bill established the priority of Canadian citizenship over British subjecthood. The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, established in 1949 "to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling," made recommendations in its report of 1951 not only for the development of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, but also for the creation of a Canada Council, which would give encouragement to the arts and letters. Canada after the war set out as never before to clarify her national identity for herself and for the international community.

* * * * *

A measure of Canada's new-found confidence in her nationhood is reflected in Wilson's Swamp Angel (1954), a novel which Hallvard Dahlie rightly argues demonstrates the maturity of "an unconscious Canadianism" in fiction rather than the insecurity of "a self-conscious one."¹⁵ Dahlie

points out that, steeped though the novel may be in the "map of B.C.," it is artistically effective because a journey to the interior governs both its plot and its characterization. Maggie Lloyd Vardoe leaves her second husband, Edward, and travels to central British Columbia where she takes up an occupation familiar to her from her maritime childhood, the operation of a fishing lodge. The political implications of Swamp Angel can be surmised even from this brief description, for Maggie's character is built on a love ad mare usque ad mare: she loves the landscapes of both New Brunswick and British Columbia. Moreover, the lodge reveals an international composite, from the Scandinavian owners to the Chinese boy whose help Maggie enlists. As Dahlie says, Wilson's "unconscious Canadianism" does not ignore "environment and tradition" (p. 6).

Swamp Angel continues Wilson's central theme: the interrelation of the individual and community. Maggie's employers are the maimed Halдар Gunnarsen and his bitter wife, Vera, who becomes increasingly jealous of Maggie's competence. Maggie's search for individual peace must encompass the difficulties of her relationship with the Gunnarsens; she decides not to leave for a more lucrative, self-satisfying job in the United States, but to stay and meet the responsibilities and personal rewards of "these people . . . now her family."¹⁶ The sub-plot also concerns

two other women on individual quests for independence, Mrs. Nell Severance and her daughter, Hilda. Mrs. Severance, an imposing woman of eighty who once was a circus juggler, is able finally to sever her memory of her past and to accept her approaching death. Throughout the novel she constantly juggles a "Swamp Angel," a small gun used in her act; when she sends the gun away to Maggie, her act of "severance" suggests freedom from the past. For Hilda the "Swamp Angel" had symbolized her parents' neglect during her childhood, and its disappearance precipitates her freedom to love, marry, and bear a child. The novel ends with Nell's death and the nurture, by Hilda and Maggie, of their respective families.

Swamp Angel is the first novel considered in this series which consciously examines a marriage breakdown. The impetus of its plot is delineated in the first chapter, as Maggie prepares for and completes her departure from Vardoe. Anna Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles had as its underlying tension the difficulties of her marriage, but the marriage did not end until after the journals' timespan. Hetty Dorval, the first novel to examine a "bad" woman, shows Hetty walking in and out of "marriages" as suits her whim, but hers can in no way be typed as typical bourgeois marriages. As New rightly points out in his article, "The 'genius' of place and time: the fiction of Ethel Wilson," Hetty, "with her silence and

withdrawal, simply uses people for her own security and moves on, always the same."¹⁷

These various marital relationships have provided the prime venue for all these novelists to explore the politics of a changing nation. Brooke examines colonial beginnings by focussing on courtship; the journalistic, autobiographical works of Jameson, Traill and Moodie suggest a colony in revolt when they, as wives, grow stronger than their husbands. Duncan, McClung and Ostenso explore the changes in imperial relations when spouse and nation gain political equality. Wilson's novel, as Smyth correctly summarizes in her study of "Strong Women in the Web: Women's Work and Community in Ethel Wilson's Fiction," captures the people of the 1940s, the kind of women whom Betty Friedan would analyze in The Feminine Mystique.¹⁸ Beginning as it does with a woman who consciously plans the end of her marriage, Swamp Angel emerges from a Canada breaking the last vestiges of colonialism, declaring Canadian citizenship, searching for a distinctive flag. In keeping with New's challenge to critics to consider the "politics" of all of Wilson's works, we must explore the political dimensions of Maggie's declared desire for independence: "I know the kind of place I want to find and I know what I want to do. I want to have a certain kind of business. I know what I want. I've worked it all out and I know I can do it" (p. 27).

The political level of Maggie's story is implied primarily in her two marriages. Maggie felt her individuality stifled and annihilated by "her outraged endurance of the nights' hateful assaults" by Vardoe (p. 23). When she leaves him, she rediscovers the identity she had lost after the deaths of her previous husband, Tom Lloyd, their child and her father: "she had once lived through three deaths, and--it really seemed--her own" (p. 16). With these three losses, Ethel Wilson makes clear, Maggie had lost touch with her feminine essence, that of nurturing, for after the multiple deaths, she had "no one to care for." "By an act of . . . fatal stupidity" she had tried to assuage her loss by marriage to Vardoe. The political implications suggested by Maggie's position between husbands is reminiscent of Emily Montague's hiatus between fathers; as Emily was a mirror of Canada in transition from French to British imperial rule, so Maggie's marriages suggest Canada's evolution from British colonial status to a more demeaning position as an American economic satellite. The generic implications of Maggie's husbands' names point to the national dimensions: Tom Lloyd's name recalls the great British Prime Minister, Lloyd George under whose leadership during the Great War Canada made strides toward national autonomy; E. Thompson Vardoe, the car salesman, is brash and enterprising, the quintessentially American-style businessman. Married to

Vardoe, Maggie was "standing still" (p. 19); Vardoe sees her only in the role of subservient wife (p. 31). She rediscovers her identity as "Tom Lloyd's own widow again" (p. 36). Considering the British origin of Wilson's family, as it is reflected in The Innocent Traveller, Swamp Angel seems to advocate a reassertion of British heritage as an antidote to the increasing threat of American economics and culture in Canadian life.

Like Hetty Dorval, Swamp Angel explores, in the context of female characters, the isolation/community theme of Donne's "no man is an Island." But whereas Hetty Dorval studies the destructive side of feminine personality and portrays the ambiguities of communal values, Swamp Angel seems to embrace wholeheartedly the necessity of preserving community. Maggie's "union with Three Loon Lake" is compared to "a happy marriage" (p. 84). She takes command of the "ordering, providing, planning, cooking" at the lodge, and succeeds in doing so "cheaply and well, and with good humour" (p. 84). Besides her function in the traditional role of housewife, Maggie does "more than that"; her innate compassion, dormant since the deaths of her father, husband and child, finds expression again in various acts of nurturing. She provides warmth and attention both to an American tourist, Mr. Carmichael, after he is trapped on the lake by a storm, and to Vera, distraught after her attempt to drown herself. As Maggie

moves from isolation to community, she finds her strength and identity renewed: "These people were now her family. She had no other" (p. 140).

Wilson seems to imply that this identity is to remain distinct from the American when Maggie rejects the lucrative offer to manage Mr. Carmichael's resort in the United States. Duncan had left the colonial Lorne at the end of her novel toying with the possibility of "abandoning the empire" by taking up employment in the United States; Wilson has her heroine refuse such adventure and affirm her Canadian allegiances to and love for the interior landscape of British Columbia, the woods of New Brunswick, and her British heritage. However, even though Maggie commits herself at the novel's end to the people of Loon Lake Lodge, there is no guarantee of success; Vera may not recover emotionally or rejoin her husband at the lodge. Maggie senses that "if I cannot cope with Vera and her folly . . . I've failed" (p. 140); the preservation of individuals within communities is confirmed as a value and a possibility to work towards.

Such affirmation is not made easily on the part of either Maggie or Wilson. The comparison of Maggie's relationship to these people to a marriage alludes to Frankie's description of the joining of two rivers in terms of a marriage. Just as Hetty Dorval juxtaposes three women to reveal the selfishness lurking beneath altruistic

feelings, so too Swamp Angel contrasts different images of women to portray the difficulties and yet the hope in human relationships. Maggie's commitment to her new community is contrasted to and commented on by the formidable Nell Severance. It is Nell who gives voice to the Donne "Meditation" which stands as epigraph to Hetty Dorval: "We are all in it together. 'No Man is an Iland, I am involved in Mankinde,' and we have no immunity and we may as well realize it" (p. 150). When critics such as Smyth assert that Nell is a "visionary . . . saint" (p. 92) who understands the mysterious web of human interaction, they seem to overlook the irony of Nell's characterization. Despite her quotation of Donne, she counsels Maggie to leave the Gunnarsens and accept Carmichael's offer of work in the States: "Leave these tiresome people. . . . Are they really your affair?" (p. 152).

Desmond Pacey's critical instincts were correct when he focussed on the significance of Nell's surname, Severance; but he sees in the name only her willingness to give up the past to enable others, particularly her daughter Hilda, to move forward (p. 153). In fact, she gives up the past, symbolized by the swamp angel, with great unwillingness and self-pity, and only after public humiliation threatens the security of the little gun. The deeper meaning of "severance" derives instead from Donne's "Meditation": "a Clod . . . washed away by the Sea . . . as well as if a

Promontorie were." "To sever" is to disjoin, to part, and, as the noun "severance" implies in terms of land surveyance, to break off a part from a whole. The woman who quotes Donne's theme of human community is also the woman who counsels the very destructive severance of Donne's image and who desires "immunity," not community.

While Maggie considers Nell her "greatest friend and the friend of [her] spirit" (p. 154), when Nell and Maggie are together in the penultimate chapter--the only time the reader sees the two friends together--an essential difference becomes clear. Maggie's response that she is well aware of the difficulties of involvement and her assertion that "escape to a desert island . . . is a trouble factory. . . . I'm not escaping . . . now" (p. 149) indicate that she has matured, that she is no longer the frightened woman who ran away from her husband. The vast difference between Maggie and Nell, moreover, is delineated by their respective views of nature. Whereas Nell believes that "everything of any importance happens indoors" (p. 149), such a statement seems pointedly indifferent to the nature imagery of Donne's "Meditation". Maggie retorts, "oh, it does not," for her "involvement" with nature--in activities such as fishing, boating and swimming which occur on the meeting place of land and water, the constituents of Donne's image--has been instrumental in the renewal of her spirit and in the creation of her community.

Maggie's commitment to her new family is also directly contrasted to Nell's family history. Nell claims to have had a wonderful love with her common-law husband, Philip, her partner in the circus. However, their life together and the pursuit of their shared careers "severed" them from their child; Hilda moved from one boarding school to another as her parents travelled the world: "She was only a child, and how could they take a child away from school to Troy, to Ravenna . . . they kept strange company; they lived like vagabonds . . . it would be unhealthy, quite unsuitable for a child" (pp. 50-51). In Nell's reminiscence Philip is clearly the dominant force, controlling their careers--"it was important, Philip had said, that they should go to Ravenna"--and answering "vaguely" Nell's maternal suggestion that Hilda should travel with them. Thus, for the sake of romance and career, Nell sacrificed her maternal role: "the mother excused herself to herself but did not convince herself" (p. 51). Yet as she grows older, she demonstrates a singular ignorance of the pain she has caused Hilda. Having sent the Angel away, she asks Hilda, "You didn't like the Angel, did you?" (p. 119). The question reminds Hilda of "the absences, the felt pity, the second place, her father whom she would have liked to love," but she only admits that "it was some kind of symbol" (p. 119). Nell asks, "Of what, darling? . . . thinking There were things I

should have known, things I should have seen." Only in a parenthetical entry in a letter to Maggie does Nell admit her "fault" in neglecting Hilda's childhood (p. 127).

Wilson's portrait of Nell Severance is most ambiguous; although Nell values and at times displays "perception and awareness of other people" (p. 127), Nell is also a self-indulgent, proud old woman who can claim, "I don't really care for humanity . . . it gets between me and my desires" (p. 78). She seeks "immunity" from humanity, "mankind," as she insists upon satisfying her individual "desires" to the exclusion of Hilda who belongs to her immediate community, the family. Maggie does not commit the same mistake, even though she too severs a relationship to pursue an independent career. She applauds Nell's sacrifice of the Angel as "our ability to throw away the substance, to lose all yet keep the essence" (p. 129). Unlike Nell's destructive isolationism, however, Maggie's severance, from her empty marriage with Vardoe and from her loved ones, is a necessary and positive amputation which allows her to rediscover her strengths, "to keep the essence."

Maggie, while she is characterized primarily through contrast with other women, is also defined in terms of traditionally masculine strengths. Men respond to her as an equal, respecting, for example, her proficiency in the art of fishing, particularly in the creation of flies. Mr.

Spencer, who buys her products, "looked for flaws in the perfection of the body, the hackle, the wings" (p. 14). When he saw that "there were no flaws, he now regarded the young woman with some respect." Having escaped Vardoe, Maggie refreshes her spirit by camping for three days beside the Similkameen River where "in the pleasure of casting over this lively stream she forgot--as always when she was fishing--her own existence" (p. 38). "Brought up from childhood by a man, with men" in the woods of New Brunswick, Maggie has the necessary courage and independence to have "serenely and alone . . . acted with her own resources" (p. 32).

Independent in what is primarily a man's world, comfortable with men in their traditional enclaves of sport and nature, Maggie is presented as admirable in comparison with the traditional, stereotypical women in the novel. On the bus driving up the Fraser Canyon, Maggie's love of the natural world is highlighted by the selfish concerns of a gossipy housewife. Wilson uses run-on sentences to convey the noisy chatter of this busybody whose thoughts are as unsophisticated as her grammar: "Well . . . that's one thing I can't take--fishing. If you want to have your home look nice you can't have men clumping in and out with dirty boots on One time my husband brought fish home and I said Well if you want me to cook those fish you can clean them yourself and he did and by the time he finished there was

fish all over the house there was scales in the new broadloom and I do declare there was scales in the drapes How he did it I don't know" (p. 54). Maggie is distinguished from the women of Three Loon Lake when, after the first season, the idle gossips speculate on the tension between Maggie and Vera. The malicious chatter, in a chorus of female voices, identifies the instigator as Vera:

"I heard that woman Henry Corder sent you was a wonder."

"Yes, she was fine."

"Did you like her?"

"I liked her all right."

"What didn't you like about her?"

"Oh, I liked her . . . sure, I liked her."

.

"Where'd she come from?"

"I don't know. She never said."

"Never said! Got a husband?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know. Didn't she tell you?"

"No . . ." abruptly.

"You'd think after a whole summer . . ."

"I know," with a half smile, "but she didn't."

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In the evening Alma Bower said to her mother Mrs Pratt, "I don't think Vera Gunnarsen's so crazy about that Mrs Lloyd." . . . And Mrs Pratt said to her friend Sally Bate, "Did you hear about that woman's been working for Gunnarsens? Kind of a myst'ry woman Vera says. Vera says"

(p. 115)

Wilson juxtaposes Maggie's quiet ways to the "gabby talkers," the women concerned with fussy social conventions determining the proper hat and hairdo for weddings (p. 122).

When Henry Corder is confronted with the indirect questions about Maggie, he explodes in a tirade against "wimmin": "Can you beat it the way wimmin talk. Make up a thing out of whole cloth. . . . She's not one of those mod'n wimmin. I got no use for mod'n wimmin She's just not one of these gabby talkers" (p. 116). The reader is led to share the admiration of the male characters for Maggie's self-control as she struggles with her painful emotions and difficult experiences. Typed by the women as "one of these man's women" (p. 116), Maggie is valued for the qualities which distinguish her from her contemporaries, the kind of women--whom Betty Friedan was to describe in The Feminine Mystique--whose world is limited by the role of housewife, whose intellect and emotion are fed on stories about getting and keeping a husband, whose energy finally degenerates into idle gossip and petty annoyance. In contrast to "mod'n wimmin," Maggie is independent, efficient, controlled--in "essence," masculine.

With her masculine talents and control and her feminine awareness of and response to others' needs, Maggie is forced to grow through the process of coming to terms with an irrational feminine force. Vera, whose antipathy to her lot in life pushes her to jealousy of the competent Maggie, is one of the "mod'n wimmin," weak, lacking in control. Though Smyth argues that Wilson shows sympathetic

understanding of Vera in the comment that other women would understand the fatigue caused by Vera's workload (p. 92), the authorial comments actually make clear that Wilson despises women like Vera. Vera "was not intelligent . . . [and] had not the support of simple philosophy" (p. 87). Although Vera's husband is bullheaded and cantankerous, Wilson observes that "living with [Vera] could hardly be called a pleasure" (p. 72). Vera's primary problem, that she cannot reason her way out of her emotional dilemma, contrasts Maggie's knowledge that she will "have to make [her] way on [her] own power" (p. 99).

Despite Wilson's obvious admiration for Maggie and her dislike of Vera, however, the difficulties Maggie experiences in applying her masculine "power" in her relationship with Vera demonstrate the limits of her "fine talk and . . . all her fine thinking" (p. 142). Maggie has to discover a deeper power within herself "to cope with one unhappy human being" (p. 142). After unsuccessfully attempting to drown herself, Vera stumbles to Maggie's cabin; the ensuing scene recalls Maggie's restoration of the exhausted Mr. Carmichael, but the diction and imagery suggest a deeper psychological dimension. The atmosphere of their meeting recalls the microcosm of Donne's "Meditation": "A room lit by a candle and in a silent and solitary place is a world within itself . . . it has a singularity" (p. 146). The encounter focusses on the

effect on Maggie; when she realizes "with horror" what Vera has tried to do, Maggie "came to herself." "Without speaking," Maggie "drew Vera into the cabin." Wilson emphasizes the absence of words during Maggie's ministrations to Vera; "still not speaking," Maggie dries Vera and prepares a fire. In this crisis Maggie is forced to abandon words: "it seemed to her the least important thing that she should speak and make words" (p. 147). When Maggie, "her heart failing her," tries to talk away Vera's fear of madness, her words are useless. The only effective response Maggie makes to Vera's anguished cry--"I hate you I love you I hate you Maggie I love you . . . don't ever leave me!"--is to cradle Vera in her arms and speak to her as a mother would to a disturbed child: "Maggie, bending, drew Vera up and held her strongly and softly in her arms until the trembling and crying went quiet. . . . She could not think what to say . . . 'There then,' she said . . . patting Vera gently as she held her in her arms, 'there then . . . there then.'"

Such a passage recalls the icon of the Pieta used in Hetty Dorval, but here the image of two embracing women also suggests lesbianism. To the extent that love of one's own sex is an expression of self-love, Maggie's embrace of Vera is a holding of part of herself, her truth, as Vera's Latinate name implies. Maggie goes beyond the rational power of "simple philosophy" and words--because she does

not know "what words you use to exorcise the Evil One"--to embrace another individual with what she quite incorrectly terms "helpless compassion." She becomes a stronger individual by acknowledging the irrational element which Ostenso's Caleb Gare could not control and therefore not accept, and she learns the tremendous healing powers of her feminine compassion. Wilson does not allow the situation to conclude on a note of naive optimism, however; Maggie knows that "it's not going to be easy" to remain with the Gunnarsens, but "perhaps there's a way" (p. 154). In the deliberation over the future of the lodge, she advises that Vera should not be brought to the lake "till she says she wants to go," that they all do "a little more petting, a little helping"(p. 153). When Henry Corder exclaims defensively, "I couldn't pet anybody--never done such a thing in all my life," Maggie promises, "I'll teach you, Henry." She has just learned herself.

Like Frances Brooke's Emily Montague two hundred years earlier, Wilson's novel dramatizes the need to go beyond the controls and limitations of a masculine "philosophy" of human relations. A dominating man such as Edward Vardoe, who sees his wife only in terms of conventional roles, must be vanquished, abandoned. This action enables Maggie to draw strength from the masculine side of her nature, suffocated during their marriage. Once released from the prison of conventional femininity, she is able to stand on

her own, to carve out aggressively the lifestyle she wants, to live independently. This portrait is distinctive to the first half of the twentieth century in its ambiguous treatment of sexual roles. Like Pearl in Purple Springs, Maggie Lloyd is an uneasy composite of masculine and feminine traits; both women are somewhat too good to be true. Maggie achieves independence, through masculine powers, in what is primarily a man's world, yet she acquires the powers of feminine nurturing and manages the domestic arrangements of the lodge with a "good housewifery" which would be the envy of Catharine Parr Traill. Wilson and McClung assert, more than they render, the feminine quality of their apparently "masculine" protagonists. McClung tried to avoid the implications of her characterization simply by giving Pearl a sentimental romantic marriage at the novel's end. Wilson, on the other hand, seems to realize the problems raised by her creation; her authorial intrusions indicate a conscious manipulation of conventional sexual types. Disliking, as does McClung, the gossips such as Vera and the irrational forces which control women, Wilson nevertheless structures the plot of Swamp Angel around Maggie's discovery of the nurturing feminine "essence" to complement her masculine strengths. Although the androgynous ideal is awkwardly realized, it seems to be the goal of the narrator as well as of the plot.

Wilson's development, seen in her characterization of Topaz, Hetty and Maggie, has its corollary in the generic growth of her work. The Innocent Traveller finds its models in the British writers Wilson acknowledged to Pacey as her primary literary influences: Fielding, Defoe, Forster, Trollope and Bennett (p. 16). Hetty Dorval followed the American "international" novel in its theme and structure. Swamp Angel, however, is a composite, a combination of British and American influences. Whereas Hetty Dorval maintains a first person point of view, Swamp Angel returns to a third person narration with an omniscient author who, as does the narrator in The Innocent Traveller, often intrudes into the story. Yet, when Wilson describes Maggie fishing in the Similkameen, her style also suggests the influence of Hemingway, particularly his fishing sequences in The Sun Also Rises. Moreover, entire chapters are rendered in dialogue only, a dramatic form which Hemingway had experimented with in such short stories as "Hills Like White Elephants." The mode of all these literary influences, it must be noted, is decidedly masculine. In a letter to Pacey stating her literary preferences, Wilson writes that she found Jane Austen "pleasurable but not truly exciting, Virginia Woolf too narrowly patrician" (p. 21). Consequently, her preference for and admiration of a masculine style of writing repeat the tension of Maggie's struggle between the poles of her

masculine and feminine psyche. The plot and character development of Swamp Angel dramatize the necessity of feminine strengths, while the style remains primarily in the masculine tradition. The book moves toward an eclectic style as its protagonist grows toward androgyny.

This novel's theme and technique also comment on Canadian consciousness at the mid-point of "her" century. "Human relations," muses Maggie, "how they defeat us" (p. 142), yet she remains committed to her wider family, despite the slim hope of success. She has found the independence she wanted, and is learning more and more about her long dormant and even previously hidden strengths. Canada, likewise, at mid-century had solidified her autonomy as a nation with her membership in the United Nations, a wider "family" than the British Commonwealth of Nations, the latter of which she remains a prominent member and is much her own creation. Yet, the growing cold war between the super-powers, the war in Korea, were situations which manifested the grave difficulties of attaining peace in the international community. While remaining committed to her increasing role as mediator in international affairs, Canada also set out as never before to explore her cultural and national identity. Creighton opines in Dominion of the North, "the appointment, in April, 1949, of a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, implied that the preservation of

Canada's intellectual and spiritual independence was now recognized as an urgent matter of both public and private concern" (p. 579). In the early years of the 1950s, Canada began to establish its own institutions for the development of the arts: the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in 1953, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1952, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada. Yet the irony in the development of the dance companies and the Stratford Festival is that the artistic directors, the chief architects, were imported from Britain. The dominance of the British in the cultural fields, coupled with the increasing dominance of the United States in the Canadian economy, are prominent reminders that Canada has always been and still is a composite of British and American influences; in the 1950s, Canada strove, like Maggie, towards independence, but could not yet formulate the qualities of her uniqueness.

Like Frankie Burnaby, Canada was thrust prematurely into a complex adult world. Like Maggie Lloyd Vardoe, Canada found herself on a difficult path towards independence, caught between the influences of the two great nations which have been so prominent throughout her history, and caught as well in an increasingly tense international community. But Maggie and Frankie have one thing in common with their creator, a love of the British Columbia landscape. The roots of their identities are in

that landscape, and Wilson's fame is ultimately as a British Columbia writer. Pacey speculates that Wilson's "impulse to write may have been her knowledge of and love for Vancouver and British Columbia . . . and [the fact that] no one had sought to record [the city and province] in serious prose fiction" (pp. 23-24). Wilson is, in this sense, a regional and pioneer writer, and her novels, particularly Swamp Angel, are unabashedly steeped in the British Columbian landscape. This setting is in its appellation a composite of British and American influences; the British and American heritages, old world and new world, meet in this western-most province of Canada. Just as Hugh Finlay in The Imperialist speculated on the possibility of formulating a new identity for himself and his newly-adopted country in the wilderness of British Columbia (p. 184), so Wilson, through her fiction and her characters, explored this land and pointed the way for Canadians to discover the uniqueness of their experience.

Endnotes

¹ Ethel Wilson, The Innocent Traveller (Toronto, 1949), p. 229.

² Peter Hinchcliffe, "Ethel Wilson," in Profiles in Canadian Literature 3, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto, 1982), p. 110.

³ George Woodcock, "Innocence and Solitude: The Fictions of Ethel Wilson," in Modern Times, ed. Moss, p. 179.

⁴ Irene Howard, "Shockable and Unshockable Methodists in Ethel Wilson's The Innocent Traveller," Essays in Canadian Writing, 23 (Spring 1982), 107-134.

⁵ Ethel Wilson, "Cat among the Falcons," in The Masks of Fiction, ed. A. J. M. Smith (Toronto, 1961), p. 30.

⁶ Ethel Wilson, Hetty Dorval (Toronto, 1967), p. 33.

⁷ W. H. New, "Critical Notes on Ethel Wilson: For a Concluding Panel," The Ethel Wilson Symposium, ed. Lorraine McMullen (Toronto, 1982), p. 143.

⁸ Beverley Mitchell, "The Right Word in the Right Place: Literary Techniques in the Fiction of Ethel Wilson," in The Wilson Symposium, ed. McMullen, p. 85.

⁹ Desmond Pacey, Ethel Wilson (New York, 1968), p. 56. R. D. McDonald also notes that "Hetty and destruction are continually associated," "Serious Whimsey," Canadian Literature, 63 (Winter 1975), 47.

¹⁰ Cf. as well H. W. Sonthoff's cryptic comment that "descriptions of the Fraser and the Thompson River . . . seem . . . outside the main line of the story," "The Novels of Ethel Wilson," Canadian Literature, 26 (Autumn 1965), 34.

¹¹ Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, p. 33.

¹² Donald Creighton makes this point about King's leadership, briefly near the end of his Dominion of the North, p. 500, and in more detail in his The Forked Road (Toronto, 1976), pp. 68-69.

¹³ See Pacey's elaboration of this interpretation in his Ethel Wilson, p. 55. Hinchcliffe gives a more general summary of critical approaches to Hetty Dorval in his article in Profiles 3, p. 107.

¹⁴ Alexandra Collins, "Who Shall Inherit the Earth? Ethel Wilson's Kinship with Wharton, Glasgow, Cather, and Ostenso," in The Wilson Symposium, pp. 61-72.

¹⁵ Hallvard Dahlie, "Self-conscious Canadians," Canadian Literature, 62 (Autumn 1974), 10.

¹⁶ Ethel Wilson, Swamp Angel (Toronto, 1962), p. 140.

¹⁷ William H. New, "The 'genius' of place and time: the fiction of Ethel Wilson," Journal of Canadian Studies, 3 (February 1968), 40.

¹⁸ Donna E. Smyth, "Strong Women in the Web: Women's Work and Community in Ethel Wilson's Fiction," in The Wilson Symposium, ed. McMullen, pp. 87-95.

Chapter Four

"A Canadian theme . . . just as much a personal theme":

Margaret Laurence, *Canada and the 1960s*

Hagar Shipley, protagonist of Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel (1964), looks back over her ninety-odd years and, at one point, recalls "as a child" spending "hours in our huge warm . . . kitchen" watching the house-keeper "slap and pat pastry." As the pampered daughter of Manawaka's first merchant, Hagar "used to think how sad to spend one's life in caring for the houses of others."¹ She herself "learned to cook after [she] was married" because she had "had no premonition" that she would spend her womanhood "caring for the houses of others," first as hostess in her father's house, next as housewife in her husband's, and finally as paid housekeeper for a Vancouver merchant. Her present home is the reward of her years of servitude: "it is mine. I bought it with the money I worked for." And it is all that she has: "If I am not somehow contained . . . in this house . . . then I do not know where I am to be found at all" (p. 36). The story of Hagar, then, is that of a modern bondservant, housebound all her life, despite her early expectation of high estate.

Laurence presents the women of Manawaka in novels

which, unlike those of some earlier women writers, are not overtly political. Unlike Jameson, Duncan and McClung, X
Laurence does not feel the need to argue national politics. Laurence, like Traill and Moodie, and especially Wilson,]
places the women's experiences at the forefront of the works. Yet while the political is implicit in her works as in the previous writers', Laurence's novels signal a new stage of independence for Canada and for women when she confidentially uses different women's perspectives to portray their individual experiences. In the context of the enthusiasm generated in the artistic community of the 1960s by the formation of the Canada Council, The Stone Angel, Laurence's 1964 novel, was a major step in the exploration and expression of uniquely Canadian experience.

If the central consciousness of each of Laurence's Canadian novels is female, this protagonist nevertheless struggles, and remembers past battles, to find her own voice. The controlling motif of Laurence's novels is the individual's fight for independence. And the source of X
this theme and plot is political; Laurence discovered it in the struggle of colonized Africans for freedom from the colonialist British. In 1943, Margaret Wemyss married Jack Laurence, a British civil engineer, and travelled with him on his postings to Somaliland in 1950 and the Gold Coast in 1952, where they remained until 1957. Aware from an early age that she wanted to be a writer, Margaret Laurence began

in this decade to transcribe African stories. She published a collection of these, A Tree for Poverty (1954), as well as her own short stories about African life. Finally, she produced her first novel, This Side Jordan (1960), a depiction of the struggle for independence in Ghana. In her later novels, the country's political struggle became the analogue of the individual woman's quest for self-determination.

Her only "directly autobiographical"² book is a travelogue of her experiences in Africa, The Prophet's Camel Bell (1963). Hers was a dual perspective: as the wife of a white technocrat she was part of the imperialist power structure; as a writer trying to produce a collection of Somali poetry and tales, she had to overcome the language barrier and the Africans' distrust of her as a white, Western female. Not surprisingly, the structural principle of The Prophet's Camel Bell is the portrait of imperialists and colonized. She begins with the admission that she had come to Africa with a confirmed prejudice "that the overwhelming majority of Englishmen in colonies could properly be classified as imperialists, and [her] feeling about imperialism was very simple--[she] was against it."³ Laurence believed that she was not of their ilk and that the Africans would clearly see the difference. At the end of her odyssey, however, by recognizing the colonialist in herself, she understands: "This was

something of an irony for me, to have started out in righteous disapproval of the empire-builders, and to have been forced at last to recognize that I, too, had been of that company" (p. 228).

If she discovers the colonialist in herself, she finds as well, in the African history of being colonized, a parallel to her experience as a Canadian. In conversation with Donald Cameron, she further explains the similar "pattern" of her African and Canadian writing: "I was dealing with something which was just as much a Canadian theme and just as much a personal theme: the whole process of every human individual coming to terms with your own past, with your childhood, with your parents, and getting to the point where you can see yourself as a human individual no longer blaming the past, no longer having even to throw out all the past, but finding a way to live with your own past, which you have to do. This kind of inner freedom has been a continuing theme."⁴ If Laurence was a colonialist, her sympathy is with the colonized whose struggle for emotional freedom forms the structural principle of her subsequent fiction. And, as she explains in "Sources," an essay she wrote for Mosaic on "Manitoba in Literature: An Issue on Literary Environment," having witnessed the African writers' "exploration of the past," when she came to write about her "own people, [her] own place of belonging," she found "the pattern" was the same.⁵

☐ Her experience of African colonialism, then, clarified her understanding of Canada and, by extension, of herself.

Thus, as she explains in "Sources," when she began in the early 1960s to write about Canada, she expressed her "continuing theme" by "approaching [her] background and [her] past through [her] grandparents' generation, the generation of pioneers of Scots-Presbyterian origin" (p. 81). As a result, The Stone Angel explores the pioneer, the colonial, past of both Laurence and Canada; not surprisingly for a person who could identify with both colonized and colonizer in African politics, Laurence approaches her protagonist, Hagar Shipley, with feelings she describes in another reflective essay, "Ten Years' Sentences," as "ambiguous . . . because I resent her authoritarian outlook, and yet I love her, too, for her battling."⁶

Laurence's own struggle, which she wages in her creation of heroines in conflict, is to come to terms with her maternal grandfather, the dominant, colonialist figure in her childhood. She tells Cameron that he appears as Grandfather Connor in the collection of short stories, A Bird in the House (1971) and she explains the conjunction of actual ancestor, fictional character and herself: "my grandfather . . . was a terrible old man . . . who had an enormous sense of his own independence. . . . I really hated him as a kid . . . but when I got to the end of those

stories I realized that in point of fact, I was an awful lot like him in this way . . . because that very tenacity which he had, I also had. . . . I do not want to be an authoritarian figure as he was, but I recognize that, like Hagar, there is a good deal of the matriarch in me. . . . I don't think I ever would have known those things about myself if I hadn't written The Stone Angel and A Bird in the House" (p. 99). The mature narrator's conclusion to this book echoes Laurence's dual response to African politics: "I had feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins."⁷

Laurence's personal exorcism seems to have struck a chord in the Canadian populace, for, as she explains to Clara Thomas and Irving Layton, "Canadians saw [Hagar] as their grandmother."⁸ The "matriarch," who is at the same time a victim, is a figure with whom Canadians, colonized as they still were in 1964, could readily identify. Certainly one does not need Laurence's extra-textual comments to realize the political implications of Hagar's personal experience. The dates corresponding to major events in Hagar's life suggest that Laurence is aware of the historical dimension of her novel. In the time present, Hagar is ninety years of age, and through a series of flashbacks, she relives her past. Laurence deliberately divides these flashbacks into three stages: the years before, during and after her marriage. Hagar's first son

is seventeen when the First World War breaks out; thus he is born in 1897. Since there is a ten years' difference between her sons, John is born in 1907. Hagar, born in 1870 and married in 1894, leaves her husband when John is twelve, in 1919. John dies in the middle years of the Depression, and Hagar ends her recollections with a brief reference to the many sons lost in World War II. Each period covers a quarter-century: Hagar marries when she is twenty-four; she lives with Bram Shipley for twenty-four years; and the third period of her reminiscences covers the twenty-five years between the two World Wars.

These three periods of Hagar's past correspond with three stages in Canada's development as a nation. British troops, after quelling the Red River uprising, finally left in 1871 and the building of an independent nation under Sir John A. Macdonald proceeded; in 1870 and 1871, respectively, Manitoba and British Columbia joined Confederation. This period ended with the ascension of the Liberals under Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1896. The Liberals completed the task of Macdonald's national policy, aided by a rise in prosperity and national confidence, but undermined by imperial questions which culminated in the 1917 election wherein the French and English were split as never before; fighting as a member of the British empire had dismembered Canadian unity. And the period between the wars was that of the Great Depression. These three

periods, therefore, contained the economic conditions of depression, followed by prosperity and depression, as well as the political conditions of union and separation.

The memories of Hagar, whose life spans the history of Canada before the renewed nationalism of the early 1960s, end in the mid-1930s on the Depression prairies with the death of her favorite son, John, when she herself was "transformed to stone" (p. 243). Hagar, in the time present, is a ninety-year-old "matriarch," as harsh and life-denying as she has ever been. Her past, which she recalls in flashbacks, demonstrates the tremendous cost of survival in the world of the Canadian frontier. W. L. Morton, a historian who Clara Thomas speculates has influenced Laurence's thinking,⁹ argues quite convincingly in his 1960 essays on The Canadian Identity, that "Canadian life . . . is marked by a northern quality, the strong seasonal rhythms . . . the wilderness venture . . . the return from the lonely savagery of the wilderness to the peace of the home . . . the puritanical restraint which masks the psychological tensions set up by the contrast of wilderness roughness and home discipline."¹⁰ Hagar's time present, in conjunction with her memories, explores the strengths and the weaknesses inherited from this communal past. As Laurence concludes in "Sources," Hagar "is very much a person who belongs in the same kind of prairie Scots-Presbyterian background as I do, and it was, of

course, people like Hagar who created that background, with all its flaws and its strengths . . . and this is the place we are standing on, for better and for worse" (p. 84).

As the publication date of Morton's book and the great popularity of The Stone Angel indicate, Canadians in the early 1960s were demonstrating great interest in their past and its influence on their present, in this "place we are standing on." Indicative of this preoccupation was the 1958 election of John George Diefenbaker with the largest majority ever accorded a leader in Canadian history. Not only did Diefenbaker present Canadians with a vision of developing a great nation of the North; he also evoked Canada's pioneer past--sixty-two when he became Prime Minister, he was proud of his family's settlement in Saskatchewan, and profoundly impressed by the prairie dwellers' determination. His frontier experience, like Hagar's, evoked immediate interest.

The first period of Hagar's reminiscences of her Canadian past, the years of her childhood and adolescence which culminate in her marriage, focusses both on her fear of the female image required of her by the pioneer community much like that of Diefenbaker's past and on her subsequent assumption of the masculine toughness required by her society. In the "uncouth land" of Manitoba, the "feeble ghost" of Hagar's mother, who died giving her life, becomes in Hagar's mind a symbol of feminine weakness (p.

3). When Hagar is asked by her brother to assume her mother's role in order to comfort their dying brother Dan, Hagar "stiffened" in resistance, the "frailty" of the "meek woman" being too threatening a role for Hagar "to play at" (p. 25). This early denial of a compassionate pose costs Hagar much torment, for she desired "above all else to do the thing he asked, [but was] unable to bend enough" (p. 25). As such, it is to "stoney" Hagar as much as to her mother's tombstone that the title of the novel refers.

Likewise, the concept of "angel" helps to explain why Hagar at least attempts to act benevolently. The expectation that woman be "The Angel in the House"--to use the title of Patmore's popular poem of the Victorian era--was a subtle way of glorifying the subservient position of woman as wife and mother.¹¹ The spiritual and moral pedestals upon which women were placed in the nineteenth century were devices by which the society, organized for the benefit of males, kept women in their colonized place. Laurence specifies this colonial implication when Hagar remarks that her "mother's angel" was "bought in pride" by her father, Jason Currie, in order to "proclaim his dynasty" (p. 3). Men, in dominating women, dehumanized them; "angels" were, inevitably, "stone."

Laurence thus quite deliberately sets the twenty-five years of Hagar's formative years in the era of "dynasty"-making under the aggressive, almost ruthless,

economic policies of Sir John A. Macdonald. In his tough drive to unite the provinces from sea to sea by rail, Macdonald strove to establish the "Kingdom of Canada," a nation founded on the same principles and institutions as Britain but independent of her. The foundations of this new nation, in Macdonald's "National Policy," determined that the country would be forged, almost arbitrarily, by the power of economics. Although Macdonald's promise to British Columbia to build a railway within ten years of its joining Confederation was not fulfilled within the designated period, the railway was nevertheless completed, in great part as a result of American capital and enterprise, and the nation's territory was satisfactorily extended. Into this society Hagar is born and from it she learns the inevitability of masculine domination.

Jason Currie, like Macdonald, strives for progress, expansion and a personal fortune on the basis of man's labor; while he outwardly prizes a respectable gentility in women, he inwardly despises their frailty and meek subservience to social conventions. Such ambivalence, discussed by Anna Jameson in 1837, is reflected in an inscription on one of the Manawaka tombstones--"Rest in peace./ From toil, surcease./ Regina Weese./ 1866"--and Hagar's memory of Regina Weese as a "flimsy, gutless creature, bland as egg custard," who had worn out her maidenhood in "caring with martyred devotion for an

ungrateful fox-voiced mother" (p. 4). The fact that Regina's name means "queen" emphasizes the irony of her subservient position, an irony like that in the phrase "angel in the house."

A further political irony of the name Regina rests in its reminder that Victoria Regina ruled during those early years of Confederation and, as Ged Martin recently pointed out in "Queen Victoria and Canada," was actively involved in the decisions which forged the nation.¹² Similarly, Regina Weese's mother "rose from sick-smelling sheets and lived . . . another full ten years" after Regina's death. Laurence's point, in short, seems to be that Canadian women, along with their country, were put and kept in their colonial positions not only by male political forces but also by the dictates and models of other women.

The negative effects of colonization are revealed in Hagar's repression of her masculine and feminine qualities. As the country is brought under the "peace, order and good government" of Ottawa, Hagar too conforms outwardly to the "neat and orderly" image expected of women (p. 5), but in the process, she rejects and suppresses utterly the loving nurture of her innate femininity. Although she "didn't want to resemble him in the least," she nevertheless "take[s] after" her father, "sturdy like him . . . [with] his hawkish nose and stare that could meet anyone's without blinking an eyelash" (p. 8). Jason Currie praises her for

her "backbone" and remarks surreptitiously to his housekeeper, "smart as a whip, she is . . . if only she'd been--" (p. 14). Hagar overhears and understands his unspoken thoughts that her admirable qualities are those masculine traits which are sadly lacking in Currie's own sons who "took after our mother, graceful unspirited boys" (p. 7).

Repression of the feminine, of all "natural" emotions of love and nurture, in individuals as in society as a whole, leads inevitably to perversion of both feminine and masculine impulses. Indeed, the unnatural development of Hagar's masculine qualities and her concomitant aversion to her femininity can be explored further from such a specifically psychological perspective as that of Karen Horney's 1926 paper entitled "Inhibited Femininity," republished in 1967, at a time of growing interest, in Feminine Psychology. Horney explores the origins of the "masculinity complex of woman," that "complex of feelings and fantasies that have for their content the woman's feeling of being discriminated against, her envy of the male, her wish to be a man and to discard the female role."¹³ Horney discovers several factors in the childhood of the female which contribute to this complex, the two most significant being those predominant in Hagar's society: the valuation of the male and the perceived "notion that the woman's position is precarious and one of

danger." Because, as Horney explains, the little girl "identifies her own instinctual claims with those of her mother," the anxiety and guilt over "this early feminine love attitude toward the father" forces "the girl [to] turn away altogether from the female role and take refuge in a fictitious masculinity for the sake of security" (p. 79).

If Hagar makes herself a good "son," she also conforms to the patriarchal requirements of a daughter; despite her instinctive need to leave her father's house when she is twenty-one, Hagar "stayed and kept [her] father's accounts, played hostess for him, chatted diplomatically to guests, did all he expected" (p. 45). Hagar's observance of the female role "expected" of her is a "diplomatic" necessity; victimized by her father because of her inferior sex and age, she responds by imitating and appeasing him, by "tak[ing] after" him as a son while "play[ing] hostess for him" as a daughter.

The political analogue of this psycho-sexual confusion is the Canadian "love" of things British, a point which Laurence makes when she has Currie send Hagar "East," presumably to Toronto, to learn "how to dress and behave like a lady" (p. 43). Laurence reveals here an interior form of colonialism in Canada, for the westerner sees "down East" as a settled and prosperous, a culturally-superior, region. But the vague reference of "East" points as well to the imperial seat of culture and politics for

nineteenth-century Canada, Great Britain, and reminds the reader that in the three decades following Confederation, Macdonald's Conservative Party was attempting to forge a nation on the British model, partly in defensive response to American republicanism and its loud, frequent calls for the liberation of the colonized peoples to the north.

Thus, too, the economic language describing Hagar upon her return from the Eastern finishing school establishes the economic basis of Currie's personal, like Macdonald's national, dreams. While Hagar stands before her father in her "bottle-green costume and feathered hat," she feels "a thing and his" (p. 43). Currie pronounces the end product "worth every penny. . . . You're a credit to me." In the five years following Confederation, the Macdonald government acted swiftly to ensure the future of the nation, buying up the Hudson's Bay lands, making British Columbia a province long before it had sufficient population to warrant such status and promising economic links with the East by means of the railroad. W. L. Morton emphasizes, in his historical study of the formation of Canada, The Kingdom of Canada, Macdonald's great spending and skillful political manoeuvring which succeeded in buying the nation into being.¹⁴

The cost of Macdonald's relentlessness, however, is not measured so much by the political repercussions of the Pacific Scandal, but by the 1885 use of the railway, built

with the intention of uniting the country, to transport Canadian militiamen to Saskatchewan for the purpose of crushing the Riel rebellion. Colonization is domination by force; white, male technology and economic and military might overpowered Canada's "virgin" nature and hapless natives. Such racial discrimination is reflected in the novel when Currie refuses to allow "any son of his" to go "gallivanting around the country with a half-breed" (p. 20). As Hagar is "antimacassared" to become a "thing and his," so the wilderness and the native people of Canada are massacred to become a "Victorian," British-styled "Kingdom of Canada."

Hagar, not surprisingly, perpetuates her father's colonizing compulsion in her marriage to Brampton Shipley. Shipley, looking like "a bearded Indian" (p. 45) and associating "with half-breed girls" (p. 47), threatens her refined and repressed instincts. She sets about to remake Shipley not just in her own image, but also in her father's. As the finishing school in the East had fitted her into the "costume" her father desired, so she imagines Shipley "rigged out in a suit of gray soft as a dove's breast-feathers" (p. 45) and her father's approval "when he saw how Brampton Shipley prospered, gentled, learned cravats and grammar" (p. 50). As Macdonald strove to forge a British nation in Canada, it is Hagar's intention to turn her husband into a refined, "Eastern," facsimile of her

father.

The twenty-four years of Hagar's marriage, which ends just after World War One, show her, while leaving home to establish her own family, continuing, in fact, to be her father's daughter. This period in her history corresponds to that of Canada, "of age" as an independent country, remaining dominated by British political issues. Laurier continued Macdonald's policy of building a nation equal in status to Great Britain; however, the issue of imperialism ultimately divided Laurier's party and the country. The governing principle of Laurier's leadership was the maintenance of national unity in the face of divisive threats, especially that of the conflict between English and French. Nevertheless, the Boer War, the rising threat of Germany, and finally World War I forced Canada more and more to commit herself to participation in what the French-Canadian saw as British concerns. Canada's decision to side with the Empire in World War I brought about the defeat of the Laurier Liberals and led to the very split along racial lines which Laurier fought so hard to avoid. The same irony recurs in The Stone Angel when John, son of British Hagar and "Indian" Bram, turns against his mother's domineering love and her expectation that he display the "get-up-and-go" of his grandfather, and retreats to his father's "coarse way" with women (p. 174).

Siding with the British in foreign conflicts, then, led

to disunity in the Dominion; Hagar's over-involvement with her father and his code of behavior contributes, even before the destruction of her relationship with her beloved John, to the breakdown of her marriage. Taught by Currie's society to value male strength, Hagar's sexual response, in her relationship with Bram, is that of frigidity, as "stoney" as her "angelic" acceptance of patriarchal domination: "I never let him know. I never spoke aloud, and I made certain that the trembling was all inner. . . . I prided myself upon keeping my pride intact, like some maidenhead" (p. 81). Denying her sensuality, she can at most conform outwardly to the role expected of her. Imagining herself upon marriage as "chatelaine" of the Shipley place (p. 51), she finds herself the day after her wedding "work[ing] and scrubb[ing] the house . . . as though . . . driven by a whip" (p. 52). She "worked like a dray horse thinking: At least nobody will ever be able to say I didn't keep a clean house" (p. 112). And, at harvest time, she "served the food . . . never letting on how I felt about it, Hagar Currie serving a bunch of breeds and ne'er-do-wells and Galacians" (p. 114). Ever her father's daughter, Hagar evinces a colonizer's disgust for people she sees to be of inferior race and, even more, for herself when she, of the "inferior" sex, is forced to serve them.

Hagar, this demoted "chatelaine," is ninety before she is able to see beneath her sense of social respectability

to the psychological problems--her devaluation of her erotic nature and dissatisfaction with her subservient female role--which originated from this very respectability which required her to accept and interiorize her society's valuation of male superiority and domination. Only at the end of her life is she able to recognize, in her memories, the missed opportunities and frustrated potential in her relationship with Bram; she realizes that Shipley was "the only person close to me who ever thought of me by name" rather than by her social roles of "daughter . . . sister . . . mother . . . even wife" (p. 80). Again, the source of her inhibited femininity, as she intimates, lies in social opinion: "People thought of things differently in those days. . . . I never spoke of it to anyone" (p. 81). The symbol of her social pretensions intrudes into the bedroom of the Shipley place; her "black leather traveling trunk . . . [with her] former name on it in neat white paint, Miss H. Currie" (p. 80) proclaims her continued "maidenhood," her acquiescence to her father's concept of socially-creditable but unfulfilled femininity.

Hagar's continued references to eastern influences are but one of the vehicles by which Laurence suggests the wider political dimensions of her protagonist's personal experience. National disunity and the loss of a generation of men were the legacy of Canada's involvement in "foreign" wars during the first two decades of the twentieth century;

Laurence repeats this national dilemma in the break-up of Hagar's marriage and the loss of her sons. As the first two periods of Hagar's history, her childhood and marriage, were evenly divided into two twenty-four year periods, so too the final section of her reminiscence spans the twenty-five years between World War I and World War II. We can conveniently label this period of Hagar's story "matriarchy," for once free of Shipley's disturbing and potentially liberating love, she recreates, in her relationships with her sons, her father's "patriarchal" role. It is, again, destructive; as the direct result of her authoritarian nature, Hagar loses both her sons. While the eldest, Marvin, enlists under-age in the First War, never to return to his mother's home, the novel reaches its apotheosis in the relationship between Hagar and her favorite son, John, whose death is but the last estrangement in a history of "lost men" (p. 6).

The psycho-social origin of this destruction of a Canadian man of John's time derives, again, from the patriarchal legacy. He is the natural product of colonizer and colonized; in John as in Canadian society of the time, the two camps could no more co-exist as equals than could male and female. Hagar's possessive love for John precludes her recognition of his separate identity, much less of her husband's share in their children's heritage. When the infant John is brought to her, she notices he has

"black hair . . . black as my own . . . forgetting for the moment that Bram was black-haired too" (p. 122). Hagar repeatedly connects the objects of her love, stressing to John that it is "a great pity your grandfather never saw you, for you're a boy after his own heart" (p. 123). Hagar is "stone" blind to the rich potential of the present when John expresses interest in "where Bram had been born" (p. 125) and Bram answers, "In a barn. I thought you'd have told been [sic] that by now. Me and Jesus. Eh, Hagar?" Hagar, refusing to see any humor or meaning in Shipley's origins, ignores both John's need to understand his relationship with his father and the saving power in Shipley's spirit.

Hagar forces her psychologically-damaging colonialist attitudes on John throughout his childhood, telling him not only of his dead grandfather, but also of his Scottish ancestry, giving him the "Currie plaid-pin" which she had received from her father, and exposing him to European and British music and art in a determined, though undoubtedly unconscious, act of cultural imperialism. This colonialist parent never acknowledges or accepts her colonized child's need for self-determination, just as she rejected the vital spirit and natural independence of Shipley, whom she treated as her social and racial inferior. She attempts to shape John into her own image, as she had tried to mold Shipley, and as she herself was made the stone angel of her

father's image.

Hagar displays the same type of colonialist mentality which came under attack in the writings of Brooke and Jameson, as she devalues the various details of her life on the prairies on the basis of the standards inculcated in her by her father and the Eastern finishing school. Brooke and Jameson both cautioned against such behavior, suggesting that "eastern" conventions should not govern human relationships in the new world; settlement in Canada held the opportunity for creating a new social order, based indeed on British principles, but molded and adapted, as Traill argued, to the "circumstances" of life in the backwoods. Hagar's inability to adapt forces her to flee her marriage and Manitoba; she takes John and moves to the more "British," urban life of Vancouver where she can live as a genteel spinster.

Political events in 1919, the year of their move, highlight the implications of Laurence's theme. The growing labor revolt against social and regional inequities culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike and made Labor a political force. But, as Morton explains in The Kingdom of Canada, the conservative public and government, fearing repetition of the Revolution in Russia, took repressive actions during the 1920s and 1930s, creating internal security as a responsibility of the RCMP, spying on

revolutionaries, and passing Section 98 into the Criminal Code in order to allow the government to act against any "unlawful associations" without the usual restraints imposed by Canadian law" (p. 431).

In this light, Hagar's spying on John's "association" with half-breeds and his rebellion against her "restraints" take on political overtones. In his affair with Arlene Simmons, "doing it . . . on [Hagar's] Toronto couch in broad daylight" (p. 208), John rejects her sexual constraints, her Eastern standards of behavior and, in that the Simmons family is socially inferior to the Curries, her British pride of class. Hagar plots to separate the young couple, finding in the Depression scarcity of jobs and money ready cause for her interference; she asserts, "the money's the main concern," and demonstrates this conviction with the horrifying picture of John's future "living on relief, perhaps with children" (p. 211). Hagar, as "depressed" as her time in history, rejects his self-determination and his assumption of the adult responsibilities of parentage. That the young lovers' deaths result directly from Hagar's destructive unconscious is symbolized in her sleepless vigil and her fantasy that "some hobo who had ridden the rods this far and wanted food and lodging, a despairing man, perhaps . . . might be tempted to ransack the house" (pp. 238-39). Her personal guilt manifests its political dimension in the fact that

the threatening figure in her fantasy was a central image of the "despairing" Depression years, a "hobo," one whom the colonizing class feared would "ransack," rebel against and overthrow, the patriarchal "house."

Hagar's retrospective narration ends at this point in the mid-1930s with her brief conjecture, that John would probably have died anyway in World War II, which points to Canada's next loss of a generation of men. The years between his death and the time-present are not, for her, worthy of consideration because, "that night he died, [her] son died" (p. 242), Hagar also died, as she was "transformed to stone" (p. 243). Canada, too, was an angel turned to stone in that, during the 1950s, Louis St. Laurent failed to meet the challenges of a new age; he delayed implementation of the Massey Commission's recommendation on the formation of a Canada Council and he did not pursue the adoption of a distinctively Canadian flag. St. Laurent and C. D. Howe concentrated instead on developing the economy of the country--"the money's the main concern"--but in so doing, they ignored the threat to independence by allowing increasing control of the Canadian economic sector to fall into the hands of Americans. Canadians at large seemed unconcerned, for, as Betty Friedan has observed about the conditions in American society which contributed to the creation of "the feminine mystique," the returning war veterans and the war-weary

population desired the peace and security of a settled and prosperous life-style. The pursuit of material prosperity forced women to return to the home, to the victimized acceptance of the belief that femininity was fulfilled through their social roles as wives and mothers.¹⁵ In the 1950s, Canada and Canadian women accepted the legacy of colonialized grandmothers such as Hagar Shipley.

* * * * *

One can speculate on the national implications of Hagar's colonized identity in 1960 as opposed to Stacey MacAindra's liberation in Laurence's 1969 novel, The Fire-Dwellers. From her beginning, Canada has been formed and governed by older men, father-figures, from Sir John A. Macdonald who fashioned the nation in 1867 to Laurier and "King," "uncle" Louis Saint-Laurent in the 1950s and finally Diefenbaker and Pearson in the 1960s. During the course of the 1960s, on the other hand, Canadians, in the process of throwing off such "governors," fervently embraced the youngest man ever elected Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau.

The early 1960s were characterized by political and cultural soul-searching. By 1963, when he lost the election to Pearson, the public confidence in Diefenbaker had waned. Partly this was due to mismanagement and a series of scandals. But at a deeper level, as Bothwell,

Drummond and English point out in their recent study of Canada since the war, "Canadians were embarrassed by their conservative reputations."¹⁶ In the United States, the youthful, flamboyant leadership of John F. Kennedy, the youngest man ever elected president, seemed to be a harbinger of an American renaissance. In comparison to Kennedy, Diefenbaker seemed "locked in the prison of his own past and his narrow beliefs" (p. 263). The ambivalence felt by Canadians toward Diefenbaker and by extension their pioneer heritage was reflected in the series of minority governments elected under Lester Pearson from 1963 to 1968; Canadians could not wholly expurgate Diefenbaker and the past, nor could they unhesitatingly endorse the leadership of Pearson. As Claude Bissell has noted in the first essay of The Literary History of Canada, "at the opening of the 1960s, Canadians were aware that a new political age had begun, although its contours were still vague."¹⁷ The publication of The Stone Angel, about a woman "locked in the prison of [her] own past," was extremely timely.

By 1969 when Laurence published The Fire-Dwellers, the Canadian political situation had drastically altered. A sense of nationalism was rising which climaxed in the Centennial celebrations, the 1967 Montreal World Exposition and the 1968 election of a majority government under Trudeau. Trudeau, with his open flaunting of conventional mores and cosmopolitan air, stirred Canadians with his

vision of creating in Canada a "Just Society" which would be a model for the rest of the world. As George Woodcock notes in his Canada and the Canadians, Trudeau "provided, as Diefenbaker did in the previous decade, a vehicle for the idea of themselves as a nation that was stirring among Canadians of all origins. He continued the work done by Expo in the previous year, the work of self-revelation by which Canadians were beginning to see themselves, no longer . . . under some overwhelming shadow of France or Britain or America, but rather as a people capable of originality, adventurousness, radical-minded, open to the future."¹⁸ At the end of the decade Canadians signalled a firm break with the past and a flamboyant style for the future. In Woodcock's phrase, "the image . . . was one of liberation."

Accompanying the volatile politics and growing nationalism of the 1960s was the increasing agitation for the rights of women. The Women's Liberation Movement had begun to change women's place in society. Highly influential texts were published: the English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex in 1961; Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique in 1963 and Kate Millet's Sexual Politics in 1969. Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, in their Rebirth of Feminism, record how the women's movement began in the early 1960s as a response to these books and as an outgrowth of the American civil rights movement, and note that, in 1968, women from the United States and Canada

convened in Chicago for the "first national [sic] women's liberation conference."¹⁹ The consciousness raising of women reached Canada at about the same time as the more indigenous social phenomenon, Trudeaumania.

Reflecting--but also questioning--the cultural scene is Laurence's characterization in The Fire-Dwellers of Stacey MacAindra, a woman who strives for freedom from her domestic trap but ultimately elects to stay within the traditional roles of wife and mother. In the late 1960s, Canada and many of her female citizens strained, not entirely successfully, to break out of past molds; the political implication of The Fire-Dwellers is that Canada and Canadian women must come to terms with, and not simply reject, their pasts. Says Laurence to Bernice Lever: "a great many of the protagonists in my books . . . find it's not a total freedom that they achieve, that there is no such thing. What they achieve is quite frequently a kind of limited triumph and a great deal more understanding of themselves."²⁰

The Fire-Dwellers is even less overtly a political novel than The Stone Angel. Indeed, as it tells of the domestic life of Stacey MacAindra (née Cameron of Manawaka), a thirty-nine-year old housewife living in Vancouver with her husband of sixteen years, Mac, and their four children, Katie, Ian, Duncan, and Jen, The Fire-Dwellers seems, on first reading, to resemble such

light-weight women's novels as Constance Beresford-Howe's The Marriage Bed. There are no grand adventures beyond everyday events, no clearly-defined political or social themes. Nevertheless, oblique references are made to the world outside the fiction. Mac takes a job selling a vitamin product and, while he works long hours trying to succeed with the new company, Stacey worries that he is wasting his life selling such a questionable American commodity. Stacey spends most of her time trying to cope with her restless children and tired husband; her own battle is ostensibly with alcohol, but actually it is against the boredom and routine of her traditional life as housewife.

Certainly this first-person narration of the details of an individual woman's life contains hints of the language of the Women's Liberation Movement. Stacey is addicted to the popular magazines' self-help articles which she asserts are "articles . . . written by male anarchists"²¹; Friedan reports her discovery that the 1950s "image of woman as housewife-mother has been largely created by writers and editors who are men" (p. 47). Stacey questions this identity, aware that she is known "only as Mac's wife or the kids' mother" (p. 95). And, like so many of her contemporaries, Stacey rebels against motherhood and matrimony. Despite her tenderness and love for the children, she also feels incompetent and anxious as a

mother. Unlike Hagar who prided herself on her orderly housekeeping, Stacey gets "bloody sick of trying to cope. I don't want to be a good wife and mother" (p. 174). When her lover, Luke, jokes that she looks like "a woman who . . . makes good pastry," Stacey quips back that "it sounds like an insult" (p. 179). Voicing the cry of many housewives, Stacey exclaims, "I don't have any time for myself" (p. 172). She is a woman of her time, seeking liberation.

But Stacey's success, limited as it is, derives not from political changes effected by the liberationist movement, but from her own internal resources; unlike Hagar, she is in touch with her emotions, her unconscious, and the feminine qualities of relatedness are alive in her. She has, concludes Laurence in "Sources," "some human warmth and ability to reach out and touch others . . . to change and to move into new areas of life" (p. 83). Thus, though the novel may be influenced by the Liberation Movement, its portrait of a modern woman goes beyond glib, conventional rhetoric and political solutions to probe the psyche of this particular woman and her self-liberation.

Critical reaction to The Fire-Dwellers indicates that many readers cannot see this. In her bibliographical essay on Laurence, Helen M. Buss observes that "this novel is the most neglected of Laurence's Canadian works in terms of individual critical consideration."²² The reviewers seemed

to be afraid or unable to take a firm stand on this "woman's novel," implying that Laurence is naive in her attempt to find meaning in the mundanity of a housewife's life. Laurence, in turn, took issue with such criticisms when, in conversation with Gibson, she observed that "The Fire-Dwellers received some real put-downs from a number of male reviewers. They didn't even say it was a bad novel; it was just that if anybody like Stacey existed, they just would rather not know" (p. 200). Laurence, through her publisher, may have seen more reviews than are available in print, but these, by both men and women, support the latter part of her statement: readers just do not like this character. The Times Literary Supplement dismissed this "extremely depressing funny novel"; the unnamed reviewer felt that Stacey would benefit from "a short course" at the "institute in California which trains unhappy couples to quarrel properly."²³ This evasive sarcasm indicates the reviewer's defensive rejection of a novel which is difficult and unsettling to read.

F. W. Watt's 1969 review in The Canadian Forum, however, is more subtle in its blame by praise. "This book contains flaws enough to sink half a dozen books by lesser novelists," he begins, but the novel "survives because of the vitality of its central character."²⁴ The problem for Watts is that Stacey is "merely a middle-class mother of four." Watt then praises Laurence's talent because readers

"learn to care about her and come to believe that what she thinks and feels and tries to do matters." Laurence, he claims, gives fresh "vision and insight even with the stale material" she has chosen. But Watt simply does not like Stacey's "perpetual chatter of complaint and self-mortification"; instead, he finds the "rich, poignant emotional existence of the spinster-teacher in A Jest of God" far more successful artistically. His preference for the latter novel supports Laurence's contention, expressed in her interview with Lever, that male reviewers "found Stacey threatening . . . [whereas] Hagar . . . was an old woman, she was too far removed from them, and Rachel . . . was a spinster, you know, pathetic, they didn't have to worry about her. But Stacey was a wife and mother, and if their own wives and mothers had thoughts like hers they just didn't want to know about them" (p. 37).

As both woman and writer, Phyllis Gotlieb expresses "relief" and "heartfelt thanks" that Laurence has produced in Stacey such a "whole woman." Yet Gotlieb would seem to agree with Watt that the "territory" of the novel is too limited, that Laurence's "material is easily available and explored and mapped without much artistic risk; it is limited and cannot be expanded."²⁵ This review, like the others, is riddled with such ambivalent, even contradictory, phrases.

Buss is therefore right to question why "Stacey,

representative as she is of the millions like her in the Canadian population, receives little comment from those sociologically-oriented critics who see Laurence as defining the Canadian identity" (p. 9). The source of such indifference apparently lies in the wide-spread feeling that the housewife, the mother, cannot be suitable material for artistic vision, for comparison to weighty issues such as national identity. Laurence seems to have anticipated such reaction when she has Stacey declare, "if I could only talk about it. But who wants to know, and anyway, could I say?" (p. 17). The defensiveness of both Stacey and her reviewers stems, one must assume, from the inculcated assumption that women, especially women as housewives, are of "low . . . human worth." This is the same internalized value which Shulamith Firestone, in Hole and Levine, cites as the reason most women never challenge their social position, never try to change their lot in life (p. 228).

Buss's challenge can be answered if one does adopt, for instance, the critical approach which Ken Hughes takes to Laurence's 1966 novel, A Jest of God; Stacey, like her sister Rachel, then becomes an embodiment of "a post-colonial Canada moving uncertainly yet with hope onto the stage of the world."²⁶ The Fire-Dwellers extends this national analogy into a study of the liberation of the North American housewife; Laurence explores in fiction what The Feminine Mystique studied in specifically political and

sociological terms. In her article, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: the Novelist as Socio-political Being," Laurence explicitly connects her "feelings of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-authoritarianism" and her "growing awareness of the dilemma and powerlessness of women, the tendency of women to accept male definition of ourselves, to be self deprecating and uncertain, and to rage inwardly."²⁷ Distraught at the possibility that one of her sons narrowly missed being hit by a car, Stacey resists the impulse to shower him with affection. "Restraint," she cautions, "some wise guy is always telling you how you're sapping the national strength" (p. 14; emphasis mine). This socially-accepted aphorism, suggesting as it does that it is in the male interest, the national interest, to suppress the woman's natural impulse, repeats the political position of The Stone Angel.

Nevertheless, as Laurence tells Lever, her work is not simply allegorized theory: "I'm very pro women's movement but at the same time I would never write a book simply to advance a cause. . . . I do not write in any propaganda way" (p. 9). While Stacey remains an autonomous character of fiction, like Laurence's other protagonists, she nevertheless demonstrates a cornerstone of Women's Liberation theory and practice, which, according to Hole and Levine is the "process of relating the personal to the political," that is, realizing that the individual woman's

situation has "a social cause and probably a political solution" (p. 125).

Stacey continually "relates" her individual problems to larger "social causes" and "political solutions." The title of one of those articles, which she so compulsively reads, written by men for women's magazines: "Nine Ways the Modern Mum May Be Ruining Her Daughter" (p. 14), pinpoints the primary focus of The Fire-Dwellers' psychological exploration: mother-daughter relationships in both the past and the present. Stacey, as she worries about her interaction with her daughter, remembers her relationship with her own mother. Waterston points out in her Survey that in the women's literature of the late 1960s, the "device of setting different generations of women in contrast to each other . . . focusses the problem of women's roles, women's status, and women's potential. . . . The relations of mother and daughter emerge as a major Canadian theme."²⁸ Indeed, Stacey's position is at the centre of three such generations: "I stand in relation to my life both as child and as parent, never quite finished with the old battles, never able to arbitrate properly the new, able to look both ways, but whichever way I look, God, it looks pretty confusing to me" (p. 47). She has no clear self-knowledge of herself as a woman, perhaps because the roles of mother and daughter continue to prove so ambiguous.

The only defined female role model in Stacey's life is negative. Mrs Cameron, as presented in the flashbacks of the novel and her more fully developed portrait in the 1966 novel, A Jest of God, is a woman very similar to Hagar in her concern for respectability, her class-consciousness and her lack of honesty and affection. As Denyse Forman and Una Parameswaran correctly note, in Manawaka "the watchword is conformity. . . . This code of behavior entails a repression of the life force. Feelings are replaced by pseudo-intellect and shallow rationalizations. Mrs. Cameron is a staunch conformist."²⁸ As a teenager, Stacey fought the demands that she be lady-like by fleeing to dances "every Saturday night, jitterbugging. Knowing by instinct how to move, loving the boy's closeness, whoever he was, loving the male smell of him" (p. 12). Between Stacey and her mother lies the conflict of decorum and the "life force" of passion.

The ominous presence which shapes both their lives is Mr. Cameron, the "town undertaker . . . capable only of dressing the dead in between bouts with his own special embalming fluid" (p. 8). Mrs. Cameron, whose upstairs gentility depends upon his buried death-in-life, proves the destructiveness of the interiorization, the acceptance of masculine values in her dependence on "codeine and phenobarb" (p. 302) and her never-ending, whining criticisms of her daughters. Her resemblance to Hagar

gives credence to Laurence's description in "Ten Years' Sentences" of Stacey as Hagar's "spiritual grand-daughter" (p. 15). These three generations of Manawaka women demonstrate the negative result of traditional socialization; Stacey predicts, "if I live to be ninety, I'll be positively venomous" (p. 81).

Now, as a mother, Stacey rails against the image of womanhood propagated by her mother, while aware that she is repeating the pattern. Over the course of the novel Stacey is struck several times with a sense of *déjà vue*, as she argues with her daughter in the same manner as her mother had argued with her about habits of dressing, drinking and dating. In the midst of one such argument Stacey questions why she keeps on trying to set "a good example. Example of what? All the things I hate. Hate, but perpetuate" (p. 5). She feels "it's my duty to appear to be doing my duty, that's all," and dismisses her maternal role as "a farce" (p. 46).

The difficulties of communicating with her own children force her to understand that while her mother might have seemed to have "the consolation of believing herself to be unquestionably right about everything," "maybe she didn't either" (p. 302). The acceptance of her ties with her mother is neither easy nor total; she has no answer to the "current pop psychology article . . . entitled 'Mummy Is the Root of All Evil?'" (p. 304). Whereas Hagar could only

flee the image of womanhood presented by her society and protect herself behind a veneer of masculine resolution, Stacey is able to perceive the psychological complexities which create women like Hagar and her mother, and ultimately herself. With this knowledge Stacey discovers the power to free the angel from her house, to communicate her human emotions to her own daughter, and to let her daughter fully enter womanhood: "she's on her own" (p. 302).

Just as Stacey battled with role models from the past, Canadians in the 1960s reacted against restrictions inherited from their ancestors and, by the end of that decade, were forced to accept the complexities of changing their collective image. Despite the growth of national pride in the early '60s, Canada still suffered a tremendous inferiority complex and was only beginning to wrestle with this feeling and its origins. When George Woodcock, for example, founded a journal to be devoted to criticism of Canadian Literature in 1959, there were many academics who openly wondered where he would find enough material to last more than four issues.³⁰ Reviewing "The Canadian personality" in 1961, Bruce Hutchison wrote: "We are the last people to realize, and the first to deny, the material achievements of the Canadian nation. . . . The Canadian audience at a political meeting (a significant little test, if the glumest), [is] the most stolid and dead-panned ever

known . . . and our politicians truly reflect us in their stodgy competence, their unvarying pedestrianism, their high ability, their positive terror of colour and flair."³¹

☐ Canadians perceived themselves as frozen by the past, meaningless in the present.

But that self-image was changing even as Hutchison wrote those words. In fact, his essay is primarily an expression of rising national pride; under his whimsey, Hutchison is extolling the virtues of the Canadian character, not the least of which is an abiding love of the land. By the time Laurence published The Fire-Dwellers, nationalism had flowered in Expo '67, the world's fair held in Montreal as part of the country's celebration of her centennial, her past. The theme of Expo, "Man and his World," reflects the high-profile international identity which Canada enjoyed at that time. The Trudeaumania which swept the country in the following years marked Canada's efforts to change her rather stodgy image--personified by Conservative leader Robert Stanfield--to that of swinging jet-setter. Trudeau has always enjoyed great popularity in the foreign presses and Canadians reaped the benefit of his image of youthful vitality. The euphoria of Expo year and Trudeaumania telegraphed to Canadians that their nation, after one hundred years, had finally come into her own.

Artists in all fields attempted to reflect this new-found Canadian nationalism and identity. Laurence

herself comments to Gibson on the fact that when she began to publish "we still had . . . a kind of colonial mentality, a great many people felt that a book written by a Canadian couldn't possibly be good. It had to come from either New York or the other side of the Atlantic to be any good" (p. 200). In the two decades since the war, however, a sizable body of literary work had appeared and what could be called a Canadian literary tradition had been established.³² The popularity of Canadian artists increased; courses in Canadian literature and history were demanded in universities, colleges and high schools. Not only was Canadian Literature still publishing ten years after its founding, but others with the same objectives, such as The Journal of Canadian Fiction, were being established.

In contrast to such nationalistic positivism, Laurence's The Fire-Dwellers seemed, despite the success of its protagonist in breaking the mold of the patriarchal social past, to strike a discordant note of insecurity and anxiety. The ambivalence of the reviews suggests, along with a defensiveness about sexual roles, the possibility that the novel was not at all timely. But as Clara Thomas recognizes, "with Stacey comes the shock of recognition, and though we have much preferred to suggest panaceas, from pills to extension courses, to the hosts of such women, Stacey's voice . . . says, 'ATTENTION MUST BE PAID.'"³³ In

light of what we know now about those nationalistic years, Laurence actually tapped the national psyche more accurately than Canadians wished to admit at the time. Looking back on the cultural nationalism of the 1960s, George Woodcock has concluded that it was "a decade of almost uncharacteristic euphoria"; "economic setbacks, changes in global conditions, threats to our precarious unity, have changed that mood to a more anxious one."³⁴

Indeed, Laurence was one of the few public commentators of the 1960s who connected national and feminine issues; she concludes the description to Gibson of the "colonial mentality" of Canadian publishing: "this [sense of inferiority] is probably true of women. . . . Women for a long time in some ways have not only been regarded by men as second-class citizens--they have even regarded themselves in this way" (p. 200). Stacey's negative feelings are often projected onto God, the Father whom she sees oppressing her, forcing her into the divinely-ordained role for woman and rebuking her for failing to conform to its standard. She lashes out at this patriarchal image: "You try bringing up four kids. . . . Next time you send somebody down here, get It born as a her with seven young or a him with a large family and a rotten boss, eh? Then we'll see how the inspirational bit goes" (p. 168). Stacey, like Hagar, is subject to the patriarchal values of a God and a father who constantly remind her of her own

inferiority. The psychological conditioning of Canadian women by their patriarchal society, has changed very little from Hagar's time to Stacey's. In her portrait of Stacey, then, one might hope to find Laurence's analysis of this national anxiety.

And Laurence, consistent with her habit of connecting women's psychological and social situations with the "state" of Canada as a colonized country, does argue, in The Fire-Dwellers, the destructiveness of patriarchal values to both women and Canada. She sets the novel in the city of Vancouver--named after Captain George Vancouver--in the province of British Columbia--a compilation of British imperialism and American republicanism. Stacey's comment on her personal situation is appropriate to this society: "Whichever way you look, it seems pretty confusing to me" (p. 47). The setting is an ironic reminder of Duncan's The Imperialist, in which Hugh Finlay thought it possible to forge a new identity, individually and nationally, on the west coast--Stacey, the 1969 variant of woman and country, is a mass of confusion and self-doubt. The beloved landscape of Wilson's heroines brings no easy solutions to identity quests. Instead of news of optimistic social programs, and more frequent than fantasies of Edenic scenery north of Vancouver, Stacey hears radio and television reports of war in South-East Asia and of violence in American cities. Apocryphal wars and rumors of

war are nightmare visions which stop only when she musters the courage to face her problems and her past. Laurence challenges the naive self-images of both Canada and her Canadian heroines.

In the late 1960s, however, Canadians persisted in their dreams of innocence. Along with the strong nationalism, a very conscious anti-American feeling displayed itself; Canadians, as well as other nations, defined Canada by what they at any rate perceived they were not. Mordecai Richler, for example, who in the early 1960s ridiculed Canada for its provincialism, compared Canada to the Americans and concluded that "we are nicer."³⁵ The nationalism of 1967-1968 climaxed at the same time that the United States, escalating the war in South East Asia, was strongly criticized by the international community. A Canadian in Europe could quickly gain respect and admiration by simply declaring his Canadian citizenship; the little Canadian flag decal on a back-pack brought immediate positive reaction. Furthermore, American cities just across the border from cities in Southern Ontario were in flames, as rioters looted many neighborhoods torn by racial strife. Comparatively, Canada seemed to have achieved "peace, order and good government." The Fire-Dwellers, however, suggests that beneath Canadians' smug feelings of superiority lies a fear of just such violence.

The political narcissism of Expo year allowed Canadians to ignore the signs of the times, the national troubles growing between the French and English. When Quebec Labour Minister, Pierre Laporte was assassinated by the FLQ in October, 1970, Canadians awoke to the painful truth that political assassination could happen here. The October Crisis brought home to Canadians the fact that they were not immune from violence, that military rule was not impossible; in retrospect, the threat to Stacey of violence which the Canadian media portrayed as indigenous to some war-torn country in Asia or a strife-ridden city in the United States makes The Fire-Dwellers prophetic. Canada no longer seemed a safe place.

Clara Thomas correctly notes in "The Novels of Margaret Laurence," that Stacey's "internal and external situation[s]" are complexly orchestrated: "Stacey's consciousness is invaded at all times . . . by the horrendous presence of our world's immediate communications system" (p. 59). The problem of communication between individuals is certainly a major theme in Laurence's work, especially in The Fire-Dwellers, as Stacey rarely expresses her feelings and thoughts to anyone, least of all her husband. Mac is a threatening enigma, as was her father: "Perhaps it isn't that the masks have been put on, one for each year like the circles that tell the age of a tree. Perhaps they've been gradually peeled off, and what's there

underneath is the face that's always been there for me, the unspeaking eyes, the mouth for whom words were too difficult" (p. 170). This image from her unconscious epitomizes her fears of nullity and death, the difficulties of communication between the sexes, the doubts of her own worth as a woman, all of which have their corollary in the images of destruction broadcast to her from a world dominated by Americans.

That Stacey feels threatened both by her father and husband and by Americans suggests a political dimension to her marriage which becomes further evident when one considers Mac's occupation. Salesmanship links him to the drummers of the American frontier, the business entrepreneurs of the American republic. He spends his spare time in his study, alone, isolated from his wife and children. His ambition leads him to compete against his new manager; his fear of failure forces him to use his wife and children to impress his boss with his commitment to the product. Through Mac's characterization Laurence dramatizes the growing influence on Canadians of the American control of the Canadian economy and way of life. Man's domination of woman becomes, in this novel, American domination of Canada.

Mac is typically American, not only in his domination, but also in his isolationism. Stacey complains to her lover: "he doesn't talk any more hardly at all can you

imagine what it's like to live in the same house with somebody who doesn't talk or who can't or else won't and I don't know which reason it could be" (p. 197). When Mac accuses her of adultery with his war-time buddy, Buckle Fennick, Stacey attempts to communicate her innocence, but is met with the impersonal male rejection she has always feared, ever since she saw her own father lock himself away from his wife. In a voice which is "almost not his voice at all," Mac tells her, "Leave me alone, can't you? Can't you just leave me alone?" (p. 166). He hates her dependence on him and attempts, like the United States throughout its history, to cut himself off from moral and emotional involvement with his satellites.

Tempted to flee this difficult marriage, Stacey longs for an affair with a man so that she "would have done something that belonged only to me, was mine only" (p. 211). As Stacey sits ruminating by the sea, from a nearby "dwelling half-concealed in undergrowth" (p. 170) comes its "occupant" (p. 175), Luke Venturi, wearing "a brown-and-off-white Indian sweater in thick wool with Haida or something motifs of outspread eagle wings and bear masks" (p. 176). He is an escapist alternative to Mac, associated with Indians rather than Americans, less powerful in that he is younger, unthreatening. Luke fits into Stacey's fantasies of escaping to the Cariboo country, for he relates his experiences in the Cariboo and then

invites Stacey "to come along and see" it with him. Stacey longs to escape because there are "too many people here, too many crises" (p. 211). The point here is that Canada, like Stacey, may be escapist in turning from her difficult but essential relationship with the United States and in trying to come to terms with her own domination of the Indians by romanticizing them, by "going Indian."

Whereas Hagar in the 1920s retreats from marriage to her "Indian" into British conventions, Stacey, in the late 1960s, chooses to continue the difficult marriage with her "American" husband. While Luke Venturi offered temporary, immature escape, "adventure," he also, as his Christian name after the physician of the Gospels implies, performs a healing role in her emotional life. He encourages her to stop "trying to be a good example" (p. 180), to break out of the mold of "the angel in the house." Laurence makes the connection with The Stone Angel explicit when Luke tells a sobbing Stacey, "You're not alone," and she insists "that's where you're wrong" (p. 179)--these same words were exchanged by Hagar and the Rev. Mr. Troy (p. 121). But where Hagar remains ultimately alone, islanded by her life-long pride, Stacey, through her experience with Luke, learns that, as he insists, "that's where [she is] wrong" (p. 179). In a comment that could be equally addressed to Canadians with their persistent sense of inferiority, Luke admonishes her, "you keep on communicating your own

awfulness to yourself, and nothing changes" (p. 192). With his help, Stacey, unlike Hagar, is able to "change" from escapism, to struggle more bravely with the dominant male side in her life, as Canadians must coexist with Americans.

Laurence signals this positive change in Stacey in the final chapters which take place a few months after the affair with Luke. She no longer needs to get drunk. And she and Mac have stopped the sham of sending the children to Sunday School to placate Mac's clergyman-father; the powers of the patriarchal past, which had bedevilled Stacey and Canadian society for so long, have faded. He is only a retired preacher suffering from glaucoma and dizzy spells, uncertain that his past work as a spiritual leader was successful because he "had so many doubts" (p. 282). Stacey discovers that she can now call Mac's father "dad" for the first time: "Strange--it's only a name now . . . only a way of identifying Matthew. Niall Cameron has been dead a long time. If someone else needs the name, no point in not using it" (p. 281). But she is also, in naming Matthew "Dad" and in inviting him to come and live with them, accepting the inevitable omnipresence of her "American" husband's connections.

Stacey's realization, "Temporarily, they are all more or less okay" (p. 308), is the novel's highly tentative resolution; Stacey's future remains as uncertain as that of Canada as, in the late 1960s, she accepted, despite many

futile, idealistic, left-wing protests, the American presence in every corner of her house. One might conjecture that the unpopularity of this novel resulted in part from the refusal of Canadian literati, with their consistently anti-American radicalism, to accept a protagonist who, in their eyes, capitulates to, rather than rebelling against, this less-than-attractive but financially responsible and historically-established husband by fleeing with her hippie lover to the idealized North. Stacey does not cling to the imperial past, as did the earlier Hagar and her Canada, but she chooses, from her limited options, the most pragmatic. As Laurence tells Gibson, "her real self-discovery was that she was a survivor. She was not going to crack up. She was going to survive"(p. 202).

If one looks at Stacey's decision to remain with Mac, not with disappointed idealism, but with a realization of the complexities of North American life, her position can be seen as difficult, but mature. So, too, "Canadian destiny," according to Morton in Canadian Identity, "is an evolution in progress"(p. 83). The media reports of world violence remind us that Stacey, like Canada, "is free, within the limits of world power politics, to continue to work our [her] own destiny." But in electing to remain with her family, when she could just as easily have run away, Stacey epitomizes what Morton defines as the

essential difference between the American and the Canadian psyches: "The moral core of Canadian nationhood is found in the fact that Canada is a monarchy and in the nature of monarchical allegiance" (p. 85). Thus when Stacey comes to terms with her past and decides to remain within the roles of wife and mother, her decision echoes Morton's contention that "the final governing force in Canada is tradition and convention. . . . Canadian nationhood has . . . put the proposition that association and equality are not incompatible terms, that nations may in free association, by careful definition and great patience, make mutual accommodations of sovereignty without loss of independence" (p. 86).

Laurence's two novels, presenting as they do portraits of a pioneer and of that pioneer's contemporary "grandchild," span the first century of Canada's history as a nation. These novels subtly suggest the tremendous changes in Canada's culture and sense of nationalism which occurred during the decade of the 1960s. In both novels--to recall Laurence's comments on the influence of her experience in Africa on her Canadian writing--what is chronicled through a focus on the interior "states" of the protagonists is the emergence of both Canada and Canadian women from their colonial positions. Viewed in this light, Hagar and Stacey show more differences than similarities. Hagar remains totally colonized all her life whereas Stacey

overcomes that "psychic" conditioning and achieves some measure of liberation.

Laurence's novels do more than just reflect the changes in the nation's cultural and political awareness: they also comment on those changes. The Stone Angel dramatizes the dangers of insularity, of maintaining a too-rigid perspective inherited from the past, of "father" fixation. The Fire-Dwellers, while demonstrating the possibility of change, also cautions against a complete break with the forefathers; Stacey faces her ghosts, unlike Hagar, but she still carries them within her. As Laurence herself comments, to Gibson, "for me the past is extremely real. . . it goes back not only as far as one's own parents, for example, but the grandparents and the distant ancestors, and a great deal is passed on. One does change. People change from generation to generation, but they don't change totally" (p. 204). Canada in the 1970s is certainly changed from the 1950s, and the consciousness of women has been raised considerably, but for the nation and for women it is not yet "the Just Society."

In keeping with its future-directed message, The Fire-Dwellers is experimental, a post-modern novel whereas The Stone Angel remains as highly structured and traditional in form as its heroine's psyche. The value of change and growth is the hope Laurence posits for women, for Canada and for the novel. This prescription for women,

and by extension for the nation, in the 1970s, can be discerned in Laurence's growth towards a more feminine form in her writing; the "personal" and the "political" unite as her style moves away from the colonial confines of the masculine novel. In The Stone Angel, as Laurence tells Cameron, she attempts to capture the "idiom" of Hagar's generation (p. 113), but the novel's form, the use of first-person narration and the chronological sequence of the flashbacks exhibit the order and control of a masculine mind, as befits a work wherein the main character is, throughout her life, dominated by her father.

The Fire-Dwellers, on the other hand, experiments with a variety of techniques to convey Stacey's emotional reality. Laurence uses interior monologue rather than first-person narration; she eschews chronological structuring of past events in favor of short memory flashes brought on by stimuli in Stacey's present. The result is a montage which more closely approximates the way humans perceive and experience daily life. The novel is loose and open-ended; the fragments and voices in the world around Stacey are there for her to assimilate, and she does manage some acceptance of the chaos, but without total understanding or the illusion of order. Feminine writing attempts to escape the masculine writer's tendency to use "explicit and direct statement" in order that the writer might "match the way we truly see and feel, in images

resembling the sequence of film." The feminine writer, according to Anais Nin, tries to break down the concept of distance between author and character in order to see a character "from within."³⁶ Laurence explains to Cameron that she attempts to portray each heroine in a style reflective of that character; her creative approach is comparable to that of a "method actor, [I] get right inside the role . . . to try and feel my way into their skull in such a way that I respond in the writing the way they would respond" (p. 102). Not only does The Fire-Dwellers portray a woman who frees herself from her personal colonized situation, at a time when Canada too was decisively breaking away from her colonial past, but also Laurence's technique moves from a masculine to a feminine mode of expression.

Life in Africa taught Laurence about her own colonialism and provided her with the physical and temporal distance from her Canadian background which helped her understand it. When she began to "set down her time and her place," she maintained distance from it by living, during the 1960s, in England as a divorced mother of two. "Living in England," she explains to Margaret Atwood, "convinced me that my real place was in Canada. I was writing from my Canadian background, [this is my spiritual home."³⁷ Subsequently, toward the end of the sixties she returned to Canada more often, first as a

writer-in-residence. Then, during the summers she purchased a cottage near Lakefield where she took up permanent residence in 1974. Although she claims that "there is certainly no sense of nationalism in a political sense in my work," Laurence's personal odyssey has given Canadians "a very strong sense of who they are, where they came from and where they may be going." While she makes no overt political statements in her novels, these works are political in that they give "voice to our history, to our legends, to our cultural being."³⁸ The colonial period, for Margaret Laurence and for Canada, is finished, but not forgotten.

Endnotes

¹ Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel (Toronto, 1968), p. 34.

² Laurence is insistent in interviews that her novels are not "directly autobiographical," but she does concede that A Bird in the House is the exception. She tells Graeme Gibson in Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto, 1973), p. 197, that the short stories are "drawn from my childhood."

³ Laurence, The Prophet's Camel Bell (Toronto, 1963), p. 16.

⁴ Donald Cameron, Conversations with Canadian Novelists (Toronto, 1973), p. 98.

⁵ Laurence, "Sources," Mosaic, 3 (Spring 1970), 81.

⁶ Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," Canadian Literature, 41 (Summer, 1969), 15.

⁷ Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House (Toronto, 1974), p. 207.

⁸ Clara Thomas, "A Conversation about Literature: an Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1 (Winter 1972), 66.

⁹ Clara Thomas, "Myth and Manitoba in The Diviners," in Here and Now, ed. John Moss (Toronto, 1978), pp. 116-17.

¹⁰ W. L. Morton, The Canadian Identity (Toronto, 1961), p. 93.

- 11 Marlene Springer, What Manner of Woman (New York, 1973), p. 130.
- 12 Ged Martin, "Queen Victoria and Canada," American Review of Canadian Studies, 13 (Spring 1983), 215-33.
- 13 Karen Horney, "Inhibited Femininity," in Feminine Psychology (New York, 1967), p. 74.
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- 15 Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, pp. 174-77.
- 16 Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English, Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism (Toronto, 1981), p. 261.
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- 20 Bernice Lever, "An Interview with Margaret Laurence," Waves, 3 (Winter 1975), 12.
- 21 Margaret Laurence, The Fire-Dwellers (Toronto, 1969), p. 56.
- 22 Helen M. Buss, "Margaret Laurence--a Bibliographical Essay," American Review of Canadian Studies, 14 (1984), 8.
- 23 "Other New Novels," The Times Literary Supplement,

22 May 1969, in Margaret Laurence: The Writer and her Critics, ed. W. H. New (Toronto, 1977), p. 197.

²⁴ F. W. Watt, "Review of The Fire-Dwellers," in The Writer and her Critics, ed. New, pp. 198-99.

²⁵ Phyllis Gotlieb, "On Margaret Laurence," Tamarack Review, 52 (1969), 76-78.

²⁶ Kenneth Hughes, "Politics and A Jest of God," Journal of Canadian Studies, 13 (Fall 1978), 43.

²⁷ Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: the Novelist as Socio-political Being," in A Political Art, ed. W. H. New (Vancouver, 1978), p. 24.

²⁸ Elizabeth Waterston, Survey: A Short History of Canadian Literature (Toronto, 1973), pp. 72-73.

²⁹ Denyse Forman and Uma Parameswaran, "Echoes and Refrains in the Canadian Novels of Margaret Laurence," in The Writer and her Critics, ed. New, p. 91.

³⁰ W. H. New, "Rhythms of Discovery," Canadian Literature, 100 (Spring 1984), 8.

³¹ Bruce Hutchison, "The Canadian Personality," in Man and His World, ed. Malcolm Ross and John Stevens (Toronto, 1961), p. 189.

³² Sandra Djwa, "Canadian Poets and the Great Tradition," Canadian Literature, 65 (Summer 1975), 42-52.

³³ Clara Thomas, "The Novels of Margaret Laurence," in The Writer and her Critics, ed. New, p. 60.

³⁴ George Woodcock, The Canadians (Don Mills, 1979),

p. 301.

³⁵ As quoted in Bothwell, Drummond and English in the context of a lengthy discussion on the growth of anti-Americanism between 1964 and 1967, p. 278.

³⁶ Anais Nin, The Novel of the Future (New York, 1968), pp. 27, 59.

³⁷ Margaret Atwood, "Face to Face," in Maclean's, May 1974, 46.

³⁸ Bernice Lever, "Literature and Canadian Culture: an interview with Margaret Laurence," in The Writer and her Critics, ed. New, pp. 26, 27.

Chapter Five

"To refuse to be a victim": Anti-Americanism in the early novels of Margaret Atwood

"Walking slowly down the aisle" of a supermarket, Marian McAlpin, a market research analyst in Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman, resents the various techniques used to "lower your sales resistance to the point at which all things are desirable."¹ The music "from the concealed loudspeakers" and the "deceptively-priced or subliminally-packaged" merchandise trick her into "doing precisely what some planner in a broadloomed office had hoped and predicted she would do." Successful merchandising depends on "which detergent had the best power-symbol" and "which tomato juice can had the sexiest-looking tomato on it." Despite Marian's attempts "to defend herself with lists," she finds herself "pushing the cart like a somnambulist, eyes fixed, swaying slightly, her hands twitching with the impulse to reach out and grab anything with a bright label." "Just because she knew what they were up to didn't mean she was immune"; The Edible Woman dramatizes the extent to which even human relationships are not "immune" from the profit-motive of a consumer-oriented society.

A society which so devotes itself to materialism is the setting of much of Margaret Atwood's poetry and fiction. In a 1972 interview with Graeme Gibson, Atwood draws a parallel between the psyches of her heroines and Canada:

What I'm really into . . . is the great Canadian victim complex. If you define yourself as innocent then nothing is ever your fault--it is always somebody else doing it to you, and until you stop defining yourself as a victim that will always be true. It will always be somebody else's fault, and you will always be the object of that rather than somebody who has any choice or takes responsibility for their life. And that is not only the Canadian stance towards the world, but the usual female one. Look what a mess I am and it's all their fault. And Canadians do that too. Look at poor innocent us, we are morally better than they. We do not burn people in Vietnam, and those bastards are coming in and taking away our country. Well the real truth of the matter² is that Canadians are selling it.

As poet, novelist, and critic, Atwood has been instrumental in shaping Canada's understanding of herself as a nation. Although she disclaims the labels "nationalist" and "feminist," her statements about the American control of the publishing industry in the early 1970s, for example, raised national consciousness enough to effect change: "Canadian writers of my generation started to read Canadian literature in self-defence; we got tired of people telling us there wasn't any."³

Her volume of poetry, Power Politics (1971), highlights the central subjects and metaphors in her work: the sexual

tactics employed by men and women and the Canadian political experience. The emphasis Atwood places on these two political arenas validates Susan Trofimenkoff's call for a closer study of the relationship between feminism and Canadian nationalism. Trofimenkoff argues that contemporary writing of women's history implies that "the major driving force of history is not the struggle between classes or the oppression of one class by another but rather the relationship between the sexes."⁴ The study of women by intellectual historians interested in nationalism, she suggests, will discover "a combination of economic, demographic and political factors." George Woodcock would seem to agree for as early as 1975 he writes that in her poetry and early novels, "Atwood presents, and supports with much shrewdly chosen evidence, the proposition that our literature is still scarred and misshapen by the state of mind that comes from a colonial relationship. All Canadian attitudes are--she suggests--related to the central fact of victimization imposed or at least attempted."⁵ Consequently, her works, describing Canadian and feminine oppression, are told from the female perspective: she uses female personae in her poetry and female narrators in her novels.

Although Atwood admits to Linda Sandler, "I probably am a feminist," she cautions against reading her characters as "role models. I don't try to resolve the problems of

living, deal out the answers, and I'm not dealing with my female characters as members of a separate species."⁶ Her first two novels, The Edible Woman (1969) and Surfacing (1972), nevertheless share a concern with female roles; in each book conventional behavior is required of the protagonist. Each heroine then suffers an identity crisis as she wrestles with her growing awareness of her dual, if not multiple, personalities which "surface" after she has rejected the imposed image. Each at first defensively reacts by seeing herself as a victim of male domination, but then comes to recognize that this colonial attitude is a way of hiding the truth of her own culpability: that she had willingly accepted the sexual role models prescribed for her by a patriarchal society, that she had become a "sellout."

These heroines, who so readily suggest feminist and nationalist struggles, are also apparently autobiographical. They closely correspond in age to Atwood, with their flashbacks, like Atwood's past, being of a childhood in post-war Canada. Like Marian in The Edible Woman, Atwood once worked for a market research firm; like the narrator of Surfacing, Atwood's parents "carried Peggy into the Quebec north woods when she was six months old. The family spent half of each year in the woods--mostly in northern Quebec."⁷ Atwood's essay in Maclean's, "Travels Back: Refusing to acknowledge where you come from is an

act of amputation," further amplifies the connections between her childhood and adolescence and those of the heroine of Surfacing: "Highway 17 was my first highway, I travelled along it six months after I was born, from Ottawa to North Bay and then to Temiskaming, and from there over a one-track dirt road into the bush. After that, twice a year, north when the ice went out, south when the snow came, the time between spent in tents; or in the cabin built by my father on a granite point a mile by water from a Quebec village so remote that the road went in only two years before I was born. . . . I didn't spend a full year in school until I was 11."⁸ In her fictional descriptions of Canadian women then, Atwood presents a portrait both of her individual experience and of her country's contemporary history.

The Edible Woman, narrated by the protagonist, Marian McAlpin, a recent university graduate who is working for a market research firm, Seymour Surveys, demonstrates the difficulties, for women of the 1960s, of living within conventional norms. The novel's three sections conform to the patterns of conventional courtship fiction: in section one, Marian becomes engaged to Peter Wollander, an articling law student; in section two, preparations are under way for the planned spring wedding; in section three, Marian breaks off the engagement and plans to search for a new job. The deviation from the traditional happy ending

in marriage, undercutting both sentimental love stories and traditional relationships between men and women, typifies the connection of aesthetic and social innovation, which extends the national/sexual parallels in Atwood's work.

Set in the mid-1960s, The Edible Woman satirizes the consumerism of North American society and suggests that the production, packaging and promotion of goods for mass consumption have pervaded relationships between men and women. The novel most particularly satirizes the conventional roles available for women in the consumer society of post-war Canada. "I can't tell [the office] yet," muses Marian about her engagement, "I'll have to keep my job there for a while longer" (p. 102). That Marian becomes engaged on a Labor Day Weekend ironically indicates the limited choices open to women in 1965: career or the "labor" of childbirth within a respectable marriage. "I was expected to have one or the other," Atwood explains in "The Curse of Eve--Or, What I Learned in School," her speech for the 1976 Gerstein Lectures at York University, "and this is one of the ways in which I hope times have changed."⁹ There was no such hope in the society of The Edible Woman.

When Marian and her room-mate are asked why they have such "crummy" jobs, they can only defend themselves with the rhetorical question, "What else do you do with a B. A. these days?" (p. 55). This question is central to the

novel and addresses the same issues raised by Friedan's The Feminine Mystique ironically; for centuries men have expressed concern about the ill effects of women's education on society. The need for female education was one of the central themes of Anna Jameson's writing; both heroines in Duncan's Imperialist and McClung's Purple Springs are raised beyond the realm of conventional roles by their advanced education. The post-war argument against the increasing numbers of women enrolling in post-secondary institutions was that higher education was wasted on the woman who would become just a wife and mother. Friedan discovered that intelligent women are not fulfilled by the boredom of the repetitive work of the housewife and mother; only when women use their intelligence and take part in activities outside the home do they feel fulfilled as women, wives and mothers.¹⁰ Sex-directed education is the central form of domination mirrored in The Edible Woman.

Friedan notes that in the period between 1945 and 1960 sex-directed education "added its weight to the process by which American women . . . were shaped increasingly to their biological function" (p. 148). Atwood tells her own version in the Gerstein lectures of the university professor who tried to dissuade her from graduate work in English by asking her whether she "wouldn't . . . rather get married" (p. 13). Marian's education "through highschool and college" was tempered by her own assumption,

inherited from her parents, "that I was going to marry someone eventually and have children, everyone does" (p. 102). Marian's parents "worried she would turn into a high-school teacher or a maiden aunt or a dope addict or a female executive, or [far worse than this] . . . would undergo some shocking physical transformation, like developing muscles and a deep voice" (p. 174). Her engagement calms their "fears about the effects of her university education": "this is surely what they've been waiting for" (p. 103).

When her room-mate states her intention of becoming a single parent, Marian wonders "about the job at the art gallery" Ainslie had talked of seeking; "what has having a baby got to do with getting a job at the art gallery?" responds Ainslie. "You're always thinking in terms of either/or" (p. 41). One can hardly blame Marian; her society has taught her to think that way. And, in light of the job opportunities open to her at the market research firm, Seymour Surveys, her desire for marriage is also understandable. For while her "kind of job is only to be expected" of female college graduates, the masculine name of her firm underscores the fact that "the executives and the psychologists . . . are all men" (p. 20). While hoping that she is "being groomed for something higher up," Marian can at best look forward to "turn[ing] into Mrs. Bogue or her assistant," overseeing the women who process the

reports of the female interviewers. When she is required to join the pension plan, Marian imagines that "somewhere in front of me a self was waiting, pre-formed" (p. 21); the fact that this future is notably one of spinsterhood reinforces her "either/or" attitude to career and marriage.

In reaction to the limitations of this pink-collar ghetto, Marian comes to view her fiancé, Peter Wollander, as a "rescuer from chaos, a provider of stability" (p. 89). But her next thought points to the threat to her identity posed by her engagement: "Somewhere in the vaults of Seymour Surveys an invisible hand was wiping away my signature." Marriage eradicates the career steps she has made; when Mrs. Bogue announces Marian's engagement at the office party, "she had, by the tone of her speech, and by the mere fact of this public announcement coming without warning or prior consultation, made it clear to Marian that she would be expecting her to leave her job whether she wanted to or not" (p. 168). Mrs. Bogue, representing "management" as she does, "preferred her girls to be either unmarried or seasoned veterans with their liability to unpredictable pregnancies well in the past. Newly-weds, she had been heard to say, were inclined to be unstable." This woman reinforces society's prejudice that a woman in her childbearing years is a "liability" in the workplace because she upsets its stable routine. That Marian has accepted her society's rules for its "girls" is made clear

at the beginning of Part Two, for "ever since she had become engaged and had known she wasn't going to be there forever," Marian grows more and more detached from her co-workers and the work itself: "In fact, she found that she couldn't become involved even when she wanted to" (p. 108).

Paralysed between the roles of career woman and wife, Marian has no identity, hence no initiative for action, and certainly no power of self-direction. When Peter asks her when she wants to get married, Marian responds in "a soft, flannelly voice [she] barely recognized, saying, 'I'd rather have you decide that. I'd rather leave the big decisions up to you" (p. 90). In "Alice in consumer-land," John Lauber astutely observes: "That flannelly voice is the voice of society, of its traditional expectations about woman's role, incorporated within her own personality and responding automatically, before her conscious mind can act."¹¹

Marian succumbs to a future for which she has ambivalent desires. What happens to Marian as she slips into the "sargasso-sea of femininity" (p. 167) happened, according to Friedan, to thousands of her contemporaries: "they learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights--the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (p. 11). Women were removed from the

world around them, rarely involved in social issues. Atwood uses third-person narration in the second part of the novel; Marian has 'lost her voice,' become distanced from the reader as from herself. Her passive removal from involvement in the world around her mirrors that of Canadian society as it developed during the 1950s. According to Creighton's 1976 examination of Canada after the war, "Uncle" St. Laurent played the role of "an affectionate pater familias, tenderly watching over the welfare and interests of his large Canadian family," instituting social welfare programs with a show of paternal largesse; meanwhile, "direct American investment in Canada . . . more than tripled during the twelve years from 1945 to 1957."¹² Only a few people such as Walter Gordon questioned the price of the standard of living enjoyed by Canadians; voices such as Canadian economist B. S. Kierstead's were more common, patronizingly asserting that it was "somewhat naive to suppose that in some fashion this [American] investment constituted a menace to Canadian independence."¹³ Hugh Aitken in 1961 might optimistically propose that "the vitality and creativity of . . . cultural life" would "maintain a sense of identity in the face of economic integration with the United States,"¹⁴ but by the mid-1960s Atwood and many more Canadians realized that American investment meant American influence of Canadian social and cultural identity. The Edible Woman exposes the

concomitant process of domination, the growing threat to woman's identity by an increasingly consumer-oriented society.

Indeed, the central motif of the novel is the "sexual sell" of market research. Atwood, in showing the hypocrisy of Seymour Surveys' claim that it does not aim to sell but only to "improve the products" (p. 45), portrays the exploitative nature of market advertising. The questions Marian asks various men about their reactions to a commercial jingo for Moose beer are intended to measure the appeal of the masculine stereotypes in the song's images. Product advertising derives directly from socially-accepted images of sexual identity. Moreover, most of the products tested at Seymour are meant for the woman and the home--as Friedan argues, "the really important role that women serve as housewives is to buy more things for the home. . . . the real business of America is business. But the perpetuation of housewifery, the growth of the feminine mystique, makes sense (and dollars) when one realizes that women are the chief customers of American business" (p. 197). Pondering a girdle advertisement, Marian perceives that the "sort of person who would have enough response . . . to go and buy the object in question" is actually trying to purchase a "self-image . . . getting their own youth and slenderness back in the package" (p. 93). Mrs. Bogue is so "sold" by her job of selling social images that she

instructs her assistant to tell the employees that they are working to "better the Lot of Womankind" (p. 109). Even Ainslie, the most independent woman in the novel, says "every woman should have at least one baby . . . like a voice on the radio saying every woman should have a hair-dryer" (p. 41); the "sexual sell" extends to the manipulation of woman's biological destiny.

The motif of woman as a packaged product created for consumption is developed further by reference to dress. In her attentions to clothing, Marian consciously conforms to the accepted social image, manipulating her appearance and thus her social acceptability by wearing the right clothes as if they were "camouflage or a protective colouration" (p. 14). Marian wears "high heels expected by the office" despite the difficulty in walking (p 12), and when trying to rent an apartment had "even got Ainslie to wear gloves" and appear innocent (p.15). This imagery climaxes in Marian's remodelling of herself as a woman for the engagement party to which her fiancé's friends are invited and foreshadows the cake woman she bakes at the novel's conclusion.

At Peter's suggestion, she plans to "have something done with her hair" and buy a dress "not quite so mousy as any she already owned" (p. 208). The hairdresser "treated your head like a cake: something to be carefully iced and ornamented" (p. 208). That the final product is an

"artificial" image of femininity imposed by society--the hairdresser is male--is emphasized by the dominating image of the hairdressing appointment as an operation on an etherized patient. Marian "thought it would be a good idea if they would give anaesthetics to the patients, just put them to sleep while all these necessary physical details were taken care of; she didn't enjoy feeling like a slab of flesh, an object. . . . Her whole body felt curiously paralysed" (p. 209). Marian "feels like a callgirl," and is encouraged to conform by an advertisement in a magazine she reads while under the dryer: "Girls! Be successful! If you want to really Go Places, Develop Your Bust" (p. 210). She succumbs to the socially-imposed facade both because she feels a loss of control, "she was intimidated by [the hairdresser's] official surroundings," and because she undergoes the operation "of her own free will."

Marian's conformity, deriving as it does from her need for social approval, is again reinforced when she buys a red dress from the saleslady who assures her, "It's you, dear" (p. 208), and goes on to pressure her to purchase a girdle, not because she needs one, but because "the saleslady who . . . was thoroughly corseted herself said she ought to. . . . 'that is a close-fitting dress and you wouldn't want it to be obvious that you haven't got one on, would you?' (p. 221). Marian understands that "it had seemed like a moral issue"; a woman who does not wear a

girdle is seen as "loose." Her hair and clothes, by contrast, are acceptably alluring; Peter approves of the final product: "Darling, you look absolutely marvellous. . . . And I love you especially in that red dress" (pp. 228,231). "Yum, yum," says Peter to his edible woman (p. 227).

In her relationship with Peter, Marian sees more and more clearly that she is a product and he is a threat. With his collection of guns and cameras, he fits the socially-approved male image of hunter as projected by the Moose beer commercial. And, once engaged, he assumes an attitude of ownership: "now that she had been ringed he took pride in displaying her" (p. 176). Marian imagines that with his "brand of logic" Peter would "go out and buy . . . one of those marriage-manuals": "if you got something new you went out and bought a book that told you how to work it" (p. 150). Certainly logic pervades his occupation, law, which is itself a form of domination by means of legalizing patriarchal power. Peter is, according to Ainslie, "nicely packaged" and Marian sees him as "ordinariness raised to perfection" (p. 61). He is the finished product of a masculine society, a success whose triumph necessitates the domination of others. The engagement party reveals what Peter is turning into and what he is doing to Marian. She imagines Peter in the future in terms of a typical American leisure scene:

"forty-five and balding . . . standing in bright sunlight beside a barbecue with a long fork in his hand She looked carefully for herself in the garden, but she wasn't there and the discovery chilled her" (p. 243). Peter's typical male interests in hunting and photography coalesce at this point; he "raised the camera and aimed it at her . . . to get a couple of shots."

Marian's fear of being photographed is well explained by John Moss: "a camera can steal the soul. The basis for such a belief is not superstition but the intuitively sophisticated equation of appearance with reality. Distort the former and the latter is jeopardized. . . . Identity is clearly a complex living thing. A static literal image like that caught . . . on film destroys intrinsic vitality and dimension, the qualities ultimately defining the soul, which is thereby lost."¹⁵ Knowing that in the red dress she is "a perfect target," Marian runs from the party before Peter can capture her; in doing so, she is running for her very life, rejecting the two-dimensional image of woman which she has allowed Peter, and by extension society, to impose on her.

Marian's rebellion against this socially-imposed femininity began, albeit unconsciously, the very night of her engagement to Peter. Her sudden flight after drinks at the Park Plaza, her hiding under Len's bed, the unexpected embrace of the stranger, Duncan, whom she meets in a

laundromat, and her inertia as she sits on her bed at the end of Part One, indicate that although she has outwardly assumed the pattern of passive femininity expected by Peter, inwardly she has begun to withdraw from this version of womanhood. The focus of Atwood's satire emerges in Part Two as Marian becomes increasingly unable to consume food; the split between her mind and body becomes a metaphor of her rejection, not only of consumerism, but also of herself as a commodity packaged as fiancée, bride, wife and mother. Her unconscious perspective leads her to identify, at the start of Part Two, with the "victim" in the market research survey (p. 107). She also empathizes with the "Underwear Man," an obscene phone-caller, seeing him as a "victim of society," his personality split in two by his inability to obtain a woman as projected by girdle advertisements (p. 117). In a humorous passage wherein Marian's fellow-workers, reacting to a failed survey on menstruation, show concern only for the product test and the client, Atwood has Marian absent-mindedly draw "a row of moons across her page; crescent moons, full moons, then crescent moons pointing the other way, then nothing: a black moon" (p. 110). This action, while also a parody of anthropological studies of woman, indicates that at some level of her being Marian is grappling with a deeper dimension of femininity.

In her exploration of Woman's Mysteries, Esther Harding

maintains that "to understand woman . . . it is necessary to take into account her moonlike character and to gain some insight into the law of change which governs her."¹⁶ When Marian views her co-workers and the "vast anonymous ocean of housewives whose mind they were employed to explore," she perceives the perversion of "the law of change" by consumerism: "their fluidity sustained somewhere within by bones, without by a carapace of clothing and makeup . . . and the continual flux between the outside and the inside, taking things in, giving them out, chewing, words, potato-chips, burps, grease, hair, babies, milk, excrement, cookies, vomit, coffee, tomato-juice, blood, tea, sweat, liquor, tears, and garbage" (p. 167). Because she realizes that "at some time she would be--or no, already she was like that too; she was one of them, her body the same, identical," she becomes anorexic, more and more detached in her reaction against the socially-approved image. It is her desire for a greater latitude of identity which prompts her to offer Peter the substitute woman of cake--in itself a parody of the woman as object popularized at stag parties by the woman who emerges from a cake. Her comment, "You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you You've been trying to assimilate me" (p. 271), uses the political language of a minority group speaking to a conventional, powerful majority, of a colony to an imperial power, of a

woman to a man.

Formally, as Atwood tells Gibson, the novel is an "anti-comedy" which rejects the happy ending of "your standard eighteenth-century comedy" (p. 21). This formal deviation from the British model has its correlative not only in Marian's rebellion against Peter, but also in the mind-state of the nation in the early 1960s. Canada continued the process of turning away from her past associations with the British while enjoying the prosperity of the American way of life. Bothwell, Drummond, and English note, for instance, that in July of 1960, "Beverly Baxter wrote his last London Letter for Maclean's," and soon after Maclean's came out with a "special issue: 'America 1960'--a 100-page report on the people all the shouting is about."¹⁷ The United States had John F. Kennedy; Canada had John George Diefenbaker. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Canadians were becoming increasingly "embarrassed about their conservative reputations," but unable to decide in what direction they wished to go: Diefenbaker stood for the British heritage; Pearson, on the other hand, was on good terms with the Americans. Bothwell, Drummond and English maintain that Pearson, trained in the international field of diplomacy, distrusted the "irrational in politics and also the values of the past" (p. 270) and that, at the same time that he began to move the country toward a sense of itself as a

nation distinct from Britain, Pearson was also convinced of the necessity of being on "the American team" (p. 279).

Others, however, such as Hugh MacLennan, saw in such views the danger of gradual American domination of Canadian life. George Grant's Lament for a Nation interpreted the defeat of Diefenbaker as the end to any hope that "an alternative to the American republic [might be] built on the northern half of this continent."¹⁸ By 1967, polls indicated a shift in public opinion from 1965; more Canadians thought that Canada should take steps to ensure its national independence from foreign economic control.

The Edible Woman is, in a sense, Atwood's early lament, for although the novel is set in a Toronto easily recognized by anyone who has lived there, the city is never named and therefore represents, as Atwood says, "any Northeast, commercial, technological city."¹⁹ The thrust of the novel's satire is that Canadian society's materialistic values are indistinguishable from those of the United States. But just as it has not been easy for a succession of Canadian governments to deal effectively with the question of American control of the economy, so too Marian's future independence is not mapped out clearly or simply. Certainly, as Atwood suggests to Gibson, the traditional "comedy solution [of marriage] would be a tragic solution for Marian" (p. 25). In the very short third section of the novel Marian struggles by herself, but

now "thinking . . . in the first person singular again" (p. 278); she is cleaning her neglected apartment, seeking a new job, even eating again.

Sherrill Grace, in her thematic study of Atwood, Violent Duality, emphasizes the negative connotations of the circular structure of the book and concludes that "Marian returns to the point from which she began."²⁰ But Grace overlooks the strong positive elements in the conclusion: that it is spring, a traditional time of rebirth, and that the baking of the cake is, as Atwood herself tells Gibson, "an action. Up until that point she has been evading, avoiding, running away, retreating, withdrawing" (p. 25). Lauber extends Atwood's reading in his observation that "through baking a cake, a traditionally feminine action . . . Marian . . . symbolically . . . represents . . . her unwillingness to be eaten" (p. 28). Atwood describes the novel to Gibson as "pessimistic" but she also acknowledges that although "the ideal would be somebody who would neither be a killer or a victim, who could achieve some kind of harmony with the world, which is a productive or creative harmony, rather than a destructive relationship towards the world [and although it] is [not] actualized [in The Edible Woman] . . . it's seen as a possibility finally, whereas initially it is not" (p. 27).

The tentative nature of the novel's ending and of

Marian's future is foreshadowed in her ambiguous relationship with Duncan, the graduate student in English, whom she often meets in a laundromat. The setting of their rendezvous suggests the life-style emerging in the 1960s; both men and women go out to do the laundry once done by women in the home. And Duncan enjoys ironing clothes. But the possibility that he is meant by Atwood to represent an admirably-liberated male is negated, to begin with, by his compulsiveness in ironing; it is a form of "relieving tensions": "you straighten things out and get them flat" (p. 142).

On the question of androgyny, Atwood explains to Kaminski about "counterparts and complements. Your counterpart is someone who is the mirror reflection of yourself, and your complement is someone who supplies those elements that are lacking in you" (p. 12). Duncan plays the role of "counterpart" most effectively; when Marian dons his dressing-gown, Duncan observes, "you look sort of like me in that" (p. 144). She enjoys his wit and imagination, qualities she too has. But Atwood clarifies Duncan's purpose as a mirror-image when his room-mate expounds on Alice in Wonderland as a "sexual-identity-crisis book." This exposition suggests the structure of The Edible Woman: "one sexual role after another is presented to [the heroine] but she seems unable to accept any of them" (p. 194). At one point Alice "goes

to talk with the Mock-Turtle," the description of whom matches the characterization of Duncan "enclosed in his shell and his self-pity, a definitely pre-adolescent character"; in the bedroom scene between Duncan and Marian near the end of the novel, Duncan slips under the bedclothes "like a turtle into his shell" (p. 253). Duncan is insecure and passive; as an animus projection he demonstrates Marian's weak self-esteem and undeveloped sense of identity. They both are, in essence, children. While Duncan remains in a childlike state through the protective relationship he fosters with his room-mates, he mirrors the fact that Marian's identity is regressive because she accepts the future her parents planned for her.

In his inability to "move out" from the protection offered by his surrogate parents--"they spend so much time fussing about my identity that I really shouldn't have to bother with it myself at all" (p. 201)--Duncan mirrors not only Marian's loss of identity as she faces marriage but also that of the thousands of North American women who accepted "the feminine mystique" in order to protect themselves; they willingly donned the roles of homemaker and motherhood as a means of avoiding participation in the world at large. Such an "evasion of growth," concludes Friedan, "consists in a systematic denial and repression of one's own personality, and an attempt to substitute some other personality, an idealized conception, a standard of

absolute goodness by which one tries to live, suppressing all those genuine impulses that are incompatible with the exaggerated and unrealistic standard, or simply taking the personality that is the popular cliché of the time" (pp. 279-80).

But there is suggested at the end of the novel a perhaps more subtle purpose to Duncan's role. Marian muses that in the case of Peter her woman of cake "as a symbol [of their relationship] had definitely failed"; Peter "hadn't devoured it after all" (p. 271). But Duncan consumes the remains of the cake, "mostly the head," while playing "head-games" with Marian, confusing her with various interpretations of her relationships with men, suggesting at one point that "the real truth is that it wasn't Peter at all. It was me. I was trying to destroy you" (p. 281). Marian has "a sinking feeling" (p. 280) that she has been wrong in her emerging analysis of her relationships with Peter and Duncan, but as she "sat watching the cake disappear," she experiences "a peculiar sense of satisfaction to see him eat as if the work [of baking the cake] hadn't been wasted after all" (p. 281). Duncan is revealed for the "cannibal" he is, and as such, is actually a symbol of the kind of man with whom Marian was programmed to become involved.

Duncan is a child-man who "bring[s] out the Florence Nightingale" in "every woman" (p. 100); immediately after

their spontaneous embrace at the laundromat, Marian "stared for a long time at an advertisement with a picture of a nurse in a white cap and dress. She had a wholesome, competent face and she was holding a bottle and smiling. The caption said: GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE" (p. 101). But after their night together, when Duncan says that "she wasn't the first," Marian realizes that he has manipulated her: "the starched nurse-like image of herself she had tried to preserve as a last resort crumpled like wet newsprint" (p. 264). Duncan's action of eating the cake confirms for Marian that men do play on the nurturing, biological function of women to manipulate them into subservient roles by appealing to "the better half" to live their lives for the welfare of husbands and children. Duncan warns her to "be careful . . . you might do something destructive: hunger is more basic than love. Florence Nightingale was a cannibal, you know" (p. 100). In light of Marian's anorexia, the "hunger" to which he alludes is the desire for self-fulfillment, for self-realization.

Friedan points out the "progressive dehumanization" of American children robbed of their identities by mothers who, frustrated with the limitations of their own lives as wives and mothers, end up living through their husbands and children, becoming so involved that the children lose all self-motivation and self-confidence (p. 278). Atwood in

her "thematic guide to Canadian literature," Survival, analyzes the literary presentation of women who "have internalized the values of their cultures" in terms of the Rapunzel fairy-tale. She observes that in Canadian novels the Rescuer "is not much help" and his "facelessness and lack of substance as a character is usually a clue to his status as a fantasy-escape figure." Canadian heroines are "stuck in the tower, and . . . [must] learn how to cope with it."²¹ In The Edible Woman, Duncan as "a rescuer" is finally inadequate and Marian at the end of the novel chooses the risks of independence. The conclusion is thus positive in that she is taking control of her life. Marian does precisely what Friedan states women must do: they "must refuse to be nameless, depersonalized, manipulated, and live their own lives again according to a self-chosen purpose. They must begin to grow" (p. 298). Yet the ending of the novel is problematic because the question remains: what can she do?

Marian, at the end of the novel, begins to take charge of her own life, despite the risks; Canada, too, began at the end of the decade to take some steps toward control of her own house. There have been two forms of economic nationalism in Canadian history. The "national policy" of Macdonald which forged the nation was similar to the economic policies of C. D. Howe. Both men used American entrepreneurship and finance to develop the nation at great

cost to the independence of the people and the country. Both men ignored the implications of their economic policies. But men who asked such questions, like Walter Gordon, proposed a form of economic nationalism whereby the independence of the nation would be protected by means of tariffs on trade and regulation of foreign investment. The economic nationalism expressed by Walter Gordon as early as his 1955 Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects was implemented by the Liberal governments under Pearson and Trudeau. The economic nationalism mirrored in The Edible Woman is that of Macdonald and Howe; Atwood demonstrates the danger of consumerism as a basis to society.

Certainly a consumer society propagates patriarchal values; in a world controlled by multi-national corporations, women and Canada remain colonies. Atwood portrays the male characters' fears of the "radical views" of "liberating" unconscious drives toward self-realization: "Politically Peter is conservative" (p. 67). However, in light of Atwood's own experience as a graduate student in English, the "home" situation of Duncan offers Atwood's most humorous satire of the "colonial mentality" of Canadians. Duncan's room-mates, Trevor and Fischer, from Westmount in Montreal and Vancouver respectively, have been in the "braingrinder" of literary studies so long that they "don't sound as though [they are] from anywhere" (p. 98).

All of their literary studies are of British literature, particularly Victorian novels, and their apartment contains touches of Victoriana: "There's so little elegance left," muses Trevor, "especially in this country. . . . we all ought to do our bit to preserve some of it" (p. 193). These men preserve imperial standards just as Peter propagates American materialism. Atwood embodies the hope of change solely in the female character's revolt against man and his world.

* * * * *

The changes in Canadians' awareness of their position as a nation in relation to the United States can best be symbolized by the cooperation between Pearson and Kennedy in 1963 and the hostility between Pearson and Johnson in 1965. In these two years American escalation of the war in Vietnam caused Canada to reassess her closeness with this aggressive neighbour. In 1963 Kennedy was assassinated; soon, as well, was civil rights leader, Martin Luther King. American cities south of the Canadian border burned with racial strife and student revolt. In comparison, as noted in the preceding chapter, Canadians began to think of themselves as a "nicer" people. Bothwell, Drummond and English note that by 1967 "the Canadian sense of inferiority was replaced by a strong gust of moral righteousness which exalted many of those values which had

embarrassed Canadians in 1960: their placidity, caution, and even innocence" (pp. 341-42).

Atwood's second novel, Surfacing, published in 1972, examines with painful precision the complex development of the "nice" image of Canada in the late 1960s. On the "surface," the first two-thirds of the novel seem apolitical. A young woman in the company of her new lover, Joe, and a married couple, David and Anna, returns to the island home of her parents in the northern Quebec wilderness to search for her father who is reported missing. However, the political camaraderie of the four young adults soon breaks down into various manoeuvres of sexual politics. And the narrator's "cool" exterior is shattered when she finds what appears to be her father's drowned body in the lake, for the experience releases a flood of memories previously sealed from her--and the reader's--consciousness. The marriage and divorce which she had cited as the reasons for the rift between herself and her parents turn out to have been her whitewashed version of an illicit affair with a married man, her college art teacher, and the resulting abortion which he had arranged. The admission of the true story, of her complicity in allowing the abortion, releases a deep sense of her own evil. Her previous insistence on her innocence and her sense that she is a "nice" victim of both male aggression and the American killer instinct are revealed as

shields behind which she hid her own guilt and evil.

Although there are few direct temporal or geographical references, a politically-significant historical period is specified. At one point the narrator mentions that David studied theology in New York "during the 60s."²² This phrase places the time present of the novel after that decade, in the early 1970s. The narrator says that she has been away from her parents' home since the time of her "marriage" and that David and Anna "got married about the same time I did" (p. 40). Since David and Anna have been married "nine years," the narrator's abortion took place during 1962-63, the time period so crucial to Canada's sense of identity as distinguished from that of the United States. Unlike The Edible Woman which concentrates on feminist issues and only indirectly makes political analogies, Surfacing focusses directly on specific national and political issues--American domination of the Canadian economy and destruction of her natural, Northern resources, the independence of Quebec, the threat of nuclear weapons--by uncovering the period of the 1960s from the narrator's past when these issues were so politically relevant.

Atwood also presents these concerns through specific, satiric commentary within the "fiction." In the first chapter, as the foursome enters the landscape of "needle trees and . . . gray granite and . . . tourist cabins" (p.

9), signs appear "saying GATEWAY TO THE NORTH"; "the future is in the North, that was a political slogan once," reflects the narrator, remembering Diefenbaker's vision of northern development which caught the imagination of the Canadian people in the 1958 election. Her next thought, and juxtaposition within the narrator's stream of consciousness is one of Atwood's vehicles of political commentary, is one of fear of the American "rockets" in Canadian territory; beneath "an innocent hill" lies "the pit the Americans hollowed out" (p. 9). The issue of nuclear weapons for Canadian armed forces and the pressure from the United States that Canada acquire them, were as controversial in the early 1960s as in the present-day testing of the Cruise Missile over western Canada. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the Bomarc missile debate--whether or not Canadian planes would be equipped with nuclear warheads--shook the confidence of the Canadian people in the Diefenbaker government, and the nuclear arms question continued to plague the Pearson administration. Significantly, an anti-nuclear weapons movement was organized in 1960 called, "The Voice of Women." But for this female narrator, as for Canada in the early 1960s, American destructive capability is, as yet, an overwhelming threat.

In the first chapter, Atwood refers twice to the debate over the sovereignty of Quebec. As she crosses the border

into Quebec with her friends, the narrator thinks, "now we're on my home ground, foreign territory" (p. 11). She is many-times dispossessed by politics: as an Anglophone in Quebec; as a Quebecker in Canada; and as a Canadian in North America. The chapter ends with a melange of slogans painted on roadside cliff faces, one of which alludes not only to separatist aspirations but also to General DeGaulle's famous 1967 balcony cry, "QUEBEC LIBRE" (p. 15). Catherine McLay perceptively comments that the "French-English relationships" are the "first evidence" in the novel of the theme of separation.²³ It is an issue which Atwood extends both beyond provincial-federal to international conflicts and beyond political to individual isolation and self-determination.

Atwood develops the theme of independence primarily in terms of Canadian dislike of American domination. The narrator's antipathy for Americans and the American way of life intensifies through the course of the novel just as nationalistic feelings grew in Canada during the mid-'60s. Anti-American comments become more strident and frequent as the novel progresses. At the start, such criticisms are muted, almost incidental, as the narrator makes passing comments on the landscape around her. She refers three times to the white birches in this part of the country not yet afflicted by "the disease . . . from the south" (p. 7). The dam that "controls the lake" to secure water power for

logging operations is no longer of much use since the "district was logged out" (p. 46). "Surveyors" whom she sees felling trees are transformed in her imagination to "advance men, agents" who are "plotting the new shoreline" (p. 113). The rise of the lake level, she surmises, will depend on "who got elected, not here but somewhere else" (p. 132). Her nationalistic feelings become more explicit: "My country, sold or drowned, a reservoir: the people were sold along with the land and the animals, a bargain, sale, solde. Les soldes they called them, sellouts." These references emphasize Americans' ~~exploitative~~ exploitative attitude to nature; the hunter/hunted motif of The Edible Woman is here expanded.

The narrator's experience of Americans is typically Canadian. In her childhood, Americans were seen as "harmless and funny and inept and faintly lovable, like President Eisenhower." This World War II general was popular among both Americans and Canadians who saw the stability of the family man and golfer as the quality necessary to contain the Russians. The familial image of Eisenhower, however, kept both publics ignorant of his administration's covert operations, for example, in the 1954 overthrow of the Communist government in Guatemala. After the Vietnam war, such questionable foreign policy was general knowledge, and the narrator of Surfacing now sees American smiles as "teeth bared . . . friendly as a shark"

(p. 66). She perceives the threat behind the fishermen and the man from the Detroit Branch of the Wildlife Protection Association of America, Bill Malstrom, and she emphasizes the "dynamite" exploitation beneath their sporting interest in nature (p. 66). When Bill Malstrom appears "prepared to make . . . an offer" for her father's property in order that his association might establish "a retreat lodge, where the members could meditate and observe . . . the beauties of Nature, and [adding in contradiction] maybe do a little hunting and fishing" (p. 94), the narrator reacts with distrust, contemptuous as she is of his reference to Michigan, his home-state, "as though it was something to be proud of." The urban turmoil in Detroit, Michigan, in particular the racial riots of 1965, had shocked and dismayed the Canadian people, as Laurence records in The Fire-Dwellers.

David further feeds the narrator's paranoia after Malstrom leaves with his hypothesis that Malstrom is "a front man for the C. I. A.," which wants the property as a "snooping base" in preparation for the eventual war between Canada and the United States over fresh water rights. His speculation reads like the plot summary of a novel by Richard Rohmer, such as Ultimatum, but both David and Rohmer tap the growing fear of Canadians that their nation would not be immune to interference such as experienced by Chile in the CIA-backed overthrow of its legally-elected

government. She does not "sell-out," she assures David, but speculates that urban Canadians would be "apathetic" in such a war, "they wouldn't mind another change of flag" (p. 97). Her reference to the flag is a reminder not only of the adoption of the Canadian flag in 1965, a formal symbol of Canadian independence from Britain, but also of the threat to Canadian independence in the face of American foreign policy perceived by Canadians in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The narrator's attitude is self-righteous; she comments only on other people's apathy, not her own. However, as Atwood has cautioned in her conversation with Gibson, we should be wary of the narrator's sense of victimization and self-righteousness. The irony of the narrator's self-righteous attitude to America--the key political statement of the novel--emerges when the two apparently American fishermen reveal that they come from Sarnia and Toronto, and that these Canadians, in turn, had mistaken the narrator and her friends for Americans. This passage redefines the narrator's anti-American bias; the American way of life becomes a metaphor to describe an attitude to nature, and consequently to people, which is exploitative and destructive: "It doesn't matter what country they're from, my head said, they're still Americans, they're what's in store for us, what we are turning into" (p. 129).

But the passage, even more significantly, reveals her

and, by extension Canada's, paranoid projection onto Americans of guilt and violence. The narrator is at this point still using only her disengaged head, for the very attributes she hates in Americans are her own. Her anger at the "senseless killing" of the heron makes her want to "swing [her] paddle sideways, blade into [the fisherman's] head" (p. 128). And when she finally admits to her abortion, her guilt, disguises and destructiveness are unmasked: "I let them catch it [the foetus]. I could have said no but I didn't; that made me one of them too, a killer" (p. 145). Her paranoia that "the innocents get slaughtered because they exist" (p. 128) reflects now on her own culpability. The narrator has been projecting onto a nation, a people, characteristics which she has been repressing in herself and which, in the course of the novel, she is forced to acknowledge.

The politics of the American domination of Canada are, for her, initially connected with social forms of domination and psychological repression; in every case she perceives herself as a helpless, even absent, victim. The narrator's view of men, however, undergoes the same transformation from defensive criticism to mature understanding as her perceptions of Americans. At first, she sees her "husband" and David as predators, just as bent on the destruction of women as the Americans are apparently determined to exploit Canada. The "Pill," with its

negative side-effects, is seen as something the "bastards . . . come up with" that "work[s]" while "killing you" (p. 80). Man's love of woman is only a war-game of power politics wherein the male gains "a victory, some flag . . . [to] wave, parade" (p. 87). Graffiti of female "private parts" drawn on the wall of an abandoned tugboat reflect "what's important" to men, "what [they are] hunting" (p. 120).

The relationship between Anna and David clearly represents for the narrator such power politics. Their marriage depends on a "little set of rules . . . break one of them [and you] get punished" (p. 122). David, whom the narrator terms a "second-hand American" (p. 152), illustrates how the American lust for power over nature has been extended to the masculine domination of women: "beautiful from a distance . . . the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it" (p. 116). The narrator sees Anna, moreover, as a compliant victim, "desperate, her body her only weapon and she was fighting for her life, he was her life, her life was the fight: she was fighting him because if she ever surrendered the balance of power would be broken and he would go elsewhere. To continue the war" (pp. 153-54).

In this cruel marriage the narrator sees a more extreme form of her own female passivity. Watching Anna apply the make-up David requires her to wear in order "to look like a

young chick" (p. 122), the narrator explains, with obvious reference to men's magazines such as Playboy, the process by which Anna has inculcated society's feminine image of "a seamed and folded imitation of a magazine picture that is itself an imitation of a woman who is also an imitation, the original nowhere" (p. 165). Recalling her own "marriage," she speaks of the baby "imposed" on her by her "husband" (p. 34) who labels the baby an "accident" (p. 138); upon discovery of the pregnancy he "arranged" the abortion and, recalling the commodity metaphor of The Edible Woman, "fixed [her] . . . as good as new" (p. 145). The constant repetition of "he said" in her version of the abortion underlines the fact that her passivity is a defensive mechanism to ward off her own guilt and sense of evil. The "husband" and David, seen by the narrator, are "American" because they are male; she has deceived herself into believing that she is the victim of a masculine ethic which she equates with American lust for power and consumerism.

The narrator has locked herself into what Atwood in Survival labels "victim position two: To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim, but to explain this as an act of Fate, the Will of God, the dictates of Biology (in the case of women, for instance) . . . or any other large general powerful idea" (p. 37). Rosemary Sullivan correctly concludes that the narrator in Surfacing

"discovers that victimization has been an excuse to escape responsibility for evil."²⁴ Charles Hanly provides a means of understanding the formative factors of Atwood's narrator's neurotic nationalism and feminism in "A Psychoanalysis of Nationalist Sentiment," an article which seeks to analyse the "complex emotion of loving veneration for the nation and hostility toward some other or others."²⁵ He explains that "nationalistic feeling arises out of the repression of the conflicts generated by . . . development in the sexual instinct (the Oedipus complex) during early childhood" (p. 306). What is valuable in his study for a consideration of Surfacing is his contention that "nationalist sentiment require[s] a hate object": the source lies in "a pattern for dealing defensively with destructive impulses" (p. 308). The goodness of the parents is transferred to the nation while the "evil image" of the parents is projected onto some "outsider."

This pattern clearly emerges in the childhood memories of Atwood's heroine; her "moral and emotional timidity," to use Sullivan's terminology, originates in her childhood experience of her parents. Her affair and abortion, she finally admits, came about because she "was not prepared for the average, its needless cruelties and lies" (p. 189). Her parents did not "teach us about evil, they didn't understand about it"; her mother taught them that "fighting was wrong" (p. 72). Because of their "perilous innocence,"

she felt she could never explain to them about her affair or the abortion (p. 144); she admits, however, that "their totalitarian innocence was my own" (p. 190), supporting Hanly's argument that such a child is unable to accept any evil in her parents, and ultimately, in herself. Because she "couldn't accept . . . that mutilation, ruin [she'd] made, [she] needed a different version" (p. 143). Consequently she "pieced . . . together" her alibi of marriage and divorce, placing the blame on her former lover and seeing herself as the innocent victim. Her rationalization, to her parents, finds its outlet in nationalistic hatred of Americans.

Through the actual and symbolic return to her childhood home in search of her missing father, the narrator comes to recognize her own capacity for evil. But even more significant is her discovery, in her "roots," of how her socialization has denied her essential femininity. Her father, who had "admired . . . the eighteenth-century rationalists" (p. 38), and her mother, who kept a diary but entered "no reflections, no emotions" (p. 22), had taught her techniques of survival in the bush, but were unable to teach her to survive as a woman in civilization. She remembers herself as a child hiding "behind open doors at birthday parties" (p. 71), becoming "crafty" in order to avoid the "tricks and minor tortures" of other children (p. 72). "Being socially retarded" made her an object for

"torment and reform" (p. 72) by the "feminine mystique" of her consumer-oriented society. She "prayed to be made invisible" (p. 73) and succeeded in becoming so by "imitating the paper dolls" (p. 42) of girlhood play.

Just as it does for Marian in The Edible Woman, clothing becomes her "camouflage." Searching through her childhood scrapbooks for "where I had come from or gone wrong," she discovers commercial advertisements of "ladies, all kinds: holding up cans of cleanser, knitting, smiling, modelling toeless high heels and nylons with dark seams and pillbox hats and veils" (p. 91). The "sexual sell" of advertising was reinforced by the sex-directed education of her youth: "At school when they asked what you were going to be when you grew up, you said 'A lady' or 'A mother,' either one was safe."

But the narrator also acknowledges the extent to which she internalized this "sexual sell": "it wasn't a lie, I did want to be those things." Photographs of her as a teen-ager "in the stiff dresses, crinolines and tulle," evince that she "was civilized at last, the finished product"; but "after the formal dresses," she notes, "I disappeared" (p. 108). The abortion which "emptied, amputated" her essential nature as woman (p. 144) was the final act, in a life-long process of psychological violence inflicted on her by a society dominated, just as much as the world of Hagar and Stacey, by patriarchal values.

Whereas Stacey's instinct to love her children rises above the inhibition of "some wise guy telling you you were sapping the national strength," Atwood's narrator capitulates to the dominant belief of the essential worthlessness of her biological function when she consents to the abortion for her lover's convenience.

Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen conclude their archetypal analysis of Surfacing with speculation that the general "cultural upheaval, political unrest, and violence" of western society precipitate "the manifestation . . . of the archetype of the Grieving Mother" in Atwood's vision.²⁶

□ The present study demonstrates the specific political and social issues in Canadian life out of which Atwood's novel emerges. Primarily, Surfacing reflects the anti-American component of Canadian nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is worth noting that Bothwell, Drummond and English's 1981 study of the evolution of Canada in the 1960s expresses Canada's emerging consciousness of an American threat in language notably similar to Atwood's. They observe that in 1964, "doubts about Johnson's international activism rarely surfaced in Canada," but by 1966 there existed "a fear that the nation might fall prey to the virus sweeping the United States" (pp. 274, 278; emphasis mine). Atwood's prime concern, however, is that the consequent "Great Canadian victim complex" is so defensive that it inhibits the development of consciousness

of both the country and its individuals. Surfacing reveals the complexity and complicity of such an attitude of injured innocence.

Other historical assessments likewise qualify the "nice, innocent" image Canada had of itself in the late 1960s. Peter Stursberg, in his 1980 examination of Lester Pearson and the American Dilemma, questions the "high moral tone" of Pearson's speech at Temple University calling for a halt to the bombing in Vietnam and concludes that "the speech had the effect of actually delaying Johnson's order to halt the air raids."²⁷ An innocent pose, in hindsight at any rate, can be destructive. But an even sterner indictment of Canada's peaceful image emerged in William Cobban's November 1971 article--a date much closer to the publication of Surfacing--on "Dealing out death discreetly: the traffic in Canadian arms." Cobban explodes with an arsenal of statistics any sense Canadians may have had about this country's international peace-keeping role. Cobban demonstrates that since as far back as the mid-1950s Canada has been "circumspect about how it cashed in on the international arms market."²⁸ In light of Cobban's article, Pearson's call for a halt to the bombing in Vietnam smacks of hypocrisy, for "half of the work Canada does for the American defence industry is in the production of aircraft and related components. . . . Peace in Vietnam would be a severe blow to our aircraft industry" (p. 24).

American control of the Canadian economy takes on frightful proportions when one considers that the "American sales [of Canadian military parts and equipment] account for more than seventy-five per cent of our market. A buyer who controls that much of the market," concludes Cobban, "can't help but influence production" (p. 25).

Moreover, while Canadians may have felt aghast at the racial tensions in the United States, "sometime in 1962 or 1963," point out Bothwell, Drummond and English, "the Quiet Revolution became the Quebec Problem" (p. 288), which culminated finally in the October Crisis of 1970 and the imposition by the Federal Government of the War Measures Act. Canadians were forced to recognize that their nation too was torn by racial animosity which could erupt into urban violence and political murder. By 1970 Canadians might well fear, along with Atwood's narrator, that we "are all Americans now" (p. 169). Canadians could no longer hide behind their self-created image as an orderly, peace-loving nation. Criticism, for the narrator and for contemporary Canada, must become self-criticism.

Atwood extends the American/Canadian comparison in the subtle manner in which she has modelled Surfacing on James Dickey's Deliverance (1970). Two critics have recently compared Atwood and Dickey with differing conclusions. E. J. Hinz stresses the similarities between Surfacing and Deliverance, seeing both ultimately as artistic responses

to the spiritual emptiness of western society.²⁹ Rosemary Sullivan argues that the primitivism in Dickey provides "emotional intensity" whereas in Atwood it engenders "moral scrutiny" (p. 12). Dickey, she maintains, celebrates the American myth of self-preservation; that is, Gentry's experience of eros proves that he is, as Dickey says, "really a born killer" (p. 16). Gentry's proven maleness in a contest with nature supports the view of Atwood's narrator of the American instinct to assert power over uncontrollable nature.

The primitivism in Surfacing, however, provides more than just a forum for "moral scrutiny." Hinz convincingly argues that Gentry returns from his experience as a "type of God the Father," that his successful mission "provides a new symbol for the brotherhood of man" (p. 90). The narrator of Surfacing, on the other hand, discovers that "redemption is elsewhere" (p. 132); she gains intense self-knowledge through contact with "the gods of this place" (p. 145), a place she states is "beyond logic" (p. 154). In the narrator's view, Americans have "turned against the gods" (p. 154). Despite the contrasting experiences, Hinz asserts that "a consideration of the sexual and national differences" reflected in the novels must be done in light of the "cultural decadence and the loss of religious symbolism" which constitute the "major impetus behind the primitivistic impulse in Dickey and

Atwood" (p. 91).

To understand Surfacing in comparison to the American ethos as captured in Deliverance, one must see the rise of feminism in the context of the decline of traditional patriarchal religion. For example, Mary Daly in her Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (1973) argues that "creative eschatology must come by way of the disenfranchised sex."³⁰ In the past, Daly contends, history evolved when "a particular eros or sense of belonging . . . provide[d] the identity of a group to the exclusion of others"; the women's movement on the other hand offers "a real leap in human evolution" because "our transformation is rooted in being" (p. 35). Consequently the Christographic images in Surfacing emphasize not merely general religious decadence but specifically the inadequacy of patriarchal religious iconography: "bland oleotinted" pictures of Jesus (p. 145) at the narrator's Sunday school suggest He is "tired-looking" (p. 55); Christ is referred to as an "alien god" (p. 14) and God is a "dead man in the sky watching" (p. 45). One can understand the limitations of the narrator's nationalism and feminism only in light of the ultimate development of her spiritual consciousness.

Daly comments that "nationalist movements do not liberate women . . . because national freedom is identified with male freedom" (p. 54). When the narrator of Surfacing discovers that "feeling was beginning to seep back into me"

(p. 146), she finally stops using nationalism and feminism as excuses for the "belief that I am powerless" (p. 191). She has, as Hinz and Teunissen persuasively argue, regained contact with her essential nature as woman, rediscovered the eros principle of her consciousness, long before supplanted by the masculine rule of logos (p. 229). Her childhood painting of mother and child becomes her "mother's gift," her "guide" (p.158), to a matriarchal perception that "everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive" (p. 159). At the novel's close, the narrator utilizes the resources of her maternal power to reject her passive innocence and to resolve that her "lost child . . . must be born, allowed" (p. 191). Deciding "to prefer life," she commits herself not to any nationalistic or feminist ideology but instead to a deeper, psychological form of "worship" (p. 140). The primitivism in Atwood creates religious ecstasy, an older form of worship and self-knowledge.

Atwood herself, in the interview with Sandler, rejects "party loyalties": "What's important to me is how human beings ought to live and behave. . . . If people end up behaving in anti-human ways, their ideology will not redeem them" (p. 26). When at the end of the novel the narrator asserts that "the pervasive menace, the Americans . . . can be watched and predicted and stopped without being copied" (p. 189), she is acknowledging that in the past she

"copied" the American way not only when she became a "killer," but also when she accepted her own victimized position as a woman and as a citizen. The statement summarizes the national, feminine and literary aspects of Atwood's novel. If Canadians are to develop their own humanity, they must cease copying the American drive for prosperity at the expense of nature, just as women must cease accepting male dominance of their psyches; but more profoundly, Canadians must "give up the old belief that [they are] powerless," must "refuse to be a victim" and accept responsibility for their development.

In interview with Gibson, Atwood has spoken of the necessity of learning the craft of fiction from any writer of any nation, yet she stresses as well the need for Canadian writers to explore the "social mythology" of Canada (p. 28). With The Edible Woman, Atwood diverged from the British literary model as Canada had from the political, but she also mirrored the infiltration of American consumerism into the Canadian system. With Surfacing Atwood "copies" to some extent an American literary form to search Canadian mythology and conceives an alternative to the American ethos.

Endnotes

- 1 Margaret Atwood, The Edible Woman (Toronto, 1969), pp. 172-73.
- 2 Graeme Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists, p. 22.
- 3 Atwood, "Canadian Monsters: Some Aspects of the Supernatural in Canadian Fiction," in The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture, ed. David Staines (Cambridge, 1977), p. 98.
- 4 Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Nationalism, Feminism, & Canadian Intellectual History," 16.
- 5 George Woodcock, "Margaret Atwood: Poet as Novelist," in his The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century (Toronto, 1975), p. 320.
- 6 Linda Sandler, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," The Malahat Review, 41 (January 1977), 24.
- 7 Valerie Miner, "The Many Facets of Margaret Atwood," Chatelaine, June 1975, p. 33.
- 8 Atwood, "Travels Back," Maclean's, January 1973, pp. 28, 31.
- 9 Atwood, "The Curse of Eve--Or, What I Learned in School," in Women on Women, ed. Ann B. Shteir (Toronto, 1978), p. 14.
- 10 Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, pp. 302-03.
- 11 John Lauber, "Alice in Consumer-Land: The Self-Discovery of Marian MacAlpine [sic]," in Here and Now,

ed. Moss, p. 24.

12 Donald Creighton, The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957, pp. 292, 284.

13 B. S. Keirstead, Canada in World Affairs, September, 1951 to October, 1953 (Toronto, 1956), p. 220.

14 Hugh G. J. Aitken, American Capital and Canadian Resources (Cambridge, 1961), p. 189.

15 John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel (Toronto, 1977), p. 142.

16 M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries (New York, 1976), p. 67.

17 Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English, Canada since 1945, p. 253.

18 George Grant, Lament for a Nation (Toronto, 1965), pp. 4-5.

19 Margaret Kaminski, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," Waves 4 (Autumn 1975), 9.

20 Sherrill Grace, Violent Duality (Montreal, 1980), p. 94.

21 Atwood, Survival (Toronto, 1972), p. 209.

22 Atwood, Surfacing (Don Mills, 1973), p. 30.

23 Catherine McLay, "The Divided Self: Theme and Pattern in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," in Here and Now, ed. Moss, p. 39.

24 Rosemary Sullivan, "Surfacing and Deliverance," Canadian Literature, 67 (Winter 1976), 10.

²⁵ Charles Hanly, "A Psychoanalysis of Nationalist Sentiment," in Nationalism in Canada, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto, 1966), p. 305.

²⁶ Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, "Surfacing: Margaret Atwood's 'Nymph Complaining,'" Contemporary Literature 20, No. 2 (1979), 236..

²⁷ Peter Stursberg, Lester Pearson and the American Dilemma (Toronto, 1980), p. 224.

²⁸ William Cobban, "Dealing out death discreetly: the traffic in Canadian arms," Saturday Night, 86 (November 1971), 23.

²⁹ Evelyn J. Hinz, "The Masculine/Feminine Psychology of American/Canadian Primitivism: Deliverance and Surfacing," in Other Voices/Other Views: a Collection of Essays from the Bi-centennial, ed. Robin W. Winks (New York, 1978), pp. 75-96.

³⁰ Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston, 1973), p. 34.

Chapter Six

"Still fighting the same bloody battles as always":

The Diviners and Lady Oracle

In the time present of The Diviners, Morag Gunn is amazed to find herself "an established and older [Canadian] writer."¹ Reflecting on the "large number of writers young enough to be her children," Morag echoes Margaret Laurence's own feelings when she muses that she "reads their work out of fascination, not duty." In an interview with Donald Cameron, Laurence discusses the "exchange" between the generations of writers; she will not "go on writing novels all my life" because "soon I will have said what I have to say for my generation, and in my idiom and about my time."² "Older writer is the right phrase," Morag concludes, "takes some mental adjustment, though. Meditation. Assimilation." Morag, like her creator, belongs to the generation of women writers who can, indeed, "assimilate." The novel ends, as it begins, with a time present made satisfying by the success of Morag's mature "adjustment" to herself, to her role as writer, and to her society.

The "exchange" between the two generations of women writers culminated in the publication of Laurence's The

Diviners in 1974 and Atwood's Lady Oracle in 1976. Certainly the internal evidence of the former suggests Laurence's consciousness of Atwood's novels. The liberated Morag's lifestyle bears a striking resemblance to that of the narrator at the end of Surfacing: Morag is raising an illegitimate child outside the institution of marriage; she maintains a profoundly close yet transient relationship with her lover, the father of the child. Furthermore, both protagonists have experienced a "marriage" dominated by the male who symbolically denies his offspring; Surfacing is the story of a woman who undergoes an abortion and abortion is a recurring topic in The Diviners. Finally, Atwood's critical work, Survival, which came out in 1972, described the imprisonment of women by the conventions of society with reference to the fable of Rapunzel and her Tower; Laurence echoes this analysis in the "Memorybank Movie" specifically entitled "The Tower," wherein Morag feels stultified by her marriage and consciously recites the Prince's call to Rapunzel.

The Diviners shows not only Laurence's awareness of Surfacing and Survival but also her development beyond the premises of these works and, indeed, her own earlier novels. The Edible Woman and The Fire-Dwellers are, like Surfacing, open-ended in that the plot of each concludes with a woman wiser for her experiences and prepared to face life with a different perspective; these works analyze

problems and offer only brief and tentative alternatives. But Morag has moved beyond the promise which concludes these earlier novels and, in the time present of The Diviners, leads an independent existence, as she has for nearly twenty years; the focus of the flashbacks is her growth toward that liberation. The Diviners, therefore, addresses and answers the question of what form liberation will take in our contemporary society. Morag is the first fully-liberated woman in this series of novels under study.

Laurence characterizes this protagonist as strong-willed, independent and artistic. The portrait painted by Morag's Scottish lover emphasizes "her eyes, clearly and unmistakably the eyes of Morag, angry and frightened, frighteningly strong" (p. 310). This picture is created just after Morag has insisted that she is "not on call" to him, that their meetings must suit her convenience as well as his so that she can have the time she needs in order to write (p. 307). Throughout the novel, Morag insists that people not "tell me what to do . . . it's the one thing I can't stand" (p. 280). It is fitting that she receives the Currie plaid-pin in the penultimate section of the novel; since her ancestral clan had no "crest or coat-of-arms," Morag adopts those of the Currie ancestors whose battle-cry is "Gainsay Who Dare" (p. 353). She is liberated because, except during her temporary marriage, she "dares" refuse everyone who

attempts to "gainsay" her independence.

This allusion to The Stone Angel demands comparison of Morag and Hagar. Both are strong-willed women but, unlike Hagar, Morag strives to maintain her essential femaleness, her sense of relatedness to those near and dear to her. There are many scenes in the time present wherein Morag's writing is interrupted by visits from her daughter and neighbors. Despite her frustration that such intrusions have become "the pattern of life," Morag affirms that "the only thing that could be said for it was that if no one ever entered that door, the situation would be infinitely worse" (p. 286). Her commitment to the paramount value of relatedness allows her to accept interruptions of her own free will; if her work suffers, her independence does not. She reveals her concern for relatedness in a telephone conversation with Ella, her poet-friend from university days: "So, did I pass that [over-riding urge for independence] on? I mean--what if [Pique] can't have any kind of lasting relationship?" (p. 173). Ella responds: "if you would kindly examine your own life, you would see that quite a few people have been lasting in it." Indeed Morag does work at her relationships with Pique and her neighbors while she also maintains contact with Ella, her Scottish lover and Jules, the father of her child.

The tension between independence and relatedness indicates not only that Laurence moves beyond Atwood but

also that she is developing the theme of Ethel Wilson's novels. Laurence mentions in her reflective essay, "Ten Years' Sentences," that Wilson wrote her a complimentary letter after reading one of her early short stories and that they maintained a life-long friendship.³ This friendship certainly influenced the younger writer's work. For example, the heroine of Swamp Angel, Maggie Vardoe, leaves her dominating husband and strives for an independent lifestyle in a wilderness setting, much as does Morag. Swamp Angel demonstrates that a woman can act out of her masculine strength and sense of independence while also working at necessary relationships. This novel, however, focusses only on the difficulties of Maggie's first year and her future is only vaguely, if optimistically, imagined. And Maggie's resolve to remain in relationship with her employer's family and the young Chinese boy who joins their business does not involve the close, complex commitments of lover or children. Also, Hetty Dorval's major problem is her unwillingness to have her life "complicated" by any relationships; if Wilson's final perspective on Hetty's story is that, despite the latter's refusal, life will indeed be complex, Laurence concludes with Morag's acceptance of and involvement in life's vital complexity. The Diviners thus addresses the challenges to a woman's liberation posed by both the older and the younger generations of women writers.

Atwood concludes her 1974 profile of Laurence, "Face to Face," with a lengthy review of The Diviners, pointing out that "Morag's discoveries and decisions are paralleled to a certain extent by Margaret Laurence's own, although Laurence made them first."⁴ Despite Laurence's protests against the autobiographical approach to her fiction, she has admitted that "in this novel I came closer to portraying myself than in any other"; the story of Morag is her "spiritual autobiography."⁵ The bulk of the novel, made up of the "Memorybank Movies," records the process of Morag's colonization and her eventual liberation from that position. As noted in the earlier chapter on Laurence, the political implications of that process have not been overlooked by Laurence or her critics. Besides her statement on "The Novelist as Socio-political Being," Laurence explains that her experiences in Africa, recorded in Prophet's Camel Bell, taught her about colonialism, most particularly her own. Jane Leney has analyzed "Laurence's African Fiction" and intriguingly concludes that This Side Jordan can be viewed as an early study of colonizer and colonized of which The Diviners is a more mature and complex exploration.⁶

Laurence herself, in The Prophet's Camel Bell, cites Mannoni's psychological study, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychological Study of Colonialism, which taught her to understand colonizers as people who have "fled because they

cannot escape men as they are."⁷ The presentation of Morag's marriage with Brooke Skelton most clearly demonstrates Mannoni's theory; however, Morag's colonized position lends to Mannoni's definition of colonizer a sexual dimension he no doubt did not intend, but which Laurence most definitely does. Brooke himself is a colonial exiled from India, the place of his birth, and he attempts to recreate another colonial situation with Morag in order to protect himself, as he says, from "the world of Others"; Brooke explains to her that he "learned . . . to keep a firm control over things so that the external forces would batter at the gates as little as possible" (p. 187). The dates of their marriage and separation correspond to the dates of Indian independence and the Suez crisis, as Ken Hughes notes in his political reading of the novel; from this perspective, Brooke becomes an "unrepentant imperialist . . . the last phase of the British Canadian connection within the framework of the imperial ideal." In Morag, whom Hughes exhorts us to see "as the embodiment of Canada," we are to witness "the de-colonization of a psyche."⁸

Morag becomes aware of her colonized position in this marriage by the growing detachment between her interior self and her exterior image. Patriarchal social domination is manifested in the clothes she wears, "clothes that Brooke will like on her," and her own colonized mentality

is proven when she has her hair permed the way "Brooke likes," conceding that "it does look more feminine" (p. 180). The extent to which he restricts her world is reflected in the conventional clothes he prefers; both her "tailored suits . . . with pastel blouses, sometimes frilled" and the "little black cocktail dress" suggest that Morag has assumed what Susan Brownmiller has termed the "artificial esthetic" of femininity.⁹ Brooke limits her even further when he steadfastly refuses to have children and talks Morag out of the idea of part-time work, arguing, quite ironically, that at twenty-four she is "still very young for that kind of limited life" (p. 181). He asserts his domination verbally, declaring, "You're mine. My woman. I'll protect you always" and further humiliates her by continually addressing her as "child" and asking, before entering her, "Have you been a good girl, love?" (pp. 182, 200). Such diminutive terms of affection reflect his patronizing attitude to his "little woman."

Morag begins to rebel against this colonization with what seems at first to be motiveless violence, throwing, for example, "a Benares brass ashtray through the kitchen window" (p. 180), perhaps unconscious that the artifact evokes the Indian struggle for independence. She comes to the self-knowledge she needs before she can rebel only after she returns to Manawaka, for the first time since her marriage, in order to attend her foster-mother's funeral.

There she is confronted by the past she had denied when she met Brooke: "that was wrong, the turning away, turning her back on . . . them" (pp. 202-03). When she meets Christie, attention is drawn to her "smart" appearance; she reacts by hating "this external self who is at such variance with whatever or whoever remains inside the glossy painted shell" (p. 203). The christian name of Prin, whose funeral is a catalyst for Morag's self-understanding, is "Princess." And the title of this, the largest section of the novel, comes from a line of "the hymn Prin used to like the best" (p. 207), "Halls of Sion." The hymn, in referring to "those halls of Sion" which are peaceful and harmonious because "the Prince is ever in them," causes Morag to realize that she had "expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke," that he would be the rescuing Prince of the Rapunzel fairy-tale; indeed, she had seen Brooke as "a prince among men" (p. 153) and had responded with "gratitude and care" the first time he called her his woman (p. 162). In an allusion to Atwood's analysis of the Rapunzel motif, Morag recognizes that her colonized position is of her own design, that she had wanted the protection of a man who could gain her entrance into a higher social class than that of her family in which there was no prince, only "Prin," the fat, common, yet loving woman who brought peace to the world of Morag's childhood.

As with Atwood's novels, one cannot read the colonizer

as the only evil one; women, as well as nations, take some part in the creation of their own identities and must accept part of the responsibility--the relations between colonized and colonizer are complex and not easily unravelled. Marian in The Edible Woman sees the male as the hunter and the woman as his victim, but Atwood implies the psychological and social roots of Marian's rationalization. Likewise, the narrator of Surfacing discovers that her hatred of males and Americans delayed her recognition of her own violence. But even when female characters such as Stacey in The Fire-Dwellers understand their own limitations, they still have to deal with oppressive external forces. So too, Morag, who had accepted marital subservience, struggles first to assert her own identity while remaining on amicable terms with her partner; only after he proves determined to maintain his dominance does she realize that compromise is no longer possible, that remaining in the marriage is, for her, conscious self-destruction.

Canada has developed her identity throughout history within the imperial framework, as reflected in the novels of the nineteenth-century writers and in Duncan's Imperialist and McClung's Purple Springs. Even Wilson's post-World War II novels implied the need of maintaining the British heritage as a safe-guard against the encroachment of American materialism. And Laurence clearly

establishes the national parallels of Morag's marriage. Hughes, who correctly points out these similarities, nevertheless, like so many Marxist interpreters of literature, tends to simplify, to make sweeping generalizations about complex historical movements. For instance, after noting that the end of Morag's marriage "coincides exactly with Suez (1956)," he goes on to claim that after Suez "even the most diehard imperialist could have no further illusions about the eternality of the British empire," without taking his analysis any further (p. 43).

Although there was a definite cultural and political shift away from things British after the war and during the 1950s and 1960s, these historic changes were not embraced by all Canadians, nor in fact by even a majority. Desmond Morton argues that at the time of the Suez crisis "opinion polls . . . showed a small majority of support for Britain" and goes on to suggest that "these were the same Canadians who had grumbled as St. Laurent created a distinct Canadian citizenship, abolished appeals to the Privy Council in London, and firmly if discreetly removed crowns, Union Jacks, and other historic symbolism from the public scene." [Contrary to Hughes, Morton concludes that "the Suez affair gave British sympathizers a focus for their discontent."¹⁰ In 1958, moreover, Canadians voted Diefenbaker the largest majority in Canadian political

history in response to his appeal to Canadian nationalism, his vision of developing a nation of the North, yet he was also a staunch monarchist and defender of the British heritage. Canada's imperial connection remained strong well into the mid-1960s and, indeed, does so to this day. The Diviners reflects the paradox of nationalism and colonialism, for in 1960 Morag moves to England, partly with the intent of seeing the homeland of her Scottish ancestors, but primarily because she believes it is the literary center of the world. She may have broken the outward bonds of colonization with Brooke, as Canada did with its "badges of colonialism," but she is still in search of a home she assumes will be British.

Morag's first steps on the road to an independent existence are chronicled in a separate section of the novel, appropriately entitled "Rites of Passage," and spanning the years from 1957 to 1967. During this decade Canada, under Diefenbaker and then Pearson, was moving much more rapidly along its nationalistic course, but as Morton notes, the roots of divisiveness were well planted, threatening to grow beyond control. The 1951 census indicated that one third of Canadians were living below the poverty line, and the majority of these were native people and Metis (p. 216). Diefenbaker lost his mandate in 1963 in part because he could not communicate with, or trust, many of the Quebec MPs in his caucus; the regional split in

voting in 1963--the West voting Conservative and the East, especially Quebec, voting Liberal--brought "Canadians . . . face to face with their history" (p. 233). Pearson's Liberals struggled to build a new nationalism, claiming that they represented Canadian unity in diversity; in 1964 Pearson established the Royal Commission on Bi-lingualism and Bi-culturalism. But the national euphoria of Expo year was undermined by Charles de Gaulle's use, in Quebec, of the slogan of Quebec independence, after which René Lévesque formed the Mouvement souveraineté-association. On the national scene one finds a country trying to come into her own, to accommodate the disparate elements of her history; in the novel, a woman tries to discover "the sound of [her] own voice" (p. 210), to come to terms with her own personal past.

Laurence finds an analogue for Morag's search in the plight of the Indian, more particularly in the offspring of French and Indian, the Métis such as Jules "Skinner" Tonnerre. Leslie Monkman, in a thematic study of "the Tonnerre Family" in the Manawaka series, concisely points out that the Tonnerres are "established in The Stone Angel as 'French half-breeds' opposing the values of white civilization associated with Hagar Shipley." In contrast to Hagar who is defined by her pride of class, Morag's "understanding of herself and her world . . . is directly linked to her relationship with Jules."¹¹ From childhood

Morag shares an unspoken affinity with this racial outcast from Manawaka society; she finds in his oppression a mirror of her own alienation as the unkempt ward of the town scavenger. Her chance meeting with Jules in Toronto precipitates her break with Brooke, just as in The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey's accidental meeting with his sister, Valentine, helps to put her troubles into perspective. Morag "knows . . . that she does not want to stay with Brooke" even before meeting Jules, but when Brooke arrives home and is outraged to find an Indian sitting in his kitchen, drinking his scotch with his wife, Morag "walks out" (p. 220). Her rebellion against Brooke's imperial standards begins.

This use of the Métis to parallel the position of Canadian women is another conceptual advance Laurence makes beyond Atwood who, in Surfacing, uses Indian religious iconography as only a minor motif. The Indian comes to The Diviners, of course, already laden with well-known political significance. Laurence reinforces the reader's historical knowledge by recalling that the Métis were once the "prairie horselords" (p. 334), by contrasting the Scots' and Métis' versions of the Battle of Batoche and by connecting her fictional characters with individuals from prairie history--Jules' grandfather fought with Riel. As Clara Thomas points out in her study of Laurence's use of mythic tales as a structural device in The Diviners, when

Morag first meets Jules in the Nuisance Grounds, she recognizes that "he, too, has a tradition behind him [which] includes two hero-ancestors from long ago."¹² For both Jules and Morag, maturity comes with the understanding and acceptance of their mutual ancestral heritages.

While many prairie writers use Métis in their fictions, Laurence does so not only to reinforce the theme of sexual oppression but also to draw attention to the plight of contemporary Indians. In the 1970s, the Canadian Federation of Native Peoples was actively pressuring Ottawa to settle Indian land claims and to change the system of welfare administered by the Department of Indian Affairs. Led by Harold Cardinal, president of the Alberta Indian Brotherhood, Canadian Indians in 1969 rejected the government's proposed new Indian policy presented to Parliament in the so-called "red-paper" in June of that year. Cardinal himself answered this paper with the publication of his polemic, The Unjust Society, the title of which parodies Trudeau's 1968 election slogan, "the Just Society."¹³

Finally, when Jules draws Morag's attention to his French ancestry, his characterization brings into the novel the nationalist aspirations of Quebec which exploded in the October Crisis of 1970 and were made politically viable first by the formation of the Parti Québécois under René Lévesque earlier in that year and then by the party's

steady climb in popular votes during the early 1970s, and finally by the election of a Parti Quebecois government in November of 1976. In her choice of a Métis as soul-mate for Morag, Laurence places her protagonist thematically in the context of numerous oppressed minorities and specific contemporary Canadian racial and cultural tensions.

Published as it is in 1974, the novel also places Morag's liberation in the context of the Women's Liberation Movement. Morag's desperate attempts to satisfy her sexual and emotional needs while resisting the conventional woman's love-making strategies demonstrate Laurence's quarrel with such superficial advice on attracting men as Helen Gurly Brown advances in Sex and the Single Woman. A humorous passage relates Morag's machinations to catch a man, during which "she dislikes and feels alienated from herself with a lot of makeup on" (p. 261), much as she did as a college girl in Winnipeg. Morag's search for a sexual relationship which allows her independence leads her, after divorce, to sterile, virtually anonymous one-night stands. After sex, Harold, one such man of the evening, repeats the line Luke asked Stacey in The Fire-Dwellers: "You wanted that for a long time, didn't you" (p. 263). Unlike Stacey, Morag does not answer; she is annoyed by "the arrogance in his voice" and hurt by "the casualness of this association." (p. 263). A sexual affair cannot help Morag as it did Stacey. In fact, after violent sex with an

acquaintance of her landlady, Morag decides "never again to have sex with a man whose child I couldn't bear to bear" (p. 270). Morag feels that it is "damned unfair" to have to limit her sexual fulfillment but this choice is, as Laurence emphasizes by using military and political diction, a psychological breakthrough; Morag "feels as though she has fought the Crimean War"--a notably imperialist war--"single-handed, and won" (p. 270). The "de-colonization of [her] psyche" is underscored when Brooke appears briefly with his new wife who fits the socially-accepted image Morag has rejected. No sex is better than sex without love, but such freedom, which precludes relationships, is a pyrrhic victory indeed.

The solution to Morag's impasse lies in a newly-defined marriage of equals. Immediately after this last scene with Brooke, Laurence introduces his successor: Jules visits Morag and love between them is good, "both equal to each other's body in this urgent meeting and grappling." In reversing the traditional "missionary" position, Morag "mounts him" and "knows he has reached whatever core of being she has." Their love confirms her chosen path; she meets him as an equal, insisting on her independence: "Listen, Jules, just don't tell me what to do, eh? It's the one thing I can't stand" (p. 280). It is not an easy course Laurence has chosen for her heroine, but she depicts the triumphs as well as the frustrations to be expected of

a woman who elects to reject socially-prescribed relationships, while yet striving to "reach out her arms and hold people" (p. 150).

Morag fulfils her feminine need for relatedness not only in loving Jules, but also in bearing their child, Pique. In contrast, Hagar Shipley went to Vancouver with her child when she left her husband, but then remained just as locked in her oppressed state as before. Laurence could, of course, have made life easier for Morag simply by not introducing the child into her life; Morag need not have become pregnant, even though 1957 was years before fool-proof oral contraceptives. But Laurence, in creating Pique, is taking issue with the more extremist members of the Women's Liberation movement who, she conveys to Atwood in "Face to Face," "state as a general principle that women should not have children" (p. 43). In the same interview, Laurence insists upon the necessity of maintaining communication with "our husbands, our sons, our lovers," and of satisfying the very "normal human desire" to have children. Morag's struggle for self-actualization differs from Germaine Greer's revolutionary call in 1970 for women to end the patriarchal capitalist system by refusing marriage and motherhood: "a woman . . . might reflect that the average family has not proved to be a very good breeding ground for children, and seeing as the world is in no urgent need of her increase she might do better, for

contraception is very possible, to wait until some suitable kind of household presents itself."¹⁴ Laurence, through Morag, aligns herself with the older, turn-of-the-century feminists such as Nellie McClung, who centered women's rights on the nurturing role of woman as epitomized in motherhood. Morag's decision to have a child answers an unspoken need which Brooke had refused to satisfy; while living with Jules she decides not to "do anything to try not to" become pregnant (p. 228). Jules has "known [her] forever" (p. 220), and the child is a link with the past she has so long denied.

Morag's decision to have a child of her own is not unrelated to her struggle to produce a literature of her own. Laurence explores the common assumption that the roles of mother and author are mutually exclusive by deliberately parodying earlier literary models of struggling artists. The pregnant Morag finds herself in Vancouver in a rooming-house which she calls "Bleak House"; the reference not only emphasizes that Morag's literary instruction, most notably under Brooke's tutelage, was in British literature, but also contrasts her care of Pique to Dickens' notorious difficulties with his large family.¹⁵ Moreover, the landlady gives Morag an attic room in exchange for "cleaning, cooking, doing the dishes" (p. 241) and the section is entitled "Portrait of the Artist as a Pregnant Skivvy," parodying Joyce's definitive

non serviam of the male artist who feels he must exile himself from family, country and religion in order to create. Morag recalls that Virginia Woolf "once said [a woman] . . . must have a room of her own," while considering, ruefully, that she herself "feels too tired and lousy most evenings to do any writing at all" (p. 242). This reference to Woolf recalls that artist's struggle for artistic recognition in a field dominated by men, and the emotional traumas brought on, in part, by her decision not to have a child.¹⁶ Morag's self-irony, while demonstrating her strength and awareness, also serves to remind the reader that the female writer's struggle must be differentiated from that of the male--Laurence shows Morag's youthful desire to discuss with Donne and Milton their anti-feminist opinions as a fanciful and yet valid step in her maturation as a writer. The key difference is explained when Morag ponders the American novel by Thomas Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again and wonders whether for her "it may be the reverse which is true. You have to go home again, in some way or other" (p. 248). Although at this stage of her development "this concept cannot yet be looked at," Morag's sense that "if she is to have a home, she must create it" (p. 240) differentiates her struggle from those of her literary models. The masculine criteria for art emphasizes the need for distance from experience; Morag strives to create while maintaining relations, while

finding "home."

When she moves to England in 1960, Morag does so primarily because she sees "London as a kind of centre of writing" (p. 271). After three years in London, she abandons that "fantasy--Morag getting to know dozens of other writers, with whom she would have everything in common. In fact, only a few of her friends are writers, and she has discovered that publishers' parties in London are no more appealing to her and no less parochial than they were in Canada" (p. 294). She knows now that when she returns to Canada, "she won't ever again feel that she must be missing out on a lot in these ways." Like Hagar, Morag had been raised on stories of her Scottish forebearers, but she discovers that Sutherland is not "the land of my ancestors"; that place is "Christie's real country. Where I was born" (p. 319). The entire "memorybank movie" of her stay in England is prefaced by Morag's commentary that "her quest for islands had ended some time ago, and her need to make pilgrimages had led her back" to Canada (p. 293). Her personal and literary discoveries correspond to the awakened nationalism in Canada, for Morag returns "back home" to Canada in 1967, centennial year, to acknowledge the Manawaka scavenger, Christie, as her father.

As she attempts to produce literature "different" from that of the dominant British and American models, Morag's writing, along with her relationships with men, is

decolonized. When Brooke reads the manuscript of her first novel, he questions whether "the main character . . . expresses anything which we haven't known before"; Morag responds internally: "No. She doesn't. But she says it. That is what is different" (p. 202). Her next novel, Prospero's Child, is a contemporary remodelling of Shakespeare's play set vaguely and distantly on "some island in some ocean very far south" (p. 270) and dealing with the political theme of colonization in terms of a marriage. In her protagonist's need to "reject nearly everything" about the husband she "worships" "in order to become her own person," Morag seems in the content and form of her fiction to be exploring and even exorcising her experience with Brooke. When she describes her novel Jonah, written in England, Morag not only, and for the first time, sets her fiction in Canada; she also uses Christie as the model for her title character. Her fiction returns home even before she does.

Morag's literary career mirrors both Laurence's own and also the development of art in Canada over the same time-period. As noted in the conclusion to Chapter Three, the Canadian artistic community in the 1950s, including the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the National Ballet Company, not only performed British material but also used British expertise in the establishment and operation of these institutions. However, over the decade it provided

employment and training for Canadian actors and technicians; consequently, with governmental financial patronage working through the Canada Council, Canadian theaters appeared throughout the sixties in all regions of the country, and Canadian playwrights began to write and to see their plays performed. John Ripley notes in The Literary History of Canada, that "within a dozen years [1960-72] a coast-to-coast chain of twenty-three Anglophone and Francophone companies would offer a total of 6,489 performances in a single season (1971-2), and that 3,112 of these would feature Canadian plays"¹⁷.

When Laurence published The Stone Angel in 1964, the novel was seen as a pioneering venture, but both Bissell and New claim in retrospect that she was "the major novelist of the sixties," the best of many.¹⁸ Likewise, Morag finds, in the seventies, in Canada, the literary community she had sought in London during the early sixties. A glance at the number of writers in the early seventies in Canada reveals the ethnic variety of the literary material being published in Canada. As Waterston rightly remarks, "Canada has continuously absorbed writers from a very wide range of countries. . . . Wherever they come from, these writers will be the literary ancestors of future generations of Canadian writers. With them, Canada moves into the new world--the global village of the 1970's."¹⁹ One of the ways in which Canadian society

changed the most during the 1960s and early '70s resulted from the increased contact Canadians experienced with foreign cultures as more travelled to Europe and the Southern hemisphere. Also, the change, in 1965, in immigration policy brought larger numbers as well as peoples of different nationalities to Canada. "Between 1965 and 1973," report Bothwell, Drummond and English, "average immigration was well over 150,000," in contrast to "the five years prior to the 1965 White Paper [when it] averaged less than 100,000."²⁰ As well, Canada "reached out her arms" in the October 1970 recognition of China. In a variety of ways, then, these years exposed Morag and Canadians to other people.

Atwood comments in "Face to Face" that The Diviners is "at once the most 'international' of Laurence's books and the most national. 'They are not,' says Laurence, 'mutually exclusive'" (p. 39). Certainly Morag is the only Manawaka heroine who travels extensively, both within and outside Canada, and who interacts with the greatest range of cultural types. But while the cultural mosaic of Canadian society became more international, the foreign policy of the first Trudeau administration attempted to move Canada to a position more isolationist than that of his predecessors'. Bothwell, Drummond and English conclude that "Trudeau has shunned international commitment and action more strenuously than any Canadian prime minister

since Mackenzie King. . . . Like King, Trudeau believed that his greatest contribution to international affairs would be the maintenance of a united Canada" (pp. 372-73). Just as Wilson's novels dramatized the dangers of such isolationist attitudes, so too The Diviners, in its departure from extremist feminist thought and in its advocacy of the necessity of maintaining relationships, counters such self-serving forms of independence. As befits a character whose personal pilgrimage is aligned with the Indian and French political struggles in Canada, Morag manages to establish her own form of sovereignty-association with society. While remaining independent, she interacts with a wide international, generational and ethnic assortment of people. The Diviners seems conscious of Ethel Wilson's identity-in-community theme.

A development of this theme is Morag's exploration of a diversity of lifestyles and opinion. Morag lives in "a log house nearly a century old, built by a great pioneering couple," much like the home of her long-dead parents; but with humor and a sense of irony, Morag lives there on her own terms, in a garden of wildflowers and unmowed grass. Very much a new woman of the 1970s, she exorcises the ghost of the Old Woman in the New World who figures in her imagination as the nineteenth-century pioneer and writer, Catharine Parr Traill: "I'm not going to stop feeling

guilty that I'll never be as hardworking or knowledgeable or all-round terrific as you were. . . . I'm not built like you, Saint C." (p. 332). Angelika Maeser rightly points out that "Morag rejects the model of domestic industriousness and the guilt-producing effect of secularized off-shoots of that image; instead, she cultivates 'a wise passiveness' to balance inner functions of intuition and activity."²¹ Morag has developed "the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction" which long ago Christie had established as worthy values in his tales of Piper Gunn's wife, "Morag" (p. 42). Living in the century-farmhouse, adopting the Currie ancestors, aligning herself with the Métis heritage, she bears witness to Laurence's statement to Cameron that beyond one's grandparents, "the ancestors are everybody's ancestors" (p. 113). "I stand somewhere in between" the nineteenth-century pioneers and the young generation of Canadian youth, muses Morag (p. 332). Her divining has clarified the process of "meditation" and "assimilation" (p. 343) necessary for her well-being and that of the Canadian global community in the 1970s.

"Look ahead into the past, and back into the future" (p. 370). These final words stand as a thematic and structural epigraph for The Diviners; they specify the primary thrust of Morag's pilgrimage and explain why so much of the novel deals with the past. The process of

Morag's liberation has necessitated coming to terms with her ancestors, a process Laurence deems necessary for everyone. But the time present of the novel is not quite as successful, except for Morag's inner monologues in which she is "still fighting the same bloody battles as always, inside the skull" (p. 239). Her struggles with her lifestyle continue and her roles as mother to an eighteen-year-old daughter and as a writer are the focus of the time present, as they were in the past. Having accepted that she has "worked out my major dilemmas as much as I'm likely to do in this life" (pp. 238-39), Morag struggles to "let go" of unresolvable emotions and her daughter (p. 358).

Laurence's treatment of Pique, as she enters the adult world, is far from confident. But while Pique's voice is not fully realized, her symbolic function as "harbinger of [Morag's] death, continuer of life" (p. 239) is clear. Pique, the product of the joining of the three ethnic groups--Scots, French and Indian--is central to the novel as well as to Canadian history. She is the inheritor, but resolution of the disparate parts is left for her, as well as for Canada's, future. The offspring of a liberated woman, she experiences independence of movement and freedom to love whomever she pleases; at the same time, she searches for her own way, struggling against exploitation by her lovers, trying to come to terms with her unique

heritage. Pique's problems are Canada's problems in the seventies, as Indian land claims proceed to the Supreme Court of Canada and French Canada elects a provincial government dedicated to the principle of separation. Canadians at large are as unsure as Laurence of the future character of their country.

The characterization would have seemed forced had Laurence not individualized Pique by endowing her with her father's gift of song. As Jules, who "never managed to do [a song] for myself" (p. 350), was able, after ten years, to "get a song about Lazarus," his father (p. 348), by the novel's end Pique has written her first song about "the valley [that] holds my name . . . [where] my fathers . . . lived . . . long ago" (p. 360). Her quest, Morag notes, "might feel to her unique, [but] was not unique" (p. 360), implying that, like Morag and Jules, Pique will someday discover her ancestors, write a song about her father and thus become, herself, a more clearly-defined woman. But Pique's voice, for Laurence's reader, is never clearly heard.

Laurence and Morag have certainly discovered their respective voices; the reader suspects that as Morag goes "to write the remaining private and fictional words, and to set down her title" (p. 370), the book she is writing is The Diviners. Just as the novel is a resolution of the themes of Laurence's earlier Manawaka novels, so too the

style of The Diviners is both a combination of and a development beyond her previous works. It continues the experimental style of The Fire-Dwellers, slipping easily from third-person narration to interior monologue, but adding the film techniques of Memorybank Movies and Innerfilms to recall past events. These flashbacks, which make up the bulk of the novel, are arranged in chronological order, as the memories of Hagar were in The Stone Angel. The Diviners is the assimilation of Laurence's own literary past.

Finally, the style of The Diviners is a culmination of qualities reflective of contemporary Canadian society. Laurence mirrors Morag's androgynous character through the eclectic style, for the ordering principle of the flashbacks allows for the masculine artistic principle of distance from material, while the interior monologues and innerfilms convey the immediacy of experience typical of the feminine. Furthermore, Morag's humor and self-irony convey her maturity, and in a subtle way Laurence suggests that both women and Canada have come of age in the 1970s, for Morag now has the security to laugh at herself, whereas when she struggled to find her creative voice while married to Brooke she could not "bear not to be taken seriously" (p. 211). Moreover, the influence of film, the modern medium of the electronic age, is quite fitting for an "international" novel. Characterization, theme and

technique fuse in The Diviners to reflect both continuity and openness, characteristics felt necessary, despite Trudeau, by Canadians in the 1970s.

* * * * *

Margaret Atwood continues her literary dialogue with Laurence through her allusions, in Lady Oracle (1976), to The Diviners. Joan Foster, like Morag, moves to London in the early 1960s, but whereas Morag is a published writer of serious fiction, Joan learns to write Costume Gothics. When her book of poetry is well received by both critics and readers, however, Morag is echoed in Joan's admission that "it was much better than not being taken seriously."²²

☐ Like Morag also, Joan's chief personality crisis concerns her growing awareness of the disparity between her outward appearance and her inner sense of identity; she hides her past from her lovers and her husband, as Morag hid her past from Brooke. Lady Oracle, too, has an international setting: Toronto, London and Terremoto (Italy). And Joan has affairs with men from several different backgrounds but, rather than learning from, and assimilating her experiences of them, as does Morag, Joan tries to escape the tangled web of her relationships. When she travels to Italy, she discovers to her consternation that "all the time my own country was embedded in my brain" (p. 310); Morag, on the other hand, accepts with serenity that "the

town where I grew up . . . was inside my head, for as long as I live" (p. 290). While Joan shares Morag's sense of humor and self-irony, she does not develop Morag's "wise passiveness"; instead, her "whole life was a tangent" (p. 311). In many respects, it would seem, Atwood has deliberately characterized her heroine as a failed version of Laurence's.

Most critics agree that the novel's central theme is the resolution of multiple personalities. Joan Foster learns, in the end, to acknowledge the various personalities she has always kept separate and also to see the dual or multiple personalities in others, particularly the men in her life. Perhaps her preoccupation with multiplicity accounts for the diversity of styles in the work. Clara Thomas observes that the novel was not "what readers and critics expected from Margaret Atwood . . . nor of a major Canadian novel at this time. . . . Lady Oracle has not been compatible with our contemporary mood of urgent and self-conscious literary nationalism."²³ Northrop Frye, however, in his conclusion to The Literary History of Canada, looks beyond such concern with his hope "for a writer . . . who will see a structure of comedy . . . in the Canadian story."²⁴ Despite the dismayed reactions of literary nationalists, this comic novel does contribute to the subject of national and feminine identity quests through the protagonist's search for integration in her

sense of self and also in her style of writing.

The key to this connection lies in the brief reference, in the novel, to Canadian Prime Ministers. Twice, within four pages, Joan describes a photograph of the spiritualist Leda Sprott "shaking hands with Mackenzie King" (pp. 203, 207). The picture evokes King's involvement in spiritualism, his devotion to his mother, and his long political hold on the country. The crucial fact about King is that much of his personality--reflected in his interest in spiritualism and women of the night, for instance--was well hidden from the Canadian people while he held public office and has been revealed only recently, upon publication of his diaries. His public image as a solid, competent and trustworthy leader disguised many facets of his personality. As Wilfred Cude notes, "Atwood draws our attention to our respectable Prime Minister with the bizarre secret life [as if to say] 'if you think my characters are whirlybirds . . . what do you think of the ones you can find in your history books?'"²⁵ Atwood explicitly connects her writing style, specifically her characterization, with Canadians', if not Canada's, multiple identities.

The parallels between Atwood's characters and Canadian historical figures do not stop with the references to King. When Joan fakes her suicide in order to escape to Italy, she soon receives, from the friends who helped her, a

telegram consisting of "a single word: BETHUNE. That was the code word for success" (p. 185). Bethune was a Canadian hero, of sorts, a doctor who left his family and a lucrative practice in Montreal to assist in the Spanish Civil War and the Chinese Revolution. Official Canadian reaction to his altruism was one of embarrassment, partly because Bethune's Communist affiliations made it expedient for Canada, during the Cold War, to downplay Bethune's contributions to communist causes, but also because Bethune's unorthodox lifestyle challenged, as Cude notes that King's interest in spiritualism did, "the Canadian self-image of staid conventionality" (p. 152). The leader acts out his inner compulsions in ways distressing to his public.

Joan goes on to describe her friends' message: "if there had been a fiasco, the letter would have said TRUDEAU." This single reference to the current Prime Minister, along with the two brief allusions to King, provides a key with which to interpret the novel's political implications. Sherrill Grace discusses Atwood's treatment of the complexities of identity with reference to the role of Trudeau in her works. Analyzing Atwood's Two-Headed Poems (1978), Grace notices its thematic focus on "the human tendency to polarize experience, to affirm one perspective while denying the other . . . [which] makes choosing to live with duality very difficult."²⁶ In the

title sequence, Grace concludes, "Atwood portrays the contemporary national dilemma, Quebec separatism, in terms of violent duality": "Duality is a fact of our national character. Canadian history has always involved an 'uneasy truce' which now threatens to polarize the country." Trudeau, "'our leader,' reflects this duality with his two voices, heads . . . but he is accepted and trusted by neither group: 'how can you use two languages/and mean what you say in both?'" (p. 133). "What Lady Oracle implies," continues Grace, "is . . . that we are all double, perhaps multiple. This condition becomes immoral or psychologically untenable when the desire to be one is reduced to the need to be 'single-minded, single-hearted, single-bodied' (LO, p. 211). The oracle tells us that she is 'one and three,' a multiplicity with unity. It is learning how to live, practically, with this knowledge that is difficult" (p. 126). The references in Lady Oracle to Trudeau and King, while certainly suggesting that the two prime ministers who have remained longest in power have done so through their ability "to live practically" with their dualities, may also be claiming that the insistence by these men on national unity and public propriety, respectively, was "immoral or psychologically untenable."

Atwood is not the only artist or citizen to notice Trudeau's multiple personality. Linda Griffiths has written a "fantasy of love, politics and the media," Maggie

& Pierre, in which the character of Trudeau comments on his relationship with the Canadian electorate:

As Heraclites said, "You never walk in the same river twice," and that's what being Prime Minister of Canada is like. The only way to stay alive is to avoid their wish to define you. Am I a millionaire who's never worked a day in his life, or a dangerous Communist? Quebecois or a sellout? They'll never find out. I'm even enjoying the process of their disillusionment in me. How perfect it is! The very things they loved of me six years ago, they can't stand in me now. I think what irritates them is the sight of a²⁷ guy having a good time being Prime Minister.

The image of Trudeau as an actor, enjoying the "fluctuations in his performance," is the metaphor Jim Coutts, Trudeau's one-time principal secretary, uses to describe his boss in George Radwanski's biography of Trudeau: "He's the best actor I've ever seen. He's got more moves than Bobby Orr. You know, in the House one day he's baiting the Opposition, the next he's doing the mumbling number so you can hardly hear him, another he's doing the professor and giving a lecture. He does it to keep everybody off balance. The greatest weapon in a prime minister's arsenal is surprise."²⁸ In a more sober assessment of Trudeau's political longevity, Radwanski credits his "remarkable ability to keep presenting himself in new guises. . . . Voters . . . have been given the opportunity in each recent election to 'change leaders' by voting for a new Trudeau" (p. 24).

Radwanski also notes Trudeau's "political . . . luck which has made his changing life-style the very embodiment of the changing times":

In 1968, when the New Morality was all the rage and open sexuality was a new adventure, there was Trudeau the swinging bachelor, dating a dazzling succession of beautiful young women and trading kisses with nubile teen-aged fans. By the early 1970s, the times were settling down, and so was Trudeau; now he was the stable family man, with an adoring young wife and charming little children. And if there has been a social phenomenon which characterizes the closing years of this decade, it has been the erosion of marriage as an institution . . . and there, in 1977, was Trudeau the single father, abandoned by a flighty wife and coping bravely with the demands of his job and three small children.

(pp. 24-25)

Trudeau expresses his multi-faceted personality in his political philosophy as well; Claude Bissell notes, "Trudeau gladly accepted the concept of multicultural mosaic; his insistence that the French language should have equality with English went along with the encouragement of ethnic variety" (p. 5). Trudeau embodied, in his political and his private lives, the complexity and change his voters experienced.

As with the leader, so with the country. George Woodcock, in The Canadians, has concluded that because the "confederation of former colonies . . . [was] a compact of limited unification," regionalism is a geographic and

historical factor in the Canadian nation, necessitating "a presentation of Canada as a country whose very nature is contained in the fact that it has as many faces as a Buddhist deity. An identity can in real life be many-faceted; a unity can find its reality in diversity."²⁹

☐ This optimistic belief in integration, paralleled both by the success of the chameleon Trudeau and by the affirmation of unity and complexity in The Diviners, was typical of the early 1970s.

Mid-way through the decade, however, national unity seemed more difficult to achieve, and Canadians accepted the need for greater governmental controls. Such a mood was foreshadowed when the decade began with the declaration of the War Measures Act, whereby all civil liberties were curtailed. By 1974 the phenomenal rise in interest rates and the correspondingly high wage settlements led Trudeau to reverse his election promise and impose Wage and Price controls for a two-year period. Federal-provincial conferences demonstrated that relations among the regions were so strained that unity was an almost impossible dream; Trudeau threatened to repatriate the constitution unilaterally, if the provinces could not reach an agreement on an amending formula. The threat to the unity of the country climaxed in 1976 with the election of the Parti Québécois, a provincial party devoted to the cause of Quebec separatism. By 1976, the hope for unity in

diversity had given way to the fear of the imminent danger of fragmentation which could be resisted only by enforced centralization.

Atwood portrays the fragmentation of Canadian identity in the mosaic of roles which threaten to tear her heroine apart. Joan grows up in English-speaking Toronto and yet her surname suggests French ancestry; her childhood is influenced, like Atwood's, by American culture; like Morag, she tries to find herself by living in England; her first lover is European; her husband is a Maritimer running from his roots and trying to find an identity in American causes; like Atwood too, Joan becomes a literary cult figure on the Canadian scene. Atwood in Lady Oracle is not just reflecting the trends of Canadian social history but rather is exploring the psychological implications of all these cultural cross-currents which lead, almost inevitably, to split personality. "If I let [my country] get out of control," cries Joan, "it would take over my head" (p. 310), she would lose her self-image to the variety of its images; Joan lacks Morag's ability to integrate multiple identity. Atwood, too, faces the same problem as these fictional authors. During her talk in 1976 at York University, she referred to the images of herself which have been created by the media: "I could tell you about Margaret the Magician, Margaret the Medusa, Margaret the Man-Eater . . . Margaret the powerhungry

Hitler, with her megalomaniac plans to take over the entire field of Canadian Literature."³⁰ And during a speech in 1972 at the Empire Club she humorously explained how she had become "a thing" in Canadian society.³¹ Both in her public statements and in Lady Oracle, Atwood addresses the often contradictory identities required of Canadian public figures.

From the evidence of Chatelaine and Maclean's magazines in 1975 and 1976, Canadians seemed to want colorful "personalities," perhaps to rival the stars of the American film and television industries, perhaps to satisfy the curiosity and need for vicarious glamor for which the British use the Royal Family. A sign of progress is the existence of media personalities, it seems, not depth of understanding. Both magazines in 1975-76 profiled a number of prominent Canadian women such as Margaret Trudeau, Maureen McTeer, Flora Macdonald, Laura Sabia, focussing on the differences between the women's public images and personal identities.³² If the magazines reflect public tastes, then there developed in the mid-1970s a compulsion to discover the "real woman" beneath the media hype; the irony, which betrays another typically Canadian contradiction, is that this search is conducted in articles which are themselves "media hype."

Lady Oracle, which examines a colorful personality--her public masks and the "real woman" beneath these

disguises--is as flamboyant and difficult as its subject. Clara Thomas emphasizes in "The Narrative of a Fool-Heroine" the problem of undertaking critical analysis of this "mixture of comedy, satire and parody" (p. 173); Grace remarks that Atwood "pokes fun at traditions in Canadian writing including her own" (p. 123). For instance, when Joan explains during her first television interview the process of automatic writing which spawned her poetry collection, "Lady Oracle," she parodies Atwood's own comments about the voice of Susanna Moodie inspiring her to compose her poetry collection, The Journals of Susanna Moodie.³³ Also, self-consciously nationalistic literature is spoofed as Joan considers putting the nationalist's "message into a form that people could understand": Terror at Casa Loma, I'd call it, I would get in the evils of the Family Compact, the martyrdom of Louis Riel, the horrors of colonialism, both English and American, the struggle of the workers, the Winnipeg General Strike" (pp. 246-47). Joan's lover, the con-crete poet, the Royal Porcupine, denounces the "beaver . . . as a national symbol. . . . A dull animal and too nineteenth-century; all that industry" (p. 240). Nowhere in the novel does Atwood propose a viable Canadian poetics; instead, she shows, in her style and her comments on Canadian writing, that Canada, colorful and complex as it is, lacks a coherent poetics in much the same way that Joan

lacks a coherent personality.

If the inadequate and ridiculous symbol of the beaver and the outline of "Terror at Casa Loma" connect Canadian art and Canadian history, this novel, which is critical of Canadian art to the point of self-parody, likewise mocks so many Canadian political and social institutions that it frustrates any discovery of a statement of positive alternatives. This is a satire without that genre's traditional moral stance which implies the possibility of a better world. Bilingualism, the cornerstone of Trudeau's political leadership, is spoofed in Joan's reference to her "Weekend Set" of underwear: "I had Friday and Saturday too, all bilingual" (p. 29). The Canadian National Exhibition, the Queen, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, all are objects of Joan's--and Atwood's--ridicule. Nothing in Canadian history or society is valued and no social alternative is proposed.

The range of this novel's humor recalls the sense of inadequacy typical of Canadians in the 1950s and 1960s; Atwood draws attention to this inferiority when Joan, falling in love at first sight with Arthur Foster, comments: "unfortunately he was only a Canadian, like me, but I over-looked this defect" (p. 165). Arthur had been "absorbed . . . for two years" in the "ban-the-bomb movement" in London, "but somehow he was still on the fringes, a leaflet man." "Perhaps," adds Joan, "it was

because he was a Canadian." At the same time, however, that the novel mocks the Canadian need for self-deprecation, its humor demonstrates great vitality and wit, qualities which Atwood's Canadian readers obviously value. The most positive reading of this novel's humor could argue that by 1976 Canadians had become secure enough in their sense of identity as a nation that they could begin to laugh at themselves, at their former inadequacies and unresolved complexities. In this vein, Joan's personality could be seen as spontaneous, creative in a way similar to the broadcaster Barbara Frum as she is portrayed in a 1976 Chatelaine profile which presents Frum's compulsive and hectic manner as the source of her success.³⁴ But such an optimistic reading of the humor and the heroine of Lady Oracle is belied by the pervasively cynical tone of the work.

Unlike Atwood's two previous novels, Lady Oracle makes specific references to dates; if we apply the same approach to the novel as Hughes did to The Diviners, the dates indicate that Joan's life coincides with important phases in Canada's development. Joan says she is seven when she joins the Miss Flegg school of dance in 1949 and later mentions she is thirteen in 1955; to these dates, which establish that she was born in 1942, she later adds that her birthday is in the summer (p. 162) of that year. Her formative years are those of wartime, when her father is

absent for five years, and her birthdate corresponds most notably with the time of the Dieppe raid, in which so many Canadians lost their lives in fighting the Germans. This battle may have demonstrated to the world the strength and courage of Canadian men, but it also, as Wilson's Hetty Dorval suggests, indicated the destructiveness of which Canadians were capable. In this light, then, Cude's psychological assessment in "Bravo Mothball! An Essay on Lady Oracle" that "because [Joan] takes her past to be ugly, she lies constantly to conceal what she cannot contemplate,"³⁵ takes on a political perspective; "her past" is also Canada's.

If by associating Morag with phases of Canada's historical evolution Laurence meant to record the positive effects of the "de-colonization of a psyche," Atwood presents in Joan the confusion and destructiveness of a post-colonial vacuum. Cude's analysis attributes Joan's unhappy life to the cruelty inflicted on her during the year-end recital of the Miss Flegg School of Dance and to her ensuing conflict with her mother. What one must also note is that the date of these experiences, 1949, corresponds with the numerous governmental steps, witness the Canadian Citizenship Act and the Royal Commission on Arts & Letters, to disassociate Canada formally from the mother-country. Joan begins her struggle for independence from her mother at the same time that Canada did.

But while Canada began moving away from the trappings of British colonialism, she was also welcoming American culture and investment. Before the country had time to establish its own cultural identity, or even to implement the recommendations of the Massey Commission, its citizens, encouraged by government policy, had assimilated American goods and values. Joan's teen years began in 1955--the date is mentioned twice--and like most North American youngsters in the mid-1950s, she was listening to Elvis Presley singing some such song as "Heartbreak Hotel" (p. 71). That was the year in which he appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show" and entered the consciousness and lives of a generation of North Americans, including Canadians such as Joan. This typical teenager plans to name her goldfish after Susan Hayward, the movie star, because "the odds were stacked against this goldfish and I wanted it to have a courageous name" (p. 80); during the 1950s, Hayward starred in three biographical pictures about brave women who struggled against overwhelming personal agonies. But the point is that, as for so many Canadian teenagers in the 1950s, the reigning cultural models were the American which had simply replaced the British.

Atwood focusses her portrait of the American domination of post-colonial Canadians on the direct derivation of Joan's name from the American silver screen; Joan's mother named her after actress Joan Crawford as confidentially as

she herself named her goldfish after Susan Hayward. The result, for the girl if not for the fish, is the traumatic sense of having no identity: "did she give me someone else's name because she wanted me never to have a name of my own?" (p. 42). The choice of Crawford symbolizes much more than the beauty and alien identity recognized, respectively, by Mrs. Delacourt and her daughter. If Mommie Dearest had been published before 1976, we could speculate about its influence on Atwood's characterization; as it is, the novelist was certainly prophetic, for Crawford's daughter dramatizes that underneath the glamorous public image of the movie star existed a neurotic, sadistic woman. More likely, Atwood had in mind Joan Crawford's Academy Award-winning performance in Mildred Pearce, a film which depicts the emotional battle between an over-protective mother and her vindictive daughter. As well, the actress herself contains a blend of multiple personalities, for Joan Crawford is the stage name of Lucille LeSueur, and she acted the roles of so many "screen characters," all of whom are "beautiful, ambitious, ruthless, destructive to men" (p. 42), that they were perceived as various masks of her own femme-fatale qualities. Joan's name, then, introduces not only the themes of multiple personality and cultural imperialism, but also the models of female identity implicit in the conflict between mother and daughter.

The political ramifications of the conflict between Joan and her mother center on the latter's attempts to shape Joan into her notion of female identity and her refusal to let Joan develop her own. That female image corresponds to society's mold which is clearly stamped "made in America." Mrs. Delacourt makes herself up in the mirror to look "like Bette Davis" (p. 68), but the new face is never complete; she is left "sadder, as if she saw behind or within the mirror some fleeting image she was unable to capture or duplicate" (p. 66). Joan's mother is characterized as a woman unfulfilled by the roles of wife and mother yet unable to graft movie glamor into her life. She redecorates a succession of homes to reflect upward social mobility and throws dinner parties "to help [her husband] with his career" in the career-role of anesthetist for which "he had studied . . . at my mother's urging" (pp. 72-73). Mrs. Delacourt is frustrated by her failure to remodel her family and home according to American images which, distorted, create only a lack of meaning.

Atwood describes the politics, within this family, of the creation or the resistance to American images as that of warfare. In adolescence Joan resists her mother's efforts to "make me over in her image, thin and beautiful" (p. 88) simply by gorging herself on sweets and becoming fat. "To think that I named you after Joan Crawford," muses her mother (p. 42). "The war" was between herself

and her mother and the "battleground was my body" (p. 69). The question of obesity in women is the topic of a recent study, Fat is a Feminist Issue, which asserts that "being fat represents an attempt to break free of society's sex stereotypes. For many women, being fat says 'screw you' to all who want me to be the perfect mom, sweetheart, maid and whore. Take me for who I am, not who I'm supposed to be."³⁶ From enrollment at the age of seven in dancing class to a year in Brownies, Joan discovers the socially-accepted cruelty inflicted on girls who do not fit into the "sugar-and-spice" image. Whereas Marian, in The Edible Woman, conforms to the "thin and beautiful" prescription through her anorexia, Joan's rebellious obesity is a "refutation" of her mother, a "victory" (p. 74).

Cude's extensive discussion of Lady Oracle in A Due Sense of Differences presents Joan, the deliberate "consumer," as an object lesson for western society. He may be right to point out, as does the novel, that "a nation of shop-keepers" (p. 147) is to be found in Britain as well as North America, that the social values criticized in the novel are common to all western nations, but in so doing he underestimates the extent to which the novel pins the American label to such consumer values. Atwood's characterization specifically emphasizes that the formative influence on Joan is American culture. The satirical

target of Lady Oracle is ultimately the same as that of The Edible Woman: the takeover of Canadian identity by American consumerism. The acceptance by women, such as Joan's mother and Marian McAlpin, of the "sexual sell" of North American advertising is the central concern of both novels. Both protagonists rebel, finally, but whereas Marian tries to stop the process of consumption, the adolescent Joan of the earlier decade gives in to it. We might at this point relate Joan's obesity to the growth of the "gross" natural product in Canada due to American investment during the 1950s. Joan's gluttony provides a humorous and grotesque analogy of the glut of American products on the Canadian market. In the tension between Joan and her mother, Atwood subtly reflects the guilt of a nation which not only turned from her motherland but also betrayed her in favor of "the fat cat" closer to home.

In Lady Oracle, then, Atwood continues to argue, as in her earlier novels, the overriding similarities of the societies of the United States and Canada. Joan becomes involved with a European whose inability to distinguish between a Canadian and an American specifies the political implications of her characterization: "The lack of one kind of history is the same as the lack of another" (p. 159). But Joan's decision to escape to England, because "living in a rented room in Albany would be the same, finally, as living in a rented room in Toronto" (p. 141),

suggests another political fact; the one consistent difference between the American and Canadian traditions has always been Canada's loyalty to the monarchical system. To continue to note the dating of events, Joan flees from home to England in 1961, in other words, at about the same time as did Morag, a time when, as indicated in the discussion of The Diviners, Canadians still widely accepted the British component of their identity.

For Atwood, however, unlike Laurence, the British connection is not easily maintained or severed. And Atwood's more accurately reflects Canada's experience in the early 1960s. "In [Pearson's] view," state Bothwell, Drummond and English, "Canada could not remain a nation if it continued to dwell upon its past" (p. 270). Pearson continued, in the Liberal policy of King and St. Laurent, to move Canada away from the outward signs and symbols of her colonial ties to England, adopting, to mention his most obvious and controversial effort to this end, a distinctively Canadian flag. The confusion which resulted, instead of the positive sense of identity Pearson promised, is mirrored in Joan's growing sense of non-entity. Joan is aware that she is "a different person" in England, having slimmed down to "the right shape" (p. 141) but her new image has "the wrong past." Whereas Morag's stay in England brought her increased maturity, stability and the recognition that her true identity lay in the past she had

so long denied, Joan simply grows "narrower" (p. 145). And while earlier she had at least felt herself to be "an exception, with the limitations that imposed, now [she] was average" (p. 144). Unlike Morag who grows beyond her colonial attitude, Joan remains "provincial" in the face of imperial standards; England, she discovers, is "a message in code which I didn't know how to decipher" (p. 145). Morag initiates a love relationship with a Scotsman on the basis of their common past while Joan becomes entangled with two "patronizing" men; from both she, typically, hides her true identity (p. 146).

That Joan falls in love with Arthur Foster in July of 1963 serves to further Atwood's satire of the Canadian search for identity. In A Due Sense of Differences, Cude, interpreting both the Polish Count and Arthur Foster as models of courage and idealism for Joan to emulate, overlooks Atwood's more pessimistic intent (pp. 145-46). Arthur mirrors both the drift toward "being on the American team" as Pearson proposed and the tendency of Canadian youths and intellectuals in the 1960s to involve themselves in American socio-political issues. Arthur's emotional fulfillment derives primarily from his championship of American causes: "This time it was civil rights: he went down to the States and almost got shot. . . . In quick succession he went through Vietnam and sheltering draft dodgers, student revolt" (p. 211). In 1968, Joan and

Arthur take a belated honeymoon to Quebec because "it was Arthur's Quebec separatist incarnation," but even as Arthur adopts this radical Canadian political stance, they spend the first night there watching "the funeral of Robert Kennedy" (p. 208) on television. The date, therefore, is June 8, 1968, and one might think it strange that there is no mention in the book of the Trudeaumania campaign which culminated on June 22 with the election of the first majority government in Canada since 1958. The point is that Arthur, caught up by the issues and personalities of the American stage, is oblivious to the political phenomenon of his own country. For him as for Joan, vicarious American identity leaves a vacuum in place of his perception of his role as a Canadian.

Moreover, "the absence of a sense of purpose" (p. 196) in Arthur's political energies echoes Joan's sexual politics. When they first meet, she believes "the right man had come along, complete with a cause I could devote myself to. My life had significance" (p. 171). Frank Davey, analyzing Joan's difficulties in male-female relationships, rightly concludes that she "relives her parents' drama of the unfulfilled, isolated, and dependent woman linked to an aloof and undemonstrative man."³⁷ Joan's greatest role is that of Mrs. Arthur Foster. And like Mrs. Brooke Skelton, Joan adopts the image of a self-effacing, supportive wife; but where Morag grows

increasingly restive within the restrictions of her role of housewife, Joan desires to preserve the security marriage provides. Cude argues that Joan uses Arthur as an excuse for her failings, a reason for not trying to improve herself as a person in her own right (p. 161). To this end, she serves inedible food because "Arthur enjoyed my defeats. . . . My failure was a performance and Arthur was the audience. His applause kept me going" (p. 210). Just as Brooke insisted that Morag conform to his notion of femininity, so too, throughout her married life, Joan strives "to turn into what Arthur thought I was, or what he thought I should be" (p. 210). Moreover, Arthur's "expectations . . . were [not] confined to cooking"; with every change in Arthur's social concerns, Joan had to adjust her views, despite the fact that she "found it so hard to read theories" (p. 211). Joan, unlike Morag, willingly remains in her colonized marital role because she lacks the strong sense of identity necessary for assuming responsibility for the direction of her own life.

Atwood has her narrator describe her childhood and adolescence in Parts One and Two, respectively, so that the reader might have some understanding of Joan's confusion and inadequacy as an adult. And certainly some degree of compassion is evoked for both Joan and her mother because of the few creative outlets provided them in the subservient role proscribed for women. But Atwood does not

allow a simple, one-sided sympathy for her heroine. Throughout adulthood, Joan is haunted by the image of her former fat self, "wearing pink tights with spangles, a short fluffy pink skirt, satin ballet slippers and, on her head, a sparkling tiara" (p. 102). Joan "knew how Arthur would analyze this fantasy": his simplistic interpretation would see "the attitudes of society, forcing me into a mold of femininity that I could never fit. . . . How much better for me if I'd been accepted for what I was and had learned to accept myself, too" (p. 103). Neither Joan nor Atwood allows the reader to accept this view of Joan as victim of social conditioning for, as she adds, the feminist analysis is "very true, very right, very pious. But it's still not so simple. I wanted those things, that fluffy skirt, that glittering tiara. I liked them." Joan wills her own colonization.

The narrator in Surfacing, Marian in The Edible Woman and Morag in The Diviners all discover the extent to which they inculcate their society's image of femininity, but the difference between them and the heroine of Lady Oracle is that Joan never breaks out of her repressed state. Joan would rather "dance as a ballerina, though faultily, than as a flawless clown" (p. 286). Despite her adolescent rebellion against the ballerina image, she harbors the desire to conform to the feminine qualities of slim gracefulness. That her social initiation took place in

1949 corresponds to Canada's attempts to fit imperial cultural standards, exemplified by the formation of the National Ballet Company by Celia Franca and Betty Oliphant. Although no nation or individual wants to be considered a clown, Joan's use of the term "flawless" suggests that she, and Canada, could achieve a distinctive, if conventionally odd, perfection, by establishing their own standards instead of trying to live up to imported models.

Unfortunately, Joan does not, and her self-destructive habits of imitation in the roles of "dancer" and housewife carry over into her artistic expression. Whereas Morag, in developing her creative skills, finds her own literary voice, Joan merely learns to write derivative "historical romances" in order to "make money faster" (p. 155). Joan defends her books on feminist grounds, pointing out that while the "great escapes" such as "war, politics and explorations up the Amazon . . . hockey or football" of the masculine world are "by and large denied" to her female readers, she offers them "hope . . . a vision of a better world, however preposterous" (p. 35). Certainly it is a "preposterous" "vision" for women of the 1970s; romance fictions rely on stereotyped sex roles and, according to recent studies of Harlequin romances such as "Dane--No! Please--No!" in The Globe & Mail, "affirm the notion that women like to be dominated."³⁸ During the years of her marriage to Arthur, Joan's "work at [her] current Costume

Gothic" provides a fantasy release which allows her to remain "patient and forbearing, warm, a sympathetic listener" (p. 213). In other words, her "vision of a better world," which promises highly-questionable improvement, keeps her enslaved in an otherwise untenable existence.

In portraying this author of romance fiction, Atwood extends her satire of Canadian women. Harlequin, which began in Winnipeg, developed into the world's largest publisher of romance fiction and presently accounts for about twenty-eight percent of all paperback sales in Canada. Marian Gibson, one of Harlequin's senior editors interviewed in the Globe & Mail article, "Dane--No! Please--No!" quoted above, suggests that women are attracted to the male dominance depicted in romance fiction as an escape from the responsibility of adulthood. "What they are searching for," she explains, "is a nice daddy to take care of them." Although Ms Gibson defends the Harlequin formula on the grounds that it simply gives its female readers what they want, nevertheless, romance fiction, by reinforcing stereotyped sex roles, is a modern method of policing women, of keeping them in their place as surely as Catharine Parr Traill did in the nineteenth century with her handbook on good housewifery. The enormous popularity of Harlequin is symptomatic of the reactionary mood among many women in the 1970s who reject

the concepts of women's liberation, who follow instead the advice of the Angelin Institute which counsels a woman to maintain her marriage by cultivating her position of subservience.³⁹ It is no surprise that during the rise of feminism such strong opposition, deriving perhaps from Jerry Fallwell's very popular "moral majority," also developed. Like Joan, many Canadian women prefer male dominance to female liberation, romance fiction to artistic expression of personal voices.

Such "innocence has its hazards," Joan discovers (p. 149), as did the narrator of Surfacing. Twice Joan is told by Leda Sprott that she has "great powers" which, if not developed, "will make use of [her] in any case, though perhaps in a less desirable way" (p. 206). Joan is "afraid to develop them" (p. 286) but Leda Sprott's prophecy is realized when Joan's unacknowledged feelings finally "go public" (p. 216). She publishes a sequence of poems which both her friends and the literary community read as an attack on marriage, "a very angry book" (p. 237). She fails to see the hostility that others see, claiming that she is happy in her marriage. Joan's refusal to act upon, or even recognize, her growing impatience with Arthur is indicative of her failure to rebel against male domination. If one can compare her to the more successful writer and woman, Morag Gunn, one must also consider her misuse of her "great powers" of psychic complexity as a criticism of

those other public chameleons, Mackenzie King and Pierre Trudeau.

Joan's lack of self-knowledge, which so limits her experience of marriage, prevents her from growing beyond destructive behavior. The Diviners, a novel of liberation, depicts Morag successfully searching for independence and relatedness, "reaching out to hold others"; Joan, on the other hand, is constricted by her need for dependence, for someone to "hold" her. The childish haze through which she views the world constantly causes her to see men in such romantic guises that she reshapes facts to fit her fantasies. Gisella Konopka, in her study of The Adolescent Girl in Conflict, observes that "the gap between this feminine ideal and her own reality can motivate her to seek an outlet for aggression that is linked to her feelings of acceptance as a woman. Sexual misconduct is the logical result."⁴⁰ When Joan tires of serving Arthur, rather than taking steps to redefine their marriage, she has an affair with the con-crete poet, the Royal Porcupine; they stay together only as long as he conforms to her bizarre fantasy-image. Likewise, although she insists that she never treats Arthur as one of her heroes, all the while she is in Terremoto, she imagines him "coming to retrieve" her (p. 8). It is such consistently misguided femininity, such pathetic immaturity, which makes her the "flawless clown" she did not choose to be.

Joan, ignoring in adolescence her high-school teacher's lesson on Canada's "natural resources" (p. 102) as well as her own "great powers" in adulthood, resembles the "fiasco" both of Trudeau's enforced centralization of the country and that of the women's movement. The "fiasco" of International Women's Year, according to Greer, was that "feminism is a revolutionary movement and cannot reasonably expect to find its interest served by governments which have come to power in the traditional masculine ways." "Discussion of the . . . phenomenon of sexism would have to wait," it seems, "on economic redistribution" between the developed and undeveloped countries of the world.⁴¹ Examining the impact of IWY on Canada, Michelle Landsberg strikes a note similar to Greer when she concludes that "government ballyhoo in honour of women fell flat . . . [and] official funds were dribbled away" on programs designed to change "people's attitudes" rather than "the painful but necessary laws enforcing equal rights."⁴²

Lady Oracle reveals the confusion in 1976 when so many conflicting voices were telling women how to live: be a mother and/or have a career; enter a traditional marriage and/or be promiscuous. The new woman discovered herself defined by a set of rules as constrictive, as impossible to follow as those of the conventional woman. And like women, Canada found it extremely difficult to achieve unity in diversity. Trudeau was forced in mid-decade to turn away

from his isolationist tendencies of the early 1970s and back to the traditional markets of the United States for investment and growth. Bothwell, Drummond and English make the point again and again that many of Trudeau's desires in the early 1970s could not be implemented because of external factors such as the world-wide recession and the escalation in the world price of oil; in the end, they conclude, "Trudeau's attempt to create long-range plans had produced mainly ambiguity; with ambiguity comes confusion and even paranoia" (p. 355). Lady Oracle conveys this national mood by the telling parallel of the confusion of a Canadian woman.

In conclusion, it is apparent that Laurence and Atwood present two contrasting perspectives on the future, one basically optimistic and the other pessimistic. Laurence's portrait of liberation radically conflicts with the selfish aggression of Greer and Brown; Morag may exercise her strength of character, but she remains responsible to those who care for her. And while Pique, representative of future womanhood, remains confused, her quest is presented with compassionate hope. Although Atwood's characterization of Joan seems to imply that the reader should, as Atwood says, "go . . . and do unlikewise,"⁴³ a positive alternative is not offered. Perhaps this character is best approached in the spirit of Atwood's injunction at the end of her Gerstein lecture: she hopes

that a female character like Joan with "the emotions all human beings have" will not be "pronounced a monster, a slur, or a bad example." "Men in literature," continues Atwood, "have been seen as individuals, women merely as examples of a gender; perhaps it is time to take the capital W off Woman" (p. 26). Canadians, after the mid-point of the decade, must read Morag and Joan, characters of this time in Canadian history, as individuals, not just as women typical of their time. This perspective leads to discovery of the saving humor of the novels and the affirmation in both of the vitality, however misdirected, of the heroines. One might, finally, extend this point of view to a perception of Canada as a country at long last like other independent nations: paradoxical, complex, in short, adult at last. Analysis of fictional Canadian women of the years after the mid 1970s as "examples of a gender" is as inappropriate as analysis of Canada after the mid 1970s as an example of a colonized country.

Endnotes

- 1 Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto, 1974), p. 343.
- 2 Donald Cameron, Conversations with Canadian Novelists, pp. 102-05.
- 3 Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," Canadian Literature, 41 (1969), 10.
- ④ Margaret Atwood, "Face to Face," Maclean's, May 1974, p. 38.
- 5 Laurence, Public Forum, Mohawk College, Hamilton, 10 May, 1975.
- 6 Jane Leney, "Prospero and Caliban in Laurence's African Fiction," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 27 (1980), 63-80.
- 7 Laurence, The Prophet's Camel Bell, p. 227.
- ⑧ Ken Hughes, "Divining the past, present, future," Canadian Dimension, March 1975, p. 43.
- 9 Susan Brownmiller, Femininity (New York, 1983), p. 139.
- 10 Desmond Morton, A Short History of Canada (Edmonton, 1983), p. 221.
- 11 Leslie Monkman, "The Tonnerre Family: Mirrors of Suffering," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 27 (1980), 143, 148.
- 12 Clara Thomas, "Myth and Manitoba in The Diviners,"

in Here and Now, ed. Moss, p. 107.

¹³ Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society (Edmonton, 1969).

¹⁴ Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch, p. 320.

¹⁵ Dicken's "misery in his marriage" is recounted in Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York, 1952), pp. 904-26 and in Edward Wagenknecht, The Man Charles Dickens (Norman, Oklahoma, 1966), pp. 155-71.

¹⁶ Woolf echoes her famous prescription for the woman writer in A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1953), p. 119: "I don't like the physicalness of having children of one's own. . . . I can dramatise myself a parent, it is true. And perhaps I have killed the feeling instinctively." Yet in another entry she anguishes, "I want to appear a success even to myself. Yet I don't It's having no children . . . failing to write well" (p. 29).

¹⁷ John Ripley, "Drama and Theatre," in Literary History of Canada, ed. Klinck, Vol. 3, p. 212.

¹⁸ Claude Bissell, "Politics and Literature in Canada in the 1960s," in Literary History of Canada, ed. Klinck, Vol. 3, p. 9; W. H. New, "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada, ed. Klinck, Vol. 3, p. 234.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Waterston, Survey, p. 139.

²⁰ Bothwell, Drummond and English, Canada since 1945, p. 371.

21 Angelika Maeser, "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 27 (1980), 163.

22 Atwood, Lady Oracle, (Toronto, 1976), p. 286.

23 Thomas, "Lady Oracle: The Narrative of a Fool-Heroine," in The Art of Margaret Atwood, ed. Arnold E. & Cathy N. Davidson, (Toronto, 1981), p. 174.

24 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," Literary History of Canada, ed. Klinck, Vol. 3, p. 325.

25 Wilfred Cude, A Due Sense of Differences (Lanham, M.D., 1980), p. 152.

26 Sherrill Grace, "More Than a Very Double Life," in her Violent Duality, p. 133.

27 Linda Griffiths, Maggie & Pierre (Vancouver, 1980), pp. 64, 66.

28 George Radwanski, Trudeau (Toronto, 1978), p. 14.

29 George Woodcock, The Canadians, p. 292.

30 Atwood, "The Curse of Eve--Or, What I Learned in School," in Women on Women, ed. Shtier, p. 25.

31 Atwood, "Getting Out from Under," Empire Club Addresses 1972-73 (Toronto, 1973), pp. 356-57.

32 See Bobbie Turcotte and Mary Hemlow, "Searching for the real Margaret Trudeau," Chatelaine, Oct. 1975, pp. 64-65, 127-32; Susan Swan, "Barbara Ann Scott, are you still happy, Happy?" Chatelaine, Nov. 1975, pp. 50, 74-86; Bonnie Buxton, "Meet Maureen McTeer," Chatelaine, Oct.

1976, pp. 52-53, 117-23. In light of her thesis in Survival, Atwood would appreciate the focus of Sheena Paterson and Mary C. McEwan's article, "Margaret Trudeau's Struggle for Identity: Victor or Victim?" Chatelaine, Aug. 1977, pp. 32-33, 91-93.

³³ Atwood explains to David Arnason and Dennis Cooley during a radio interview at the University of Manitoba, in November 1975, how a dream about Susanna Moodie spawned a few poems which she set aside, until a few months later Moodie's voice began to speak to her and she created The Journals of Susanna Moodie.

³⁴ Heather Robertson, "Keep Plugging, Barbara Frum," Maclean's, June 1975, pp. 32-35.

³⁵ Cude, "Bravo Mothball! An Essay on Lady Oracle," in Here and Now, ed. Moss, p. 48.

³⁶ As quoted in John Haslett Cuff, "Too Fat to Make the Grade?" The Globe and Mail, 16 July 1983, Fanfare, p. 2.

³⁷ Frank Davey, "Atwood's Comic Novels," Studies in Canadian Literature, 5 (1980), 214.

³⁸ Dawn Cowan, "Dane--No! Please--No!," The Globe & Mail, 7 March 1985, Metro, p. 7.

³⁹ Valerie Ross, "She Stoops--Grovels!--to conquer," Maclean's, 15 Dec. 1975, p. 67.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Judith Finlayson, "More to birth control than mere education," The Globe and Mail, 6 Aug.

1983, *Fanfare*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Greer, "On Women's Year," Chatelaine, Sept. 1975, pp. 101, 103.

⁴² Michele Landsberg, "Has Women's Year Laid an Egg?" Chatelaine, Nov. 1975, p. 50.

⁴³ Atwood, "What's So Funny?: Notes on Canadian Humour," in her Second Words: Selected Critical Prose (Toronto, 1982), p. 183.

Conclusion

On Oct. 18, 1929, the Privy Council of Great Britain decreed that women are persons. Up to this date, the only persons appointed to the Canadian Senate were male because the British North America Act, in defining the constitution of the Senate, took legal precedent from an 1876 British court ruling: "women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges."¹ Spearheaded by Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung joined with her and three other women in order to appeal to the Privy Council for a clarification of the word "persons" in the BNA Act; the Council explained that its verdict, to recognize women as "persons," conformed to the spirit of the BNA Act in that it was meant not to be a static document, but to enable Canada to evolve, "to become Mistress in her own House." Again and again in Canadian history, as this statement from the Persons Case proves, feminism has been closely related to nationalism. A number of conclusions can now be drawn about the process whereby women writers have examined this relationship between the personal and the political.

Some authors are explicitly political in that they directly address national and sexual issues. Their works provide clearly-defined points of reference for this study because they demonstrate unequivocally that a relationship

between the two forms of colonialism does exist. Anna Jameson fights the restrictions placed on her by her estranged husband, mirrors her battle in the Reformers' struggle against the colonial oligarchy, and calls for reform in both areas. Susanna Moodie describes the growth of her personal independence at the time of the 1837 rebellion; Catharine Parr Traill studiously avoids expressing any criticism of her subservient position as housewife or of politics, with the exception of her reactionary diatribe against the rebels. Most blatantly propagandistic is Nellie McClung's celebration, in Purple Springs, of women's power to win political rights. Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist confronts the major political issue of her day and, albeit indirectly, relates imperialism to woman's position in her patriarchal society.

Other novelists examined in this study are more artistically successful because their politics are more organically integrated into their depiction of the socio/psychological problems of their female protagonists. Frances Brooke sets the model here, for within her fiction--an autonomous world with no authorial intrusions--she explores the attitudes of the male conqueror and lover and suggests the need for increased awareness of and respect for the Canadian landscape and people. Ethel Wilson, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood likewise convey individualized women and male-female

relationships in a recognizably Canadian landscape and in a specified period of Canadian history. By this indirect means, they reflect and analyze the social and political forces shaping their characters and events.

Viewed chronologically Canadian women's fiction similarly presents the evolution of understanding and acceptance of the difficulties of female and national freedom. Whereas Brooke recognizes some of the problems in transplanting British sexual and political conventions, the only solution she can offer is the return of her characters to England. And so intimidated is Traill by her life in the backwoods that she refuses to face its personal and political implications; Moodie, while embracing the process of growth and change wholeheartedly, remains ambivalent, unable to reconcile British loyalty and colonial autonomy. Duncan, McClung, Ostenso and, to some degree, Wilson, although supporting change, all avoid tackling the implications of equality in male-female relationships and leave ambiguous the conclusions of their novels. Their difficulties echo the complex changes during the first half of the twentieth century in Canada's political alliances with Britain and the United States and in federal-provincial relations. World events, including the two World Wars and the Depression, hastened Canada's maturity in the international community, yet prevented resolution of social and constitutional imbalances within

her own borders; similarly, while attaining the position of "persons" in the eyes of the law, women remained frustrated within a society still patriarchal in structure.

One can, with the knowledge of this tension, distinguish the next stage of political and social maturity in Wilson, Laurence and Atwood; while all three recognize the difficulties that result from increasing independence for women and Canada, the two most modern of these writers, not surprisingly, are the most willing to confront these complexities. If Hagar, in The Stone Angel, is not aware of the factors which contributed to her colonization, Laurence ensures that the reader is. In The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey, Hagar's "spiritual grand-daughter," triumphs by learning to live with all the troubles of 1960s Canadian life. In the early 1970s, Morag, in The Diviners, the most mature Laurence heroine, accepts the dichotomies of her experience with wisdom and patience as she strives to maintain both personal relationships and political independence. Marian, in The Edible Woman, and the narrator of Surfacing recognize the need to create a new order, a new marriage of woman and man, of the United States and Canada; failure, in Atwood, is demonstrated by Joan, the protagonist of Lady Oracle who cannot integrate and accept the complexities of her life.

In the brief recapitulation above, one can see the central points of contact between the development of

women's legal rights and literary forms and the growth of British North America toward full national stature as the Dominion of Canada. Northrop Frye defined the "colonial position of the Canadian imagination" as "the instinct to seek a conventional or commonplace expression of an idea;"² this study indicates that none of these women--with to some degree the exception of Traill--is at all colonial in this sense. Because they develop their own ideas and observations, their subject matter, "the commonwealth of women," allows them to grow beyond, rather than restricting them to, domestic trivia and conventional romance structures. In that Brooke, Jameson, Traill and Moodie use British literary modes to explore their personal experiences of Canada, the British form and Canadian matter display the same tension that existed in the political arena, where Canadians desired to keep the British forms of government while running their own affairs through "responsible government." The fiction of early Canadian women, doubly colonized as they were, contains the particularly dynamic political dimension of the redefinition of relationships.

Furthermore, at a time when Canadian women and their nation were experimenting with political forms and learning from the example of the United States, a society which had cast off its colonial position and had accepted female suffrage, Duncan, McClung and Ostenso adapted American

literary models. Wilson presages in her form a combination of British and American styles, mirroring the attitude of compromise with which Canada strove to maintain balance in her alliances with Britain and the United States. Finally, Laurence and Atwood move through their three novels to a mosaic of styles reflective of a nation which has not only assumed its place in an international community, but has also recognized its ethnic and regional composition.

This study stops in the mid-seventies, but the process of gaining independence, for women and for Canada, goes on. Due to the repatriation of the BNA Act in 1982, Canada has its own Constitution, but political amendment and social adaptation continue. Equality for women was enshrined in the Charter of Rights only this year; its social effects remain unknown as long as challenges, based on the new provision, are to be made in the courts. To understand the process of Canada's political and social evolution, it would be advisable, my study suggests, to look as much at what contemporary women writers are saying as at what his-torians are recording.

Endnotes

- 1 Savage, Our Nell, p. 73.
- 2 Frye, Bush Garden, p. 134.

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