

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: *COUREURS DE BOIS*, BACKWOODSMEN AS
ECOCRITICAL MOTIF IN FOUR WORKS OF FRENCH
CANADIAN LITERATURE

Anne Collier Rehill, Doctor of Philosophy, 2015

Dissertation co-directed by: Professor Valérie K. Orlando and Professor Andrea Marie
Frisch
Department of French and Italian

The 17th–19th century French Canadian fur traders and interpreters called *coureurs de bois* and later *voyageurs* were known for their independence of spirit and connection to the wilds. They can also be seen as an ecocritical motif because, in addition to participating in the environmentally abusive fur trade, they also show the way forward through intercultural connections and business relationships with Amerindians. The four novels analyzed here—Taché’s *Forestiers et voyageurs: Moeurs et légendes canadiennes* (1863); Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916); Desrosiers’ *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (1938); and Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979)—portray woodsmen operating in a collaborative mode within the realistic context of the need to make money. They participated in both ruthless capitalist exploitation and greater intercultural acceptance, as exemplified in Desrosiers’ two opposing main characters. They entered folklore through the 19th century literary efforts of Taché and others to construct a distinct French Canadian national identity, then in an unstable and continually disrupted process of

formation. Because *coureurs* linked the natural and human worlds as well as radically different human cultures, their entry into literature involved their Amerindian business partners, thus making intercultural connections an aspect of the national identity that Taché strove to construct and mirror. From a modern perspective, such cultural intersections pertain to the ecocritical acknowledgment of the need to respect global populations' widely varying modes of survival. Serres' *Contrat naturel* offers a broader proposal: that the human population, from the position of its diverse needs and power over the environment, should reach a silent contract with the rest of the planet that also acknowledges and respects its needs. The *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* portrayed in the works studied here embody both the problem and the way forward. They and their Amerindian partners occupy the perhaps unique position of contributing to environmental damage as well as greater understanding of the cultural other, which holds the promise of collaboration and the joint search for realistic solutions. Thus, in ways both positive and negative, *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs*, far from perfect models, continue to serve as guides, even in today's tremendously diverse field of ecocriticism.

COUREURS DE BOIS, BACKWOODSMEN AS ECOCRITICAL MOTIF IN FOUR
WORKS OF FRENCH CANADIAN LITERATURE

by

Anne Collier Rehill

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Valérie K. Orlando, co-chair
Professor Andrea Marie Frisch, co-chair
Professor Ralph Bauer
Professor Sarah Benharrech
Professor Caroline Eades

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1:	Introduction: Historical Basis and Ecocritical Literary Perspective, <i>Coueurs de Bois</i> and <i>Voyageurs</i>	1
	A Few Historical <i>Coueurs</i>	7
	Etienne Brûlé	7
	Nicolas Perrot	11
	Pierre-Esprit Radisson	12
	A Male-Dominated Occupation	19
	Belief Systems and Identities	21
Chapter 2:	Theoretical Approach: Movements through Time and Place on Earth	29
	Definitions and Illustrations: Ecocritical Chronotopic Rhizomes	29
	Perceptions of the Other	38
	Capitalist European Savagery	49
	Unruly Characters in an Unstable Literature	53
Chapter 3:	19th-Century Desiring Machines in Joseph-Charles Taché's <i>Forestiers et voyageurs</i>	62
	Constructing a French Canadian Identity through Language	66
	Shifting Audience, Moving Plateaus	76
	Deterritorialized Rhizomes in New Soil	81
	Soil and <i>Coueurs</i> , Real and Romanticized	94
	Natural Resources: Capitalist Development Dependent on Workers	105
Chapter 4:	Controlling, Clearing, or Exploiting Wildness in Louis Hémon's <i>Maria Chapdelaine</i> and Léo-Paul Desrosiers' <i>Les Engagés du Grand Portage</i>	122
	<i>Maria Chapdelaine</i>	123
	Pulling Stumps or Running through Woods, in Both Cases on the Land	129
	Death of the <i>Coureur de Bois</i>	138
	<i>Les Engagés du Grand Portage</i>	150
	Discomfort in a Beautiful Setting	153
	Savage Business Competition	164
Chapter 5:	<i>Courees</i> and <i>Coueurs de Bois</i> : A People's Becoming in Antonine Maillet's <i>Pélagie-la-charrette</i>	187
	The Rabelaisian Author	194
	A Deterritorialized and Reterritorialized <i>Evangéline</i>	197
	Female Leaders and <i>Courees de Bois</i>	203
	Storytellers, Chroniclers, and Narratives Continuously Destabilized	217
	<i>Coueurs de Bois</i> As Rhizomes of Survival and Narrative	227
	<i>Coueurs de Bois</i> in Acadian Identity	241

Chapter 6: Conclusions: Motifs of Capitalist Expansion, Socialist Cooperation, and Intercultural Connections	251
<i>Coueurs</i> in—and Outside of—the Capitalist Machine	253
Intercultural <i>Coueurs</i>	257
People and/in the World	261
Bibliography	272

Chapter 1. Introduction and Historical Context: *Coueurs de Bois* and *Voyageurs*

French Canadian fur traders, trappers, hunters, and interpreters, 17th- through 19th-century *coueurs de bois* (“runners of the woods”) and *voyageurs* were known for their independence of spirit and connection to the wilds. This dissertation centers on their role in 19th- and 20th-century French Canadian literature from an ecocritical perspective, meaning one that engages the problematic of human interactions with the rest of the “natural” world. This was the chief and enduring concern with what is now called the first literary ecocritical wave, from roughly the 1990s to the early 2000s (with precursors such as Thoreau and Emerson in the 1800s). Concerns in the second wave of this still-emerging discipline have widened to encompass not just humans’ treatment of the planet, but also our treatment of one another, as elements ourselves of the natural world.¹ Questions of definition include exactly what “nature” comprises, leading to issues of phenomenology, materialism, colonialism and postcolonialism, capitalism, and socialism, among others. This dissertation takes the position that *coueurs de bois* served as physical, rhizomatic connections between the Old and New Worlds, and that they represent changing attitudes toward cultures foreign to one’s own (Edward Said’s “Other”) and toward the Earth.

The first concern is exactly who the *coueurs de bois* were, a question to which the following few paragraphs respond before explaining the scope and methodology of this dissertation. Europeans discovered Newfoundland in 1497, when John Cabot (Giovanni Cabotto) encountered the New World en route to Asia, as had Columbus before him. The Vikings had come and been long gone from Vinland (probably

northeastern Canada, ca. 1000).² Basques and Portuguese began fishing off Newfoundland in the 16th century, and Jacques Cartier likely coined the word *Canada* in 1535. He may have gleaned the term from an Iroquois who pointed out the Indian settlement of Stadacona (future site of Quebec City), referring to it as “kanata” (village). The 17th’s century’s main explorers were Henry Hudson from England and Samuel de Champlain from France. Champlain established the first permanent French settlement at Quebec in 1608 and brought with him the person often called the first *coureur de bois*, Etienne Brûlé, who is discussed in this chapter. An essential element of the fur trade that boomed in the 17th and 18th centuries, *coureurs* were the ones willing to penetrate the wilderness and bring back the raw materials of the trade, especially the much-coveted beaver whose pelt provided several varieties of fashionable hats in Europe.

In the history of Canadian thought, these men of the woods have held an unstable position.³ Historian Gilles Havard cites several 17th- and 18th-century officials, so common were complaints against *coureurs de bois* and their disruptive behavior in the French colony of New France. One major merchant lamented that “les Grands Lacs forment un espace de liberté et d’impunité où les coureurs de bois . . . ‘vivent dans une entière indépendance, ils n’ont à rendre compte de leur action à personne, ils ne reconnaissent ny superieurs, ny juges ny loix ny police, ny subordination’” (the Great Lakes form a space of freedom and impunity where the *coureurs de bois* . . . “live in complete independence, they account for their actions to no one, they acknowledge neither supervisors nor judges nor police nor subordination”).⁴ For French governors the *coureurs* represented a distinct threat to

societal order and needed to be regulated, brought under control so they would not negatively influence other crown subjects.⁵ Indeed it is clear from abundant primary-source documents and the many promulgations cited by Havard, Moogk, and other historians that *coureurs de bois* were largely seen as half-savage themselves.⁶ But through the centuries the image of and associations invoked by the woodsmen have changed, as this dissertation will reflect.

Mindful that manifestations of ideas and attitudes are not always deliberate (a central *raison d'être* of literary analyses), this dissertation seeks to isolate, from an ecocritical point of view, the role played by *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* in four Canadian literary works from the 19th and 20th centuries: Joseph-Charles Taché's *Forestiers et voyageurs: Moeurs et légendes canadiennes* (1863); Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916); Léo-Paul Desrosiers' *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (1938); and Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979). These works, all classics of French Canadian literature, have as either their principal subject or a central theme *coureurs de bois* or *voyageurs*. Aside from their literary use of the historical figures, the works are linked by their evocation of the difficult, uncertain, and shifting space in which the French encountered the wilderness and its indigenous inhabitants, and by their varying attitudes toward and uses of nature and its resources.

The present work relies on a historical foundation provided by scholars and experts on *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs*, including Grace Lee Nute (*The Voyager*), Jeanne Pomerleau (*Les coureurs de bois*), Gilles Havard (*Empire et métissages: Indiens et français dans le Pays d'en Haut, 1660–1715*), Carolyn Podruchny (*Making the Voyager World*), and Peter Moogk (*La Nouvelle France: The Making of French*

Canada, a Cultural History), along with other histories and primary or secondary documents as noted. Using this historical frame of reference, the dissertation considers the four works listed above from an ecocritical perspective informed by several of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's foundational notions, in particular those of deterritorialization, the rhizome, the desiring machine, and the minor language. Seen in this way, *coureurs de bois* are emblematic of not only French Canadian wilderness and independence, which are their usual associations, but also in a larger sense, the turbulent history of human attitudes toward and uses of land in direct and immediate, "incorporated" ways. Aside from Deleuze and Guattari's, the principal critical theories on which I have drawn to illuminate this notion are those of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, Michel Serres, Lawrence Buell, and more recent ecocritics. Additionally, Said's postcolonial concept of "the other" is elucidated by the behavior of *coureurs* as well as by the ways in which they themselves have been perceived through the centuries, as reflected in literature. At the same time, they were instrumental in slowly changing mentalities of the larger society, like moving parts in a Deleuzo-Guattarian capitalist-type desiring machine, as will be elaborated in following chapters.

Thus, the methodology of this dissertation is to focus through an ecocritical lens on the study of one figure, the *coureur de bois*, in four works of the 19th and 20th centuries, using theoretical tools provided by Deleuze and Guattari and the others noted. This strategy allows for a consideration of the figure as he moves through the chronotopes reflected in these works of literature. Starting on a historical basis to establish who the real *coureur* was, the dissertation follows him through time and his

various situations and surroundings to find ways in which views of him changed, and how these changing perceptions and behaviors may help to illuminate the history of human-nature relations. The wideness of this scope also constitutes the limitation of the methodology, in that it is impossible to focus comprehensively on the life, times, and literary production of a single author or even two authors. Instead, this dissertation seeks to provide a detailed thematic “fly-over” that will, I hope, allow for multiple points of entry in future research projects.

This first chapter explains the scale of the project and introduces the historical *coureurs de bois* who frame the entire work. Chapter 2, after briefly reviewing French Canadian literature to contextualize the works under consideration, discusses the theoretical structure, its intersections with ecocritical concerns, and how these emerge from the literary works studied. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are in-depth analyses of *coureurs/voyageurs* as ecocritical motif. A short concluding section summarizes the chief findings of this inquiry and suggests possible avenues for further research.

Coureurs de bois were active especially throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. By the 19th century most *coureurs* had become *voyageurs*, officially licensed and employed traders whose job included canoeing in or overseeing flotillas.⁷ *Coureurs* often worked alone or in much smaller groups, but also hired themselves out, including as *voyageurs* when that work became widely available. Thus, a *coureur* might become a *voyageur* at one or several points during his career, and vice-versa. Numerous historians and critics have noted the differences and overlaps between the two positions, and the present study refers to both licensed and unlicensed traders, hence to both agents of the crown and “outlaws.”⁸

Such men originated largely from the rural population of France and signed on with entrepreneurs such as Samuel de Champlain for reasons ranging from financial gain to punishment for a crime. Many were originally soldiers who chose to remain in Canada because of the incentives offered to do so. Mysterious and bewitching opportunities in the New World, by and large, held no appeal for most of the 17th century French population, who preferred to stay home near family and friends or to migrate internally, despite overcrowded and very difficult conditions in France.⁹ Often working initially as sailors, tradesmen, hunters and trappers, the mostly illiterate young men who did emigrate and become *coureurs* possessed or learned the skills of survivalists.¹⁰ Many had a facility for languages and learned native tongues to become interpreters and guides. In these and other ways, *coureurs de bois* functioned in a material sense as links between the (European) “civilized” world and the Canadian wilderness and its indigenous inhabitants. The relationships, disharmony, and troubles experienced on all sides of this paradigm reflect those of the cultures encountering one another while continually negotiating the rough country.¹¹

A Few Historical *Coureurs*

ETIENNE BRÛLÉ

In his account of 1618 events, Champlain refers to one of the first *coureurs*, Etienne Brûlé, by name, identifying him as “un de nos truchements” (one of our interpreters).¹² This qualifier signals not just the importance of language skills in 17th-century French-Amerindian encounters and exchanges, but also the fact that Brûlé was not the

only one. The periodic skepticism about Brûlé's existence likely originates from the occasional claim that he was *the first*, which he was clearly not. Rather, Brûlé was part of the early group to which Champlain refers.¹³ His complicated and ultimately tragic personal story resulted in high and lasting visibility in history and folklore. The salient elements of this compelling drama are that Champlain sent Brûlé to live among Indians, as he wished, but eventually Brûlé led British captain David Kirke to Quebec in 1629, which the Englishman captured and held until 1632. Champlain never forgave Brûlé, who may have believed he was saving both his adopted Hurons and the French from certain starvation. Hurons killed him at some point before 1633.

Writing in the early years of this sad trajectory, while pleading for more resources with which to explore Canada and colonize it for France, Champlain emphasizes the importance of making allies among the Amerindians. He singles out the interpreter: "Or y avoit-il avec eux un appellé Estienne Brulé, l'un de nos truchemens, qui s'estoit addonné avec eux depuis 8 ans, tant pour passer son temps, que pour voir le pays, & apprendre leur langue & façon de vivre, & est celuy que j'avois envoyé" to live among the Hurons (With them traveled one Etienne Brûlé, one of our interpreters, who had been living with them for eight years, as much in the in the interest of passing his time as in that of seeing the country and learning their language and life style; this is the one I had sent).¹⁴

This is an apt description of the main quality needed to become a *coureur de bois*: the ability to live among Indians. For this physical strength was essential, as he had to hunt and survive in the Canadian wilderness. Such a person should be able to

learn languages dramatically different from his own—and possibly to endure torture, as did Brûlé.

The 17th-century Récollet (Franciscan) missionary Gabriel Sagard refers to Brûlé. In one of numerous accounts of the routine torture inflicted by various Amerindian tribes on those whom they conquered, the missionary notes that the same fate awaited the “black robes” (Catholic missionary priests) should the Iroquois capture them, and that Brûlé had endured it:

S'ils nous eussent pris nous autres Religieux, les mesmes tourments nous eussent esté appliquez sinon que de plus ils nous eussent arraché la barbe la premiere, comme ils firent à Bruslé, le Truchement qu'ils pensoient faire mourir, et lequel fut miraculeusement deliuré par la vertu de l'Agnus Dei, qu'il portoit pendu à son col: car comme ils luy pensoient arracher, le tonnerre commença à donner avec tant de furies, d'esclairs et de bruits, qu'ils en creurent estre à leur derniere journée, et tous espouventez le laisserent aller, craignans eux-mesmes de perir, pour auoir voulu faire mourir ce Chrestien, et luy oster son Reliquaire.

(If they had captured us, they would have done the same, if they had not started by ripping out our beards, as they did to Brûlé, the interpreter whom they planned to kill, and who was miraculously delivered by the consecrated Agnus Dei, which he wore around his neck on a pendant: for as they began to tear at him, thunder struck with such fury and lightning and loudness that they thought they were at their final day, and, terrified, they let him go for fear they would themselves perish for having wanted to kill this Christian and take away his reliquary).¹⁵

Aside from being a vivid reminder to modern readers of the cultural shock encountered by Europeans in the New World, this scene echoes with the medieval sense of the Christianity that Franciscans and Jesuits carried into the New World.¹⁶ Moogk explains that the *agnus dei* was one of many motifs that colonists routinely carried or wore.¹⁷ Their ritual-laden connection with the spirit world must have been equally shocking to Amerindians, especially, Moogk says, the missionaries' strange notion that self-mortification was holy and desirable.¹⁸ Yet their cultural expectation that one should be able not only to withstand torture but to sing a death song while doing so indicates that indigenous people manifested their own variety of self-punishment. Sagard, who encountered Brûlé during his 1623–24 evangelizing among the Hurons, names him elsewhere, notably in the context of language study.¹⁹

The term *coureur de bois* was not yet used, but by the 1680s it was in common usage.²⁰ Nevertheless, Brûlé's (literally) hair-raising story establishes early in the history of New France and Acadia the type of person who pursued such activities. From the beginning, the two essential aspects of the Franco-Canadian cultural exchange were the ability to trade and to communicate—in short, to interact (for the purposes of survival and/or conducting business) with native peoples and, to this end, to be willing to stretch and develop linguistic skills. These facilities would remain a constant.

Moogk reminds readers, moreover, that business was never the only motivating factor. “A historical explanation that assumes all human actions are undertaken to satisfy material needs and that ignores the desire for psychological or emotional gratification, or even cultural imperatives, is an incomplete explanation,” he states.

Instead, Moogk's study attempts to account for everyday concerns and preoccupations experienced by the common people in New France—"the impatient, proud, and headstrong people encountered in the law courts' records. Concern with acquiring sufficient resources to support life was certainly paramount, but that drive could be deflected by other concerns."²¹

These concerns have included, since recorded history and writing, the need for discovery. Havard also highlights the desire for adventure and freedom that motivated the *coureurs*, the timeless sense of inspiration and excitement—*inspiraræ* from the Greek muses or, perhaps more aptly in this case, the Nordic god Odin the Wanderer—that is unrelated to the profit motive. These have been the driving forces of all exploration and invention. At the same time, the impetus to survive or to achieve increased comfort has also since time immemorial led to the practice of trading, whether in the form of goods or of currency.

These motivators—on the one hand physical survival followed by various levels of ease; on the other psychological and/or spiritual elevation—are evident in first-person accounts of *coureurs de bois*, as will be clear below. Most, reflecting the general population, did not write, hence we have only a few surviving first-person records.²² At the peak of the enterprise in the 1680s, Havard estimates that 500–800 young Frenchmen were trading with the Amerindians.²³ After Brûlé, among the best-known names are Jean Nicolet (1598–1642), Nicolas Perrot (1644–1717), and Pierre-Esprit Radisson (ca. 1640–ca. 1710).

NICOLAS PERROT

Over the course of thirty-five years that he spent among the Amerindians in what is now the state of Wisconsin, Nicolas Perrot became an official French representative in 1683, and in 1685 was placed in command of the post at La Baie des Puants (present-day Green Bay, where the *coureur de bois* and explorer Jean Nicolet, sent by Champlain, had preceded him in 1634). Perrot moved from a status of independence to one of secure employment, even overseeing others. He was responsible for the establishment of several French outposts along the Mississippi, “claiming possession of the region and the Sioux country for France, and serving as an effective mediator in trade negotiations between the French and Indians.”²⁴

Perrot explained his actions and accomplishments in an unpublished manuscript written toward the end of his life, with the aim, explains Jesuit scholar Jules Tailhan, posthumous editor of the work, “d’éclairer confidentiellement l’intendant du Canada sur le véritable caractère des tribus alliées ou ennemies de la France, et sur la nature des rapports qu’on devait entretenir avec elles” (of confidentially informing the Canadian Intendant as to the real character of tribes that were allied with or enemies of France, and on the nature of the relationships that should be cultivated with them).²⁵ Tailhan’s editorial work is considered in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, in the context of theoretical and ecocritical elaboration.

PIERRE-ESPRIT RADISSON

To ensure that the booming fur trade remained profitable, the government of Louis XIV established a permit system of *congés* (permits to trade)—which *coureurs* consistently flouted.²⁶ During the 18th century, properly registered and licensed

traders who had by 1681 come to be known as *voyageurs* operated increasingly as employees for big companies such as Hudson's Bay.²⁷ North of the St. Lawrence River and Quebec City, the Compagnie des Postes-du-Nord (King's Posts) had originally operated in the Domaine du Roy (the French king's domain), a vast territory stretching to the Hudson Bay. Most of the fur trade was carried out here between Amerindians and *coureurs de bois*, and a series of posts was established at, among other places, Tadoussac, Chicoutimi, Sept-Îles, and La Malbaie. After Canada fell under British domination in 1759, the domain was leased to private enterprises such as the Hudson's Bay Company that two now-famous *coureurs de bois*, Radisson and his brother-in-law Médard Chouart des Groseillers, had helped establish in 1670.

This was a century before the English definitively conquered Canada in 1760, a victory confirmed by the 1763 Treaty of Paris in which the colonies of New France and Acadia were transferred to Britain. But business competition between France and England had long been fierce and unapologetic, a tug of war in the middle of which Radisson negotiated his career. Amerindian groups had since the beginning also done their best to monopolize trade with Europeans, the Iroquois warning the French on repeated occasions of great dangers north of Quebec (where the best beaver hunting was, along with competing tribes).

In his posthumously published memoir, *Peter-Esprit Radisson, Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences Among the North American Indians, from 1652 to 1684*, Radisson provides historical information about his business ventures and personal explorations and exploits. Like Perrot, Radisson writes to his employer (in English),²⁸ in this case to advance his quest for a secure position for himself, des

Groseilliers, and des Groseilliers' son. He surely felt the rhetorical need for caution and carefully selected inclusions and exclusions in his narrative, as many critics have observed.²⁹ But on the other hand, Radisson's work is of acknowledged historical value.³⁰ In short, Radisson was a complex and very multifaceted, multitalented individual, who has also been criticized (like Etienne Brûlé) for shifting allegiances between France and England, in his case for business reasons.

This complicated question exemplifies the political and "on the ground" realities for both of the famous *coureurs*, who operated in times of major geographical and socio-ethnic discoveries, expansion by major powers and the attendant conflicts to which this gave rise, and tremendous difficulties for the common man. Even though the interests of survival and business necessarily trumped all other considerations "in the moment," at the same time the *coureurs* were acting as international agents of diplomacy and trade. Their linguistic skills and ability to adapt to lifestyles and mores that were radically different from those with which they had been raised help to explain how and why someone living in such times of cultural upheaval would not have a clearly established sense of national identity, and hence be able with relative ease to switch sides and allegiances.

"We are now Englishmen," Radisson explains simply to his nephew,³¹ adding that he will pay everyone, including the French, "their legitimate due."³² But the deal that he strikes with the English works directly against the French competition and ensures the safety and success of his nephew. This is where Radisson's true loyalty lies, in the final analysis: with his family, in conformance with the cultural and legal practices that Moogk describes. "The royal government encouraged family solidarity

by compelling members to help one another,” Moogk writes.³³ In New France, “bonds of blood entailed mutual aid,” and “after a few generations, the extended family satisfied most of the Canadians’ and Acadians’ social needs, and it provided business partners too.”³⁴ Indeed, never once throughout Radisson’s accounts does he work against the interest of his brother-in-law, sister, or any of his family. When he succeeds in his undertakings, as here, he always finds a way to include them.

In his relation of his 1684 voyage, Radisson addresses Hudson’s Bay officials directly, making his case for a secure position. He can offer, he promises, experience, detailed knowledge, and follow-through. He can show the company “in what manner it was necessary for them [the company] to proceed there for establishing to the best advantage the Beaver trade in the Northern country, the means of properly sustaining it, & of ruining in a short time the trade with foreigners.”³⁵ This reference to his native French people as “the other” illustrates perfectly the mental ease with which Radisson and other adventuresome entrepreneurs moved across cultural borders. Such international fluidity is emblematic of those who ventured out in times where most preferred to stay in their known environments. Often the reason they ventured out was economic, as Moogk details.³⁶

The fur trade was central to commerce; even the Jesuits were deeply involved in the beaver-pelt business, as Radisson notes: “The ffather Jesuits weare desirous to find out a way how they might gett downe the castors [beavers] from the bay of ye north by the Sacgnes, and so make themselves masters of that trade. They resolved to make a tryall as soone as the ice would permitt them.”³⁷ Any significant activity in this weather-dependent enterprise necessitated successful and ongoing interactions with

the “wild men,” as Radisson terms the Amerindians throughout his accounts.

Radisson’s own aptitude for conducting transactions is equally clear, as he illustrates repeatedly his knowledge of Amerindian customs and the imperative to hold a hard line.

It is thanks to skills learned from the Indians that the men in Radisson’s family have endured the most difficult of conditions, including near-starvation and extreme cold: “Our cloaths were frozen on our backs, & wee could not stirr but with great paine; but at length with much adoe wee got ashore, our canoo being broke to peeces.”³⁸ Radisson never loses sight of how he learned all he knows about the wilderness, having lived for many years among the Iroquois. Throughout the accounts his conflicted feelings toward Indians are clear, as he expresses alternatively love, admiration, or disdain. Among several illustrations of his high regard for the native people is his description of a famine during the fourth voyage (ca. 1660), when they share food despite having almost none for themselves, “shewing themselves far gratfuller then many Christians even to their owne relations.”³⁹ Having noted this example of generosity that exceeds anything Radisson witnessed among his people of origin, he goes on to also describe their hunting prowess as they enter Lake Huron:

I cannot forgett here the subtilty [skill] of one of these wildmen that was in the same boat wth me. We see a castor along the watter side, that puts his head out of the watter. That wildman no sooner saw him but throwes himself out into the watter and downe to the bottom, without so much time as to give notice to any, and before many knewed of anything, he brings up the castor in his armes as a child, without fearing to be bitten. By this we see that hunger can doe much.⁴⁰

This passage reflects not just Radisson's admiration of the Indians, but also, on a deeper level, his immediate, fully present connection to the forces of life and death. Everyone is hungry, yet the people with whom he canoes share whatever they obtain. The scene that Radisson describes here represents an individual action that will benefit the group, or one of Deleuze and Guattari's three conditions for what constitutes a minor literature: "Tout prend une valeur collective" (everything takes on a collective value).⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari refer to a minor literature in the process of developing amid a different dominant culture; in Radisson's account, this same concept emerges not from words (aside from those of Radisson's telling) but from actions. Heaving himself without hesitation into the water, the "wildman" dives to the bottom, captures his prey with seeming ease, and emerges cradling it. Radisson uses the imagery of birth and youth to evoke a strong sense of life and vibrancy, as well as gentleness, but the purpose of the hunt is the death of the animal and food for the people.

This is survival at its most basic level, and Radisson experiences it in the company of Indians, who upon his arrival in New France *are* the dominant culture in numbers and in their capacity of being necessary for the survival of the invading culture. Yet it is they who are ultimately dominated, initially because they do not understand that this invasion will be to their detriment, and later because the Europeans become strong enough to oppress them. In this sense, Radisson's account of the "wildman" capturing the beaver directly from a canoe is an *abyme* (miniature reflection) of the story of his travels as a whole, which may be seen as an example of a work of Deleuzo-Guattarien minor literature. The two other criteria that Deleuze and Guattari stipulate for this are deterritorialization and a necessarily political aspect of all

individual action. Radisson, himself a living deterritorialized French rhizome, tells the story of two or more cultures in a state of continuous destabilization and shifting power structures. Amid continually changing situations, his loyalty remains with his family, which temporarily includes Amerindians. It is the apex of deterritorialization, and Radisson negotiates his lurching world through actions that are politically controversial, though he himself strives only to survive and ensure the welfare of those close to him, as in a minor culture. In all, he exemplifies the *coureur de bois* as physical link between the Old and New Worlds and between nature and man, while also representing historically changing attitudes toward “the other.”

Yet it does not follow that the *coureur* experiences only admiration and enthusiasm for the new and strange. Awestruck by the sheer physical space available in the New World, Radisson says of his first sight of Lake Superior:

We embarked ourselves on the delightfulest lake of the world. . . . the country was so pleasant, so beautifull & fruitfull that it grieved me to see y, ye world could not discover such inticing countrys to live in. This I say because that the Europeans fight for a rock in the sea against one another, or for a sterill land and horrid country . . . Contrarywise those kingdoms are so delicious & under so temperat a climat, plentifull of all things, the earth bringing foorth its fruit twice a yeare, the people live long & lusty & wise in their way. What conquest would that bee att litle or no cost; what laborinth of pleasure should millions of people have, instead that millions complaine of misery & poverty!⁴²

Aside from the obvious enjoyment Radisson takes in the out of doors and untamed nature, this passage also reveals his acquisitive and expansionist European mindset. After

holding forth on the beauty of the country, he remembers conditions in his overly crowded original homeland and wishes its population could simply take over that of the Amerindians. How easy and inexpensive this would be, he muses, and it would improve the lives of millions. However, he never wonders in what ways the lives of Amerindians would be altered, ruined, destroyed, or possibly improved. Fond though he is of them, in the end Radisson maintains the typical European view of his age: as human beings the Amerindians are not equal, and their interests are not of equal importance. In all, Radisson's accounts exemplify unexamined assumptions about cultural superiority in flux, as well as the priority of business interests.

Because most *coureurs de bois* remain anonymous, Havard wonders, “combien d'aventuriers obscurs ont échappé aux sources?” (how many obscure adventurers escaped notice in primary sources?)⁴³ This type of musing intersects effectively with that of Michel Serres, philosophical author of *Le contrat naturel* (1990), one of whose themes is that major changes historically have not been agreed upon or even verbally acknowledged; it is only in retrospect that we detect such movements. In this case, Havard looks back at a time long before his own and wonders about all the *coureurs* who lived and made their mark on their world but remained unrecorded in history, silent actors. But perhaps they are not completely silent after all. By considering their lives and their activities, Havard and others study traces, or indicators of a long trail of mute human “agreements” in the sense that Serres evokes. Serres' exhortation that humans must make a conscious contract with the rest of the natural world represents a concept that would have been alien in 17th–19th century French Canada, but its troublesome echoes resonate as a problematic throughout this study.⁴⁴

A Male-Dominated Occupation

Coueurs de bois were young French men, not women, despite Canadian author Antonine Maillet's 20th-century fictional mention of a possible *coureuse de bois* in *Pélagie-la-charrette*, which will be considered in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. Likely a deliberate rhetorical decision on the part of this feminist, playful, and scholarly Rabelaisian author, the reference may also encompass the possibility of an Indian woman, as were most who traveled and worked with and often married *coueurs*. This common marital practice, detailed by Havard and Moogk, established the Métis population that is today classified as one of the three major Canadian Aboriginal groups (with the Inuit and First Nations).⁴⁵ Of course, not all *coueurs* married Amerindian women, but such marriages benefitted the man, the woman (whose status was, as in Europe, far inferior to that of man), and her entire tribe, from the point of view of trade. A few French women participated in the fur trade as permit holders for outfitting canoes (usually for their husbands),⁴⁶ but few European women came to the colonies of New France and Acadia until the early 1700s, and none willingly penetrated the wilderness unaccompanied.⁴⁷ Even in the unlikely event that a European woman would have wanted to become a runner of the woods and trade with Indians, this would not have been a possibility in her world—unless she happened to be abducted by Indians, not tortured and killed, and experience a successful union with an indigenous man.

Along with the fact that *coueurs* were mostly young, the few white women in Canada is the reason commonly given for widespread intermarriage with Indian women, a practice sanctioned intermittently by French officials and priests in the hopes of cultural

assimilation. However, it was more frequently the case that *coureurs* assimilated themselves into the Indians' world, thereby further deteriorating their image in their European-origin society.⁴⁸

Belief Systems and Identities

Havard connects European paganism and superstition to the appeal of Indian belief systems for so many *coureurs*, with their rural backgrounds.⁴⁹ Aside from elucidating the inferior status to which *coureurs* were often relegated in the accounts of upper-class or aspiring upper-class officials, Havard clarifies why indigenous superstitions may often not have been so alien in the minds of many rural Frenchmen. Chapter 4 of this dissertation analyzes the novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, in which author Louis Hémon specifically alludes to French rural superstitions not in the context of *coureurs de bois*, but of the agricultural population. Hémon, a reporter, gives vivid examples of a type of thinking that by the 19th and early 20th centuries had largely been ridiculed among educated classes. Yet it reflects a reality with a long history, one traced by Havard to France and, more widely, European pagan systems that served perhaps ironically to connect many *coureurs* more with Indians than with their fellow—very Catholic—Frenchmen.

The 1763 definitive defeat by the English was, of course, widely deplored among defiant French residents of Canada, at least until the explosion of the French Revolution that left Canada unaffected. Catholics, in particular priests, saw this as a blessing, because it spared the flock from the destructive influences of atheism and helped preserve the “one true religion” in Canada. Overwhelmingly rural, many of the French had settled

in the fertile St. Lawrence Valley (or fled there during or after the 1755–64 Great Upheaval, in which the British brutally expelled Acadians, as will be considered in Chapter 5 in the context of Maillet’s novel).

As the revolutionary 18th century drew to a close and the industrially oriented 19th picked up steam, the English population, still in the minority numerically, dominated the economy, much as the more powerful French had dominated the Indians despite their lesser numbers. The English lived mostly in urban areas and favored their own nationality when hiring. Meanwhile the resentful, rural French clung to their identifying treasures—their land, their language, and their Catholic religion—despite Lord Durham’s notorious affirmation that, “owing to their retaining their peculiar language and manners,” the descendants of the French in Lower Canada were “a people with no history, and no literature.”⁵⁰ Durham, the Crown’s high commissioner, recommended unification in 1839, pursuant to 1837 troubles. He believed that the French would soon give up their hopeless fight, reasoning that:

the French population of Lower Canada, cut off from every people that speaks its own language, can support no national stage.

. . . Much as they struggle against it, it is obvious that the process of assimilation to English habits is already commencing. The English language is gaining ground, as the language of the rich and of the employers of labour naturally will.⁵¹

In fact, of course, French populations throughout Canada spoke regional versions of French, just as dialectical variations occur within every language even after one has achieved dominance and controls the educational system, as did Latin in medieval

Europe and English in 19th-century Canada. French Canadians continued to struggle and eventually prevailed against assimilation with the 1960s progressive establishment of the province of Québec as primarily francophone, in what is known as the Quiet Revolution.⁵² Durham's condescending dismissal also refers to the prejudice that French Canadians endured in the professional arena. But the French put an end to that situation also, as part of the radical social improvements accomplished during the 1960s. French Canadian authors and artists had deliberately set out during the 19th century to identify and build a national ethos distinct from that of France, as Chapter 2 discusses in a review of the literature that contextualizes the works analyzed herein.

1. Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005); Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Ken Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015).

² "Canada in the Making," Early Canadiana Online, <http://www.canadiana.ca/>; "Virtual Museum of New France," Canadian Museum of History, <http://www.historymuseum.ca/>.

³ For example, "Arrêt déchargeant Jean-Baptiste Giguère, voyageur, de l'accusation d'avoir été coursé au pays des Outaouais, après la publication de l'amnistie accordées aux coureurs des bois et ordonnant son élargissement , 1er décembre 1704" (Judgment releasing Jean-Baptiste Giguère, *voyageur*, from the charge of having hunted and

traded in Ottawa country, after the publication of the amnesty granted to *coureurs des bois* and ordering its expansion, 1 December 1704), Bibliothèque et archives nationales Québec (BanQ Québec), Pistard, Fonds conseil souverain, Jugements et délibérations, TP1,S28,P7953; and “Procès par contumace contre les nommés Réaume, Maret, Magnan, Chamaillard et Magdelaine, coureurs des bois, partis traiter illégalement dans l’Outaouais, 25 avril 1712–5 août 1712” (Trial in absentia against those known by the names of Réaume, Maret, Magnan, Chamaillard, and Magdelaine, *coureurs des bois*, who left to trade illegally in Ottawa country, 25 April 1712–5 August 1712), BanQ Québec, Pistard, Fonds Juridiction royale de Montréal, Dossiers, TL4,S1,D1351. See Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages: Indiens et français dans le Pays d’en Haut, 1660–1715* (Sillery, Québec: Les Editions du Septentrion, 2003); and Stéphane Couture, “L’itinéraire historiographique de la ‘figure’ du coureur de bois, 1744–2005,” thesis, Université Laval (2007).

⁴ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 541, citing Riverin. Unless otherwise noted, all translations throughout this dissertation are mine.

⁵ Among numerous other illustrations of this, see “Édit contre les coureurs des bois, il est défendu à tous les Français habitant en Nouvelle-France, domiciliés ou non, de sortir et abandonner leur maison pour vaquer dans les bois plus de 24 heures sans permission du gouverneur et lieutenant général de la Nouvelle-France . . . 4 septembre 1673–5 juin 1673” (Edict against *coureurs des bois*: It is prohibited to all Frenchmen staying in New France, whether or not they are residents, to leave and abandon their house to go about in the woods for more than 24 hours without the permission of the governor and lieutenant-general of New France . . . 4 September 1673–5 June 1673),

BanQ Québec, Pistard, Fonds Cour supérieure, District judiciaire de Québec, Insinuations, CR301,P159.

⁶ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 777–78 ; Jeanne Pomerleau, *Les coureurs de bois: La traite des fourrures avec les Amérindiens* (Québec: Editions J.-C. Dupont, 1996), 43, 124–25.

⁷ Pomerleau, *Les coureurs de bois*, 61–83; Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1955 [(New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1931)]. Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 22, 88.

⁸ See Nute, *The Voyageur*, 7; Havard, *Empire et métissages*,75; Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, xi.

⁹ Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada, A Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 114–20, 122, 219. See also Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 25, 782; Pomerleau, *Les coureurs de bois*,134.

¹¹ By “culture” I refer to a population’s generally accepted mores, traditions, and spiritual beliefs and practices, or what cultural historian Peter Moogk terms the French settlements’ “institutions and practices, along with popular beliefs and values” (*La Nouvelle France*, xvii).

¹² *Truchement* derives from the Arabic *tourdjouman*, “interpreter,” reflecting centuries of international encounters and influences during the medieval period. Champlain had previously referred to a youth who by 1610 had spent two winters in Quebec and now

wanted to live among Algonquins to learn their language. An exchange agreement was reached whereby Champlain took a young Huron to France, and both youths were returned to their people in 1611 (Samuel de Champlain, *Oeuvres de Champlain*, publiées sous le patronage de l'Université Laval par l'abbé C.-H. Laverdière, M.A., 2d ed., 5 vols (Québec: Imprimé au Séminaire par Geo.-E. Desbarats, 1870), vol. 3, 368 [220]); Douglas Hunter, *God's Mercies: Rivalry, Betrayal, and the Dream of Discovery* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2010), 254.

¹³ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 65, 389; Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 289 n. 83; Champlain, *Oeuvres*, vol. 4, 621 [133]; F. Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des hurons situé en l'Amérique vers la mer douce, es derniers confins Nouvelle France dite Canada, avec un dictionnaire de la langue huronne* (Paris: Librairie Tross, 1865 [Paris: Denys Moreau, 1632]), 152.

¹⁴ Champlain, *Oeuvres*, vol. 4, 621 [133].

¹⁵ Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des hurons*, 152.

¹⁶ E. D. Blodgett, "Reports from la Nouvelle France: The Jesuit Relations, Marie de l'Incarnation, and Elisabeth Bégon," chapter 2, *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 38.

¹⁷ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 252–3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁹ Sagard-Theodat, Gabriel. "Excerpts related to Etienne Brûlé's Discovery of Lake Superior," as collected in Butterfield, Consul Willshire, *History of Brulé's Discoveries and Explorations, 1610–1626* (Cleveland, 1898): note XXII to appendix (online facsimile at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=52>).

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- ²⁰ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 539, 558.
- ²¹ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, xv–xvi.
- ²² Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 25; Couture, “L’itinéraire historiographique,” 98.
- ²³ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 77. See also Alain Messier, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique et historique des coureurs des bois* (Montréal: Guérin, 2005).
- ²⁴ Claude Charles le Roy de la Potherie, *Adventures of Nicolas Perrot, 1665–1670*, in Louise P. Kellogg, ed., *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634–1699* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 69–92, at American Journeys, Eyewitness Accounts of Early American Exploration and Settlement: A Digital Library and Learning Center, Wisconsin Historical Society, www.americanjourneys.org/aj-046/.
- ²⁵ Nicolas Perrot, *Mémoire sur les Moeurs, Coustumes et Relligion des Sauvages de L’Amérique Septentrionale*, R. P. G. Tailhan, ed. (Leipzig and Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1864), Tailhan’s preface, vi.
- ²⁶ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 70; Pomerleau, *Les coureurs de bois* 26; Nute, *The Voyageur*, 5; Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, xi, 22.
- ²⁷ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 75.
- ²⁸ Germaine Warkentin, “Who Was the Scribe of the Radisson Manuscript?” *Archivaria* 53 (spring 2002): 47–63. Radisson left writings in both French and English.
- ²⁹ Martin Fournier, *Pierre-Esprit Radisson, Merchant Adventurer, 1636–1701* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2002), 170–71.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

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- ³¹ Pierre-Esprit Radisson, *Peter-Esprit Radisson, Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences Among the North American Indians, from 1652 to 1684* (Boston: Prince Society, 1885), Voyage of 1684, 328. Transcribed from original [translated] manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and the British Museum.
- ³² Radisson, *Peter-Esprit Radisson*, Voyage of 1684, 320.
- ³³ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 217.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 178; see also 206, 214, and chapter 8, “The Sovereign Family.”
- ³⁵ Radisson, *Peter-Esprit Radisson*, Voyage of 1684, 320.
- ³⁶ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 90–92, 118–19.
- ³⁷ Radisson, *Peter-Esprit Radisson*, Fourth Voyage, 173.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, Voyage of 1682–83, 278.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, Fourth Voyage, 186.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Fourth Voyage, 186–87.
- ⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1975), 31.
- ⁴² Radisson, *Peter-Esprit Radisson*, Third Voyage, 150.
- ⁴³ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 66.
- ⁴⁴ Michel Serres, *Le contrat naturel* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1990).
- ⁴⁵ The legacy of the *coureurs de bois* is physical as well as cultural. In 2011, Métis people accounted for 32.3 percent of the total Canadian Aboriginal population, and 1.4 percent of the overall population (National Aboriginal Day: By the Numbers, 2013 [Government of Canada, Statistics and Data, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/p10-eng.cfm>]).

⁴⁶ Pomerleau, *Les coureurs de bois*, 24. See also Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 208, for information about widows in New France as investors.

⁴⁷ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 626–30, 636.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 639–58.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 724.

⁵⁰ “Report on the Affairs of British North America,” from the Earl of Durham, Her Majesty’s High Commissioner, Appendix to Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada, in the Second Year of the Reign of Queen Victoria, 4th Session, 13th Provincial Parliament, Session 1839 (Toronto: Robert Stanton, 1839), Appendices D and E, 95. Upper and Lower Canada were designated by the Canada Act of 1791, separating the region at the Ottawa River. Along the St. Lawrence River, Upper Canada stretched westward, while the expanse of Lower Canada ended at the Atlantic Ocean (“Upper and Lower Canada in 1791,” The Canada Act, *Canada: A Country by Consent*, Ottawa: West/Dunn Productions, <http://www.canadahistoryproject.ca>).

⁵¹ “Report on the Affairs of British North America.”

⁵² In 1867, the three British colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada (which became Ontario and Quebec) were joined as four provinces in the British North America Act, creating the Dominion of Canada. The rest of Canada joined as follows: Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in 1870; British Columbia in 1871; Prince Edward Island in 1873; the Yukon Territory in 1898; Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905; Newfoundland and Labrador in 1949; and Nunavut in 1999 (Parliament of Canada, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/>). The 1931 Statute of Westminster gave Canada full legal autonomy (Canada’s History, <http://www.canadashistory.ca/>).

Chapter 2. Theoretical Approach: Movements through Time and Place on Earth

As detailed in the previous chapter, 17th–19th *coureurs de bois* were backwoodsmen and traders who often learned Amerindian languages and translated for French business and government representatives. Often they lived among indigenous people. They and the *voyageurs*, who did the same type of work as employees, have been widely studied historically and as literary representations of independence and a connection to the wilderness. But, to my knowledge, their history and literary symbolism have not yet been scrutinized from a specifically ecocritical perspective. This chapter specifies the theoretical approach of this dissertation and how it is applied, beginning with definitions and examples of ways in which the theories are illuminated. In conclusion, a brief and partial review of French Canadian literature contextualizes the works examined in the following chapters.

Definitions and Illustrations: Ecocritical Chronotopic Rhizomes

Ecocriticism, “the youngest of the revisionist movements that have swept the humanities over the past few decades,” considers literature and other arts from the viewpoint of “how cultures construct and are in turn constructed by the non-human world.”¹ As a critical approach that seeks to clarify relationships between nature and humans, it is of particular interest to those concerned with contemporary environmental realities such as human-population growth, pollution, and climate change. The term for the discipline, coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” became better known

during the 1990s, especially through the work of Lawrence Buell. It has influenced francophone authors writing in the new millennium and enjoys increasing interest and visibility, especially in regards to the contemporary environmental-justice movement.² The perspective is relevant to analyses of Canadian literature because of the northern nation's well-known link with the wilderness, reflected in the work of nature writers ranging from Catharine Parr Traill in the 19th century to Grey Owl, Louise de Kirilene Lawrence, and Pierre Béland in the 20th and 21st.³ But ecocriticism encompasses much more than a consideration of nature writing. Its cross-disciplinary considerations involve collaborations between biologists, chemists, physicists, literary critics, novelists, and more.⁴ Even its definition is not stable, with critics such as Rob Nixon arguing that the scope needs to further widen and overlap more with studies in postcolonialism.⁵

The present dissertation, in its overall aim of studying French Canadian *coureurs de bois* as an ecocritical literary motif, works from a viewpoint based in material “real-life” reality that is closer to the perspectives of William Cronon and Edouard Glissant than to more idealistic views such as that of Michel Serres, despite the appeal of his exhortation in *Le Contrat naturel* to make a “contract” with Planet Earth to better preserve it.⁶ Elaborations on these various concepts follow throughout this chapter.

In part, my critical viewpoint has arisen from personal experience. During my adolescent years, my family lived near Geneva in Switzerland and then France, in rural areas from where my father drove into the city to work. My best friend's father in Collonge-Bellerive was a farmer, as was our neighbor in Conches. Both were gruff,

weather-beaten, usually kind men, who worked long hours with their hired hands in one case and sons in the other. Neither family romanticized the land or those who lived on it, but they taught my mother how to make fondue and rabbit stew, and they showed us children where to pick blueberries and lilies-of-the-valley in the woods. Their attitude vis-à-vis the natural world was similar to that of a farmer's wife who was for a time my neighbor later in life, when I lived with my husband in the countryside near State College, Pennsylvania. Having unfortunately struck one of her numerous cats with our car one evening, my husband contritely walked to her door to confess and offer to take the cat to the vet. "Just take a stick and kill it!" she advised simply, thanked him, and closed the door. This may be brutal, but it is certainly a direct way of dealing with matters of life and death (happily the cat had run off by the time my husband returned, so we elected to hope for the best and continued on our way).

By contrast, in the Sierra Club one evening I sat and listened to a population-control advocate drone on to a group who already agreed with him about how no problem in the world was more important than population growth, and if we didn't address this, nothing else would matter because it would be the end of everything. This is one of many examples of apocalyptic thinking (in the abstract) that I have encountered among those who allege to espouse the cause of environmentalism. Leaving aside the fact that it takes a long time to change minds, not to mention entire regions of the world whose cultures have prioritized myriad offspring for millennia and that are also plagued with corruption, corporate greed, political paralysis, and international lack of assistance due to perceived self-interest despite claims of

“promoting democracy,” surely there is more than one front on which environmental issues can and should be addressed. Myopia and narrow-mindedness are two characteristics that William Cronon and especially Rob Nixon ascribe to U.S. environmentalists in particular. I draw on the work of these critics in Chapter 4, during the analysis of Louis Hémon’s and Léo-Paul Desrosiers novels.

The effort to widen thinking is characteristic of the second, more inclusive wave of ecocriticism of which Nixon, arguably Cronon, and certainly Timothy Morton are a part. In his exploration of perception versus materiality, Morton concludes that consumerism and environmentalism need to be linked in our thinking, rather than held sacredly apart. In this way, he maintains, we would “awake to the irony that a national park is as reified as an advertisement for an SUV. Ecocritique should aim not only at a globalized capitalism, but also the ‘Nature’ that gets in the way of looking out for actually existing species, including the human species.”⁷ This pragmatic, phenomenological view accounts for the real and imperfect world as it actually is today, characteristically of much of second-wave ecocriticism. Some philosophers, though, were promoting a commonsense, down-to-earth approach much earlier.

For example, in *Poétique de la relation* (1990), which predates Lawrence Buell’s seminal ecocritical work *Environmental Imagination* by five years, Edouard Glissant points out that without acknowledging the trauma that African Caribbeans and other formerly subjugated peoples have survived, the whole issue of “environment” is not even really being addressed in its plenitude. This is the type of postcolonial thinking to which Nixon refers when he urges that it should blend more

with environmentalism. Glissant actually carries this out in *Poétique* as well as in his novel *Tout-monde*.

Revisiting Glissant's *Poétique* is useful for "archeological" explorations such as the present dissertation, because the work sheds light on the key second-wave ecocritical concept of including humans in definitions of nature. Glissant's "catholic" vision (in the sense of all-encompassing) of a diverse and equal world in continuous movement is expressed in this work in a way that is both critical and beautifully poetic. The vision may lack specificity, but it is precisely this aspect of it that enables flexibility and a complete lack of totalitarianism. Glissant addresses the historical, social, political, and economic situations that have converged to arrive at our contemporary reality, which he describes as one dominated (in 1990) by Europe's reunited sense of Christian self-righteousness, U.S. technological power, and Japan's financial sovereignty. With this triangle of power excluding from its serious concerns "les problèmes, les dépendances et les souffrances chaotiques des pays du Sud" (the problems, the dependencies, and the chaotic sufferings of the countries of the South), says Glissant, the solution for these "other" parts of the world lies in changing paradigms of thinking to become inclusive, or really global.⁸

Anti-population-growth laws, for example, represent a totalitarian approach that, in the type of thinking Glissant describes, will fail because of the resistance that will be mounted against them. Instead, Glissant asks readers to listen to the world, and thereby allow for the necessary movement of real, actual life and living beings as opposed to imposing ideologies. In this way, his ideas can serve as a beacon by which

those who are sincerely interested in a better world for all can navigate, ecocritically as well as socially and politically.

Like Cronon, I do not wish in any way to diminish the efforts of environmental groups, most of which, in my view, are essential to keep humans moving in the general direction of Serres' "contract" with the rest of the planet, even though resistance will continue to be met at every step. Also like Cronon, I believe that anyone genuinely concerned with the environment today benefits from working within the context of the real, terribly imperfect world.

Rather than adopting the apocalyptic view so deplorably common in environmental thinking and writing, Glissant seeks solutions through changing ways of thinking. This track obviously takes a very long time, as noted, but it is here that I see the most promise, and it is from this position that I hope to make a contribution by tracing ways of thinking about and dealing with the natural world through the literary trajectory of *coureurs de bois*.

In this process, I will apply modern concepts to earlier historical periods with completely different thought systems. For this reason it is important to keep in mind Mikhail Bakhtin's caveat about critical views of times and places earlier than one's own. As Bakhtin writes in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, "the author is a captive of his epoch, of his own present. Subsequent times liberate him from this captivity, and literary scholarship is called upon to assist in this liberation."⁹

Attempting to see through time in this way, Bakhtin urges critics to approach literary work in its full historical and cultural context, while drawing upon the insights afforded with the passage of time and a greater understanding of events past.

He calls this unique intersection of time and space a *chrontope*. “Everything in this world is a *time-space*, a true *chronotope*,” Bakhtin he writes.¹⁰ He uses this notion to discuss the creation of historical novels, which necessarily attempt to reconstruct a believable picture of earlier times while maintaining their own later viewpoint. “Everything is material in this world, and at the same time everything is intensive, interpreted, and creatively necessary.”¹¹ Bakhtin then evokes the level of skill needed to grasp, select, and render the most representative and vivid details from the period(s) in question, while also effectively “speaking” to one’s own time. The need for writers to contextualize the periods under scrutiny historically as well as geopolitically applies equally to critics; therefore, this dissertation periodically draws on Bakhtin’s chronotopic reminders, particularly in the analysis of Antonine Maillet’s historical novel in Chapter 5.

In what is, I hope, a parallel movement through the dissertation, the main images upon which I draw to illustrate the chronotopes under consideration are those of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. As an overall historical event, the cultures that met in Canada were in an active process of becoming, or Deleuze and Guattari’s *devenir*. The concept underlies the ideas elaborated in this dissertation. In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari evoke a continuing physical, material rhythm of “deteritorialization” and “reterritorialization,” using biological metaphors:

Le territoire se forme au niveau d’un certain *décodage*. Les biologistes ont souligné l’importance de ces marges déterminées . . . qui ne se confondent pas avec des mutations, c’est-à-dire avec des changements intérieurs au code: il s’agit . . . de gènes dédoublés ou de chromosomes surnuméraires, qui ne sont pas

pris dans le code génétique, sont fonctionnellement libres et offrent une matière libre à la variation. Mais qu'une telle matière puisse créer de nouvelles espèces indépendamment des mutations reste très improbable, *si les événements d'un autre ordre ne s'y joignent pas, capables de multiplier les interactions de l'organisme avec ses milieux*

(The [new] territory is shaped at the level of a type of *decoding*. Biologists have stressed the importance of these predetermined margins . . . that are not to be confused with mutations, that is with changes that are in the code. Rather, this pertains to . . . duplicated genes or extra chromosomes that are not captured in the genetic code, but functionally free and able to provide uncontrolled material for variation. But that such material could create new species independently of mutations is very unlikely, *without the action of events of a different type, capable of multiplying the interactions of the organism with its environment* [emphasis mine]).¹²

The philosophers specify in a note that biologists differentiate between mutations and other types of transformation that can be genetic, geographical, or even psychic (metaphysical). A contemporary biologist would not likely be involved in researching psychic phenomena (nor do Deleuze and Guattari cite one), a point that reminds readers that the philosophers at times push analogies further than science might warrant.¹³ Nevertheless, the biological metaphor effectively brings to life their notion of dynamic change and renewal at all levels of existence.

Bakhtin enlists a similar metaphoric use of nature, that of Goethe imagining mountains that are alive. "The scientific groundlessness of this hypothesis is quite

unimportant to us here,” Bakhtin notes. “What is important are the characteristic features of Goethe’s way of seeing.”¹⁴ Just so in the case of Deleuze and Guattari. Our concern here is to study in literature traces of young French colonists who, in the process of invading the New World, also assimilated themselves into it and helped to create a new culture, both mentally and physically. In developments such as this, a Deleuzo-Guattarian view would be that only the *devenir* itself is real, because it is the only event actually taking place, in an activity they define as “un verbe” and “un rhizome.” This living, rhizomic growth takes place not in a linear movement but “par des communications transversales entre populations hétérogènes”¹⁵ (by transversal communication between heterogenous populations). The rhizome spreads by cutting across lines that separate peoples of dissimilar genetic codes. This is the way in which *coureurs* can be seen as themselves *being* rhizomes in both body and spirit.

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphor for becoming is illuminated by an interpretation of *coureurs* as a physical and cultural ecocritical motif in literature. As well, the woodsmen’s desire to penetrate wilderness and profit from its fruits can be viewed as a manifestation of Deleuze and Guattari’s “desiring machine,” which is always moving toward “ces nouvelles régions où les connexions sont toujours partielles et non personnelles, les conjonctions, nomades et polyvoques . . . terre nouvelle où le désir fonctionne d’après ses éléments et ses flux moléculaires” (new regions in which connections are always partial and unpersonal, [and] conjunctions are nomadic and polyvocal . . . a new territory where desire operates according to its elements and molecular flow).¹⁶

As applied to an analysis of the French-Canadian literary works studied in this dissertation, these notions of movement, becoming, and desiring concern the formation of a new identity that retains the cultural codes and biological genes of its origin while also growing into something new and different that takes its nourishment and shape from elements found in the new soil, materially and culturally. The historical *coureurs de bois* were at the juncture of this continually moving paradigm, which at times became a vortex.

Perceptions of the Other

In literature, the search for life's meaning has necessitated confrontations with "the other" since the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in which the king of Uruk teams up with the wildman Enkidu to defeat a monster and a beast before Gilgamesh must contend with his friend's death and his own unsuccessful quest for everlasting life. In Homer's *Odyssey*, all the hero wants after ten years of war is to return home, but first Odysseus must confront repeated negotiations with the strange, fantastic, and horrible, such as the near-fatal escape from the cyclops' cave. *Beowulf's* epic tells of how the hero must defeat two monsters and a dragon before being overcome and buried with great honors, thereby ensuring, as did Gilgamesh, that his name will live on. Throughout recorded history and storytelling, encountering "the other," both non-human and human, has been a disruptive event that challenges and pushes the limits of the imagination. Those of exceptional strength and wit come to embody the ability to navigate successfully precarious but necessary encounters, and as their stories pass from one generation to the next, they grow in scope. In time heroes become enmeshed

with cultural identity, and many came to see their own as being the best. Edward Said explains and develops this unconscious psychological progression in *Orientalism*.¹⁷

But views of the other work in both directions, and what was to 16th century Europeans a New World full of wildmen was to Amerindians a home invaded by beings who wielded amazing technology. *Coueurs de bois* were part of this invasion, but they connected with the Indians in part through love of the wilderness, or at least willingness to negotiate it on a regular basis, in some cases never returning to the settlements that were their point of departure. Some met an untimely demise; started new lives elsewhere, including, very commonly, among the Amerindians, as noted. Such an intimate connection with *sauvages*, as indigenous people were often referred to as late as 1950,¹⁸ was one of the reasons *coueurs* were branded in the colony of New France as outsiders, marginal to society, quasi-savage themselves, and certainly “other” within their own culture.

Montaigne questioned and dissected the European concept of “savage” as early as 1580, when his *Essais* first appeared. Reflecting on cultural differences after seeing and discussing three Brazilian natives in Rouen in 1562, he wrote in “Des Cannibales”:

Or je trouve . . . qu’il n’y a rien de barbare et de sauvage en cette nation, à ce qu’on m’en a rapporté, sinon que chacun appelle barbarie ce qui n’est pas de son usage; comme de vray il semble que nous n’avons autre touche de la vérité et de la raison que l’exemple et idée des opinions et usances du païs où nous sommes. . . . Ils sont sauvages, de mesmes que nous appellons sauvages les fruicts que nature, de soy et de son progrez ordinaire, a produits: là où, à la vérité, ce sont

ceuz que nous avons alterez par nostre artifice et detrounez de l'ordre commun, que nous devrions appeller plutost sauvages.

(However . . . I find nothing barbaric or savage in these people, according to what I have been told, if not that we call barbarism that which is unfamiliar to us; just as, in truth, it seems our only touchstones of truth and reason are examples and concepts about the opinions and practices held in the country where we are. . . . They are wild in the same way we call "wild" the fruits that nature, of itself and through its ordinary processes, produces: whereas actually, we should be calling wild those whom we have altered by our artifice and turned away from the common order).¹⁹

In this passage, Montaigne establishes the enduring concept of "the good savage," taken up and developed during the Enlightenment especially by Rousseau. It is a patronizing vision that Montaigne goes on to qualify by describing the natives' natural ignorance that puts them closer to "nature," versus his own culture's much greater sophistication and knowledge. Long accepted, today postcolonials, ecocritics, and many others have exposed such views as being part and parcel of the paradisiacal, naive view of nature that contributed to the oppression and destruction of non-dominant cultures and the wilderness.

But Montaigne, in the passage cited above, focuses more on subjective and skewed reporting than on the question of whether or not indigeneous people are actual savages. He has, he tells us, relied on the descriptions of a traveler, which in and of itself, he acknowledges, is problematic because of the inevitable self-interest and other forms of subjectivity that will enter the narrative and be accepted by unquestioning

listeners as fact. Montaigne explores questions of perception and the processes of thought itself, in a much larger sense than seeing new types of people for the first time. It is “truth” and “reason” that he seeks, and in front of which he discerns many rhetorical veils. This is the “artifice” of which he speaks when noting that it is these human-generated alterations of reality that we should be terming “wild.” People from other cultures very different from ours stand simply as they are, created by nature rather than by the stories of exaggerating travelers who wish to appear to know everything, Montaigne says. Yet these are the reports he has, and so Montaigne attempts to sift through them while combining them with what he sees and hears before him in the natives themselves.

In this way, in “Des Cannibales” Montaigne questions the commonly held view of others and subjective reports about their cultures from fellow Europeans. But he does not question the assumption that European culture is more advanced. Montaigne raises doubt about the terminology *sauvage*, but in so doing he also confirms a culturally held notion about people who lived in the wilds. It would endure for centuries and had already been in the European psyche since medieval times, as historian Peter Moogk explains. During the late medieval period and throughout the Renaissance, art and architecture portrayed “many representations of a being whom German-speakers called the *Wildermann*, the English referred to as the ‘Green Man,’ and the French termed *l’homme sauvage*. This mythical creature was a hairy, solitary being who lived in the woods and was customarily portrayed wearing a leafy girdle and holding a club or uprooted tree.”²⁰ In the European mind, Moogk says, the older meaning of these terms was “not so hostile,” but rather indicated people who were

“physically powerful, yet ignorant of religion, government, and civil society. . . . Tales of the wild people were known to Europeans during the Age of Discovery and they continued to shape perception of Amerindians in later centuries.”²¹ Despite the efforts of French writers such as Brother Chrestien Le Clerq (in 1691) and Father Joseph-François Lafitau (in 1724) to distinguish New World Amerindians from Europe’s hairy woodsmen, both the preconception and the terminology endured, developing over time into a far less sympathetic notion.²²

While Havard deconstructs and examines long-held cultural ideas in *Empires et métissages*, the historian makes use of Montaigne’s essay on cannibalism only in the specific context of anthropophagy, not in his examination of assumptions about superiority.²³ Nevertheless, Havard’s study unequivocally indicates and documents extensively the fact that by their close association with Indians, *coureurs de bois* were themselves seen as quasi-*sauvage*, and as planting the (literal) seeds of many more little savages.²⁴

Among the many reasons for which *coureurs* were associated with criminality was their frequent refusal to “settle down”—that is, among French compatriots. The *coureur de bois*, explains Havard,

refuse en effet de se sédentariser (“continuellement en course”) et on l’associe naturellement à la figure du nomadisme et du vagabondage. Les coureurs de bois “demeurent des quatre et six ans sans revenir,” ils sont “incapables d’autre chose que de courir,” notent les administrateurs. D’“humeur volage,” “sans aveu, ni feu, ni lieu,” le voyageur dérange, et ce d’autant plus que l’errance est associée au brigandage, comme la criminalité l’est à la marginalité.

L'instabilité—géographique, sociologique, culturelle—du coureur de bois est un défi au caractère statique de la société.

(indeed refuses to settle down [“continually running”] and is naturally associated with the image of nomadism and vagrancy. The *coureurs de bois* “stay gone for four to six years without returning,” they are “incapable of anything other than running,” administrators note. Of “volatile disposition,” “with no admission, hearth, nor place,” the voyageur disturbs, even more so because wandering is associated with brigandage, just as is crime with marginality. The instability—geographical, sociological, cultural—of the *coureur de bois* defies the static characteristic of society).²⁵

It is precisely this variability on so many fronts that makes the *coureur* such an intriguing figure from a Deleuzo-Guattarien/ecocritical point of view. These men serve as physical embodiments of changing cultural notions and assumptions.

In terms of the effects of the growing and intensifying commerce of which they were a part, thus part of the capitalist “desiring machine,” ecocritics William Chaloupka and McGregor Cawley observe that one of Michel Foucault’s “most recognized accomplishments” was “to have found compelling ways to bring attention to the processes by which the habits of self-disciplined individuals have been built. . . . The poststructuralist concern with the making of self is more than a psychology of habit. When one alters the notion of the constituent individual, the very roots of the state are at issue.”²⁶ This comment about a threat to the state helps to further clarify why the 17th–18th century intendants and governors of New France saw the *coureurs*

as dangerous. Allowing them too much freedom in an authoritarian system had the potential, eventually, to bring it down.

Foucault's focus was on the patterns of thought reflected in discourse, and complaints to the king from Canada reflect the prevailing royal concern with absolute authority. This was then a cultural bedrock, a foundational assumption that in rhetorical terms could be questioned only at great personal risk. The individual existed to serve the monarch.

Today, even in the context of the triumph of the individual in the sense of freer modes of thought, habits in mental processes also should be questioned. Wilderness advocates, frequently unwilling to account for points of views and interests beyond what they perceive to be those of nature, often think and speak in a way that evokes what could be described as one of Foucault's heterotopias, or or alternative notions of utopia. Chaloupka and Cawley identify this as problematic because it elevates the land to a status greater than any other considerations, including human. They urge, "there are other ways to politicize the environment," ways that involve a change in ways of thinking, both philosophically and environmentally.²⁷ This process involves probing, questioning, and engaging others, rather than attempting to tell them what they *should* think. Efforts to discover and discuss some of the psychological origins and ongoing challenges associated with environmental use and abuse also necessitate attempting to understand alternative points of view and to account for them in possible solutions.

Coureurs challenged what Chaloupka and Cawley describe as notions of what constitutes an individual within the state. Consequently, they were seen as potentially destabilizing it. Because of their willingness to embrace more than one way of living

and belief system, they were multifaceted and rhizomatic. They can even be seen as living heterotopias, creators of alternative spaces. Their rhizomatic, continually deterritorializing movement cleared new mental spaces where they and others (not including the beleaguered beaver) could survive and thrive. *Coueurs* were able to embrace “the other.”

Only a few individuals, for example Nicolas Perrot (1644–1717), discussed in Chapter 1, commanded the respect of contemporary government personnel as well as of later analysts. Jesuit scholar Jules Tailhan, posthumous editor of Perrot’s work, discovered the manuscript in Paris in the 1860s and painstakingly edited the work, in 1865 publishing Perrot’s *Mémoire sur les moeurs, coutumes et religion des sauvages de l’Amérique septentrionale*. In his introduction, the editor’s choice of words reveals his low opinion of *coueurs de bois*. Even as he praises Perrot’s impressive accomplishments, Tailhan refers to the woodsman’s original profession with the qualifier “mere”:

D’abord simple coureur de bois de son métier (1665–1684) et interprète par occasion (1671, 1701), il fut ensuite, sous les gouvernements successifs de MM. de La Barre, Denonville et Frontenac (1684–1699), chargé d’un commandement analogue à celui de nos chefs de bureaux arabes en Algérie. Son habileté dans les langues du pays, son éloquence naturelle, le mélange heureux de hardiesse, de sang-froid et de libéralité qui faisait le fond de son caractère, lui acquirent bientôt l’estime, la confiance et même l’affection des naturels, autant du moins que ces peuples sont accessibles à ce dernier sentiment.

(At first a mere *coureur de bois* by trade (1665–84) and occasional interpreter (1671, 1701), he was then given, under the successive governments of MM. de La Barre, Denonville, and Frontenac (1684–99) a command similar to those of our Arab bureau chiefs in Algeria. His skill in the languages of the country, his natural eloquence, the happy blend of courage, composure, and generosity that formed the basis of his character, soon earned him the esteem, confidence, even the affection of the natives, at least insofar as the latter sentiment is accessible to these people).²⁸

In both this introduction and notes, Tailhan uses the term *coureur de bois* only in the context of a negligible position, limited by the word “mere” (or simple) to indicate that this lowly status is worth mentioning only because Perrot then rose to command of a post. He held a position of responsibility that Tailhan compares to those in Algeria, a French colonial holding that the Métropole valued far more than Canada. Thus, in Tailhan’s view, the *coureur* rose above his humble station to become a person of note.

But Havard, writing from his 21st-century historian’s standpoint, describes the same man as “Nicolas Perrot, explorateur, coureur de bois, interprète et diplomate auprès des nations amérindiennes des Grands Lacs” (Nicolas Perrot, explorer, *coureur de bois*, interpreter, and diplomat to the Indian nations of the Great Lakes). Havard then provides details on the multifaceted aspects of this work, specifying: “Coureur de bois de profession, mais aussi agent de la *Pax Gallica*, Perrot tâche de restaurer l’alliance ici et là parmi les peuples de la Baie, non seulement en limitant les heurts inter-indiens, mais aussi en s’efforçant de remédier aux meurtres de Français” (*Coureur de bois* by profession, but also *Pax Gallica* diplomat, Perrot attempts to

restore various alliances among the peoples of the Bay, not only by limiting inter-Indian clashes, but also by striving to remedy the murders of Frenchmen).²⁹ Havard places more importance on Perrot's intercultural skills, which a *coureur de bois* had to possess in order to survive. The difference is notable between Havard's modern critical perceptions and those of Taihan writing in the mid-19th century, both of them about a 17th-century memoir. The contemporary Havard is barely concerned, if at all, with social limitations such as stations in life, because society has become so much more fluid. Despite the peacemaking abilities noted by both scholars, their overall understanding varies considerably, illustrating that perceptions are framed in the context of the times, and terminology reflects this.

Foucault addresses this phenomenon in *Les mots et les choses*, his exploration of the history of human thought, or what he terms an archeology of mankind's idea of itself as a subject of study and knowledge. Foucault's theories explain how thought processes shape what becomes reality for both mankind and the rest of life on this planet. In considering points of view and perspective, Foucault uses Vélasquez' painting *Las Meninas* (1656) as an example. He writes:

Nul regard n'est stable, ou plutôt, dans le sillon neutre du regard que transperce la toile [de l'artiste] à la perpendiculaire, le sujet et l'objet, le spectateur et le modèle inversent leur rôle à l'infini. . . . La fixité opaque qu'elle [la toile] fait régner d'un côté rend pour toujours instable le jeu des métamorphoses qui au centre s'établit entre le spectateur et le modèle.

(No view is stable, or rather, in the neutral line of sight that cuts perpendicularly across the canvas [of the artist], the subject and the object, viewer and model

reverse their roles into infinity. . . . The opaque fixity that [the painting] portrays on one side renders permanently unstable the play of transformations established in the center between the viewer and the model).³⁰

Foucault analyzes how the painting at first glance appears to center on a beautiful young girl, the queen Maria Theresa, daughter of King Philip IV of Spain and Mariana of Austria, but in reality shows an entire surrounding, shifting, complicated interplay of positions and characters, reflecting the world of its time. Even the painter is included. The room actually teems with people and change and movement, and Foucault uses this as a metaphor for the subjectivity and perpetual shifting of human perceptions.

In a similar fashion, the encounter between Europeans and Amerindians cannot be considered with pure objectivity. The critic's point of view is always situated, bringing with it certain perspectives and blind spots not necessarily shared by the object of inquiry. Perrot considers events from his immediately present standpoint as a French stakeholder dealing with natives he hopes to subjugate and exploit. Tailhan, looking back in time with both the benefits and the limitations described by Bakhtin, evaluates the situation in a similar way to that of Perrot because of his similar interests as a missionary Jesuit. Havard, in today's times of much greater social equality and movement, holds no stake in either the business practices or the belief systems of Perrot and the Amerindians, seeking only to elucidate both while considering them from a modern mindset that limits his ability to perceive long-past realities "on the ground." And the present dissertation is also necessarily limited as well as strengthened by its chronological context and its focus on one or two aspects of a

very complex and shifting picture, again echoing Bakhtin's caveat about contextualizing critical views within their times, while also benefitting from the distance provided from one's own more recent perspective.

Capitalist European Savagery

The invasive European mentality felt entitled to the New World's natural resources; this was an unquestioned given. Only the *coureurs de bois*, and others such as *voyageurs* who interacted closely with Indians of the region on their own terms, and who did not try to change them, represented an authentic meeting of one culture with another. The Franciscans and Jesuits, courageous, sincere, anxious to self-sacrifice for the glory of their God, ventured into the wilderness to save (by changing) savages. By contrast, the *coureurs* did so to meet them and conduct business that would benefit all concerned.

The need to survive by any means possible being the essence of the life force, a Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic movement is identifiable here. For example, it was the highly developed survival skills of Pierre-Esprit Radisson, considered in Chapter 1 of this dissertation through his own writings, that enabled the now-famous *coureur de bois* to move from canoeing and hunting in the wilderness to negotiating in London or Paris. The "desiring machine" of his fierce resolve was the source of Radisson's personal power that drove him in both the forest and city. In *L'Anti-Oedipe*, Deleuze and Guattari use a capitalist, desiring-machine metaphor to explain the functioning of the subconscious in the modern world, but these ideas also pertain to earlier times. Radisson can be seen as a physical manifestation of the concept. Bodily and mentally,

he represents the rhizomatic spread of Europe into the New World, where his presence has effects on both the new terrain and the old. Indeed, one of most enduring effects of the *coureurs* in the New World was the creation of a new population, the Métis, today one of three main Indian groups in Canada (the other two being Inuit and First Nations). These may have been happenstance encounters in the beginning, but as Gilles Havard's history details, some *coureurs* felt they actually had more in common with Indians than with their compatriots of higher social ranks.

It was trade that brought together these highly diverse groups of people. The focus on trade is clear and intense on all sides of the enterprise. By this very intensity, as well as through the intersection of languages and cultures, these cultural and commercial exchanges also exemplify Deleuze and Guattari's ongoing process of deterritorialization, which precedes that of *le devenir*. They explain it in *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, in reference to the fall of the Habsbourg empire: "La décomposition et la chute de l'empire redoublent la crise, accentuent partout les mouvements de déterritorialisation, et suscitent des reterritorialisations complexes, archaïsantes, mythiques ou symbolistes" (The decline and fall of empire repeat the crisis, everywhere accentuating movements of deterritorialization and provoking complex reterritorialisations, whether archaic, mythical, or symbolic).³¹ The same can be said of the situation for the French in Canada. After the Seven Years' (or French and Indian) War (1756–63), victorious England increasingly controlled Canada until it became a self-governing element of the British Empire in 1867 (shortly thereafter winning full independence). The "becoming" of Canada, in Deleuzo-Guattarien terms, is a troubled process, with cultural and physical rhizomes becoming tangled and

enmeshed, metamorphosing the Canadian cultural environment into a nordic bayou-like maze.

After 1760 the French population felt deterritorialized and abandoned. As the people began a long process of reterritorialization, preference for good jobs went to the English who spoke the new dominant, official language. But Canada's unique blend of cultures and its new geopolitical situation would in time give rise to a new nation that has faced new and different crises, including declines and falls such as that of the previously English-dominated government of the Province of Quebec. After another long process of continual disruption, the 1960s Quiet Revolution established a French-speaking province as almost its own mini-empire within the constitutional monarchy of Canada, an independent member of Britain's Commonwealth of Nations. In short, Canada's complicated economic, cultural, and geopolitical past has retained strong elements of its French-colonial and post-European invasion beginnings. For the Amerindians and the French in particular, it has been an arduous process of deterritorializations and reterritorializations, often physically.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, those among the French who learned most from the Indians had already been predisposed to a sensitivity toward the natural world through their original agricultural or otherwise rural connections in France or Canada. Jean-François Mouhot, in exploring "L'Influence amérindienne sur la société en Nouvelle-France" (Amerindian influence on the society of New France) specifies that it was especially the French who were able to experience an in-depth intercultural connection, because the English arrived in great numbers after them. The English did

not benefit, as Mouhot puts it, from the Amerindian “vent de liberté” (wind of freedom).³²

Almost from the beginning, though, business conglomerates and merchants strove to organize themselves so that they could hire, indenture, or enslave others to do the physical labor, while they purchased, resold, and realized a profit. The origins of capitalism remain widely debated, but in broad terms, merchant-capitalist (or mercantilist) exchanges had been taking place since medieval times, developing into industrial capitalism during the 18th century, with a heavy dependence on wage labor. By the 19th century, the ever-increasing intensity and size of these exchanges had incited ideas about how to counter or at least limit it in various forms of socialism. The capitalist-communist opposition will pertain to the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, in the context of discussing first Joseph-Charles Taché’s *Forestiers et voyageurs*, about the logging industry; and then in the following chapter Léo-Paul Desrosiers’ *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, about the 19th century fight for dominance between two major fur-trading companies.

In the early 19th century, the extent of the continent had been established by Alexander Mackenzie’s 1793 crossing, which attained the Pacific near today’s U.S.-Canada border. The ground had yet to be cleared, possessed, and exploited. It was a process of invasion, resistance, accommodation, and learning, in which the intersections of populations and cultures gave rise to a new culture. Serres’ *Contrat naturel* addresses this invasive aspect of human behavior, which will be of relevance throughout this dissertation, in particular in the context of analyzing Antonine Maillet’s novel *Pélagie-la-charette* in Chapter 5.

Serres points to previous centuries in which humans operated on Earth according to agreements that were never written or formalized, such as exploitation of the land and of people deemed inferior, or at least not as important as those who dominated, wherever they were or traveled to (invaded) on the planet. *Coueurs de bois* spread like French rhizomes into the forests of Canada during the reign of Louis XIV, whose focus in the New World was to extract as many riches as possible. Champlain tried to convince the French powers that the colony of New France was viable and should be cultivated and encouraged, but sufficient resources were always lacking. Nevertheless, people seeking (or forced to seek, as Moogk details) new lives continued to transplant themselves and expand their resources. Many failed and returned to France, or died in the New World. But some succeeded and eventually prevailed, and all the anonymous *coueurs* about whom Havard wonders contributed to this momentum. It was certainly not all beneficial to the planet or to its other inhabitants, but it represents a move toward greater cultural exchanges and accommodations in the history of human interactions. *Coueurs* needed to have a certain degree of fearlessness in order to venture where they did, into a world of *sauvages* known to torture and eat people. At the same time, they needed to be undaunted by their own people's view of them as wildmen, all of which leads to a picture of just how unruly many among them must have been.

Unruly Characters in an Unstable Literature

Canadian literature, in 1917 no more than a short chapter in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, today fills its own 753-page volume. The editors describe the

history of this canon as having “always been a fractured discourse, notoriously difficult to define along chronological or national lines.”³³ Aside from problems generated by early European-Amerindian interactions, Howells and Kröller note, “the problem of multiple beginnings and conflicting allegiances continues with Canada’s fraught bilingual and bicultural traditions which are written into the history of its European colonization and which continue to feature in its postcolonial politics.”³⁴ This does not account for contemporary complications added by increasingly visible indigenous allegiances and traditions, or for growing populations from other parts of the world, however chapters 25 through 28 cover literatures from these peoples. Such a book can never address all the issues or even all the authors that it ideally should, but it amply illustrates the complexity of what is today an established national literature. These annals comprise subsections that can be classified in various ways, one of which is by comparison with contemporaneous literatures from other parts of the world.

By this standard, Canadian scholar and poet E. D. Blodgett observes that 19th-century Canadian literature “took much of its ideology from European Romanticism,” the genre selected, in combination with the historical narrative, for “the not insignificant task of developing identities and national aspirations.”³⁵ The effect in Canada of the romantic movement in Europe was to inspire French Canadian writers to relate their historical truths within that framework, with the aim of motivating their compatriots. They strove to preserve their cultural roots in the land to which their population had already spread beyond its original borders. Moreover, in this new soil the writers hoped to galvanize their people to nourish new cultural shoots of their own.

One important result of this push was the *roman du terroir*, exemplified among other works by Patrice Lacombe's *La Terre paternelle* (1846) and Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (1913), the latter of which is analyzed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Roland Michel Tremblay writes in his presentation of "Canadian Literature in French" that technically, this national literature can be said to have begun "with the introduction of a printing press and the founding of a weekly bilingual newspaper, the *Québec Gazette*, in 1764."³⁶ But from another point of view, one can equally well maintain, as does E. D. Blodgett, that French Canadian literature begins with the accounts of Catholic priests and missionaries. "To neglect these texts, especially the Jesuit *Relations*, simply because they inscribe an ideology that does not fit the contemporary doxa would be to distort the sense of Canada's arrival into history," he writes.³⁷ Indeed, it was the writings of the 17th-century Franciscan missionary Gabriel Sagard and then the annual Jesuit reports (1632–73) that introduced Canada to many people of influence in Europe.³⁸ It is, thus, an arguable position that these works should be included in a thorough overview of Canadian, and especially French Canadian, literature.

One of the reasons for the notorious difficulty in dating this canon is that until 1763, "Canada" meant the colonies of New France and Acadia, and thereafter it was part of the British Empire. Therefore, a scholar looking at this background could find reasons to consider "Canadian literature" as having begun at any time between Cartier's 16th-century explorations and the 1763 British conquest. Writings grew out of the international fracas—a perspective from which it could also make sense to date a literature that is specifically *French Canadian* from 1838, when the Earl of Durham

made the infamous speech referred to in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, describing French Canadians as having neither history nor literature. They responded.

It was Durham who inspired François-Xavier Garneau “with the desire to demonstrate to his compatriots and the world that French Canadians had a glorious history.”³⁹ Garneau’s 1845–48 monumental *L’Histoire du Canada* presented the fullness of the French story, galvanizing the historical, literary, artistic, cultural, and socioeconomic movement that would ultimately culminate in the 1960s Quiet Revolution and the establishment of Quebec as a francophone province.

One of the main themes expressed in French Canadian literature has been historical, as seen in works such as poetry from the Patriotic School of Québec, established in 1860 and inspired by Garneau. The poet Octave Crémazie and the writer/historian/literary critic Henri-Raymond Casgrain were members of this movement, and the latter cofounded the literary periodical *Les Soirées Canadiennes* with Taché, whose writing is the subject of this dissertation’s next chapter.

Another very common theme is nature in its glory and terror, which runs through both French and English writings. Two environmental factors are at the foundation of this initial stage of Canadian-identity creation: climate and geographical location. In winter, temperatures in Quebec can drop below -20 degrees Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit), while in summers, black flies and mosquitos are ubiquitous in the woods. Such conditions imposed limitations on Europeans as to what was possible and who would be able to survive. Secondly, France’s unique interest in Canada lay in its natural resources, which was a continual source of frustration for Champlain. The explorer and entrepreneur’s obsessive dream was to establish a sustainable and

growing colony. But most businessmen wanted only the furs, especially the beaver coveted by the Métropole's garment industry.

Obtaining the furs meant France had to contend with the savages, who, in the imagination of most Europeans, embodied the wilderness from which they came. They needed to be assimilated to become true, civilized members of the French community—even if lesser. Just like the rough country, it was necessary to dominate and use them, to exploit them as a resource. The earth needed clearing so it could be farmed; the people needed converting to the true and only valid religion on Earth, and, to this end, the French endorsed intermarriage, as historians Gilles Havard and Peter Moogk show. The Franciscans and then the Jesuits accepted their spiritual mission with enthusiasm.

In one way or another, colonists had to negotiate wilderness routinely, and this was the area of expertise of a *coureur de bois*. His traces in literature extend well beyond specific reference to him, as Moogk explains: a direct connection with wilderness even came to characterize colonial-era ideas about what differentiated a colonist of New France from a Frenchman.⁴⁰ Thus, the woodsman's skills helped in both a physical and an abstract sense to build a new country and a complicated, unstable culture and literature.

By the 18th century, even the way Canadians built their houses, incorporating elements of indigenous construction, distinguished them from their European forebears, Moogk says: "Like the people who built them, these timber dwellings had fully adapted to the new environment, a land of forests and brutally cold winters."⁴¹

This concept reflects an ecocritical awareness of how environment can not only influence the human psyche and behavior, but actually become part of it.

Having introduced the historical *coureurs de bois* in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 2 elaborated on the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I now turn to an in-depth consideration of one 19th and then three 20th-century works of recognized and lasting literary interest. Throughout the dissertation, the centering question is how *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* represent the uneven and controversial human relationship with the rest of the natural world, in their journey through the literature of Canada and the globe.

¹ “What is Ecocriticism?” European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment, <http://www.easlce.eu/about-us/what-is-ecocriticism/>. My understanding and definition of “culture” is specified in Chapter 1.

² Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, “Environmental Justice, Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy,” in Ken Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 135–42. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Northeast Modern Language Association, 2013 CFP: French and Francophone, http://nemla.org/convention/2013/cfp_french.html.

³ David R. Boyd, ed., *Northern Wild: Best Contemporary Canadian Nature Writing* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2001).

⁴ Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, 131–33.

⁵ Rob Nixon, “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism,” *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, 196–206.

⁶ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, 102–19. Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990). Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1990).

⁷ Timothy Morton, “Imagining Ecology without Nature,” *The Essential Reader*, 253.

⁸ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 205.

⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 5.

¹⁰ Bakhtin, “The *Bildungsroman*,” in *Speech Genres*, 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 396.

¹³ Brian Rehill, professor of biology, U.S. Naval Academy, conversations with author, 2014.

¹⁴ Bakhtin, “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism,” in *Speech Genres*, 29.

¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 396.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe*, 380–81.

¹⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [Random House, 1978]).

¹⁸ For example, Damase Potvin, *Le Roman d’un roman: Louis Hémon à Péribonka* (Quebec: Editions du Quartier Latin, 1950), 68.

¹⁹ Michel de Montaigne, “Des Cannibales,” *Essais* (Bordeaux: Féret et fils, 1870, vol. 1 [1580]), livre premier, chap. 31, 169–70.

²⁰ Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada, A Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 17.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 18–20 and Chapter 2.

²³ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 22, 745.

²⁴ Regarding mainstream French Canadian society’s fears about “going Indian” and the marginal status of *coureurs de bois*, see, for example, Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 777–82.

²⁵ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 539, citing works and archival documents from Charlevoix, Intendant Champigny, Baron Lahontan, Intendant Raudot, and Governor Denonville.

²⁶ William Chaloupka and McGregor Cawley, “The Great Wild Hope,” in Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, eds., *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 20–21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Nicolas Perrot, *Mémoire sur les Moeurs, Coustumes et Relligion des Sauvages de L’Amérique Septentrionale*, R. P. G. Tailhan, ed. (Leipzig and Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1864), Tailhan’s preface, vi.

²⁹ Havard, *Empires et métissages*, 20, 466.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966), 20–21.

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, 45.

³² Jean-François Mouhot, « L’Influence amérindienne sur la société en Nouvelle-France: Une Exploration de l’historiographie canadienne de François-Xavier Garneau à Allan Greer (1845–1997). *Globe: Revue internationale d’études québécoises* 5, no. 1 (octobre 2002) : 123–57.

³³ Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller, eds., *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ E. D. Blodgett, “History in English and French, 1832–1898,” chapter 6, *Cambridge History*, 105.

³⁶ Roland Michel Tremblay, “Canadian Literature in French,” 14th Annual Comparative Literature Symposium, Crossing Borders: 21st Century Writers in the Americas, University of Tulsa, 4 April 2003.

³⁷ Blodgett, “Reports from la Nouvelle-France: The Jesuit Relations, Marie de l’Incarnation, and Elisabeth Bégon,” chapter 2, *Cambridge History*, 29.

³⁸ John Steckley, *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 7.

³⁹ Tremblay, “Canadian Literature in French.”

⁴⁰ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 143, 145.

⁴¹ Ibid., 176.

Chapter 3. 19th-Century Desiring Machines in Joseph-Charles Taché's *Forestiers et voyageurs*

Joseph-Charles Taché's work of blended fiction and nonfiction *Forestiers et voyageurs: Etude de moeurs* (1863) portrays the men of the woods in terms that echo its period's conflicting views of wilderness: both a deep connection with untamed places and an encroaching (and welcome) industrial capitalism. The fur trade, once Canada's main economic resource, was in the process of being displaced by logging, a process that Taché was able to document as it was occurring.¹ In what is partially a long hymn to Canadian wilderness and to those who earned their living from and in it, and partially an ode to the lumber industry and its workers, *Forestiers et voyageurs* brings together its author's talents in journalism, storytelling, and poetry to produce what is, like the production of its creator *in toto*, a hybrid.² The work's mélange of genres and styles adds ecocritical relevance to considering it from the standpoint of human interactions with and uses of the environment, because this hybridic aspect mirrors the cross-breeding found in nature and among the French and Indians whose stories Taché conveys.³ They are told in the first person by the narrator, a medical doctor (Taché), and by another character to whom the doctor cedes much of the storytelling. This compiled fictional character, a former *coureur de bois* and *voyageur*, is named Michel. Through his stories as well as his material body, Michel links past lifestyles with developing industrialism.

Because the increase of industrialization brought the development of both capitalism and socialism, Taché's work can be considered in a way that illuminates

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the "desiring machine" of capitalism. In *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie I*, the philosophers explain this mechanism that is based on an illusion.⁴ The notion emerges from *Forestiers et voyageurs* because the work was instrumental in creating a new body of literature, one that eventually inspired a new reality for French Canada in the form of the francophone province of Quebec. The desiring machine led in this case to an entire socioeconomic apparatus, based initially on ideas about national identity that Taché helped to shape and disseminate. This represents an adaptation of the process Deleuze and Guattari describe, even though it does not always pertain specifically to the growth of capitalism. The main idea of relevance here is that discourse can shape reality, even if it is based on abstract notions. In the analysis that follows, Deleuze and Guattari's paradigm applies in places specifically to industrial enterprises, in others to the formation of a sense of national identity.

Along these lines, Deleuze and Guattari's minor-language concept is also illuminated by the treatment in *Forestiers et voyageurs* of the *coureur de bois/voyageur*. Visions of the past, documented by Taché and other nationalists to help create a clear sense of identity and a source of pride, were founded in part on the unique work done by *coureurs*, who in *Forestiers et voyageurs* are in the process of entering the national literature.⁵ In Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a minor language and culture, described in *Kafka: Pour une langue mineure*, three criteria are necessary: deterritorialization of the language, a connection of the individual to the political immediate, and a collective arrangement of utterance.⁶ The people of whom Taché writes and much of the terminology he uses to discuss them (which he often

explains in notes) have already been deterritorialized and are now connected, both as individuals and collectively, to political realities. Taché uses individual voices to express, through the vehicle of one *voyageur*, the collective situation of a whole people. Illustration of these points follows throughout the present chapter.

Taché (1820–94) was born and raised in Kamouraska, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River west of Rimouski, where he would practice medicine in the first phase of a long and extremely varied career.⁷ From a comfortable family established in the land-holding seigneurial system, Taché initially attended seminary school but rebelled, known for his opinionated nature and especially for taking action based on his strongly held views. After completing medical school instead, he secured a post in Rimouski. Popular for his down-to-earth approach, engagement in local affairs, and sincere caring about people and issues, Taché was invited to join the municipal council. This launched a political trajectory that would culminate with his appointment as Canada's deputy minister of agriculture, public health, and statistics; he held that post from 1864 to 1888. Taché married Françoise Lepage in 1847; the couple had seven children, of whom two died in infancy and two survived into their eighties.⁸

Enormously productive and versatile, Taché also worked as a journalist, pamphleteer, editor, and storyteller. The fields in which he researched and wrote ranged from agriculture to poetry. He was the parliamentary correspondent for the periodical *L'Ami de la Religion et de la Patrie* and editor-in-chief of the daily Catholic newspaper *Le Courrier du Canada*. Taché was appointed to represent his country at the Universal Expositions of Paris in 1855 and 1867, thereby opening new avenues for trade. In 1871 he reformed the way censuses were taken in Canada, and he contributed

through his comprehensively thought-out articles to the 1872 realization of Canadian Confederation.⁹ Taché was a major figure in his time and place, and by the time he wrote *Forestiers et voyageurs*, his readership knew and respected his voice.

François-Xavier Garneau's three-volume opus *L'Histoire du Canada* (1845–48) established the French side of Canadian history, as noted in the previous chapter. The English victory, Garneau influentially argued, had been a “grand désastre national” (great national disaster) that could and should have had a different outcome.¹⁰ Garneau died in 1866 leaving a legacy of French Canadian pride and coherence. His work inspired the *Ecole patriotique de Québec* (patriotic school of Quebec), also known as the *Mouvement littéraire de 1860*, of which Taché was a member. A seminal figure in the development of French Canadian literature, Taché participated, as part of a group of literati that also included critics and historians Henri-Raymond Casgrain and Benjamin Sulte, in the period's nationalist push.¹¹ In 1861 he was one of four cofounders (with Casgrain, with whom he would later fall out) of the monthly journal *Les Soirées canadiennes*, which aimed to incite the building of a body of literature by publishing nonfiction, fiction, and poetry pertaining to past glory, traditions, and folklore—“tout un bouquet de légendes et de contes populaires” (a veritable bouquet of legends and folktales).¹² Luc Lacourcière qualified the significance of the periodical in his preface to a 1946 edition of *Forestiers et voyageurs*, writing that in *Soirées canadiennes*, Taché assembled the main literary figures of his time. *Forestiers et voyageurs* initially appeared here as a series. The important folktale element is addressed later in this chapter.

Constructing a French Canadian Identity through Language

In the preface, Taché explains that *Michel* is a compilation intended to represent several real people; this specifies his collective utterance through an individual voice. Taché adds that he has also made use of the collective cultural memory, thereby solidifying this first criterion of a minor culture/language in Deleuzo-Guattarien terms. The author explains, “J’ai encore pris occasion de mentionner quelques noms bénis de nos populations, de narrer quelques légendes et contes populaires, et de rappeler quelques souvenirs qui se rattachent aux endroits parcourus par mon héros” (I also took the opportunity to mention a few names that are sacred among our people, to tell some popular legends and tales, and to recall memories that relate to areas covered by my hero).¹³ This is a succinct recapitulation of Taché’s participation in the Patriotic School as a writer. With the overall aim of reinforcing or rebuilding a specifically French Canadian ethos, the author lays out the foundations of his methodology. He appeals to what the people already know about themselves: their traditions, their history, and the stories they have been passing on. The preservation of a minor culture, as Deleuze and Guattari illustrate through their interpretation of Kafka’s creative process, is accomplished through oral transmission in an oppressed atmosphere.¹⁴ In describing his motivations and methodology, Taché wrote, of course, from within his own chronotope, the Bakhtinian concept for specific intersections of time and space discussed in the previous chapter. From the perspective of our chronotope, it is possible to detect additional unconscious theoretical underpinnings such as the author’s assumptions about land use and human entitlements.

The work is constructed in two parts, each of which displays the aspects of a working world that Taché wishes viewers to appreciate. Two breaks in the narrative, “The Intermission” and “The Adjournment,” provide the author with physical and mental space to speak directly to his audience in targeted reminders of his overall purpose. These will be discussed later. Part 1 of the book presents the setting in full, carefully described detail. The site of a lumberjack camp is specified: it should be built on a little plateau, not so high that it is exposed, yet not so low that it may get swamped when the ice melts, and near running water. The materials and methods are stipulated, as is the dwelling, stable, shelters for gear, and furniture. Next come the jobs held, by title and function.¹⁵ The systematic presentation allows readers to see, as if in a museum display, the “factory” in the forest. This again recalls the classification and cataloging aspect of Taché’s exhibition of his people to themselves and to others, but his is not a stagnant or dusty display; rather, it expresses the continuous and rhizomatic change that is under way and evident especially in Part 2.

Part 2 centers on the people who inhabit the world that was fleshed out in Part 1. To show them, Taché uses the storyteller Michel to relate the accounts of many to an audience of tired but enthralled lumberjacks in the evenings in camp. As a physical item, Taché’s book serves to describe, classify, preserve, and display not just the foresters’ trades, but also the stories of others who live and work in the woods, including *coureurs de bois* and Indians. Because of the book’s division into parts, readers can focus on one aspect at a time: first the material realities of the world they are being shown, and then some of the most dramatic stories and legends that have over time arisen from it and that continue to play out. The effect of this rhetorical

strategy is to erect in the reader's imagination an entire functioning economic and cultural system, one that the author presents as being sustainable financially and spiritually. For it is the French Canadian ethos that he strives to both echo and create.

Part 1 sets the stage, as the narrator/doctor enters a lumberjack camp. Right away the attentive reader takes note that we are in an area where people do their jobs. We are in the domain of labor, with its realities and its effects. In Taché's portrayal of this domain, the independent *coureur de bois* has become a hired hand employed in the capitalist engine, while at the same time turning into an element of folklore. These points will quickly become clear.

The doctor is visiting with the widowed and very lonely camp cook, François, ministering to his psyche as would a priest, two functions that Taché associates closely: "Après le prêtre, le médecin est celui de tous qui est le plus à même de comprendre les joies et les douleurs de la sensibilité" (After the priest, the doctor is the one most likely to understand susceptibilities to joy and pain).¹⁶ This is one of several instances in which the author shows a genuine concern for those under his care, reflecting his version of Catholicism that, as explained by historian Peter Moogk, "dominated in French-speaking Canada until the 1950s."¹⁷ Inherited from the Ancien Régime, this conservative faith was also deeply concerned with humane treatment of the people and, Moogk argues in *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada*, left a legacy that imprints the contemporary social systems in the province of Quebec. Taché's sincere caring is the subject of another study, but it is documented by the vast array of his undertakings for the public betterment, as seen for example in Julien Goyette and Claude La Charité's recent edited volume.¹⁸

As they talk, the doctor attempts to console the still-young François and encourage him to reengage with society, if not remarry. Suddenly the two hear “battre des raquettes” (snowshoes stamping) outside the door. “Un instant après la porte s’ouvrit, laissant pénétrer dans la cabane un vigoureux vieillard, chargé d’un loup-cervier et de quelques lièvres pris au collet” (An instant later the door opened, and into the cabin came a vigorous old man carrying a lynx and a few hares he had caught in a trap).¹⁹ This is Michel, the main character of *Forestiers et voyageurs* other than the doctor/narrator himself. The reader sees that he is very strong, an aging man who is also a serious hunter. He seems to bring in the outdoors with him; the reader imagines the wintry blast as the door opens, a few swirls of snow in the air as the bundled hunter sets down his fresh game and peels off some winter layers of clothing.

It is a textual movement that brings the Canadian winter into the indoors realm of shelter and warmth, a place associated with the civilized world and with reading and visiting. Indeed, this will be Michel’s function in the text: It is he who conveys most of the stories in *Forestiers et voyageurs*. Through his intervention the stories are carried from the outside world inside, into the imagination of French Canadians who know these traditions and convey them verbally but had previously not likely thought of them as material for literature.

On the contrary, Taché explains in the second intermission, “The Adjournment,” that is precisely what they are. He parallels the folktales and legends of his people to the beginnings of all great literatures, comparing an actively evil Indian evil spirit in a tale told by Michel to Faust’s Mephistopholes: “les deux derniers on passé par le génie et le crayon d’un grand poète, le premiers sont encore ce qu’ étaient les deux autres,

dans les traditions populaires de l'Allemagne, avant Goethe" (the latter two were interpreted by the genius and pencil of a great poet, the former are still what the other two were in Germany's popular traditions before Goethe).²⁰ In methodically transforming these raw materials into part of a national canon through the medium of a collective character, Taché participates in what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the process of collective utterance—one of their criteria for the formation of a minor language/culture/literature. Another criterion, that of a deterritorialized language, is met in Michel's initial greeting.

Bonjour, docteur, bonjour! Mais je ne peux pas me plaindre depuis que je fais la gargotte avec François. Pourtant les loups-cerviers sont donc futés cet hiver! . . . Sapristi, si j'avais su que vous veniez nous voir, je vous aurais bien fait dire de m'apporter *de la drogue*. J'ai du *rognon de castor*, ah! pour ça, je n'en manque jamais; mais j'aurais besoin de *Sartifida et d'Huile d'Aspic* (1). Tenez, j'en avais composé *une* il y a deux ans, que les loups-cerviers me suivaient à la piste; si bien, que je ne tendais presque plus au parc, je les prenais quasiment tous *à la passée* (2)! (emphases in original).

(Hello, doctor, hello! Well, I can't complain since I've been eating with François. But the lynxes are clever this winter! . . . Damn, if I had known you were coming to see us, I would have asked you to bring some drugs. I have beaver kidneys, oh, I never lack for that; but I need Sartifida and aspic oil. In fact I made one two years ago that the lynxes followed on my trail; it worked so well I almost didn't need the park, I was taking almost all of them as they passed!)²¹

Taché's notes explain. The "drug" refers to a mixture of asafoetida (extracted from the rhizome of the perennial herb *Ferula*) and lavender that attracts wild game. The terms *tendre au parc* and *tendre à la passée* designate two ways to lay a trap, the first by creating a little enclosure with branches with the bait inside; the second by setting the trap in the open where the animal is known to pass or where it can be made to pass. Thus the first visual impression conveyed of Michel is one of strength and hunting knowledge, and this first spoken passage further brings that image into focus. In note 2, Taché characterizes Michel's French as "termes canadiens de chasse" (Canadian hunting terminology). Taché's explanatory addenda throughout the work result in a substantial scholarly apparatus that is one of the aspects making *Forestiers et voyageurs* such an intriguing literary hybrid. His use of the vernacular, explained in notes as needed, constitutes the deliberate incorporation of what Bakhtin defines as a primary language genre (in this case the spoken use of an everyday term among hunters) into the secondary genre of this story.

Bakhtin analyzes how such "living" utterances enter various forms of writing and ultimately transform the ever-changing phenomenon of language. He separates primary speech genres, such as simple everyday communications, from secondary, more complex genres that include distillations from novels to science writing. "Historical changes in language styles are inseparably linked to changes in speech genres. Literary language is a complex, dynamic system of linguistic styles. The proportions and interrelations of these styles in the system of literary language are constantly changing."²² Taché's use of the language of Canadian rural areas exemplifies this progression. By incorporating and explaining terminology from a

primary speech genre into the secondary genre of the book that he is writing, Taché methodically promotes change in the French language of Canada as part of his overall mission. This involves active participation on the part of his readers, as Bakhtin also clarifies.²³ Through publication both the story and the language will be widely disseminated, becoming part of the national consciousness in a process of diffusion and continuous movement that illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *le devenir* (becoming), to be discussed shortly.

In using Michel as the collective vehicle through which to tell the Canadian story, and the vernacular to bring the story fully alive, Taché carries a minor language physically into the realm of the dominant standard French, both of which function within the larger context of a British environment. This illustrates the process described by Deleuze and Guattari for the growth and establishment of a minor language within a culture where it is oppressed by another. As well, Taché's chronotopic use of the vernacular within a book written in standard French in an English-governed country illuminates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of lines of flight that shoot out from areas of intensity that have been building up. This occurs, they explain, in a process that is "branché sur des agencements réels en train de se faire; et celui d'un nomade en train de fuir à la façon la plus actuelle, qui se branche sur le socialisme, l'anarchisme, les mouvements nouveaux" (connected to real arrangements in the process of forming; and that of a nomad fleeing in a fully present way, who plugs into socialism, anarchism, the new movements).²⁴ Taché's characters do not align themselves with systems related to socialism (the philosophers are speaking of Kafka and the environment in which he wrote), but the mechanism is the same. In an

oppressed environment where their self-expression has been building into intensive nodes seeking outlets, the French Canadians are given a voice(s) in their own words, like lines of flight plugging back into their own still-forming national self-identity. Everything is in motion.

This collectivity reflects the author's rhetorical purpose, and as a technique it suits Taché's own multidimensional nature, which critics Julien Goyette and Claude La Charité emphasize: "Taché était un homme de lettres au sens fort qu'avait le terme au XIXe siècle, un esprit universel, touche-à-tout, homme d'action autant que penseur. Il y a chez lui quelque chose de la polyvalence du coureur des bois qu'il admirait pour sa capacité à s'adapter à tous les contextes et à embrasser tous les métiers" (Taché was a man of letters in the fullness of that term in the 19th-century, he was a polymath, a jack-of-all-trades, a man of action as much as he was a thinker. There is in him something of the versatility of the *coureur de bois*, whom he admired for his ability to adapt to all contexts and embrace all trades).²⁵ This description of the author as part *coureur* himself is particularly apt here, because *Forestiers et voyageurs* reflects its author's "polygraphic" nature, as his 1971 biographer Eveline Bossé characterized him in a term echoed in Goyette and La Charité's book title.²⁶ Taché's propensity to write about multiple subjects related chiefly by the act of writing can be seen as quite modern, but in fact Taché's work is united. His overarching theme and driving effort was always to improve the status of his people and help build a body of French Canadian writings.

Bossé's biography most effectively contextualizes this aspect of the man in his chronotope. Michèle Bernard's 2011 biography, though not a scholarly work, makes

use of Taché family records and the research of archivist Pierre-Georges Roy, making hers an effective complement to Bossé's definitive biography in terms of conveying a more accurate sense of Taché's rich personal life.²⁷

His polygraphic body of work reflects a vast effort of classification and cataloging, also characteristically of his chronotope. Although big public-library initiatives such as those of Andrew Carnegie were slower to develop in Canada, worldly people such as Taché espoused his period's enthusiasm for collecting, identifying, and preserving. The most well-known example of this may be the fieldwork done by Charles Darwin to write *The Origin of Species* (1859), and Taché would have known of many other efforts. With his educational background and determination to participate in a collection and display of his people's knowledge and traditions, he would have visited the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec's library (established 1824), and as a government official, he would have regularly used the legislative and parliamentary libraries.

Indeed, in science alone Taché covered agriculture, entomology, "generalities," geology, horticulture, and zoology. Of these, the most numerous titles counted by Mélanie Desmeules in her 2011 dissertation are in agriculture (34.1 percent or 14 titles) and generalities (36.6 percent or 15 titles). Geology comes next, with 7 titles (17.1 percent). The total number of publications in science is 41.²⁸ Taché also wrote political tracts, government reports, general-audience articles, satire, medical studies, and "16 oeuvres littéraires: contes, légendes, poésies, histoires et essais, publiés dans des revues et parfois repris en volumes" (16 literary works: stories, folktales, poems, histories and essays, published in periodicals and sometimes reprinted in books).²⁹

Seemingly inexhaustible, this author was mission-driven.³⁰ Known in his time as “a universal scholar,”³¹ more recent criticism has tended to contextualize him exclusively in the light of his Catholic bourgeois background, which biographer Bossé emphasizes without its overshadowing or diminishing his other notable aspects and accomplishments.³² For example, after describing Taché’s political stance as “ultramontane Catholicism with a commitment to traditional virtues of rural Quebec,” Margo Anderson adds flatly that he “was no liberal.”³³ But he was sincerely committed to bettering life for everyone, as noted earlier, a goal toward which he worked tirelessly. Among others, historian Bruce Curtis clarifies this in *The Politics of Population*: “Taché was interested in a grand project of social reform that contained a transcendental vision of human subjects moving through history and tied to territory.”³⁴ Curtis sees his involvement in the 1871 Canadian national census as part of this effort; his categorization of all “French” as one unit and subdivision of “English” into English, Irish, Scots, or Welsh resulted a much larger representation of the French in the dominion as a whole (which then consisted of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia).

The massive 1871 census project was just one of Taché’s major social undertakings, and, as evidenced by Goyette and La Charité’s 2013 collection of scholarship, today he is the object of a fresh look because of the tremendous diversity of his interests, undertakings, and writings. His Catholic faith, while of fundamental importance to a full understanding of Taché and his work, is not the object of my inquiry here, thus it will for the most part be left aside in the analysis and discussion. However, it is important to note that Catholicism appears throughout *Forestiers et*

voyageurs and is somehow woven in to nearly every story. Taché was, in a literal sense, on a mission, and, as he explains in the preface, his faith was at its underpinning. This does not make him unusual, but part of a sociopolitical school of thought that had wide and enduring influence, as previously noted.

Shifting Audience, Moving Plateaus

Forestiers et voyageurs' scholarly apparatus bolsters Taché's deliberate effort to help construct a national identity and ethos. It also exemplifies the process of bringing a minor language into the full light of the larger society, in Deleuze and Guattari's process discussed previously. But to whom will these developments be shown, and what will their effect ultimately be?

Taché's audience is threefold: French Canadians, English Canadians, and non-Canadians. In the first group he wishes to instill a sense of uniqueness of character and pride, as noted. He addresses the first note in Part 2 to the third group, "foreigners": "Il est bon que les étrangers qui pourraient lire ces lignes sachent qu'en Canada ces mots, un gros habitant, veulent dire un cultivateur à l'aise" (Foreigners who might read these lines should understand that in Canada the words "a big habitant" mean a farmer at ease).³⁵ Because the term *habitant* was specifically Canadian and in France meant simply someone who inhabited a given place, Taché likely has the Métropole in mind in writing this note, as part of his push to give French Canada greater international visibility, especially from the motherland.

Even though the second audience group, English Canadians who read French, live in the same country, they do not need the author's help to construct an idea of who

they are as a people. To Taché and the French they are “other,” in Edward Said’s sense of cultural divides. Taché’s term *étrangers* in the note may also include them, even though they are more likely to understand the term. However, the author cannot assume that they will. In sum, aside from serving the purpose of instructing readers who may not be familiar with certain terminology, traditions, and/or history, Taché’s notes build toward the definition of a culture that does not include the Métropole French or the English, but only and specifically the French Canadians.

The notational explanations are not just helpful but often necessary, including for a French-speaking readership outside Taché’s specific chronotope. We see here two Deleuzo-Guattrien processes: that of the minor culture moving toward its new plateau, and that of becoming. The *voyageur*’s direct connection with the wilderness is carried rhizomatically through a mental mechanism that will be disseminated into the wider world. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin state this phenomenon, “It is in the myriad relationships between material practices and ideas—especially in cross-cultural contexts—that day-to-day planetary life is lived and futures are governed: practices and ideas that are inseparable from issues of *representation*.”³⁶ In other words, as Foucault and others have dissected, how a phenomenon is represented enters human discourse and creates reality.³⁷

Taché’s work illustrates this process on three levels: that of the writing creator who brings new terminology into a larger sphere through publication; that of the character Michel, in whom the everyday practices and views of many backwoodsmen are collected and represented; and that of the readership who will receive and interpret the written material in ways the creator cannot control, while his words influence and

somehow alter the public mentality. Because this process of representation to discourse to material reality is the only thing that is actually occurring, it manifests Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming, in which ideas do not die. Instead: "Elles peuvent . . . changer d'application, et de statut, elles peuvent même changer de forme et de contenu, elles gardent quelque chose d'essentiel, dans la démarche, dans le déplacement, dans la répartition d'un nouveau domaine. Les idées, ça ressert toujours, puisque ça a toujours servi, mais sur les modes actuels les plus différents" (They can . . . switch applications and status, they can even change their shape and content, they still retain something fundamental in the process, in the movement, while being redistributed in a new field. Ideas always serve a purpose, since they have always served purposes, but in the most diverse ways in the moment).³⁸ Ideas alter themselves to fit the chronotopic situation, which, like them, is in a state of continuous movement and change. This is the essence of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *mille plateaux*, a thousand plateaus in motion, breaking up and being reformed through rhizomatic lines of flight that shoot out, meet and intensify into new plateaus, where the process begins anew. Only the movement, the action, the becoming itself is a material constant, while the dynamic retains something of the original essence, which manifests itself in diverse and constantly recombining ways.

Taché's introduction of Michel, for example, retains elements of the author's French Catholic background, while also displaying material pieces of his new Canadian soil and way of life. The mild swear word *sapristi*, a 19th-century corruption of *sacristie*, refers to holiness in a general sense (from the Latin *sacer*, holy), or to the sacristy, the room that stores vestments and chalices for Catholic mass. The passage

cited above also introduces what may be unfamiliar terminology, thereby reflecting the chronotopic reality that Taché's native French language has been deterritorialized. Since its initial disruption it has adapted, incorporating new expressions for items or conditions that did not exist in its country of origin. In ways such as this, the language documented here (and throughout *Forestiers et voyageurs*) contains and conveys elements of the natural world in an almost physical sense.

Such an observation should be made with the caution advised by Dana Phillips, who reminds readers that trees themselves are not actually in books. Phillips takes issue with a lyrical passage in Buell's work *The Environmental Imagination*, where the author writes of a stand of white pines outside his office window and complains that the trees "can be found in the pages of American literature also, but it is not the woods imagined by American criticism."³⁹ In this introduction to his groundbreaking ecocritical work, Buell goes on to trace for the reader ways in which he guides his students toward a desire for greater incorporation of material reality in the text itself: "Must literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?"⁴⁰ In fairness to Buell, his aim is not to put physical trees into books, but to inspire a much sharper awareness of and concern for their very existence. "Nature," he states, "has been doubly otherized in modern thought," and Buell's aim is to bring it back into the full relevance of the present moment.⁴¹

Phillips, reading this introduction, identifies a rhetorical move in which the trees are in two places at once—in literature and outside—and concludes: "Confusing actual and physical trees, or trying to conflate them (however rhetorically and provisionally), would seem to be a . . . critical error."⁴² Instead, Phillips wants to insist on the full

reality of both the imagination *and* the here and now in both the psychological and physical realms, arguing that much of ecocriticism has lost the distinction between the thing that is being portrayed and its depiction. “I think we need to cure ecocriticism of its fundamentalist fixation on literal representation, and shift its focus away from the epistemological to the pragmatic.”⁴³ This useful observation pertains to Taché’s work, but so does Buell’s. Nature and Amerindians are otherized in *Forestiers et voyageurs*, but the workers portrayed are not; they are “we” French Canadians. In an encompassing view of “nature,” neither the trees nor the people are in the book, but thought, ideas, and new written terms are. Both Taché’s full present and imaginative reconceptions are conveyed in this creative process.

In the process of bringing into the public sphere a minor language, Taché simultaneously attempts not just to facilitate the formation of a national identity, but further, to bring into the rest of the world increase greater awareness of the French Canadian experience and reality. Both of these culturally rhizomatic movements contain elements of the physical and the mental, which have intensified over time and are now, through the work of Taché and others, finding their lines of flight into new plateaus of unstable existence. The language used in *Forestiers et voyageurs*, having developed from physical contacts and interactions with a world in which new terminology emerged to express a new experience, thus incorporates and communicates parts of the physical world. Because the experiences have been processed and communicated, first verbally and now by writing, what is conveyed in the language is not the experience itself, but rather interpretations of it.

Similarly, what the reader sees in Buell's passage is not trees but Buell's musing on trees, as Phillips cautions. This is an important reminder for the often holier-than-thou field of ecocriticism, and it pertains here in that the present dissertation focuses on both historical and imagined *coureurs de bois*, in both cases as they exemplify an idea that is both physical (human interactions in and with nature) and mental (human attitudes toward the rest of the world). The mental leads to physical realities in this case (treatment of the environment), but at the same time the physical realities determine the conditions under which psychological processes must take place. They are, in short, completely intermingled. Because of this, the processes by which humans (and, arguably, all creatures) negotiate both realms are most accurately described not by either Buell or Phillips but by Deleuze and Guattari. Their vision of continual rhizomatic movement, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and new plateaus that are unstable and temporary seems to best capture the forces at play in the developing French Canadian culture and language.

Deterritorialized Rhizomes in New Soil

Part 2, "Histoire du Père Michel," opens with Michel telling stories at the end of the day in camp, after dinner, as the workers have urged him to. He begins with his own story: now sixty-five, he was the sixteenth child born to a couple of *habitants* in latter 18th-century Kamouraska (Taché's birthplace, as noted). As did many in the parish, Michel's father enjoyed far too much alcohol: "Ça ne pouvait pas durer; mais aussi plusieurs se sont ruinés et, si les vieux de ce temps-là revenaient, il y en a beaucoup qui trouveraient des faces étrangères dans leurs maisons . . . C'est malheureux qu'on

n'ait pas plus tôt établi les sociétés de tempérance!” (It couldn't go on like that; what was more, many ruined themselves [including Michel's father] and, if those old days were to come back, many of them would find foreign faces in their homes. . . It's too bad that no temperance societies were established sooner!)⁴⁴ Here, by showing that his French Canadian hero is strongly opposed to the excessive consumption of alcohol, Taché the author/doctor/narrator again shows evidence of ministering to those under his care. It is notable that he specifically evokes the temperance movement, an international advocacy of moderation or complete abstinence.

Michel drives the lesson home in telling of how his father finally saw—too late—that “le temps de ces fêtes-là” (those times of celebration), what was often in late 18th/early 19th-century Canada a continuous party atmosphere lamented by the Church, was ruining the family.⁴⁵ Like many farmers, Michel's father, tired of working so hard, obviously heard the captivating stories of a glittering life of ease in the city. (Such temptations will be revisited during the analysis of Louis Hémon's novel *Maria Chapdelaine* in the next chapter.) Michel's father may not consciously even have desired to live in a city, or to send his children to do so. But the capitalist dream, the unattainable, yet ever-present “party,” spread like an infectious disease, along with illusions about the harmlessness of continuous over-indulgence.

As Deleuze and Guattari summarize the phenomenon: “Le capitalisme est inséparable du mouvement de la déterritorialisation, mais ce mouvement, il le conjure par des re-territorialisations factices” (capitalism is inseparable from the movement of deterritorialization, but it conjures this movement by factitious reterritorializations) that amount to “des images, rien que des images” (images, nothing more than

images).⁴⁶ Michel's father represents not so much the capitalist machine at work as it does the dream of the capitalist dream. Michel's father loves playing the generous host and allows incessant celebrations to carry him mentally away from reality. This is the factitious reterritorialization that his imagination conjures. It is a fantasy, an imagined construction of the type Deleuze and Guattari describe in the workings of capitalism. But Michel's father cannot afford the party that he carries on nevertheless. He loses the one real thing he had, his land.

Progress was the order of the day, and those who did not dream of riches resisted the capitalist march through promoting alternatives such as socialism, or, like Taché, a life of religious virtue. *Forestiers et voyageurs* showcases the 19th-century prioritization of industrial progress. The *coureur/voyageur* represents a way of life that is already turning into stories, as is Michel even as he passes on his own story. Like the rest of the wilderness, he must make way for the inexorable developments—more roads, bridges, cleared and cultivated land, schools—that signify and enable progress. In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, Michel is a deterritorialized French rhizome who is in movement toward becoming a legend that stands for all the *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* of the past. Taché witnesses and records the process of their entering the French Canadian ethos. At the same time as he observes, he creates. Reflecting what he sees in the forests around him during frequent visits with those who live and work there, in *Forestiers et voyageurs* Taché constructs a cultural identity that is “avant tout catholique, un peu voyageur et beaucoup canadien” (above all Catholic, a bit *voyageur*, and very much Canadian), as he describes himself in the book's preface.⁴⁷

The word *voyageur* evokes regular interactions with the natural world and its indigenous inhabitants, a theme that is expounded and developed throughout the work.

Michel's stories are often interwoven with those of others, a narrative strategy that gives the work its collective voice. By weaving in many voices, Taché conveys the people's diversity. Because Amerindians' stories are retold through the author's Christianizing filter, theirs is only a partial inclusion in this diversity, and their representation is necessarily incomplete. Taché's focus is on the French Canadians, whom he also portrays in a way that simultaneously creates them, as noted. He cannot accurately or fully represent them without also showing Indians and their world, even if only through his own lens. This is accomplished, again, through the character of Michel.

Loving the outdoors, Michel finds work first with the seigneurie of Kamouraska (where Taché grew up in a domain-holding family), then moves to the Baie des Chaleurs, between the Gaspé Peninsula and present-day New Brunswick. He fishes for cod in summers and hunts winters with "les sauvages de Cascapédiac et de Ristigouche" (the Cascapédiac and Ristigouche savages).⁴⁸ The history of the use of the term *sauvage* was questioned and considered in detail in the previous chapter and will not be further revisited here, except to note that Michel represents the author's construction of a French Canadian identity. Rhetorically, this is presented as loving nature and not only accepting Canada's original inhabitants but going into the woods and working with them, often becoming very close with them. Michel effuses: "J'étais si bon ami avec les sauvages qu'il ne s'en est guère manqué que je me sois *mis sauvage* (1) . . . Vous me croirez si vous voulez, mais je vous dis qu'il n'y a pas d'homme plus

heureux qu'un bon sauvage” (I was such good friends with the savages that I almost went native . . . Believe it or not, I tell you there is no man happier than a good savage).⁴⁹

This passage echoes with the obvious good-savage allusion considered extensively in Chapter 2, but two more rhetorical movements are identifiable. First, in becoming a part of the French Canadian world, through Michel’s stories the Indian world, which is the natural, untamed world, becomes part of the French Canadian identity. The process illuminates Said’s concept of “the construction of identity,” which “involves the construction of opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us.’ Each age and society re-creates its ‘Others.’”⁵⁰ In Taché’s work, Michel is the tool by which the author incorporates his interpretation of the other into his construction of a national identity. The collective nature of Michel’s character and voice(s) further illustrates Deleuze and Guattari’s elaboration of what constitutes a minor culture and language, as previously noted.

The second rhetorical suggestion of particular interest to this discussion is Michel’s reference to going native. This evokes not just ongoing rhizomatic movement, but also the image of a Deleuzo-Guattarian capitalist desiring machine, of which the human body and its work are an essential part. Michel’s enthusiasm expresses his libido, which the philosophers use as another name for “le ‘travail’ connectif de la production désirante” (the connective “work” done by the desiring production).⁵¹ But in this case Michel is actually an anti-capitalist example of the

desiring machine, in that he will not need money or pay when he joins his Amerindian friends.

In this event, he would become part of the population to whom the author's note refers without naming them: the *coureurs de bois* who have been at issue since Michel began describing his lifestyle. *Forestiers et voyageurs* reflects the period's preferred, often exclusive, socially acceptable terminology for men who worked in the forest. Even the author's description of the legendary 17th–early 18th-century *coureur de bois* Cadieux refers to him as a *voyageur* and interpreter who was married to an Algonquin.⁵²

This preference for the regulated, licensed job title is in keeping with the period's growing capitalist enterprises, associated alternatively with “civilization” or the need for social reforms. Ironically, with the 1821 monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, originally cofounded by 17th-century *coureurs de bois* Radisson and des Groseillers, came the increasing rarity of references to that profession in favor of *voyageur*.

Relegated to a note in which they are not even named by their historically accurate term, *coureurs de bois* are described for those among the audience who may not be familiar with their lifestyle: “*Se mettre sauvage* est une expression consacrée, à l'expression du petit nombre de canadiens et d'europeens qui ont adopté la vie des bois et des côtes, en s'associant aux tribus aborigènes auxquelles leurs familles sont devenues incorporées” (To go native is an expression designating the small number of Canadians and Europeans who adopted the life of the woods and shores, by joining the aboriginal tribes in which their families became incorporated).⁵³ But historian Gilles Havard's study contradicts in no uncertain terms this estimate of a “small number” of

whites who joined the Amerindians. In fact, large numbers of *coureurs* intermarried and formed the Métis population, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This is another instance of Taché's construction. In this case he attempts to foster what he believes will be a favorable view of his now—socially acceptable *voyageurs* (who were never *coureurs de bois* and did not often generally marry Indians, in his [re]telling/[re]creation). Because European-origin assumptions about cultural superiority have also been addressed and examined in Chapters 1 and 2, here they are referred to as needed but not extensively re-analyzed. It suffices to note here that Taché, widely known to have loved Amerindian peoples and often dubbed “the Iroquois,” intended no disrespect toward them or their lifestyle.⁵⁴ At the same time he represents them as clearly other, and they are, by comparison with Taché's French Canadian characters, wild people who have benefitted from Christian teachings.

Despite his love for the Amerindian lifestyle and his time spent among the Micmacs of eastern Canada, Michel remains in motion, first returning to Kamouraska and then accepting a partner to trade with Indians in the Pays d'en Haut (“up country,” a fur-trading expression designating the general region north and west of Quebec). They are both unlicensed and operating outside the bounds of the law; in other words, they are *coureurs de bois*. Their trade with the Montagnais Indians goes very well, although they must keep a constant watch for the Hudson's Bay guardsmen whose purpose is to stop unlicensed trade. “Nos échanges avec les Montagnais allaient à merveille pour les deux parties, attendu que nous donnions aux sauvages des prix beaucoup plus élevés que ceux que donnait alors La Compagnie, lorsque deux jeunes sauvages, placés en sentinelle dans un canot, vinrent nous avertir qu'on apercevait une

chaloupe de gardes-côtes, venant de notre côté” (our exchanges with the Montagnais were going wonderfully for both parties, since we paid the savages much higher prices than what they received from the Company, when two young savages, placed as sentinels in a canoe, came to warn us they had seen a coast-guard boat coming our way).⁵⁵ This was the start of what would have been a classic *coureur-de-bois* confrontation with the local law in the early 1800s, when the compilation character Michel was active as an independent trader; 1806 is mentioned in the book as the year he saw the end of these conflicts in his operating region.

In the standoff that follows, Michel strikes out with his boat hook, intending only to hold his opponent at bay. But he misses the vessel and hits one of the guardsmen, a “malheureux commis” (unfortunate clerk), who is English. His companions rush to his aid and do not pursue Michel and Levêque, who row away. But Michel, plagued with guilt and believing the wound to have been fatal, returns to Quebec, where he meets a guide from the Pays d’en Haut and signs a five-year contract with the North West Company as a *voyageur*. This reflects a typical trajectory for a man of his type, as detailed by historians Grace Lee Nute and Carolyn Podruchny.⁵⁶ Through his hands-on participation in the struggle of life against death, Michel incorporates a material reality that Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman would like to bring (or return) to ecocritics’ attention. Interested in “innovative theories that combine social construction with an understanding of the ontology and agency of the material world,” Alaimo and Hekman draw on Deleuze and Foucault to illustrate the need to accommodate “material force” in theoretical constructions.⁵⁷ Material reality may sound like obvious fact, but in Alaimo and Hekman’s view it has, paradoxically, often

been left aside in ecocritical arguments. They maintain that movement, uncertainty, and overlaps are materially integral to reevaluating what constitutes physical nature and how humans, in body and mind, fit into it.

In Taché's work, the figure of Michel is a Deleuzo-Guattarian illustration of this dynamic physicality. He is a French rhizome in motion; barely under way, he begins to reflect that he is now working for one of the trading companies he was opposing nine days ago, and is now under the command of someone who could be friends with the man he may have killed. His unstable situation troubles him, and he muses briefly on the uncertainty of life but then forces sad thoughts away to focus on his job. The task at hand trumps all other considerations, and it is a demanding one. "Un voyageur ne peut pas porter son sac et le chagrin tout à la fois. Je me mis donc à faire *chorus* avec mes compagnons; car vous savez que les voyageurs chantent presque toujours" (A *voyageur* cannot carry both his pack and sorrow. So I joined my companions in song, for you know that voyageurs sing almost all the time).⁵⁸

In this instance Taché again distills the stories of many *voyageurs*, men who signed on for reasons ranging from income to escaping from something, as had Michel. Taché thus condenses and repackages what were at the time commonly held notions about voyageurs. They sang in the same way as did many out-of-doors laborers at the time, from chain gangs to plantations to ships, just as workers had in pre-industrial times.⁵⁹ Singing was banned in early 19th-century British factories, but outside, slaves picking cotton sang, and *voyageurs* paddling canoes sang. This might suggest a tendency toward greater human freedom in the out of doors, were it not for the slavery that often gave rise to these soulful expressions. In the case of the

voyageurs, freedom was an obvious attraction of the job, despite its tremendous physical difficulties. Perhaps it was, rather, extremely demanding physical labor that inspired so much song among 19th-century workers. Song had a practical function that, arguably, was like oil for the capitalist machine, and in this way further contributed to the continual larger social movements, in a physical sense, then taking place. Keeping the beat of a song helped *voyageurs* to paddle effectively for twelve or more hours daily, not counting regular breaks for pipe-smoking or the time it took to effect one of the many necessary, long, tedious portages around waterfalls or other areas difficult or impossible to navigate.⁶⁰

The work was hard and they took great pride in it, illustrating both Marx's description of them as necessary parts of the economic apparatus and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the desiring machine in which they embody the desire. In writing of the buying and selling of labor power, Marx writes, "For the conversion of his money into capital . . . the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour-power."⁶¹ The laborer is, thus, the means by which cash is converted into capital. He provides the mechanism that converts raw materials into products, in this case living animals into hats. But the *voyageurs* are laborers who take great pride in their work and often love it, in large part for the freedom it affords them, despite their status as hired employees.⁶² They are young and strong and working outside and making money, in a demonstration of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as "desiring production." In

elaborating their concept of desiring machines, the authors present the metaphor of capital as a body without organs. This body attracts to itself willing organ-machines (workers), which “s’accrochent sur lui comme sur un gilet de fleurettiste” (hang onto it like a fencer’s vest). They do the work (labeled “libido”) that makes the machine run.⁶³ The thing that is desired will always remain an illusion, Deleuze and Guattari explain. What is real is the process of meeting the capitalist in the market and becoming a biological part of the desiring capitalist machine.

Michel signs on for a second tour, working a total of nine years as a *voyageur* in the employment of the Compagnie du Nord-Ouest. He travels, in a typical trajectory, from Hudson’s Bay to the Rocky Mountains, from Quebec’s Rivière-Rouge to the Lac des Esclaves in the north.⁶⁴ Finally Michel gratefully returns home and never again travels north of Quebec. It is at this point in his life that he “enters” Taché’s book and travels into the imaginations of its readers. “Tout ce dont je puis vous assurer, dit-il, c’est que j’étais un homme content, quand je me vis de retour à Lachine après neuf ans d’absence. On a bien du plaisir à raconter ces voyages-là; mais le métier en est dur” (All I can say is I was a happy man when I found myself back in Lachine after nine years of absence. It is very enjoyable to tell stories about those voyages, but the work is hard).⁶⁵ This last qualifier serves to remind readers why a person might prefer another type of work, and why it may not be a negative development that *voyageurs* are entering folklore. Michel has been an effective cog in the capitalist machine, and now he has earned the right to rest and tell (and be) stories.

Michel’s stories are often presented as digressions, and as a whole they serve the rhetorical purpose of fleshing out and contextualizing the world that the author paints

through his narration. They animate a pluralistic representation, one of an entire population, that of the forest. Michel even speaks for those who do not yet commonly speak for themselves in 19th-century writing, the native people who were born in those forests. Michel names one of his Amerindian friends, Noël, who tells a story in Micmac that Michel translates into French. It is a tale of revenge against the English, of the hatred of a Micmac named Coundo for the race of those who killed his wife, and of his terrible bloody retribution against an anonymous Englishman who had hired Coundo as a guide, having no idea of the danger he was in. Coundo and his son then hide out for a few years, “dans l’intérieur du pays, comme des ours” (in the interior, living like bears).⁶⁶ But in the end Coundo repents, confesses to a missionary, and his soul is saved, as is that of his then-pious son. by and damnation The narrative thus moves from Noël through Michel’s interpretation and rendition, and is then retold to the reader through the medium of the book’s doctor-narrator. Overseeing and creating all this orchestration is Taché, who retells a story that has already been filtered through three previous narrators and that conveys not just Noël’s story but that of his native people.

In a parallel and mirroring narrative movement, in *Forestiers et voyageurs* Taché tells the story of his French people, in which he rhetorically incorporates that of the Amerindians. The work is thus a dynamic and complicated interaction of cultures and languages, illuminating Deleuzo-Guattarien rhizomatic concepts in the context of Bakhtin’s chronotopes and Said’s other. The concepts of these theorists can be connected in Taché’s work, even though Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, and Said seek to clarify the actual links and modes of communication between people while

questioning and rejecting widespread colonial and pre-colonial *idées reçues* about non-Europeans. Taché expresses his own sense of cultural superiority and entitlement, as noted previously, and also, in presenting his people to the world and to themselves, he seeks to question and debunk widespread assumptions about them. At the same time, he is presenting to the more modern reader images that he may not have had in mind, such as that of a people in motion. Taché sought stability for French Canadians, but what he shows is a world in continual disruption and movement.

Michel exemplifies this, through both his stories and his actions. The fact that Michel translates meets another key criterion for the definition of a *coureur de bois*, often an interpreter. Living among and working with Indians, the only activity typical of a *coureur* that he does not yet pursue is trade, because, like many historical *coureurs* as defined by Havard, Michel has chosen (for the time being in the narration) to join the Amerindian world completely. He gives up his livelihood of cod fishing because if he is to choose this life over that in which he was raised, he will not need it. All Michel will need is his companions and his hunting skills, living like them in perpetual motion. Yet he later moves on, moving like a rhizome in search of a new plateau.

Connections are at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's second and third criteria for a minor language. The individual is connected to the political immediate, and the people are connected to, or expressed in, the utterances of the individual. Michel speaks for all of French Canada when he tells of the English deportations and murders in Acadia, including stories of murderous (and righteous, in his view) revenge on the English. And he speaks for French Canadian Catholicism when forgiveness trumps all

in the end, as Michel prays for the soul of the Protestant Englishman he believes he killed until late in the story, when he rejoices upon learning of his last-minute conversion.

Seen in its entirety, *Forestiers et voyageurs* is an expression of a minor language within a dominant culture, in the context of which the author strives to carve out a place of recognition and respect for his people, their traditions and language, their culture and their legacy. To accomplish this, he creates a Canadian who unapologetically uses jargon that Taché explains as he feels the need for a mixed audience. Michel is a repository of stories that must be told before the lifestyle disappears completely, echoing Charles Nodier's exhortation and the epigraph of *Les Soirées canadiennes*: "Hâtons-nous de raconter les délicieuses histoires du peuple avant qu'il les ait oubliées" (Let us hurry to tell the wonderful stories of the people before they forget them).⁶⁷ Along with Catholicism, these stories form the foundation of the identity that Taché wishes to present to his people for their ownership. Thus, the *coureur de bois/voyageur*, himself a deterritorialized rhizome moving between the native and European cultures as well as between the wilderness and the town, forms a new and unstable cultural plateau that serves as a national motif.

Soil and *Coueurs*, Real and Romanticized

Historian E. D. Blodgett notes that 19th-century Canadian historical fiction is "designed to inspire the reader" and therefore "is rarely deliberately humorous."⁶⁸

However, romantic depictions hold a noticeable importance, including in writings that attempt to convey a "peinture vraie de la vie réelle" (true picture of real life),⁶⁹ as the

abbot Henri-Raymond Casgrain says in praise of Laure Conan's (a pseudonym of Félicité Angers) novel *Angéline de Montbrun* (1882). As part of the Ecole patriotique's quest, Casgrain exhorted his peers to write the truth. While responding to the negative portrayals and opinions of fellow illustrious historian Francis Parkman, Casgrain concedes that at least the American's criticisms spur the French Canadians to reexamine their own annales with a nonpartisan eye:

Notre orgueil national est souvent froissé par les commentaires défavorables dont il accompagne ses citations. Nous y sommes d'autant plus sensibles que notre patriotisme, toujours en éveil, nous a accoutumés à envisager notre passé sous un aspect peut-être trop idéal et plutôt conforme à nos rêves qu'à la réalité.

Trop souvent on a fait des panégyriques au lieu de l'histoire

(Our national pride is often offended by the unfavorable comments that accompany his [Parkman's] citations. We are all the more sensitive because we have become accustomed through our patriotism, always vigilant, to contemplate our past in a light that is perhaps too idealistic and that conforms more with our dreams than with reality. Too often we have written panegyrics rather than history).⁷⁰

These views capture the spirit in which Taché, along with his colleagues, attempted to create a Canadian canon in French. Embedded in the truth that they attempted to convey is their passion, and romantic strands run through much of the weave they created. For example, Louis Fréchette (1839–1908) also aimed to hold a mirror before his people and provoke a sense of national pride. His *Légende d'un peuple* (1887) reflects the strong influence of French romantic writers such as

Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo. Even its title echoes Hugo's poetry collection *La Légende des siècles* (1859). Fréchette dedicates his work to France, in a passage that weaves realism into a romantic framework.

A la France!

Mère, je ne suis pas de ceux qui ont eu le bonheur d'être bercés sur tes genoux.

Ce sont de bien lointains échos qui m'ont familiarisé avec ton nom et ta gloire.

Ta belle langue, j'ai appris à la balbutier loin de toi.

J'ose cependant, aujourd'hui, apporter une nouvelle page héroïque à ton histoire déjà si belle et si chevaleresque.

Cette page est écrite plus avec le cœur qu'avec la plume. [. . .]

L. F.

("To France!" / Mother, I am not among those who enjoyed the happiness of being rocked on your knees. / Only distant echoes familiarized me with your name and your glory. / I learned to babble your beautiful language far from you. / And yet today I dare to bring a new heroic page to your history, which already is so beautiful and chivalrous).⁷¹

The romanticized image of the poet as a baby conjures the historical accuracy of Canada as France's offspring, thus blending fact and fiction, romance and history. A detailed consideration of this major work is beyond the purview of this dissertation, except to note this rhetorical technique that was typical of *Ecole Patriotique* aspirations, and that Taché also enlists. These authors claimed the beautiful language as their own, however "poorly" they may express it (by comparison with Hugo). Using this language as his tool, however imperfectly (in a display false modesty from an

illustrious poet), Fréchette states his intention to add a page to French literature, in what is also the beginnings of French Canadian literature, “a new heroic page.”

Taché uses the same technique in *Forestiers et voyageurs*, but then incorporates the Canadian environment into his construction of the French Canadian identity. Because this environment comprises a vast area of wilderness in which the immigrants have learned to earn their living, new linguistic expressions have developed. Taché uses and explains these in *Forestiers et voyageurs*, in a quintessential illustration of Deleuze and Guattari’s *langue mineure*. At the same time, Taché’s literal transcription of the legends and traditions of his people contributes to its patchwork quality, like that of a folk quilt, incorporating both material elements of its world and the artistic vision of its creator.

As Réjean Beaudoin observes, Taché’s hybrid work is part of a developing new literature that differentiates itself from its French ancestors through a conscious rejection of the novel form in favor of an accurate representation of reality. Beaudoin traces to this predisposition the development of, paradoxically, a uniquely Canadian form of fiction, one blending autobiography and other nonfiction with invented characters and situations.⁷² Built into the world that Taché represents are pieces of the wilderness and its inhabitants, laid out in a pattern interspersing slices of the real among the French folklore brought by the disrupted immigrants. Using a minor language still in the process of developing and being conveyed, Taché makes use of the rules-breaking characteristics by which Beaudoin explains the emergence of the French Canadian novel during the 19th century. As Beaudoin observes, it is a new methodology, one free of conventions and in this way showing aspects of modernity.⁷³

Folktales held great appeal in Taché's period and were collected, reinterpreted, and retold by several contemporaneous authors, as Aurélien Boivin details. He ties the genre's popularity partly to its length—shorter pieces are easier to listen to or learn to read—and partly to the climate, “Surtout pendant les longues saisons d’hiver, alors que les bateaux, en raison des glaces, fuient les ports du Saint-Laurent” (Especially during the long winter season, while the boats, due to ice, fleeing the ports of St. Lawrence).⁷⁴ In their evocations of the spirit realm, Michel's tales often blend Amerindian with Christian belief systems in a sort of exotic appeal aimed, in the end, at better illustrating the obvious value of what Taché calls “la véritable doctrine, même dans le sens naturel des choses” (the true doctrine, even in the natural sense of things).⁷⁵ He speaks in the context of consoling the widowed François at the beginning of *Forestiers et voyageurs*, but the same sentiment runs throughout the work, appearing for instance in Michel's rendering of “Ikès le jongleur,” an Amerindian sorcerer who gets into a dispute with another Algonquin magician. Michel hunts with Ikès for a season and learns that he has a *mahoumet*, or spirit guide whom he must serve in return for material aid, along the lines of Faust's Mephistopheles (the comparison made by Taché referred to earlier). As he begins his story, Michel reassures his audience that he was in no danger, being Christian and non-Indian: “Or, vous n’êtes pas sans savoir que les jongleurs sauvages n’ont aucun pouvoir sur les blancs. La jonglerie ne prend que sur le sang des nations, et seulement sur les sauvages infidèles, ou sur les sauvages chrétiens qui sont en état de péché mortel” (Now, you are aware that savage sorcerers have no power over whites. Their magic only works on the blood of nations [Indians], and only on unbelieving savages, or on Christian

savages who are in a state of mortal sin).⁷⁶ This passage reflects not just the ever-present Christian foundation of Taché's message, but also the superstition that Havard identifies as an important element of the European imagination and mentality that helps to explain the appeal of native belief systems for so many *coureurs de bois* who had originated in France's rural population.⁷⁷ Michel's belief that the magic is real but only works on certain people illustrates Havard's findings, which Moogk also covers in his cultural history of New France.

Amerindian belief systems penetrated and blended with those of the European newcomers, incorporating, reinterpreting, and passing on mindsets in a process of Deleuzo-Guattarien becoming. As folktales were re-told from the French consciousness that had transplanted itself into a new soil, the stories fed on and re-presented elements of their new environment, in a rhizomatic movement merging the physical with the abstract. David Abram articulates the phenomenon as a fusion of the material and the perceptual: "The human mind is not some otherworldly essence that comes to house itself inside our physiology. Rather, it is instilled and provoked by the sensorial field itself, induced by the tensions and participations between the human body and the animate earth."⁷⁸ This captures the essence of the ecocritical concept of the world actually becoming part of human consciousness.

Taché selects the forester and the canoe-paddler, both workers for industry, to show unique French Canadian characteristics. The qualities he wishes to emphasize are mental agility, survival skills in the wilderness, physical prowess, and an artistic appreciation. The lumberjack is of interest, he says, "à cause même du caractère de nos grands bois canadiens" (precisely because of the characteristics of our great

Canadian woods).⁷⁹ This phrase associates the woodsman with the very personality of the forest. Throughout the book Taché describes the northern woods, often in workmanlike terms that convey the tasks needed to cut and remove the lumber, and periodically in terms that romanticize both the work and the men.

The most striking example of this is “The Intermission,” a pause in the narrative during which the author extols Canada’s magnificence, thus bringing the reader back into the setting in which these stories take place. In this way, he ties the outside domain directly to the people. This impression grows stronger during the course of the intermission. It is a rhetorical strategy that has the effect of, as David Abram explains it, “acknowledging . . . links between the inner, psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us.”⁸⁰ Just so, by describing an outdoors scene in vivid detail, Taché effectively brings this vision into his reader’s psyche, where he wishes to implant it so that it may grow into part of how he sees himself. In the process, the author uses physical pieces of the material world to construct or renew a uniquely French Canadian national identity.

Everyone gets up to stretch, they open the door to let in some fresh air, and, says the narrator-doctor: “Je sortis afin de jouir du spectacle d’une nuit d’hiver dans la forêt. Quelques étoiles brillaient au firmament; la lune tantôt illuminait le ciel d’une vive clarté qui scintillait sur les cristaux de neige et de givre, tantôt, se cachant derrière un gros nuage, abandonnait la nature à l’obscurité. Une montagne voisine élevait ses puissants massifs au-dessus de nos têtes” (I went out to enjoy the spectacle of a winter night in the forest. A few stars shone in the firmament; the moon either illuminated the sky with a bright light that glittered on the crystals of snow and frost, or at times hid

behind a big cloud, abandoning nature to the darkness. A nearby mountain raised its powerful peaks above our heads.)⁸¹ Taché transitions the reader from a state of listening to the adventures of an old *coureur de bois* to one of direct communication with nature. He takes the reader outside to admire another performance, that of a winter night in the forest. After introducing this display with the word “spectacle,” the author focuses on nighttime lights: those of the stars, the moon, and reflections scintillating in the snow. Using a chiaroscuro technique characteristic of romantic paintings and writings of the period, he creates an impression of magnificence that leaves his audience marveling at nature’s glory. Taché’s narrative uses a romantic view of the natural world as an engaging vehicle to carry the historical and cultural information that he wishes to impart.

Having painted a spectacular backdrop, the author then shifts the reader’s attention to the view in the foreground: “Au pied des grands arbres et dans l’ombre des sombres profondeurs des bois, se dessinaient les sapins couverts de neige, comme autant de spectres enveloppés de leurs suaires blancs” (Toward the bottom of the tall trees and in the shadow of the dark depths of the woods, snow-covered pines stood like phantoms enveloped in white shrouds’).⁸² This tableau of tall trees, dark woods, and snow-covered firs evokes both the awe and the fear of the wilderness that was discussed in this dissertation’s previous chapter. In Taché’s writing, beauty and fear coalesce in the archetypal winter image of pines in snow, set in an environment that is stunning and that also holds the potential for death, in a romantic image that prepares French Canadian readers to revel in their familiar realm of folklore.

The setting is of central importance. Taché has established that we are in the forest, the dark and mysterious, deep woods that are the domain of the unusual and from where we may never emerge. By placing in this environment the folktales that his readers already know, the author connects their culture to the Canadian landscape. This reflects a dual overall purpose in *Forestiers et voyageurs*: on the one hand Taché constructs a French Canadian identity, and on the other he attempts to broaden this sense of self into an entire national ethos by making the people feel that they belong to the land. He connects them to it spiritually, in a concept that resembles that of the U.S. idea of Manifest Destiny, another 19th-century expression of ownership contemporaneous with Taché's work.

Toward these dual and also linked ends, Taché follows the creative lead of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (d. 1832), whom he later quotes and cites. Taché writes: "Oh! la forêt! c'est bien là le domaine des esprits qu'ont évoqués les poètes. Ce n'est pas sans raison que l'imagination populaire a placé dans les mystérieux détours du dédale qu'elle forme le séjour favori des fées, des lutins, des sylphes, des gobelins, des gnomes, et de tous ces génies fantastiques dont les histoires nous fascinent, nous épouvantent et nous charment tour à tour" (Oh! The forest! It is indeed the domain of spirits that poets have evoked. Not without reason does the popular imagination set in its labyrinth's mysterious detours the favorite dwelling of fairies, gremlins, sylphs, goblins, gnomes, and all these fantastic genies whose stories captivate, terrify, or delight us).⁸³ Instead of the humans that populate the narrative of *Forestiers et voyageurs*, the intermission provides Taché with the space, in a concrete sense, to people the forest with ethereal beings. These are not Amerindian spirits, though they

also were adapted and incorporated into French Canadian folklore, as seen elsewhere in *Forestiers et voyageurs* and as Boivin details⁸⁴ Here in the intermission it is European fairies and ghouls who appear, having migrated in the minds of their French rhizomatic hosts. These goblins also inhabit the collection of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, who in 1812 had published fairy tales so widely read that W. H. Auden famously referred to them as fundamental in Western literature.⁸⁵ When Europeans first arrived in America in the 16th century, and throughout their multiplication in the 17th and 18th centuries, hobgoblins and witches were very real to them, as a simple mention of the name Cotton Mather or the town Salem in the British colonies should suffice to illustrate.

Taché enlists this European tradition of spirits in the service of his effort to provide French Canadians with a forest they can consider their own. Quoting Goethe, he continues:

Et, quand je me reporte vers ces moments de délicieuses jouissances, je redis avec Goethe, rêvant du Brocken:

Voici des arbres et des monts, / Voici des pics couverts de neige, / Le torrent qui roule et s'abrège / Les âpres chemins par ses bonds.

(And, when I am carried back to these moments of delicious pleasures, I repeat with Goethe, dreaming of the Brocken:

Here are trees and mountains / Here are peaks covered with snow, / The torrent that rolls and cuts short / The rugged paths by its rushing).⁸⁶

This reference to the Brocken, highest peak of the Harz range in Germany and traditionally thought to be populated with mystic beings of all sorts, evokes Goethe's

Faust (1808 and 1832) and its exploration of the irrational, while also conjuring nature's sublimity in romantic terms. The intermission is thus a walk outside during which readers are reminded of their *patrie* in physical, spiritual, and emotional terms. In striving to touch the soul of his audience, the author's effusions carry romanticized descriptions that can be seen as an instance of rhizomatic growth, a Deleuzo-Guattarian process of this culture's movement and readjustment, as it is interpreted and re-disseminated in Taché's hands. In this instance, the process incorporates materially the soil (not the real soil, but the idea of it) into the abstract construction of a Canadian ethos.

Having introduced foresters, Taché now turns to *voyageurs*, stating that he will focus on the latter because he finds them the most intriguing: "Pittoresque entre tous, ce type a plus contribué à faire connaître notre petit peuple que tous les événements de notre histoire" (The most original of all, this type has contributed more to make known our small population than all the events of our history).⁸⁷ This major claim about the significance of the profession of *voyageur/coureur de bois* carries the weight of the entire book, because Taché's aim is precisely to make the people better known to themselves. To accomplish this, he selects the traders and trappers who contributed to both the formation of present-day Canada and the capitalist exploitation of its natural resources. Meanwhile the real *voyageur* is, in Taché's authorial chronotope, already en route to becoming folklore, helped into this category by the publication and dissemination of *Forestiers et voyageurs*. In this sense the work is a verb, an illumination of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming.

Natural Resources: Capitalist Development Dependent on Workers

Even as Taché describes its breathtaking beauty and tells tales of bygone days, the forest is portrayed as a major economic resource to be exploited. This reflects the author's conflicted feelings derived from the tension between on one hand a 19th-century romanticism inspired by Chateaubriand, Hugo, and Goethe, and on the other hand a resolute drive toward ever-increasing industrialization. Even if the author did not consciously feel pulled between these two apparently opposing states of mind, his awareness of the dichotomy shows in his vivid portrayals of both poles in sympathetic terms. It is as if he were searching for a compromise, a way to accommodate all sides of a national debate, a problematic with which he had contended throughout his political career.

Taché's position could almost be seen as an attempt at Michel Serres' contract with nature—except that Taché often represents the natural world as having value chiefly through its ability to support people. There are, however, exceptions to this. In both of the book's intermissions, the author steps away from the storytelling interior to rejoin the outside world and reconnect his readers with it. Taché's contribution to a national literature is founded on cultural memories of the French Canadian direct contact with nature, as he says specifically during the second intermission, "The Adjournment," while speaking of his talks with Michel and the backwoodsman's honesty and wisdom.

Ce n'était pas le premier et ce n'a pas été le dernier entretien du genre que j'ai eu avec ces hommes du peuple, chez qui une foi sincère, une grande honnêteté de but *et le contact continuel avec la nature*, servis par beaucoup d'intelligence,

ont fait fleurir et fructifier cette précieuse semence ces vérités naturelles restée dans l'homme après sa chute, comme souvenir de sa splendeur perdue et motif de poursuivre sa réhabilitation.

(This was not the first nor the last such conversation that I have had with these men of the people, in whom a sincere faith, a great honesty of purpose, and *a continual contact with nature*, all employed with great intelligence, caused this precious seed to flower and bear the fruit of natural truths that remained in man after his fall, as a memory of his lost splendor and the reason to pursue his rehabilitation).⁸⁸ (My emphasis.)

In this passage, we see that Taché is less anthropocentric than he is God-centric, bringing his religious foundation into this probing mental and spiritual consideration, as he does throughout the work. Of course, it can be argued that God-centric thinking *is* anthropocentric, a topic to be explored in the following chapter. Here, the point is to show that Taché considers the woodsman's admirable qualities to be a direct result of living in nature. This may be an extension of his adherence to romanticized, pastoral, Rousseau-inspired notions of *le bon sauvage*, but it also reveals the author's awareness of the importance of this direct and ongoing contact, and his interpretation of it as being foundational to the French Canadian character that it is both mirroring and constructing. As Luc Lacourcière wrote in his 1946 preface to the work, Taché "a compris la valeur humaine exceptionnelle de cet homme des bois qu'on appelait le voyageur. Cette connaissance est indispensable à l'intelligence d'une vie ancienne dont le souvenir peut encore nous instruire" (understood the exceptional human value of this woodsman called the *voyageur*. This knowledge is essential to understanding a

former way of life that, through its memory, can still teach us).⁸⁹ This was precisely Taché's aim, but his description of the woodsman can even be seen as blurring the boundaries between nature and the human psyche.

In writing of this human-nature interface, ecocritic Timothy Morton explores the possibility of dissolving the lines between perception and the subject perceived: "What remains after our long delve into the fake otherness of ecomemesis is the fragility of an 'I' that we can't quite get rid of, but that at least can be made to vibrate, in such a way that does not strengthen its aggressive resolve (like a hammer or a boot), but that dissolves its form, however momentarily."⁹⁰ Morton's move to make human consciousness more aware of and connected with the very rhythm of atmosphere resonates in Taché's passage quoted above, despite his religious overcast (or, Taché would say, because of it). Notably, it is through the character of the *coureur de bois/voyageur* that Taché carries this sense of harmonic resonance into the French Canadian national identity.

Aside from serving as a fictitious compilation and repository for the stories of numerous other characters, this honest character of Michel plays the role of geographical guide (another function of the *coureurs de bois*, who often hired themselves out as forest guides, especially during the 19th and early 20th centuries). In *Forestiers et voyageurs*, Michel's difficult life takes readers far beyond the forests near Rimouski, into the vastness of the northern Canadian country that is theirs. Taché's enraptured, Goethe-inspired depictions of this land have been discussed, and we see in Michel's descriptions this same combination of a love of wild beauty and wise fear of the dangers it hides. He describes the breathtaking site of Tadoussac,

where the Saguenay River meets the St. Lawrence, site of Samuel de Champlain's first agreement with Algonquin and Montagnais Indians in 1603:

Tadoussac est placé comme un nid, au milieu des rochers de granit qui entourent l'embouchure du Saguenay. La chapelle et les maisons du poste occupent le rebord d'un joli plateau, au sommet d'une dune escarpée qui suit les contours d'une charmante petite baie. Ainsi perchés, ces édifices dominent l'étroit rivage de sable fin qui s'arrondit à leurs pieds. A droite, la vue plonge dans les eaux profondes du sombre Saguenay; en avant, elle se perd dans l'immense Saint-Laurent. Tout autour de soi des montagnes couvertes de bois de sapins et de bouleaux. Par l'ouverture que s'est frayée la puissante rivière à travers le roc, on voit les battures, les îles et les rives sud du Grand Fleuve. C'est un endroit délicieux!

(Tadoussac is placed like a nest, amid granite boulders that surround the mouth of the Saguenay. The post's chapel and houses stand at the edge of a pretty plateau, at the summit of a steep hill that follows the contours of a charming little bay. Thus perched, these buildings dominate the narrow sandy beach curving at their feet. To the right, your view plunges into the deep waters of the dark Saguenay; ahead, it disappears into the vast St. Lawrence. All about you, mountains are cloaked in fir trees and birches. Through the opening that the mighty river has carved through the rock, you see mudflats, islands, and the great river's southern shores. It is a delightful place!)⁹¹

This is the gateway to the Pays d'en Haut, Canada north of the St. Lawrence, where Michel will spend the next nine years. The bird's eye view of the scene that

Taché describes is far more reportorial than that of the interlude previously considered. Here the only metaphor is that of a bird's nest, which places the reader in a position to imagine the view. The chapel links the scene to Taché's ubiquitous Catholicism, but other than that the author here appears to feel the need for no romantic flights to show Michel's (and his own) awe before Canada's wild nature. Michel observes it here from the safe distance of the pretty French settlement, but soon he will be negotiating this wilderness very intimately.

As Michel's narrative draws to a close, Taché brings the reader back into the real-time chronotope from which the author creates while also looking back in time at a previous one. "Dame," says Michel, who has almost finished his tales, "vous seriez peut-être surpris si je vous disais que, depuis ce temps-là, je ne suis jamais allé plus haut que Québec. Mais, dites donc, docteur, est-ce vrai qu'on amène du bois carré à Québec du fond du lac Huron?" (you might be surprised if I told you that since those days, I have never been farther north than Quebec. But tell me, doctor, is it true that squared timber is being carried to Quebec from the bottom of Lake Huron?)⁹² Michel's surprise at the modern world and the advancements that technology has made possible leads to Taché's description of how the men construct, ride, and live in vast "cages" and trains of wood that they float down into the lumberyards. He has already introduced this topic as a third and final movement in his second intermission, "The Adjournment," after comparing French Canadian folktales to the beginnings of any great literature and then extolling the virtues and wisdom of the woodsman. By then moving into an initial description of the extremely dangerous work done by those who ride logs floating down rivers, Taché prepares his readers for this grand finale in

which he portrays the booming forest industry in terms of awe and wonder, thus fully promoting the growing and always desiring capitalist machine and encouraging his people to become part of it.

“Mais, racontez-moi donc un peu” (But tell me a bit about it), Michel urges, in a rhetorical move that passes the narration back to the doctor. “Comment s’y prennent-ils? Allons, donnez-nous une idée de ces travaux” (How do they do it? Come, give us an idea of this work).⁹³ The doctor agrees to tell his audience about “les merveilles de cette immense exploitation forestière des vallées des grands lacs et de l’Outaouais” (the marvels of the immense forest harvesting from the valleys of the great lakes and the Ottawa River).⁹⁴ The description shows no evidence of an interest in preserving wilderness, in keeping with the economically oriented mentality that Taché exhibits throughout the book. While attracted to the beauties of nature, his interest is in what it can do for the economy of his people.

Michel, the representative of the past, is equally intrigued by the impressive capitalist machine at work. In chapter 19, Part 2, “Les hommes-de-cages” (the men of the cages), Taché again uses the terminology of the trade to bring the work of these men into the full consciousness of his readers as something meriting their attention and their interest. The chapter concludes with a sweeping vision, grandiose in scope and lyrical in delivery, of the sheer inevitability of technological and economic progress:

Tous ces grands trains de bois, ces îles flottantes, avec ces troupes d’hommes qui s’agitent à leur surface, qui descendent, poussés par toutes ces forces qui les emportent, vents, courants et vapeurs, . . . qui s’éparpillent, quelque fois, laissant

aux rivages qu'ils parcourent leurs débris d'hommes et de choses, et finissent, après leur long voyage, par aller se perdre au sein du vieux monde! . . . tout cela ne vous semble-t-il pas une image des vents et des courants qui emportent, sur le fleuve du temps, les peuples, les générations et les individus vers les régions du tombeau?

(All these great wooden rafts, these floating islands with troops of men moving about on their surfaces as they descend, driven by all the forces that carry them—winds, currents, steam—that sometimes break apart, leaving on the shores along which they travel debris of men and things, and eventually, after their long journey, disappear into the old world! . . . does not all this strike you as an image of the winds and currents that carry on the river of time people, generations, and individuals toward the grave?)⁹⁵

This portrait of huge wood trains carrying human lives down toward the River Styx exudes both romanticism and realism. It calls to mind Zola's description in *L'Assomoir* (1877) of workers entering Paris in the morning, an interminable flow of men, beasts, and carts. "Il y avait là un piétinement de troupeau, une foule que de brusques arrêts étalaient en mares sur la chaussée, un défilé sans fin d'ouvriers allant au travail, leurs outils sur le dos, leur pain sous le bras; et la cohue s'engouffrait dans Paris où elle se noyait, continuellement" (It was a trampling herd, a crowd that sudden stops caused to swell in waves on the pavement, an endless parade of workers heading for work, their tools on their backs, their bread under their arms; and the crowd rushed into Paris where it drowned, continually).⁹⁶ Three parallels between the two descriptions are particularly noteworthy: the flow of people working, the occasional

accident resulting in wreckage, and a continual movement toward self-perdition. Zola's depiction is by far the more evocative on a sensory level, but Taché's provides a similar moment of pause and existential reflection. An important contrast between the two groups of contemporary workers is that the Canadians are portrayed as being happy, proud, and industrious Christians, whereas the Parisians are drowning in hopeless poverty. This opposition between two works of the same period highlights a basic clash between the late 19th century's capitalist and socialist viewpoints. Zola portrays the widespread urban misery that led to anarchist resistance and the 1871 Commune, both inspired by Marx's calls to rally for workers' rights. Taché, on the other extreme, represents singing men who labor willingly in capitalist enterprises that reward their workers.

Taché's wholehearted embrace of the industrial movement reflects a worldview that critics have often dismissed as merely bourgeois, and certainly Taché was a member of the comfortable middle class.⁹⁷ But his genuine concern for workers' welfare is not expressed in a way that simply promotes philanthropy. Taché's ultimate solution for all humans may be the salvation of the soul and eternal life next to Jesus, but he depicts earthly realities in unvarnished terms, even when the larger picture is presented in a romanticized light. For example, within his comparison of the floating trains of lumber to the river of time, quoted above, are embedded images of men broken apart like debris. This portrayal presents the extreme dangers involved in the work, and here, along with the promotion of industrial growth, lies his interest. For his people to develop and maintain a positive image of themselves, they need to see a future toward which they can work.

Taché's interest is in advancing the cause of people, his people. He enlists two "branches" of the French Canadian "family tree" to portray his people to themselves. Michel represents their original direct contact with untamed and very rough, albeit beautiful country. They have now moved beyond the point in history where they had to depend on such difficult work, and, even though the lumberjack's job is also very difficult, it is shown as being less fraught with peril than that of the *voyageurs* of yore. Both ways of earning a living involve direct and ongoing contact with nature, but in the long trains of lumber floating down to the lumberyards, industrial progress is shown as being unstoppable and desirable. Taché describes the demise of Michel's trade with affection and admiration, but it is now necessary that industry and agriculture—progress—take priority over hunting and fishing, as European immigrants painstakingly clear and conquer the wilderness. Still, Taché savors his time in the woods and preserves the stories of the old days, knowing Michel is a dying type. Using the figure of the aging *coureur de bois*, the author brings him and his environment inside from the cold into literature. The character of the *voyageur* is used as a repository of the past, a device that links him and the wilderness, which includes native populations, to a way of life that is obsolete, in the process of being overcome by the booming forestry business. The methodic clearing of forests was one of the most promising chronotopic investments, a development that is portrayed not in negative terms, but lauded, while the past is painted in lyrical terms as a world already lost.

While the doctor/politician/author Taché wishes to care for his people in every sense, he shows no concern for the depletion of Canada's natural resources, and in this

way the workers he describes can be seen as links in the capitalist insatiable machine that Deleuze and Guattari articulate so well in *L'Anti-Oedipe*. In terms of the human relationship with nature, we see the prevalent late-19th-century view reflected in Michel's marveling at industrial progress. This is the point at which the compiled character corporally links the past to the future.

Like Fréchette, Taché adds a new page to the French story in Canada. Here big business is glorified, while *coureurs de bois* are all but completely gone except in stories. As an ecocritical motif, the woodsmen continue to represent a connection between French Canadians and the wilderness, but this link must now serve the larger goals of exploitation and profit. Nature continues to be admired for its beauty, but otherwise it is valued in terms of how it can support and benefit "civilization."

¹ Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur* (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Historical Society, 1955), 261, 267 n. 6 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1931).

² Michel Fournier, "Transferts culturels et formation de l'imaginaire: La poétique de l'irrationnel dans *Forestiers et voyageurs*," in Julien Goyette and Claude La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2013), 181, referencing the work of Luc Lacourcière and Michel Biron.

³ Throughout this dissertation, "ecocritical" designates a critical perspective that focuses on human interactions with and uses of the natural world, as discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie I* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1972–73), for example, 368–70, 373, 413–15.

⁵ “Nationalist” in this context refers to ethnicity and culture, or ways in which French Canadians strove to distinguish themselves in the English-dominated country in which they now lived.

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Editions de minuit, 1975), 33.

⁷ The name of this lower-St. Lawrence River city is also, of course, the title of Anne Hébert’s famous 20th century novel.

⁸ Biographical details from Eveline Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché (1820–94): Un grand représentant de l’élite canadienne-française* (Quebec: Editions Garneau, 1971); and Michèle Bernard, *Joseph-Charles Taché, visionnaire, penseur et homme d’action au coeur du XIXe siècle* (Montreal: XYZ, 2011).

⁹ Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001), 14, 274, 306.

Eveline Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché (1820–94): Un grand représentant de l’élite canadienne-française* (Quebec: Editions Garneau, 1971), 216–7, 201, and chap. 5.

Mélanie Desmeules, “Pratiques et réseaux des naturalistes au Québec, 1850–1920” (Ph.D. diss., Université Laval, Québec, 2011), 76–77, 270–71.

¹⁰ François-Xavier Garneau, *Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu’à nos jours*, vol. 2, 3d ed. (Quebec: Lamoureux, 1859), 373.

¹¹ Taché would publicly clash with both Casgrain and Sulte, in the former case over what Taché alleged were stolen royalties that should have gone to him; in the latter over Sulte’s vociferous condemnation of the Jesuits and their influence. Bossé

untangles these fascinating disputes, which are beyond our purview here, in chapters 12 and 13 of *Un grand représentant de l'élite canadienne-française*.

¹² Abbé Camille Roy, *Essais sur la littérature canadienne* (Quebec: Librairie Garneau, 1907), 87.

¹³ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 10.

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, 36–37. On the Quebecois incorporation into literature of orality known as Joual, see Réjean Beaudoin, *Le roman québécois* (Quebec : Boréal, 1991), 67–71.

¹⁵ Joseph-Charles Taché, *Forestiers et voyageurs: Moeurs et légendes canadiennes* (Montréal: Librairie Saint-Joseph, 1884), 19–24. Originally published serially in *Soirées canadiennes*, 1863.

¹⁶ Taché, “Le camp d’un chantier,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 21.

¹⁷ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 275.

¹⁸ Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*. Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*.

¹⁹ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 32.

²⁰ Taché, “Ajournement,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 135.

²¹ Taché, “Le père Michel,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 33.

²² M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Vern W. McGee, trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 65.

²³ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 68–69.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, 75.

²⁵ Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*, 2.

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- ²⁶ Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*, 7.
- ²⁷ Bernard, *Joseph-Charles Taché, Visionnaire, penseur et homme d'action*.
- ²⁸ Desmeules, "Pratiques et réseaux," 77.
- ²⁹ Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*, 2.
- ³⁰ Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*, 40–41.
- ³¹ Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*, 1, citing Henri-Raymond Casgrain.
- ³² Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*. Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*, 2
- ³³ Margo Anderson, review of Curtis, *The Politics of Population*, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 1 (summer 2002): 151–52.
- ³⁴ Curtis, *The Politics of Population*, 239. See Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*.
- ³⁵ Taché, "Un compérage," *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 51.
- ³⁶ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 6–7.
- ³⁷ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966), 12–13.
- ³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1980), 287.
- ³⁹ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1995), 10.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

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- ⁴² Dana Phillips, “Expostulations and Replies,” in Ken Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 265.
- ⁴³ Phillips, “Expostulations and Replies,” 262.
- ⁴⁴ Taché, “Un compérage,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 52.
- ⁴⁵ Taché, “Le fôllet de la mare-aux-bars,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 62.
- ⁴⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe*, 364, 367.
- ⁴⁷ Taché, preface, *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 8.
- ⁴⁸ Taché, “Le feu de la baie,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 73.
- ⁴⁹ Taché, “Le passeur de mitis,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 78.
- ⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 332 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
- ⁵¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe*, 21.
- ⁵² Marius Barbeau analyzes the legend’s many versions in “La Complainte de Cadieux, Coureur de Bois (circa 1709),” *Journal of American folklore* 67 (1954): 163–83.
- ⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe*, 21 n. 1.
- ⁵⁴ Bernard, *Joseph-Charles Taché, Visionnaire, penseur et homme d’action*, 14. Placide Lépine (H. R. Casgrain), *Silhouettes littéraires* (St. Jacques, Quebec: Editions du pot de fer, 1994 [1872]).
- ⁵⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 124.
- ⁵⁶ Nute, *The Voyager*, 4–10; see chapter 4. Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyager World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 34–35.

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- ⁵⁷ Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, “Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory,” in Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism*, 144.
- ⁵⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 131–2.
- ⁵⁹ Marek Korczynski and Keith Jones, “Instrumental Music? The Social Origins of Broadcast Music in British Factories,” *Popular Music* 25, No. 2 (2006): 146.
- ⁶⁰ Nute, *The Voyageur*, 28, 46–51, 56, 58, 154–55. Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 86–93.
- ⁶¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Friedrich Engels, ed., Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1906), 147.
- ⁶² Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 30–31, 166–67.
- ⁶³ Deleuze and Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe*, 19.
- ⁶⁴ Nute, *The Voyageur*, chapter 4. Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 93–101.
- ⁶⁵ Taché, “La chapelle de Port Neuf,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 225.
- ⁶⁶ Taché, “Le passeur de mitis,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 83.
- ⁶⁷ Charles Nodier, *Contes fantastiques*, quoted in Claude Bélanger, “Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française,” Quebec History, Marianopolis College, <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/>.
- ⁶⁸ Blodgett, “History in English and French, 1832–1898,” in Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller, eds., *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 121–22.
- ⁶⁹ Henri-Raymond Casgrain, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 1, *Légendes canadiennes et variétés* (Montreal: Beauchemin and Valois, 1884), 421.

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- ⁷⁰ Casgrain, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 395.
- ⁷¹ Louis-Honoré Fréchette, *La Légende d'un peuple* (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1908), 6 (1887).
- ⁷² Réjean Beaudoin, "La poétique du roman chez Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, père," *University of Toronto Quarterly: A Canadian Journal of the Humanities* 79, no. 4 (2010), 1123, 1128.
- ⁷³ Beaudoin, "La poétique du roman chez Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, père," 1124.
- ⁷⁴ Aurélien Boivin, ed., *Les Meilleurs contes fantastiques québécois du XIXe siècle*, 3d ed. (Quebec: Fides, 2001), 8.
- ⁷⁵ Taché, "François-le-veuf," *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 26.
- ⁷⁶ Taché, "Ikès le jongleur," *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 89.
- ⁷⁷ Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages: Indiens et français dans le Pays d'en Haut, 1660–1715* (Sillery, Québec: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2003), 724.
- ⁷⁸ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 262.
- ⁷⁹ Taché, preface, *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 6.
- ⁸⁰ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 262.
- ⁸¹ Taché, "L'entr'acte," *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 86.
- ⁸² Ibid.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 87.
- ⁸⁴ Boivin, ed., *Les Meilleurs contes fantastiques québécois du XIXe siècle*, 8–9.

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- ⁸⁵ Donald Haase, “Yours, Mine, or Ours? Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and the Ownership of Fairy Tales,” *Merveilles et contes* 7, no. 2 (December 1993): 383.
- ⁸⁶ Taché, “L’entr’acte,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 87, citing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, Act V.
- ⁸⁷ Taché, preface, *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 6.
- ⁸⁸ Taché, “Ajournement,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 138.
- ⁸⁹ Luc Lacourcière, preface, *Forestiers et voyageurs* (Montreal: Fides, 1946), quoted in Bossé, *Joseph-Charles Taché*, 288.
- ⁹⁰ Timothy Morton, “Imagining Ecology without Nature,” in Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism*, 256.
- ⁹¹ Taché, “Les chaloupiers,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 112.
- ⁹² Taché, “La conteste,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 212.
- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ⁹⁵ Taché, “Les hommes-de-cages,” *Forestiers et voyageurs*, 223–24.
- ⁹⁶ Emile Zola, *L’Assomoir* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), 36–37 (1877).
- ⁹⁷ Anderson, review of Curtis, *The Politics of Population*, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 151–52. Goyette and La Charité, eds., *Joseph-Charles Taché polygraphe*, 4.

Chapter 4. Controlling, Clearing, or Exploiting Wildness in Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* and Léo-Paul Desrosiers' *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*

In the works considered so far, treatments by and of the backwoodsmen echo in varying ways the dominant culture's stewardship of the land and the Indians. Ideas about who and what the dominant culture is are complicated by the long French-British struggle, resulting in shifting representations such as Radisson's in the late 17th century, and in later deliberate efforts to mirror/create a French Canadian "national identity," as seen in *Forestiers et voyageurs*. These previously considered works can be seen as eco-historical documents through their conveyance of stories about Canadian land use. The present chapter builds on these ideas as they emerge from two 20th-century novels, Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* and Léo-Paul Desrosiers' *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*.

In both works, the exploitation of wild places and people is intensifying. The *coureurs de bois* are part of this development through both their participation in the voracious fur trade and the fact that increasingly they are working as *voyageurs*, who as employees are integral parts of the capitalist machine that Deleuze and Guattari articulate in *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie I*. From the standpoint of ecocritical history, this is the socioeconomic movement that has resulted in contemporary global marches to protest continuing capitalist investment in large-scale fossil-fuel-producing enterprises at the expense of serious development of alternative energy sources. These protests represent another becoming in the process of unfolding, of obvious ecocritical importance but otherwise beyond the scope of the present study.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, *coureurs*, Indians, and wild places came under increasing official classification, isolation, and control, while in a parallel movement agricultural and capitalist interests expanded. This overall arc plays out in Hémon's novel about the farming community, and in Desrosiers' work about *voyageurs* in the employ of big, fiercely competitive companies. Framed largely by William Cronon's article "The Trouble with Wilderness" and Edouard Glissant's poetic critical work *Poétique de la relation*, this chapter considers the forces at play in Hémon's and Desrosiers' works of fiction that depict, in different ways, an increasing marginalization of the *coureurs de bois*, and explains how their gradual disappearance echoes a historical sequence that is of continuing ecocritical relevance.

MARIA CHAPDELAINE

Louis Hémon had won three writing prizes in France by the time he wrote *Maria Chapdelaine* in Canada.¹ Born in 1880 in Brest, France, Hémon worked as a journalist and sportswriter in London while writing novels that would be published posthumously. During this time he lived with a woman (Lydia O'Kelly) with whom he had a daughter.² He emigrated to Canada in 1911 alone, and the child (also Lydia) was raised in Quimper by Hémon's sister Marie.³ After working in Montreal for a year as a translator, he moved north to the rural Lake Saint-Jean region in Quebec Province. There Hémon worked on the farm of Samuel Bédard near the village of Peribonka, on the northern shore, and collected the experiences and observations that would result in what some have called the best-known work of French Canadian literature, *Maria Chapdelaine*. Hémon sent his manuscript to the Paris magazine *Le Temps* in 1913 and

then set off on his next adventure, this time westward bound. He was walking along a railroad track in Ontario when a locomotive struck and killed him. Hémon was thirty-three years old.

Maria Chapdelaine was published in 1916, after first appearing in serial form in *Le Temps* in 1914. It has since gone through many editions and been widely translated. Hémon's other novels were also published but considered lesser.⁴ *Maria Chapdelaine* is the story of a farming community around Peribonka in 1908–09, as dated by critic Bernard Duchatelet through clues such as who the pope is in the novel (Pius X), and on which day of the week falls Saint Anne's Feast (always 26 July).⁵ Peribonka was still relatively recent (1887), with logging camps continuing to increase in the region.⁶ The story opens as a Catholic mass ends and the people go outside to mingle and visit at the church steps, where they hear the week's news delivered from the door by the town crier. Along with various updates—a dock is being built for which government funding has arrived and men may apply for jobs, a surveyor is coming to measure anyone's fields who wishes to know their borders before rebuilding fences—the crier says two men have arrived seeking to buy furs.

Si vous avez des peaux d'ours, ou de vison, ou de rat musqué, ou de renard, allez voir ces hommes-là au magasin avant mercredi ou bien adressez-vous à François Paradis, de Mistassini, qui est avec eux. Ils ont de l'argent en masse et ils payeront *cash* pour toutes les peaux de première classe.

(If you have bearskins, or mink or muskrat, or fox, go see these men in the shop before Wednesday, or else talk to François Paradis of Mistassini, who is with them. They have plenty of money and will pay cash for all top-quality furs).⁷

François Paradis is a *coureur de bois* and the main love interest of the novel's protagonist, fifteen-year-old Maria Chapdelaine (a common family name in Quebec). This opening scene of the novel establishes that we are in the north country, almost in the wilderness. There is money to be made in this developing region in which the government is investing. Growing industrialization is evident in the entrepreneurial activities that the crier cites.

François is strong, handsome, and self-assured, and Maria (of course) falls in love with him as he does with her. They meet shortly after the crier's messages have been delivered (followed by that of a farmer attempting to sell a pig). François has not seen the Chapdelaines in seven years and is struck by Maria's beauty, which the parish boys have already noticed—"une belle grosse fille!" (a beautiful big girl!).⁸ To attend Sunday mass, Maria and her father have traveled twelve miles from their farm, across the Peribonka River above the falls. François recognizes and greets them, then explains his goings-on since the death of his father: "J'ai tout vendu, et depuis j'ai presque toujours travaillé dans les bois, fait la chasse ou bien commercé avec les sauvages" (I sold everything, and since then I have almost always worked in the woods, hunting or else trading with the savages).⁹ Later François says he has always gotten along well with the Indians, with whom he has never had any problems. They and their territories are the cultural "other" with whom François now associates to earn his way in the world. At the same time, by selling his paternal land and becoming a *coureur de bois*, within his own native culture François has become other himself, in the sense that he has rejected farming to embrace entirely the lifestyle of the other (Indian culture), at least insofar as his working life is concerned. So the *coureur* has

already been transformed by the other, but in Hémon's novel he will not bring about a change in the farming population's lifestyle. He will, however, intensify their awareness of the wilderness as a dangerous other. This process occurs throughout the novel for as long as he lives, making François an embodiment of Deleuzo-Guattarien becoming.

The story unfolds around the life of Maria, a farmer's daughter who must choose between three suitors: François Paradis, a *coureur de bois*; Lorenzo Surprenant, who works in a factory in Massachusetts; and Eutrope Gagnon, a neighboring farmer. The names of the three reflect Maria's options as well as the novel's outcome: François, who will go to "Paradis" (Paradise); Lorenzo, who wants to take her to the United States for an urban life full of "Surprenant" (surprising) delights; and Eutrope, a name that can be read to mean "the good trope," who "Gagne" (wins) because it is he who represents the primacy of agriculture that the author illustrates. Inspired by the basic conflict between French Canadians who preferred a nomadic life (as Hémon clearly did) and those who chose to work the land, the novel is structured on the passage of one year as measured by the seasons and climatic events in both agriculture and the wilderness.

Hémon arrived in Quebec in 1911 to find a population seeking a balance between rural and city life. The Catholic Church was instrumental in the concerted push to encourage the defeated, yet still defiant French-origin people to opt in favor of agriculture and cultural preservation, especially in the form of Catholicism and their native language. But others, such Hémon's character François Paradis, preferred not to be tied to the land. The novel's third-person omniscient narrator explains:

C'était l'éternel malentendu des deux races: les pionniers et les sédentaires, les paysans venus de France qui avaient continué sur le sol nouveau leur idéal d'ordre et de paix immobile, et ces autres paysans en qui le vaste pays sauvage avait réveillé un atavisme lointain de vagabondage et d'aventure.

(It was the eternal disagreement between the two groups: the settlers and sedentary farmers from France who had continued in the new land to pursue their ideals of order and stable peace, and these other peasants in whom the vast wilderness had awakened a distant primitive appeal of vagrancy and adventure).¹⁰

François has chosen life in motion, as he explains to the Chapdelaines. He prefers it *because* of the new way of life it affords him—and this leads to his new identity, one that is not valued among his people, but who love him nevertheless because he is still their French son.

Upon its publication the book came to be well received, though this is a contentious question addressed only briefly here, since it is beyond my purview.¹¹ Patricia Demers addresses it thoroughly in her comprehensive review of criticism on the novel, while presenting her own reading of it as a masterpiece of “subtle minimalist art.”¹² *Maria Chapdelaine* became a worldwide success and is often described as a prototypical *roman du terroir* (novel of the soil) by virtue of its apparent valorization of agriculture and those who work the land, although some critics have challenged this interpretation. While the farming lifestyle is described in careful detail, that of the *coureur de bois* is marginalized and then extinguished altogether, in a story arc that echoes late 19th through early 20th-century social

changes among French Canadians. Because ecocriticism concerns itself with analyzing human interactions with the natural world as reflected in literature, this transformation of societally approved methods of earning one's living from the land constitutes the book's principal interest for our purposes here.

Several biographies have been devoted to Louis Hémon and his work, and hundreds of articles discuss and analyze *Maria Chapdelaine* from numerous points of view.¹³ Wade Mason summed up Hémon's fate and that of his masterpiece in 1955: "This young Frenchman was killed in 1913, shortly after finishing his manuscript, but his book had a profound influence on the postwar French-Canadian novel," because it was considered one of the best examples of a *roman du terroir*.¹⁴ Over time the novel has been of interest to conservative and leftist critics alike. Contemporaneous nationalists came to embrace it for its traditional family-religion-land values, while more recent criticism has been interested in it from postcolonial, feminist, and other sociopolitical perspectives. In 1980 critics Nicole Deschamps, Raymonde Héroux, and Normand Villeneuve published *Le Mythe de Maria Chapdelaine*, in which they challenged what they labeled usurpations of the novel to serve causes such as that of conservative Catholicism, in the process so transforming the book's characters and intentions that they became part of a myth too far removed from the original work.¹⁵ Ben-Z. Shek summarizes Deschamps' findings in his review of the critical volume:

Rarely in contemporary literary history has one seen such an immense *après-texte*. Hémon's novel has inspired lectures, poems, dramatizations, films (the third—and the first one to be made by a Canadian, Denys Arcand—is now in preparation), theses, political slogans, comic strips, and so on. Deschamps and her

collaborators make a strong case for their contention that the basic content and texture of *Maria Chapdelaine* have been deformed in order to serve ideological and political causes of the right.¹⁶

Yet, Shek notes, Deschamps later acknowledged that their own critique of the critique of Hémon's work may portray him as a leftist that he was not. Shek adds the chronotopic perspective of World War I, saying that in Canada as in France, *Maria Chapdelaine*'s publication "coincided with a period in which traditional rural societies and values were entering a deep crisis and in which ideologues of the old order sought reassuring models to help stem the tide of urbanization and industrialization."¹⁷ *Maria Chapdelaine* was recruited to help with this effort, according to Shek, Deschamps, Héroux, and Villeneuve, the latter of whom also takes on the myth of the book's immediate favorable reception, showing that instead, the populations of Montreal, Quebec, and Lake Saint-Jean were conditioned to it through concerted promotions.

Among the myriad other critics and writers who have engaged with *Maria Chapdelaine* are Damase Potvin, Franck Rannou, Max-Hervé Thomas, Gérard Tougas, and Aurélien Boivin. Hémon's novel has received abundant critical attention, but not yet, as far as I can ascertain, from a specifically ecocritical perspective, which I hope may complement this mix.

Pulling Stumps or Running through Woods, in Both Cases on the Land

In Canada those who till the soil and work the earth are called *habitants* (inhabitants who occupy what were seigneurial lands; in France these are *paysans*, peasants), as opposed to men who "ran in the woods," working in the wilderness itself. Mireille Servais-Maquoi

draws the distinction in *Le roman de la terre au Québec* (1974): “L’on décèle déjà [au 17^e siècle], parmi les ‘gens de la terre,’ deux types humain bien définis : l’‘habitant’ et le ‘coureur de bois,’ amant des espaces libres, qui rejette les conventions de la vie en société” (But among the “people of the earth,” two human types can already be distinguished [in the 17th century]: the *habitant* and the *coureur de bois*, who loves open spaces and rejects the conventions life in society).¹⁸ Servais-Maquoi focuses on the first category in tracing, in French Canadian novels from 1846 to 1947, a strong link between the role played by the earth itself and the difficult destiny of those who work it. Known as *romans du terroir*, these literary works are of significant interest from an ecocritical point of view—just as is, in the fundamentally different way that Servais-Maquoi describes, the literary trajectory of the *coureurs*. The distinction between an *habitant* and a *coureur* is important because it is central to the dramatic tension in Hémon’s novel.

Despite their great fondness for François, the Chapdelaines would never have envisioned their daughter (and grandchildren) actually sharing his choice of lifestyle. The way Maria’s mother (Laura) describes it could not make clearer the basic opposition:

Vivre dans une tente sur la neige ou dans un camp plein de trous par où le vent passe, vous aimez mieux cela que faire tout votre règne tranquillement sur une belle terre, là où il y a des magasins et des maisons [...] du terrain sans une souche ni un creux, une bonne maison chaude toute tapissée en dedans, des animaux gras dans le clos ou à l’étable, pour des gens bien grésés d’instruments et qui ont de la santé, y a-t-il rien de plus plaisant et de plus aimable?

(Living in a tent in the snow or a cabin full of holes through which the wind blows, you prefer that to reigning peacefully over a beautiful piece of land, with

nearby shops and houses [...] land without one stump or hole, a good warm house all lined inside, fat livestock in the corral or the barn, for people who are well equipped with tools and health, is there anything more pleasant and desirable?)¹⁹

In fact, of course, Maria could have lived with François on a farm while he continued to hunt and trade with Indians for part of the year, but this would have made farming more difficult, especially for Maria. And where would their land be, since he has sold his? New land would have to be purchased, but François has already stated his preference for working in the wilds. Some *coureurs* did maintain farms, leaving home in winters when the furs were of the highest quality, then returning for the planting and harvesting season (but among these, especially among the unmarried, some never returned).²⁰ In Hémon's novel, this option is never discussed because François does not live long enough to broach these practical difficulties with Maria, who would have become his betrothed. The novel depicts his preferred way of life as already being unsustainable because to the agriculturists, it (and by extension he) is outdated, even though furs continue to be bought and sold, as seen in the novel's opening scene. At this chronotopic point, the emphasis is on agriculture and industrial development, as part of the great late 19th- early 20th-century entrepreneurial push that was also considered in the previous chapter.

The tension between lifestyles is maintained throughout the novel, until François' death closes off one path entirely to Maria. This provides the author with the terrain needed to explore fully her remaining options: city or land (Surprenant or Gagnon), giving further emphasis to the opposition between those who were drawn to

perceived urban ease versus those who promoted a rural life on land that the French Canadians owned and that, many insisted, was a defining aspect of their culture, as it had been since the French had begun settling in the St. Lawrence Valley in the 17th century.²¹ This is the viewpoint that “wins” in the novel, as Maria’s options are further narrowed by Laura’s death and her ensuing feeling of greater closeness to her father. The life forces surrounding her squeeze Maria to stay on the land, as recent critics have noted in various ways.²²

The narrow thinking of those who work the land in *Maria Chapdelaine* is in direct opposition to the inclusive model that Glissant portrays in *Poétique de la relation* and *Tout-monde*. Glissant describes the contemporary world as a convergence of the history of peoples and the planet’s material composition.²³ But in this entanglement, “Toute la question est de savoir si ce sera sur le mode des participations ou sur celui ces anciennes impositions” (The whole question is whether it will be a participatory model or one following that of the old impositions).²⁴ Glissant speaks of the contemporary situation, whereas at the time Hémon wrote, inclusive thinking did not commonly include everyone, and certainly not Indians or wildmen.

Among the dominant population in Hémon’s *roman du terroir*, the desirable identity being shaped throughout the course of the novel is that of agricultural, Catholic French Canada. Having arrived in this new land, the French have settled here and have become voluntarily sedentary. They reject further movement and displacement (which is exactly what the Acadians were subjected to, as the next chapter will consider). *Maria Chapdelaine* typifies the *terroir* genre by its dual portrayal of agriculture and Catholicism as the foundations of rural life, with the

church as the village center. The *coureur de bois* is also Catholic, and questions of faith are not the involved in the story's two opposite poles of attraction. Instead, disagreements centered around staying on the land or selling it, as did François after the death of his father, and as Surprenant is also about to do.

By the mid-19th century, one-tenth of Quebec's farming population had abandoned agriculture in favor of jobs in U.S. cities and factories, a situation blamed on "laziness, ignorance, and new desires among country folk for luxury goods and alcohol."²⁵ By the late 19th century, among those who chose a rural life, some were land cultivators while others (fewer) continued to "run in the woods," trade with Amerindians, and live off the land. The overwhelming trend among French Canadians by this time was a choice between the farm and the city, not the wilderness and the farm (and the city was winning). In this way, Hémon's novel reflects the increasing historical devaluation of the life of a *coureur de bois*.

Yet *Maria Chapdelaine* also emphasizes that farming is not an easy life (as, Surprenant assures Maria, it is in the city). Summer lasts about three months, during which the *habitants* work fast and hard, more than twelve hours a day six days a week. The author often highlights the patience and simplicity of Maria, as well as that of her parents and of Gagnon. Uncultivated nature to them is literally nothing, *rien*. As Maria and her father enter the woods on their way home after the book's opening-scene Sunday mass:

Maria Chapdelaine ajusta sa pelisse autour d'elle [...] et ferma à demi les yeux. *Il n'y avait rien à voir ici*; dans les villages les maisons et les granges neuves pouvaient s'élever d'une maison à l'autre, [...] mais la vie du bois était quelque

chose de si lent qu'il eût fallu plus qu'une patience humaine pour *attendre et noter un changement*.

(Maria Chapdelaine nestled into her wrap [...] and closed her eyes. *There was nothing to see here*; in the villages there could be new houses or barns to see, [...] but life in the woods was so slow that it would have taken more than human patience to *wait and notice a change*) (emphases mine).²⁶

The forest seems strangely devoid of activity here; only later, when she is in love, will non-human biological life be vividly portrayed. In this passage cited here, the word “change” signifies the human activity of construction. This is what matters: building, clearing, developing. In the novel, activity exists when people interact with each other or impose their presence on the land, in grueling, combat-like toil that requires steadfast determination and strength. Wilderness becomes farmable land through human intervention that serves as a painful, yet clear dividing line between the two states of land.

For Maria the woods are nothing because they contain no houses and have not been cleared, whereas for François they are (almost) everything, at least in terms of the game and hunting/trading opportunities that they hold. François knows an entire world in the wilderness that his beloved does not value, but even he is happy to return to the (white) settlements' comfort: “C'est plaisant de revoir les maisons!” (It is pleasing to see the houses again!) he enthuses, having just arrived at the Chapdelaine home after “une job de faite” (a job completed).²⁷ He is, in other words, delighted to relax in the environment of his origins after earning his money. In the Deleuzo-Guattarien capitalist desiring machine, the *coureur* and his partners, including

Amerindians, supply the necessary human-toil element in “machine without organs,” discussed extensively in the previous chapter. François even states, while explaining his preference for working in the wilds, that he knows he could have profited more after the death of this father: “Si j’avais eu plus de capital, j’aurais pu faire gros d’argent avec eux . . . gros d’argent” (If I had had more capital, I could have made big money with them . . . big money).²⁸ He is aware of how to participate in the capitalist enterprise, but François does not follow that path. Because he also enjoys returning to “the houses,” which offer warmth and shelter and represent civilization, François links the French Canadian settlement and the wilderness. While joining two sides of a dichotomy, within the space and time of his life François, as a body, walks along a line. On one side of this abstract division he works in the wilderness, while on the other, his intimate personal life awaits him with Maria and “the houses.” The two sides are clearly separated into categories, with François himself as the line.

It is a mental paradigm that highlights the opposing view of ecocritic William Cronon, who wants to erase that line by exhorting readers to redefine “wilderness” so that it *includes* parts of urban areas. Maria’s devaluing of uncontrolled, uncultivated places reflects her society’s prioritization of what they saw as progress. For farmers this meant clearing and working more land, and it also involved finding ways to increase human comfort. This effort, Cronon reminds readers, was and today remains a concern that is natural and must be accepted if real environmental progress is to be achieved. “Only people whose relationship to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature,” he says, one that “leaves precisely nowhere for human beings actually to make their living from the land.”²⁹

This is because many contemporary environmentalists, says Cronon, paradoxically have notions of wilderness that have been tainted with a romantic view resulting from a lack of experience with its often harsh conditions. Instead, Cronon urges readers to accept peoples and cultures as they actually are, while working to discover what “an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like.”³⁰

Maria and the Chapdelaines, like François Paradis, are examples of unromanticized (for the most part) interactions with wilderness. Despite the tension between their two choices of how to contend with wild nature, both are fully experienced in the hard realities of the surroundings in which they have survived.

The novel does include a few moments in which Canada’s wilderness is depicted in terms that, while not sparing its ruthlessness, portray it in more friendly terms. When François and Maria, picking blueberries in July with her family and others, manage to find a few moments to themselves to sit on a log:

Un écureuil descendit du tronc d’un bouleau mort et les guetta quelques instants de ses yeux vifs avant de se risquer à terre. Au milieu de la clameur ivre des mouches, les sauterelles pondeuses passaient avec un crépitement sec; un souffle de vent apporta à travers les aunes le grondement lointain des chutes.

(A squirrel came down the trunk of a dead birch and stood watching for a few moments, eyes alert, before venturing onto the ground. Amid the riotous clamor of flies, grasshoppers preparing to lay eggs flew by with a dry crackling; a breath of wind carried the distant roar of the falls through the alder trees).³¹

This scene should make the reader uncomfortable because of the relentless flies, but Hémon softens the would-be lovers’ intimate moment by first drawing our attention to

a harmless furry mammal who, after noticing them and determining them to be harmless, scampers into the woods. Only then are we reminded of the northern forests' summertime pest, biting flies. But even their unwelcome presence is diminished by that of the larger nonbiting grasshoppers, whose suggested propagation evokes the possible future of Maria and François. Finally, the nasty little flies seem to be carried away entirely by the breeze that brings through the trees the refreshing water of the falls.

The description of this moment in the forest centers not on the humans but on their surroundings, and yet every detail evoked relates to their state of mind and current situation. Here the woods become something for Maria, they become everything, because she is in them with her love. This anthropocentrism is what gives them significance. Maria's love is a *coureur de bois*, and it is only through him that the reader is shown this brief window into pleasures that can be experienced in untamed, uncomfortable nature. She sits for a romantic spell with François, but in most encounters she is in a carriage, house, church, or on the farm, settings that represent settlement, in accordance with the preponderant values discussed previously, and in the end, the forest romance is presented as being an unsustainable moment.

The general "anti-wilderness" direction in which Western society has moved is woven thematically into Hémon's novel as a seemingly unexamined assumption. Cronon addresses this big unconscious societal movement in a way that opposes romanticized environmental thinking and challenges notions that human land use is the problem. Cronon observes that humans will indeed use—including by killing—much of nature to survive. To negotiate a more realistic future path, he maintains,

environmentalists should accept this use, rather than trying to wish ourselves away. As he and others observe, to act on the conviction that the natural world on this Earth has the potential to return to a “pristine” state, we humans would have to kill ourselves off.³² The real situation is, as these second-wave critics remind readers, that all segments of the natural world affect each other. Interestingly, as they emerge from this novel, these ideas support the *habitants*’ determination to stay on their land.

Death of the *Coureur de Bois*

It is Eutrope Gagnon who announces, with genuine sadness and sympathy, that François has died in a snowstorm while coming to visit the Chapdelaines. He had been working in a logging camp for the winter, but: “Quand le milieu de décembre est venu, il a dit tout à coup au *boss* qu’il allait partir pour venir passer les fêtes au lac Saint-Jean, icitte” (In the middle of December, suddenly he told the boss he was leaving to spend the holidays at Lake Saint-Jean, here).³³ He had been coming to see her, Maria knows, as the reality sinks in that her would-be betrothed has fallen in the woods in the snow and will never be coming back again.

Hémon’s use of the vernacular (such as Anglicisms and *icitte* for *ici*) has been widely studied and has been considered an important part of the book’s charm ever since the editor at *Le Temps* first evaluated the manuscript he had sent.³⁴ It serves to bring the characters into full, believable life, presented from a reporter who lived among the people. In this moment, Hémon shows Eutrope, a farmer who will win the hand of the novel’s protagonist, in a sympathetic, down-to-earth light. The vernacular in which he speaks delivers his sad message in honest, simple terms. He goes on to

explain that the boss had resisted François' decision, not just because he was the foreman but because of the extreme danger of such a trip at this time of year, especially alone. Eutrope says:

Quand les sauvages font ce voyage-là, c'est plusieurs ensemble, et avec des chiens. François est parti seul, à raquette, avec ses couvertes et des provisions sur une petite traîne (When the savages make that trip, it is with several of them together, and with dogs. François left alone, on snowshoes, with his covers and provisions on a little sled).³⁵

Thus, Hémon's fictional woodsman in the end makes a fatal mistake, as Eutrope emphasizes by his comparison with the Indians. François dies alone, much to Maria's chagrin, but he has been alone throughout the novel, despite working with partners.

In *Maria Chapdelaine* there is only one *coureur de bois*. François describes his friendship with Indians from Mistassini (north of Lake Saint- Jean), whom his father befriended after they saved his life one winter, but they are not named.³⁶ The agricultural community, the central setting, is well populated; cities are described in alluring terms. As a species, François is almost extinct. The *coureur de bois* in the early 20th century, when Hémon writes, has become a Canadian story, with only few "real life" representatives left.

The fact that François had hired himself out for that season in a logging camp does not mean he had ceased being a *coureur de bois*. As he explained during his first visit to the farm, when Laura Chapdelaine questioned why he had given up his land:

Travailler dans les chantiers, faire la chasse, gagner un peu d'argent de temps en temps à servir de guide ou à commercer avec les sauvages, ça, c'est mon plaisir,

mais gratter toujours le même morceau de terre, d'année en année, et rester là, je n'aurais jamais pu faire ça tout mon 'règne,' il m'aurait semblé être attaché comme un animal à un pieu.

(Working in the logging camps, hunting, earning some money now and then as a guide or trading with the Indians, that's what I enjoy, but to always scratch in the same piece of soil, year after year, and to stay there, I would never have been able to do that for my whole life, I would have felt like an animal tied to a stake).³⁷

François, thus, has been patching together several ways of earning his ways, just as two of Maria's brothers leave every winter to work in the camps and bring in money to help support the family farm. In the chronotope that Hémon mirrors and creates in *Maria Chapdelaine*, this annual departure is a normal behavior in this society, because the men are doing what is needed to retain the land.³⁸ Eutrope's brother does the same. But François has abandoned his land and is a free agent.

Like the Amerindians, the *coureur de bois* is not confined by boundaries. He remains in motion, following his trading partners of the wilds. In this way he embodies Glissant's notion of *déracinement* (uprooting), which favors a new sense of identity if the movement takes place in the context not of expanding or conquering territory, but of searching for the other, by which Glissant refers to people who travel not by a conscious desire to conquer or possess but to encounter what is outside their existing environment and different from themselves.³⁹ Glissant himself is of course influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, as he states at the beginning of *Poétique de la relation*, but he elucidates the fact that their rhizomatic notion comprises that of a root

(even though they oppose the rhizome to the root in their own metaphor for how phenomena spread and change) in explaining his own concept of how identity is shaped:

La pensée du rhizome serait au principe de ce que j'appelle une poétique de la Relation, selon laquelle toute identité s'étend dans un rapport à l'Autre.

(The idea of the rhizome is the principle of what I call a poetics of relations, in which identity stretches itself into a relationship with the Other).⁴⁰

Glissant thus illustrates how, through the nomadic feature that characterizes humans, our sense of who we are is shaped by what we encounter. In a physical sense, this includes contact with the earth and how it is handled. François prefers a way closer to that of his Amerindian trading partners, who work within the wilderness as it exists and do not consciously try to alter its shape or yield. Hence, when the people of Peribonka see and speak with him, he brings into their world something of the wild, something that is more than its furs, that is a heightened awareness of its three-dimensional reality. François is the rhizome through which identity stretches into a relationship with the other, and, even though he does not transform the farming community, he does bring to it this awareness and in this way influences it.

Maria's parents and the farming community may experience a greater attentiveness to realities of the deep forest because of the link that the *coureur* gives them to it, but what they do with that awareness differs fundamentally from what François does. For them the earth exists to be divided into parcels that they can purchase, alter, and exploit. For the *habitants*, land value means earth they clear and till, which they call "faire de la terre" (to make soil).

C'est la forte expression du pays, qui exprime tout ce qui gît de travail terrible entre la pauvreté du bois sauvage et la fertilité finale des champs labourés et semés. Samuel Chapdelaine en parlait avec une flamme d'enthousiasme et d'entêtement dans les yeux. (It is the countryside's main expression, designating all the hard labor that takes place between the desolate wild woods and the eventual fertility of plowed and planted fields. Samuel Chapdelaine spoke of it with a flame of enthusiasm and stubbornness in his eyes).⁴¹

That stubbornness is an essential element needed for the backbreaking work needed to pull stumps with the help of one poor horse who is as overworked as are all the men, who resolutely do whatever it takes to clear, keep, and farm the land. In the wilderness, where François sees opportunities to remain a free agent, Samuel sees land to clear and logging camps where his sons can work and help support the farm. For him, earth does not even really exist unless he makes it, in his ever-expanding possessions of land to work and exploit.⁴²

In this way he and his family are much more closely related to the prevailing chronotopic expansive mentality. Society at large, in its big instinctive tidal movements, had at the time already swelled steadily toward a more acquisitive approach vis-à-vis land use. In Deleuzo-Guattarien terms, this mentality had been building into an intensity from which lines of flight would shoot out into the wilderness for even greater exploitation, as witnessed by enthusiastic Canadian parliamentary and U.S. government reports about big opportunities for investment and development.⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari describe this social phenomenon as “un investissement libidinal inconscient de la production sociale historique” (historical

social production's unconscious libidinal investment).⁴⁴ In the developing New World socioeconomic machine of the 17th–18th centuries, the *coureurs*' activities had served as a tool in the way natural resources were exploited in an already increasingly globalized economy, but by the late 19th/early 20th century, English dominance had complicated matters in Canada for the French, and the stakes in the global capitalist grab were much higher. More and more segments of the general population desired their own share of the profits, as illustrated by the allure of the glittering cities. Hémon's novel depicts the influence of the Catholic Church attempting to counter this state of affairs by offering French Canadians *roman du terroir* agricultural/religious values, but even in this paradigm the wilderness remains a place to be tamed and cleared. Thus the *coureur de bois* is outdated, at least insofar as his use to mainstream society. He occupies the uncomfortable position of being not quite entirely "savage," yet not entirely civilized.

It is a societal opposition that expresses one of contemporary ecocriticism's central concerns: an inaccurate evaluation of humans' place in "nature." For ecocritics Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, this mental vision is due to postcolonial realities. They and others see among the colonial legacies still to be overcome an entrenched practice of exploiting natural resources as well as other humans.⁴⁵ Hémon's novel shows both the *coureur* and the farmer using land, each in his own way, but the "wild" way, the way that does not involve reshaping the environment, is unsustainable, in the end. The author shows this through the demise of the *coureur de bois*.

The *coureur* is caught between wilderness and industrial progress, in an anthropocentric paradigm where who counts as a “real,” valid person is a shifting idea. Rob Nixon tackles this question in “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism,” finding that the two schools of thought have had little overlap but can benefit from greater collaborative efforts, both in and beyond the borders of the United States. Until recently a mostly U.S. product, ecocriticism has been expanding its purview to investigate the human-nature relationship throughout the globe, and in so doing is changing to account for these complex human realities that differ so from place to place. The effort includes rethinking humans *as* part of nature, which is Cronon’s fundamental point. For Nixon, the problematic needs to be further expanded to include humans in all their “real” (not idealized) behavior, while continually striving to improve habits through greater awareness of the whole of which we are a part. “Non-Western environmental movements are typically alert to the interdependence of human survival and environmental change in situations where the illusion of a static purity cannot be sustained, far less exalted as an ideal,” Nixon writes. “Such movements are also typically aware of how easily foreign forces—transnational corporations . . .—can destroy the delicate, always mutable, mesh between cultural traditions, cultural justice, and ecosystems.”⁴⁶ Thus, in order to overcome colonial legacies, mindsets throughout the world need to be challenged so they can begin to change.

The process is already under way, as Nixon says: “We are witnessing, on the environmental front, something similar to the mutation of feminism, which was often dismissed, twenty or thirty years ago, as white, privileged, and irrelevant to the needs

of third world women.⁴⁷ At the time Hémon wrote, colonial systems were still in place in many parts of the world; Canada itself had been a collection of colonies until the Confederation of 1867. Among the vast majority of Euro-Americans, the distinction was clear and necessary between the “wilderness” (to dominate) and “civilization,” which white people brought into “sparsely populated” regions (except by Indians and non-human life forms). These basic assumptions remained largely unquestioned in 1911 (and well thereafter) by the dominant population.

After François dies, Maria mourns into February, until her father takes her to a village closer than Peribonka for a mass and a private visit with the priest. He points out to her that because she and François had never informed her parents of their wishes, they had not been officially engaged, and hence this long period of bereavement is inappropriate. Besides, her family needs her. Hémon’s omniscient narrator has set stage for this meeting by explaining:

Les paysans ne meurent point des chagrins d’amour, ni n’en restent marqués tragiquement toute la vie. Ils sont trop près de la nature et perçoivent trop clairement la hiérarchie essentielle des choses qui comptent (Farmers do not die of heartbreak, nor do they remain tragically marked for life. They are too close to nature and perceive too clearly the essential hierarchy of things that matter).⁴⁸

This simple explanation, which describes one of life’s stark realities regardless of how closely to nature one spends it, prepares the reader for the priest’s seemingly unsympathetic words. From an ecocritical standpoint, in this passage Cronon’s contention that “wilderness” *includes* humans and their activities pertains. He argues that anyone concerned with the environment today benefits from working within the

context of the real, terribly imperfect world, rather than seeing nature as a kind of cathedral, as something sacred and removed from human activities: “Thus it is that wilderness serves as the unexamined foundation on which quasi-religious values of modern environmentalism rest. . . . the trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject.”⁴⁹ That is, wilderness is purported, by those who think of it as holy, to be somehow virgin, an idea that is far removed from its actual harshness.

This concept of separation has given rise to a widespread “us versus them (or it)” mentality when it comes to the natural world, a case that Michel Serres eloquently develops in *Le Contrat naturel*.⁵⁰

Le contrat naturel nous amène à considérer le point de vue du monde en sa totalité. . . . aujourd’hui la nature se définit par un ensemble de relations, dont le réseau unifie la Terre entière; le contrat naturel connecte en un réseau le second au premier (The natural contract leads us to consider the world’s point of view in its entirety. . . . Today nature is defined by a set of relations, of which the network unifies the entire Earth; the natural contract connects in a network the second to the first).⁵¹

Interestingly, this is along the lines of what Maria Chapdelaine’s narrator explains to readers: Because these people live very close to (in) nature, they understand the “things that matter” about life. That is, all of life is linked and networked, including human activity. As noted, the narrator’s explanation softens the impact of the priest’s harsh message to the grieving Maria, however quietly delivered:

Une fille comme toi, plaisante à voir, de bonne santé et avec ça vaillante et ménagère, c'est fait pour encourager ses vieux parents, d'abord, et puis après se marier et fonder une famille chrétienne. Tu n'as pas dessein d'entrer en religion? Non. Alors tu vas abandonner de te tourmenter de même, parce que c'est un tourmente profane et peu concevable, vu que ce garçon ne t'était rien. Et le bon Dieu sait ce qui est bon pour nous; il ne faut pas se révolter ni se plaindre . . .

(A girl like you, of a pleasant appearance, good health and strength, and with homemaking skills, you were made first of all to help your elderly parents, and then to get married and start a Christian family. You have no calling for religion? No. So you will cease tormenting yourself as well, because this grief is irreverent and inappropriate, since this boy was nothing to you. And God knows what is good for us; we must not rebel or complain . . .)⁵²

These words have been the subject of feminist critical attention for obvious reasons.⁵³ As well, critics have pointed to an anti-religious view on the part the author; for Patricia Demers, the scene illustrates Hémon's "decidedly unconciliatory" attitude toward "religious matters."⁵⁴ For the purposes of the present ecocritically focused discussion, their relevance lies chiefly in their influence on the deeply religious Maria, for whom they are a turning point. She sits quietly and listens to the priest's admonition without complaining, even though it is clear she does not fully accept what he says. Maria remains devastated thereafter, resentful of the natural elements that have taken François. But her conversation with the priest also helps her to digest the unadorned fact that he is dead and she remains alive. Maria is part of a biological collectivity to which she is responsible, and that is also responsible for her. The

priest's dressing down can be seen as a religiously grounded way of reminding Maria of what Serres calls the network of life, or what Glissant describes as human history merging with that of the planet's material composition. Maria's place, the priest says, is with her people—which means, as will be seen shortly and has already been seen, on the farming land that they own. In the end she will embrace her place as part of this soil because it is already in her consciousness, as will be seen. In Duchatelet's reading, throughout the novel descriptions of nature echo Maria's state of mind as she evolves to that final stage of acceptance.⁵⁵

Shortly after her encounter with the priest, as she struggles with the remaining choices open to her, another disaster sweeps through Maria's young life when her mother takes suddenly ill and dies. This brings her even closer to her group and predisposes her further to accept the offer of the kind, sincere, hardworking Eutrope, who works the neighboring farm.

As Maria grapples with her opposing city-farm options, she sits at the window in the Chapdelaine home, asking herself why she should not marry Surprenant and live in the city where life is easier. "Et comme elle ne trouvait pas de réponse, voici que du silence de la nuit, à la longue, des voix s'élevèrent" (And as she could not find an answer, finally from the night's silence, voices arose).⁵⁶ At first simple interior dialogue of the sort everyone has, three successive voices build on one another into a sort of musical crescendo. First comes a review of the seasons, each with its signs from nature and its agricultural chores; next all the regional French names that she knows, both geographically and those of families; and finally it is the voice of the Quebec soil itself that she hears, reminding her of the history of her people, how they

came here and what they brought with them, and why they must remain, especially becoming a culture dominated by the English.

Nous nous sommes maintenus, peut-être afin que dans plusieurs siècles encore le monde se tourne vers nous et dise: ‘Ces gens sont d’une race qui ne sait pas mourir . . .’ Nous sommes en témoignage.

C’est pourquoi il faut rester dans la province où nos pères sont restés, et vivre comme ils ont vécu . . .

(We endured, perhaps so that in several centuries the world will turn to us and say, ‘These people are of a race that does not know how to die. . .’ We are the proof.

That is why we must remain in the province where our fathers stayed, and live as they lived . . .)⁵⁷

By the time this third voice has run its course, Maria understands that she is a part of this enduring group of people, and part of this land that she now knows is hers, despite its brutal winters that kill beautiful, strong young men. The realization comes to her not as a resignation but as a triumph, a revelation brought by the voices of her own conscience.⁵⁸

In walking by himself the dangerous line between wilderness and houses, François was overcome by the wilds. With that physical link to the backwoods gone, Maria now sees herself fully as the daughter and future mother of the soil that is her legacy. That May, when Eutrope asks if she will marry him, she agrees to do so the following spring, “quand les hommes reviendront du bois pour les semailles” (when the men come home from the woods for planting season).⁵⁹ Maria will join her family

to Eutrope's when their three brothers, two of hers and one of his, return from the following winter's work in the logging camps to help support the farms. By marrying and reproducing, they will strengthen both families as they create their own. The end of this *roman du terroir* thus concludes by connecting humans to agriculture in the metaphor and the physical reality of planting. This determined group of people holds steadfastly to the land and becomes part of it. They accomplish this not through running in the woods, but through clearing the woods.

In *Maria Chapdelaine* the *coureur de bois* thus represents impossibility, a fantasy. The reader understands that a young woman would be attracted to such an independent and handsome young man, but in the community where the story is set, just as among the general 19th–early 20th century Canadian population, the lifestyle of François Paradis is increasingly considered undesirable as well as unrealistic. Urban and agricultural development are favored, with wilderness seen as a source of wood and furs. This trend was examined in Chapter 3 during the study of Taché's work, which paints *coureurs de bois* as already becoming legends of the past. Here that cultural development continues as the *coureur* meets his actual demise, while the ongoing process of becoming passes entirely to farmers and loggers of the future.

LES ENGAGÉS DU GRAND PORTAGE

During the 1800s, as commercial interests expanded, thousands of men were hired by companies as traders/hunters and lumberjacks. Called *voyageurs*, these men could be former or still-periodic independent *coureurs de bois*. *Voyageurs* were officially authorized and hired (*engagé*) by large enterprises such as the North West Company,

formed in 1779 by fur traders who banded together in competition against the Hudson's Bay Company. This is the terrain that Léo-Paul Desrosiers explores in his novel about the early 19th century fur trade, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (1938).

Desrosiers, born in 1896 in Berthier-en Haut, Quebec, was the youngest of fourteen children in a family of Catholic farmers.⁶⁰ He studied law at the University of Montreal and in 1920 became parliamentary correspondent in Ottawa for *Le Devoir*, founded in 1910 as an independent newspaper by French Canadian nationalist and Catholic Henri Bourassa.⁶¹ In 1922 Desrosiers married Marie-Antoinette Tardif, who was as committed as he to a life of intellectual pursuits and the author of short stories, novels, and memoir under the pen name Michelle Le Normand. Desrosiers became curator of the Montreal Municipal Library in 1941 and retained the post until 1953, as well as being principal of the School of Library Science and collaborating with the *Cahiers des Dix*, founded in 1936 by ten scholars and one of Canada's most important historical journals. He produced several award-winning books, and in 1963 the Société Royale du Canada honored him for his body of work. Desrosiers died in 1967, his wife having preceded him by three years. They had three children.

In the historical novel *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, Desrosiers stages the conflicts of three major fur-trading enterprises: North West; "les Petits," or XY (established in the late 1790s by North West defectors working with traders in Montreal); and Hudson's Bay. The conflict in this novel is between North West and XY, which will unite by the story's end. The fight with Hudson's Bay will come later and also end in a merger. Fur traders of all ilks, whether licensed or not, were caught in these conflicts and the relentless commercial developments. And, just as among the

general population, not everyone was virtuous. In the opposing characters of Nicolas Montour and Louison Turenne, Desrosiers illustrates the brute force of savage capitalism and the ethical conscience that attempts to comprehend it.

Set ca. 1800, the novel follows the career of anti-hero Montour (a historical figure to be briefly discussed later), who signs as an employee of the North West Company led by Simon McTavish. During the initial journey to Grand Portage (in today's northern Minnesota on Lake Superior), a rivalry develops with Turenne. This is aggravated when expedition-leader Cournoyer benefits from Montour's talents at espionage and recruits him as a conveyor of information in the company interest, in exchange for promises of advancement. Simon McTavish himself confirms these assurances when they meet in person at Grand Portage. The ambitious Montour, who has lived a hard life, gleefully sees his at-long-last break and gives the company his all. He will penetrate the most outlying areas and bring back as many furs as he can manage. At Fort Vermillon, Saskatchewan, he will orchestrate with Indians the burning of the XY and Hudson's Bay forts, both close by, in order to steal their furs and thereby increase his own yield. Montour is relentless, and in the end it is Turenne who does not renew his engagement with the company, while Montour goes on to his next promotion.

Favorably received in both Canada and Europe upon its 1938 French publication by Gallimard, the novel was reissued by Fides, Montreal, in 1946, after the end of World War II eased transcontinental communications and distribution.⁶² The work was widely lauded for its historical rigor and lyrical descriptions of nature, both of which appear from the start. Critics have often noted Montour's one-dimensionality, but this

feature also serves to emphasize his role as a dynamic that parallels and mirrors the North West Company's behavior, and, in a larger sense, that of the capitalist dynamic itself (to be discussed shortly).⁶³ Michelle G  linas sees the origins of the two main characters—country (Turenne) versus city (Montour)—as an opposition reflecting the good-evil conflict.⁶⁴ Mason Wade opined in 1955: “Leo-Paul Desrosiers renounced an early preoccupation with terroir themes, which culminated in *Nord-Sud* (1931) in favor of historical novels, of which *L'Accalmie* (1937) and *Les Engag  s du Grand Portage* (1938) are among the best produced in French Canada.”⁶⁵ An English translation appeared in 1978 under the title *The Making of Nicolas Mountour* (Christina van Oordt, translator).

Historically a real person (1756–1808), Nicolas Montour was involved in the fur trade and worked for and owned shares in the North West Company. *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* says of his private that “Not much is known . . . , but it is clear that he has a bad reputation with the historians who have studied him. Father Alexandre Dugr   observed: ‘He was a sad fellow, anglicized, a Protestant, a drinker and high-liver.’”⁶⁶ This is the character that Desrosiers, in his capacity as a historical researcher and librarian, uses as his model for his fictionalized adaptation of the man.

Discomfort in a Beautiful Setting

Opening with the voyage already under way for five days, Desrosiers’ novel employs terms of the trade and descriptions of *voyageurs*’ jobs that are worked in smoothly. As they approach the rocky shoreline of the Outaouais River preparing to stop for the night, the canoes’ bottoms must be kept off the banks to avoid damage.

Alors André Bombardier, premier rameur ou brigadier, et François Lendormy, gouvernail, se laissent glisser jusqu'aux aisselles dans le courant et le maintiennent par les pinces.

(So André Bombardier, first paddler or brigadier, and François Lendormy, at the rudder, slide into the current up to their armpits and steady the canoe using hooks).⁶⁷

Coming in the second paragraph of the book, this concise description of the work and tools needed to move a brigade of canoes through the Canadian wilds already makes clear that this is not an easy life. However, when they can appreciate their surroundings before wrapping themselves in blankets to sleep on the ground, the men work amid often stunning natural beauty. Desrosiers writes of the camp's fires that night:

Bientôt les longues flammes résineuses se reflètent dans la rivière, large de près d'un mille, qui luit vaguement et s'épand entre les îles noires avant de s'engouffrer dans l'obscurité de la cataracte.

(Soon the long resinous flames are reflected in the river, almost a mile wide, which glows dimly and stretches between the black islands before it disappears into the darkness of the waterfall).⁶⁸

Evocative, unromanticized descriptions of Canada's wild nature appear throughout the novel and constitute one of its main appeals.

Montour stops at nothing to use his colleagues to ensure his own fortune. In a sense, he reflects an important aspect of the brutal wilderness in which the *engagés* struggle to survive while trading with the Indians for furs: like nature, Montour is

indifferent regarding his colleagues' concerns about their lives and families. Without pity, without any emotion at all aside from occasional fear for his own survival, Montour carefully studies the other *voyageurs*, learns their weaknesses, and finds ways to use them without their knowledge.

Savoir, voilà la grande loi. Rien ne s'est jamais passé parmi la brigade—jeu des amitiés ou des haines, manquements à la discipline, partialité des chefs, incidents des relations entre engagés—sans qu'il l'ait aussitôt appris.

(Knowledge, that is the great law. Nothing happens in the brigade—interplays because of friendships or animosities, breaches of discipline, bias of leaders, incidents affecting relations between the men—without his immediate learning of it).⁶⁹

This harshness is the driving problematic of the novel, and Turenne wrestles increasingly with it while trying to sleep at night.

Problèmes angoissants qui assaillent Louison Turenne lorsqu'il voit Nicolas Montour agir devant lui [. . .] Comment un homme comme lui parvient-il à déconnecter aussi facilement ses actes et ses paroles d'avec la sincérité, leur inspiratrice naturelle? [. . .] Comment les connecte-il ensuite avec l'intérêt, avec l'ambition, avec les passions, et de façon si continue, que le courant passe toujours par le fil nouveau au lieu de l'ancien?

Durant ses insomnies tourmentées, Louison Turenne pense d'une manière morbide à toutes ces choses.

(These agonizing problems torment Louison Turenne when he sees how Nicolas Montour behaves [. . .] How can such a man manage to disconnect so easily his

actions and words from sincerity, which is their natural inspiration? [. . .] How does he then connect them with self-interest, ambition, and passions, and so continuously that the current always finds the new wire instead of passing by the old one one?

Louison Turenne spends tormented nights of insomnia thinking morosely of all these things.⁷⁰

It is clear from the beginning that Turenne sees Montour for the evil person that he is, yet he continues to struggle inwardly with the basic premise that motivates people like Montour, who “sincerely,” deeply do not care about anyone but themselves and their own agenda. Deeply troubled by the concept of amorality in another human, Turenne grapples with his questions. Thus in the middle of another deadly winter, it is the behavior of another man that most preoccupies Turenne as a matter of survival.

In the end, it is Turenne’s close connection with his own mind and spirit, his sensitivity to higher forces that will allow him to avoid Montour’s traps—along with his complete lack of trust in Montour. Turenne never falls prey to his opponent’s psychological maneuverings, which are calculated to bring about a ruin that never comes for either man. Both evil and good simply exist, as does the wilderness with which they must both contend.

Turenne also wishes he had some power, but for entirely different reasons:

Montour et la Compagnie ne songent qu’à exploiter méthodiquement les Indiens; s’ils ont voulu donner à Turenne une part d’autorité, ce n’est pas pour accomplir des réformes, mais bien pour exploiter l’affections que les naturels éprouvent à son endroit.

(Montour and the Company think only of systematically exploiting the Indians; if they wanted to give Turenne some authority, it was not to carry out reforms, but to exploit the affections that the indigenes felt for him.)⁷¹

Seeing the way Indians are routinely treated as lesser, deceived, and abandoned unless they were needed for business reasons, Turenne befriends and clandestinely helps individuals—who are named and have stories with which Turenne gets involved—as best he is able. Thus, to him they are real people, whereas to Montour they are basically raw materials.

Glissant addresses the seemingly uncomplicated “being” of good and evil in the form of several lists throughout *Poétique de la relation* that, as a whole, serve to flesh out his concept of the world’s chaos (with a hidden order that does not rest on hierarchies but can be felt through poetry and other art forms), itself a global expression of humanity’s “echos-monde” (world-echoes) that range from William Faulkner’s novels and Bob Marley’s songs to Chicago’s architecture, Caracas’s barrios, and the march of schoolchildren in Soweto.⁷²

Dans les . . . ghettos des plus petites cités, les mêmes embrayages sont à l’œuvre : la violence de la misère et de la boue, mais aussi la rage inconsciente et désespérée de ne pas ‘comprendre’ le chaos du monde. Les dominants profitent du chaos, les opprimés s’en exaspèrent (In the . . . smallest city ghettos, the same dynamic is at work: the violence of misery and mud, but also the unconscious and desperate rage of not ‘understanding’ the world’s chaos. Those who dominate take advantage of the chaos, while the oppressed are infuriated).⁷³

This is simply the way it is, Glissant says, and the hierarchical relationship “retentit sur le plein-sens qu’on se donne de l’identité” (reverberates in the fullness of our sense of identity).⁷⁴ In today’s modern world of perpetual motion and change, Glissant envisions concepts of personal identity as no longer being necessarily connected to notions of “roots” as strongly as they are to

la façon dont une société participe de la relation globale, s’inscrit dans cette vitesse, en contrôle ou non le charroi. L’identité n’est plus seulement permanence, elle est capacité de variation, oui, une variable, maîtrisée ou affolée (the way in which a society participates in global relations and inscribes itself in that speed, of which it either can or cannot control the load. Identity is no longer only permanence, it is the capacity for variation, yes, a variable that is either controlled or disturbed).⁷⁵

Glissant strives, thus, to describe the world as it really is, rather than wasting his time and precious, limited human life force (which he also evokes in lyrical terms throughout the book) on wishing it were another way. He promotes an “esthétique de la terre” (Earth esthetics) even as he lists misery and contradictions and exploitations. “Dans ce plein-sens, la passion de la terre où l’on vit est un acte débutant, éternellement à risquer” (In this full meaning, a passion for the Earth where we live is a beginning act that we must forever risk).⁷⁶ This engagement with unvarnished reality is the point at which both he and second-wave ecocritics see the best use of human efforts toward change.

In attempting to clarify the mental processes as humans have historically behaved in trying to understand the phenomena around and within them, Glissant

deconstructs the verb *comprendre* (to understand) in its etymological elements. In the above quote about unconscious, desperate rage at a failure to “understand” the world’s chaos, he places “comprendre” in quotes for this reason, having noted its origin in the Latin *comprehendere* (*saisir*: to grasp or seize). The word indicates, Glissant says, a psychological progression in which the thinker seeks to possess abstract territory that is alien to him. When he cannot do so, he experiences anxiety and frustration. Instead, Glissant promotes a new mental paradigm of *donner-avec* (to give-with).⁷⁷ Thinking this way, he says, opens the mind to the concept of diverse totality in continual motion that is far closer to the real nature of the world.

Turenne exhibits awareness of diverse totality in Desrosiers’ novel, and he acts on it by helping oppressed people when he sees the possibility. He genuinely struggles with the question of how anyone could be like Montour, because to him the natural way is in line with Glissant’s concept of giving-with. Turenne understands and leads his life in a collaborative way. He asks himself of Montour: “Se peut-il que l’homme soit si égoïste? . . . Quelle tristesse que de trouver de petits esprits malins devant de grandes tâches” (Is it possible for man to be so selfish? . . . How sad to find small evil spirits faced with great tasks).⁷⁸

Mental anxiety keeps Turenne awake at night because he is unable to “grasp” Montour’s inherently evil nature. Despite the fact that he sees it and knows that he must steer clear of it if he is to survive, Turenne cannot simply accept the inexplicable contradictions and movements that he sees resulting from greed and cold acquisitiveness. He represents Desrosiers’ portrayal of not just one deeply ethical man, but the human consciousness as it grapples with the fallout of capitalist competition.

Humans are presented as being part of nature—the part that either dominates or makes use of the others when it can (Montour), or, alternatively, that seeks opportunities to collaborate and work with others (Turenne). Anthropocentrism is central to the concerns of all the characters in Desrosiers' book, but Montour's crimes are committed well outside population centers, in the wilderness where no one will know. The most ferocious brutality takes place with impunity far from urban centers, as Montour's boss reassures him when he first enlists his special skills.

Desrosiers paints a psychological portrait motivated by commercial activity against a backdrop of spectacular beauty, as noted. Although the author expresses awe of the type Cronon identifies as typifying romanticized, quasi-religious idealized landscapes that have nothing to do with people actually living and working in them. This is not the case here. The country in which the *voyageurs* work very hard is not presented as a passive entity, nor is it painted in any idealized terms. Alternatively deadly or peaceful, the terrain's beauty remains the only constant.⁷⁹

Après avoir remonté la rivière Sainte-Marie dont la largeur silencieuse glisse en serpentant entre les forêts de haute futaie, la brigade campe à la Pointe des Pins.

En avant, deux bornes massives: Gros Cap et Pointe Iroquois entre lesquelles s'étend et miroite comme une mer la surface du lac Supérieur.

(After canoeing up the Sainte-Marie River, which winds silent and wide through old-growth forests, the brigade makes camp at Pointe des Pins. Ahead, two massive milestones: Gros Cap and Pointe Iroquois, between which extends the surface of Lake Superior, shimmering like a sea).⁸⁰

In the chronology of Cronon's analysis of how wilderness came to be romanticized and spiritualized, Desrosiers' novel falls well beyond the 19th century point at which (U.S.) wild places had been set aside as paradisiacal havens (which excluded those who had formerly lived and worked there). By contrast to his American contemporaries and predecessors, this is not at all the way Desrosiers portrays wild nature. The amazing geography amid which his *voyageurs* work is much closer to what Cronon describes as a portrayal typical of 18th century literature, when "wilderness had . . . been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good."⁸¹ Indeed, aside from its aesthetic appeal, the outside working world that Desrosiers paints is fraught with regular periods of terror and mortal danger. For example, after their peaceful paddle up the Sainte-Marie river:

Plus de paysages idylliques. Devant eux maintenant se dessinent des côtes élevées, anfractueuses et bleuâtres, nettes de ligne et austères. [...] Pendant quatre cent quarante-cinq milles, la brigade doit suivre la rive nord avant d'atteindre Grand Portage. Comme des oiseaux craintifs, les canots rasent les rivages déserts; à la moindre alerte, ils fuient vers la terre.

(No more idyllic landscapes. Now before them rise high coastlines, craggy and bluish, their lines sharp and austere. [...] For four hundred forty-five miles, the brigade must follow the north shore before reaching Grand Portage. Like fearful birds the canoes hug deserted shores, and at the slightest alarm they flee toward land).⁸²

The author's sensitivity to the frightening beauty of nature is consistent with a pattern that critics have often noted in Canadian portrayals of the wilds: terror and pleasure.

Eva Beautell identifies these and then presents the hypothesis that beyond these two responses, the issue of anthropocentrism should no longer be resisted, but instead should be incorporated into environmental critical efforts. Like Cronon, Morton, and other second-wave ecocritics, Beautell argues that contemporary thinking about humans and nature needs to broaden its horizons. Given the relentlessly growing human population and the trend toward (sub)urban life, ecocriticism must, Beautell says, recognize urban forms of nature and their potential. “On the one hand, these numbers [...] overthrow the traditional connection between the country and its wilderness, be this [...] figured as terror or as pleasure. On the other, this reality is pushing the subject of ecocriticism towards the encompassing notion of *urban nature*.”⁸³ This pertains to Desrosiers’ novel in that the working world he interprets is populated by the same character types who work everywhere, from Wall Street to farming communities. Beautell speaks of how we see plants and animals, but behind this concern lies the problematical set of human behavior patterns that will play out regardless of their setting.

Thomas Vauterin interprets *Les Engagés du grand portage* from a geographical standpoint of ecocritical interest because of his contention that beneath the novel’s depiction of the forest is a modern dynamic of deterritorialization, a version of Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the capitalist machine. For Vauterin, the paradigms and activities imposed on the forest are urban, in the sense that business penetrates, possesses, and alters segments of the wilderness just as it does in creating the city.⁸⁴ Indeed, in Desrosiers’ work ruthless capitalism is the force that drives big fur-trading companies ever-deeper into the wilderness, while, in a mirroring trajectory,

Montour's ruthlessness is applied against those around him in the interest of only himself (and is from the city, as the author notes at the novel's beginning). From an ecocritical standpoint, Vauterin's rapprochement of the urban to the wild through human intervention is a useful way of seeing the capitalist drive that is at issue in *Les Engagés du portage*, but this gets at only part of the environmental problematic, as the question of good versus evil remains uncomfortably unsettled, perhaps of necessity.

Kate Soper approaches the issue through an investigation of what separates "the human possession of instinct or 'animal' desire" from "the ethics of human conduct, and specifically the extent to which 'nature' offers itself as an appropriate guide to this; in other words, whether is it conceived essentially as a source of virtue or vice."⁸⁵ Her aim, in exploring the area between "that part of the environment which we have had no hand in creating" and human behavior, is to identify two basic attitudes: one that is essentially pro-nature and the other that sees it as a set of forces or circumstances to be overcome or changed.⁸⁶ Even though both views are social constructions, it is useful to question how we humans comport ourselves in the context of ethical considerations regarding both one another and the rest of the planet. If our natural genetic makeup is responsible for what have historically been urges to dominate and control one another and our environment, then extreme behaviors such as torture may be explained by either personal or societal failures in controlling these impulses, or in some cases possibly by genetic mutations.

Montour's behavior seems to result from an out-of-control survival instinct. Through his desire to advance himself in the company, he dominates those around him

by whatever means are at his disposal. If the good-evil dichotomy is related genetically to such urges to rule, then Montour does not descend to the lowest levels, but he is very dangerous, as Turenne quickly sees. He warns his friend Bombardier early in the voyage, as they notice that Montour makes social rounds every evening whether or not it is clear that he is welcome (which he usually is not): “Un homme qui place quelque chose avant son amour-propre, on doit s’en méfier” (A man who puts something before his self-respect is a man of whom to be wary).⁸⁷ Throughout the novel, Turenne recognizes that he can never win against such a relentlessly amoral opponent. He simply watches him and, to the best of his ability, stays out of his way.

Despite Montour’s cruelly cold nature, in the end Turenne—and the reader—is forced to admire his ability to survive. Yet Turenne also endures.

Savage Business Competition

By the novel’s midpoint, XY, the company against which North West is competing for business territory in the Rabaska region, has become “the enemy.” Montour’s new boss, Tom MacDonald, conspires with other “bourgeois” (company officials) to spy on XY’s activities and devise ways to foil their advancement. Montour is enlisted for the cause because “qui, mieux que lui, peut étudier le caractère de ceux qui l’entourent, bernier les uns, détruire les autres, se concilier le reste?” (who better than he can study the character of those around him, deceive some of them, destroy others, and conciliate the rest?)⁸⁸ MacDonald promises Montour more money and the possibility of a raise in status, warning him only not to go so far that he besmirches the company’s reputation. His aim is to “donner aux talents de Montour une occasion de

s'exercer sur un plan plus vaste et . . . au bénéfice de la Compagnie" (provide Montour's talents with the opportunity to be expressed on a wider scale. . . for the Company's benefit).⁸⁹ Ironically, Montour's behavior mirrors that of the company that employs him as it exploits ruthlessly Canada's natural resources and people with the sole aim of its own profit.

Both Montour and the North West Company are driven by competition and have no regard whatsoever for the welfare of the Indians with whom they trade. The Indians object loudly to the invasion of their hunting grounds by "des Iroquois de Montréal" (Iroquois from Montreal) whom the company has brought to find beaver. "Ceux-ci exterminent systématiquement tout le gibier avec leur armes et leurs méthodes. Une disette s'ensuivra" (They are systematically exterminating all the game with their weapons and methods. A famine will result). What is more, they complain, the company is selling certain Indian women with whom the *voyageurs* live to acquit their debts. "Ces pratiques immorales doivent cesser" (these immoral practices must stop). But MacDonald appeases them, makes promises, and passes out more tobacco and alcohol.

Le bourgeois n'a qu'une idée en tête: persuader les Indiens de rouler le cuir de caribou de leurs loges et de s'enfoncer dans la forêt avant l'arrivée des Petits. (The official has only one idea in mind: to persuade the Indians to roll up the caribou skins of their lodges and melt into the forest before the arrival of the Petits [small ones, the XY company]).⁹⁰

At this point in the story, the cold-bloodedness of Montour and that of his boss come together and interlink in unscrupulous calculations and planning, because they have

both glommed on to the organ-less capitalist machine to make whole its possibilities with their biological work and render it effective, in Deleuzo-Guattarien terms. They are lubrication for the always-expanding industrial enterprise. The company exploits and deceives the Amerindian population as it wipes out the beaver for profit, while in a parallel movement Montour has “risen” to this level of confidence from a company man by his own machinations. To do this, they must be vigilant about secrecy and mindful that boundaries of acceptable behavior must be redefined periodically—and, as necessary, in confidence.

In the anthropocentric view, nature can even be redefined according to the needs of the economy and profit. Similarly, however, this paradigm can be inversed, as Cronon does when he observes that capitalist interests have framed contemporary ideas about what constitutes the wilds, and in so doing have marginalized its inhabitants. This is why Cronon asks that “wilderness” be redefined to consider where people actually live and work. The problem, which is central to the engaged field of ecocriticism, emerges from *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* as a stark depiction of exploitation, both of people and of the earth’s fruits.

While the *voyageurs* who were the hired hands, the *engagés*, worked their way northwest from Grand Portage, they had to survive not only the hardships of extremely difficult canoe portaging and paddling in what could often be unpredictably harsh conditions of geography and climate, but also—and, in Desrosiers’ telling, potentially even more lethal—the actions of men who were far from the happy singing stereotype portrayed in Taché’s work. Not everyone was cooperative or good-natured, and

Desrosiers' novel shows the other side of what could and sometimes did happen, including murder.

For the interests of this dissertation, the ecocritical issue at play here is one of deteriorating human relations in a movement that directly parallels the growth of big business. The *coureurs de bois*, once free and wild, have morphed into licensed *voyageurs* who must now contend with one another's questionable motivations at least as much as they must be concerned with survival in the wilderness, as seen by Turenne's troubled nights of attempting to sleep. Both he and Montour work as *voyageurs*, and now the conduct of a *voyageur* mimics that of the company. Montour is an enthusiastic participant in the capitalist machine; he rushes to fill its empty organs with the strength and cunning of his own. "Enfin, enfin" (At last, at last), he repeats to himself upon recognizing that his big break has come when his first boss, Cournoyer, makes use of intelligence he has provided.

Orphelin pauvre, il s'est lancé dans diverses aventures, de modestes tâches à sa portée: menuiserie, bijouterie, comptabilité. Toujours, il se lassait vite: des routes qui ne conduisaient qu'aux culs-de sac de la médiocrité, de la pauvreté. Pour gagner son pain tout au plus, il savait employer toute la subtilité de son esprit. Et il devait craindre les renvois, appréhender les affres de la faim, celles des recherches d'emploi.

(An impoverished orphan, he embarked on various adventures, modest tasks that he could handle: carpentry, jewelry, accounting. But he always tired fast of these directions, which led only to dead ends of mediocrity and poverty. To best earn

his bread, he knew how to deploy all the subtlety of his mind. He had feared dismissals and understood the pains of hunger and job searches).⁹¹

Montour vows never to experience want again and commits with gratitude to carry out whatever the company needs from him. First Cournoyer, then McTavish, and finally MacDonald, all North West officials in various ranks, use Montour. They exploit their employee to advance the company's interests in its relentless push to penetrate and exploit northern Saskatchewan and Alberta. MacDonald sends Montour to Fort Providence, on the shores of the Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, precisely because of his talent for espionage and intrigue, along with his total lack of compassion.

An important aspect of *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* is Desrosiers' portrayal of the inexorable progression of big business. For large enterprises, it is not only natural resources but also the workers themselves that represent a capital investment, in the well-known paradigm presented by Marx and Engels express in their 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. As well, a key ecocritical phenomenon is involved here in the historical development of a mainstream mentality oriented toward profit at any cost, including, as necessary and paradoxically, in direct conflict with the interests of people and the environment. Merchant traces the development from a postcolonial perspective:

European capitalism expanded through the establishment of colonies [...] that supplied both the natural resources and cheap labor that extracted them from the earth. [...]

Accumulation of economic surplus occurred as natural resources (or free raw materials) were extracted at minimum costs (minimum wages) and manufactured goods were sold at market value. This accumulation of economic surplus through mercantile expansion helped to fuel eighteenth and nineteenth century industrialization.⁹²

As part of his exhaustive analysis of this development in *Capital*, Marx studies the contribution to the capitalist momentum of the laborer himself, who performs the work that is his commodity to sell, by means of his mind and body that carry out the task. But the worker does not realize his profit immediately; instead there is a time lapse during which “the use-value of the labour-power is advanced to the capitalist: the labourer allows the buyer to consume it before he receives payment of the price; he everywhere gives credit to the capitalist.”⁹³ Thus the accumulation of economic surplus noted by Merchant and others is aided at all times by the unquestioned simple practice of the worker doing the work before payment is made. Since Merchant’s 1992 analysis, the influence of Marxism on postcolonial ecocriticism in particular is identified by Huggan and Tiffin as one of the numerous areas that ecocritical studies are now encompassing.⁹⁴ But it would be going too far, they caution, to state that a socialist perspective characterizes all postcolonial ecocriticism.

In *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, Montour understands and accepts, even embraces his place in the capitalist machine. Having understood that Simon McTavish values his talents and especially the cargo of beaver furs he brings for the voracious market, Montour has no illusions about preferential treatment without continuing to

deliver. When McTavish explains that he needs both Montour's special skills and Turenne's facility with Indian relations:

Montour ne s'est pas trompé. Maintenant, il sait ce que veut son bourgeois. Un plan se dessine en une seconde dans son esprit vif et clair. Comme Simon McTavish va lui demander d'intervenir auprès de Turenne pour le disposer à accepter un poste, il ne reste plus qu'à représenter cette entreprise comme très difficile afin d'obtenir un bon prix de son intervention.

(Montour was not mistaken. Now he knows what his boss wants. A plan takes shape in one second in his vivid, clear mind. Simon McTavish is going to ask him to influence Turenne to accept a position, so Montour must represent this as a very difficult undertaking in order to fetch a good price for his intervention).⁹⁵

Such cold calculation is presented as manipulative and often evil in Montour's case, but it is also clear that he fully understands that for the company, he himself is a capital investment. He recognizes this as a mechanistic process and grasps that aside from watching and learning everything he can, especially in terms of secret intelligence that is worth cash and advancement, he must negotiate continually in his own interest if he is to turn the machine to work for his advantage and maximize its returns for himself.

The world that emerges along with the protagonists in Desrosiers' novel is one in which the forces of moneymaking are growing, and becoming more organized as well as more ruthless. In this world and as part of it, human nature displays its two extreme sides of compassion (good) and selfishness (bad). Desrosiers presents *voyageurs* to explore the moral conflicts that accompanied the parallel movements

toward 19th century capitalism and socialism. Both socioeconomic systems were well established at the time Desrosiers wrote, and his novel reflects the tension between them. The characters of Montour and Turenne represent capitalist ruthlessness versus a man with socialist concerns, even if the author does not describe them as such. Both survive, uncomfortable though this realistic resolution may be. Like the life force, both simply continue to exist, one amoral, the other consulting his conscience on a regular basis. Desrosiers makes no judgment about this survival, implicit or otherwise. The novel is a psychological study of these two individuals who must survive in nature and among men, while depending on both. In their struggles, they are isolated and they are also part of the forces of nature amid which they trade and fight.

From Desrosiers' perspective, in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* the *coureur de bois/voyageur* is represented as the two moral sides of human nature: good and evil. For the author who created these opposing characters, questions of the validity of a capitalist versus socialist approach may not even have arisen. Nevertheless, for a modern critic reading the work from an ecocritical point of view, the *coureur de bois/voyageur* can be seen as representing two effects of capitalism's inexorable march to exploit both natural resources and people: amoral self-interest and a social consciousness, both of which are capable of surviving and succeeding in such an environment.⁹⁶ The novel thus portrays stark realities about human nature that are in harmony with both Desrosiers' likely intended moralistic effect and a Marxist-inspired analysis of the capitalist push into nature.

Nature is not protected in either Desrosiers' or Hémon's novel (nor in Taché's, writing in the late 19th century after the U.S. national parks had been set aside), and

there is no suggestion that it should be. This was once a fundamental difference between U.S. and Canadian writings involving nature, as observed by David R. Boyd: “Thirty years ago Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye used the metaphors of ‘survival’ and the ‘garrison mentality’ to describe the relationship between Canadians and the wild, reflecting our separation from, and our fear of, nature.”⁹⁷ Clearly, a culture that developed in a climate as severe in winters as that of Canada, where many 17th century French settlers gave up and went home (if they survived), is not as predisposed as those living farther south to idealize the realities of nature, especially wild nature that has not been groomed or prepared for even a modicum of human comfort.

This defining difference between 19th–20th century U.S. and Canadian nature writing is of interest here in that it helps to pinpoint one of the ways in which Canadian literature distinguishes itself, even though, as Boyd specifies, “the separation and fear have [today] begun to disappear, and along with them much of the early hostility toward the wild.”⁹⁸ Why the separation and fear are disappearing likely relates to the writers’ far greater comfort. Desrosiers, even though he never worked as a voyageur or apparently in any physically demanding type of job, was fully aware of the uncomfortable realities, in his capacity as a historian, chief librarian, and researcher.

In the works studied here and in the previous chapter, the *coureurs de bois* and their commercial and cultural direct engagement with the wilderness are presented either in one of two ways: either in romantic terms because they and their lifestyle are unsustainable in a developing world (even though the Indians/Inuit/First Nations

endure, but they are even more marginalized than the *coureurs* as being part of the wilderness itself) or in terms entirely devoid of romance, as in the case of Montour and Turenne. As a group, the *coureurs/voyageurs* emerge from the forest, from history, and from literature as emblems of survival, flexibility, intercultural adaptation, and a deep knowledge of earth and many of its life forms beyond human. In both a literal and an abstract sense, they connect humans with the earth. Their gradual disappearance reflects a parallel movement in 19th to 20th century socioeconomic conditions favoring urbanization and organized forces of labor over independent workers. Boyd notes that fear of wild nature is far lesser among Canadian writers than it once was. In a society that is overwhelmingly now (sub- and)urbanized, they no longer need to venture into situations as fraught with imminent danger as did the *coureurs/voyageurs* or even farmers on a daily basis. As Serres says:

Le plus grand événement du XXe siècle reste sans conteste la disparition de l'agriculture comme activité pilote de la vie humaine en générale et des cultures singulières” (the most significant event of the 20th century remains without question the disappearance of agriculture as a driving activity of human life in general and of individual cultures).⁹⁹

People who live close to the wilds in primitive conditions still exist, obviously, but even Inuit seal hunters now drive snowmobiles. Cellphones connecting the network are ubiquitous.

Modern society has continued its tacit movement away from the most difficult conditions of the (rest of the) natural world, and the *coureurs' de bois* trajectory reflects this historical sequence. Humans may not abhor nature, as Serres maintains,¹⁰⁰

but they do fear it—and they have succeeded in mitigating many (never all) of its dangers. This is the world as modern people know it today, shaped by what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a continual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, human fantasies becoming capitalist realities as they participate willingly in an ongoing unconscious desiring machine.¹⁰¹ To replace this acquiring and possessing mindset, both Serres and Glissant point to a greater awareness of sharing—shared space, shared resources, what Glissant conceives as “*donner-avec*” instead of “*com-prendre*” (to give-with instead of to seize).

The *coureurs de bois* embodied, by their lifestyle, such sharing, even if by necessity. But the sharing ways were overpowered by much stronger acquisitive forces, pushing to the sidelines those who shared the wilderness, which shrunk into an exploited resource. Glissant’s *Poétique de la relation* is a dynamic, “verbal” effort to help change human thinking so that it becomes inclusive of all people. Ecocritical writers extend the comprehensive notion to include non-human life as well. Changes such as these cannot occur quickly, but this is no reason to veer suddenly toward apocalyptic thinking. Cronon reminds us of the absurdity of the proposition that we kill ourselves to save the rest of nature. “Not only does it ascribe greater power to humanity than we in fact possess—physical and biological nature will surely survive in some form or another long after we ourselves have gone the way of all flesh—but in the end it offers us little more than a self-defeating counsel of despair.”¹⁰² Instead, like Turenne in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, we can recognize reality and press on.

As Glissant brings *Poétique de la relation* toward a conclusion, or more accurately a suitable resting place, he wonders whether the contemporary world’s

cultures will begin to mingle in a participatory mode or continue repeating invasive and abusive methods of the past, adding: “Et quand même on ne se ferait aucune illusion sur les réalités, poser seulement cette question c’est commencer déjà de changer leurs données” (Even with no illusions about the realities, simply asking this question is already starting to change their facts).¹⁰³ It is at this cultural intersection, between humanity and the rest of nature, that ecocriticism strives for relevance, to make a useful contribution to literary criticism, if only by raising questions that may eventually help to give rise to new ways of thinking.

Turenne, when necessary for the job or immediate survival, even cooperates with Montour—and then moves away as quickly as possible, fully aware that his nemesis’ next move could be fatal to him. This, in the wilderness of the entrepreneurial push portrayed by Desrosiers, is reality, dealing and with the world as it actually exists. In *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, the final time the readers sees the two opponents together, Montour is passed out drunk and Turenne just looks at him, still bewildered.

Turenne has made his decision: He will not sign a new contract. In this way he has won the struggle between them, because getting Turenne to reenlist was one of the tasks with which the company charged Montour. Turenne will go home to his family. “Cinq longues années, il a vécu dans les terres inhumaines où toute parole cache un piège” (For five long years he has lived in inhuman territory where every word hides a trap).¹⁰⁴ After witnessing a massacre of friendly Saulteur Indians by warring Sioux, the face of the woman Turenne loves appears in his imagination. “Il s’interdisait de penser à elle. Et voici qu’elle lui apparaît soudain dans toute sa ferme beauté” (He had

forbidden himself to think of her. And here she appears to him suddenly in all her strong beauty).¹⁰⁵ In a mere five months, he reminds himself, he will be with her again,

dans la maison construite de ses mains, au seuil de la forêt; elle sera sienne au sein de la vallée heureuse, là où les hommes ont de l'amitié dans le coeur, savent comprendre autre chose que le cri d'une ambition inquiète et prononcer les mots qui ne trompent point" (in the house built with his hands at the edge of the forest; she will be his in the heart of the happy valley, where men have friendship in their hearts, understand something besides the cry of restless ambition, and speak words that do not deceive).¹⁰⁶

Notably, Turenne's happiness awaits him in a house, just as did François Paradis' in *Maria Chapdelaine*. Both the *coureur de bois* and the *voyageur* go into the woods to work and then reenter the houses of French Canadian settlements, where they find happiness.

The chronotopic trend toward devaluing the wilderness and those who inhabit continues in both Hémon's and Desrosiers' novels. In *Maria Chapdelaine*, the author romantically conflates the lone dying/dead *coureur de bois* with a nostalgia for disappearing wild places and people, however necessary this may be for the inevitable and desirable progression of agriculture. By contrast, in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, Desrosiers portrays a whole subculture of men who venture beyond the borders of (Euro) settlements and work in the wilderness. In both cases, however, the areas beyond these settlements are portrayed as sources of raw materials that can be transformed, through human labor, into capital. By addressing through the two novels

some of the problems that emerge from human-nature interactions (or, more accurately, human efforts to dominate and control nature), we can, thus, detect a continuing and intensifying movement of separation between spaces over which humans have gained power and those in which they have not or to a lesser degree. This persistent dynamic moves in a line of ascent parallel to that of the growth of big-business enterprises. In a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, lines of flight are moving toward a new plateau of intensification.

¹ First prize for his essay “La Rivière,” published in the sports magazine *Le Vélo* in 1904; first prize in 1906 for “La Conquête,” published in *L’Auto* (the renamed *Vélo*); second prize in *Le Journal* for “La foire aux vérités” (1906). Hémon also contributed to *Le Temps*, which would serialize *Maria Chapdelaine* after his death (Patricia Demers, *A Seasonal Romance: Louis Hémon’s Maria Chapdelaine* [Toronto: ECW Press, 1993], 9–10. *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hémon, W. H. Blake, trans. [London: Macmillan, 1922], translator’s note).

² Lydia was institutionalized in 1911. To his father, the “prestigious Inspector General of Public Education” in France, Hémon was volatile and irresponsible (Demers, *A Seasonal Romance*, 15).

³ Damase Potvin, *Le Roman d’un roman: Louis Hémon à Péribonka* (Quebec: Editions du Quartier Latin, 1950), 42, 157.

⁴ *La Belle que voilà* (1923), *Colin-Maillard* (1924), *Battling Malone* (1925), *Monsieur Ripois et la némésis* (1950), *Lettres à sa famille* (1968), and *Récits sportifs* (1982).

⁵ Bernard Duchatelet, “La lisière sombre de la forêt,” *Colloque Louis Hémon Quimper* (Quimper: Calligrammes, 1986), 103, 114.

⁶ “Origine et signification,” Rivière Péribonka, Commission de Toponymie Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2012, http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no_seq=179128. A 1903 government report refers to the desirability of investing in logging on the Peribonka River: “What enormous business will be developed when the rivers Ashuapmashouan, Peribonka, Mistassini, and others will be put to use with the great forests they drain” (Mr. Girard, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 3d sess. 9th parliament, 3 Edward VII, 1903, vol. 61 [Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1903], 10000).

⁷ Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine: Récit du Canada français* (Paris: Nelson, Editeurs, 1938 [Montréal: J. A. Lefebvre, ed., 1916]), 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹ Réjean Robidoux and André Renaud refer briefly to the novel’s initial reception in their fine analysis of it and its significance in *Le roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle* (Ottawa: Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1966), 30–36, see 33 n. 20.

¹² Demers, *A Seasonal Romance*, 31.

¹³ For example, Allen McAndrew, *Louis Hémon, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1936); Louigny de Montigny, *La revanche de Maria Chapdelaine* (Montreal: Editions de l’action canadienne-française, 1937); Damase Potvin, *Le roman d’un roman: Louis Hémon à Péribonka* (Quebec: Editions du quartier latin, 1950); Alfred Ayotte and

Victor Tremblay, *L'aventure Louis Hémon* (Montreal: Fides: 1974); Gilbert Lévesque, *Louis Hémon, aventurier ou philosophe?* (Montreal: Fides, 1980); Mathieu-Robert Sauvé, *Louis Hémon, le fou du lac* (Montreal: XYZ Editeur, 2000).

¹⁴ Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760 to 1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 899.

¹⁵ Nicole Deschamps edited Hemon's letters to his family and in 1966 discovered the novel's original manuscript in Quimper, Brittany, in the family archives (Ben-Z. Shek, review of Nicole Deschamps, Raymonde Héroux, and Normand Villeneuve, *Le Mythe de Maria Chapdelaine* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montreal, 1980), *University of Toronto Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (summer 1981): 185.

¹⁶ Ben-Z. Shek, review of Nicole Deschamps, Raymonde Héroux, and Normand Villeneuve, *Le Mythe de Maria Chapdelaine*), 185.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185–86.

¹⁸ Mireille Servais-Maquoi, *Le roman de la terre au Québec* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), 2.

¹⁹ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 52.

²⁰ Peter N. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada, A Cultural History* (East Lansing, Mich.: 2000), 45–46; Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 540; Bothwell, *Penguin History of Canada*, 35.

²¹ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 83, 91–94.

²² For example: Rebecca Linz, “Maternités et identités: Representations of Motherhood and National Identity in Literary Texts of Quebec,” *Dissertation Abstracts International* 74, no. 6 (December 2013). Sudarsan Rangarajan, “The Poetics

of Silence in *Maria Chapdelaine*,” *Neophilologus* 96, no. 1 (January 2012): 33-46.

Gerard J. Brault, “Maria and Her Mother: Conflict and Continuity in Maria Chapdelaine,” *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 50, no. 2 (summer 1996): 88–100.

²³ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 212.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁵ E. A. Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 58.

²⁶ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92–93.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁹ Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, Ken Hiltner, ed. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 110.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 100–101.

³² Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 110.

³³ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 154–55.

³⁴ Ben-Z. Shek, review of Nicole Deschamps, Raymonde Héroux, and Normand Villeneuve, *Le Mythe de Maria Chapdelaine*, 188. Réjean Beaudoin identifies Hémon’s use of orality in literature as a precursor of Quebecois Joual: *Le roman québécois* (Quebec : Boréal, 1991), 68–69.

³⁵ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 157.

³⁶ Ibid., 54–55.

³⁷ Ibid., 51.

³⁸ See Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 47, 304.

³⁹ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 30. In *Philosophie de la relation*, Glissant draws a distinction between continental and archipelago thought, differences that arise from geographical features. This ecocritically significant concept of otherness within the writing of an artist who champions a *Tout-monde* of continuous movement and dynamic change presents intriguing possibilities for future directions of research (Valerie Orlando, article in *Research in African Literatures*, in press).

⁴⁰ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 23.

⁴¹ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 42.

⁴² Robidoux and Renaud emphasize Samuel's continual desire to relocate, comparing it to François Paradis' need for freedom as a *coureur de bois* (*Le roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle*, 34). However, every time Samuel moves his family, he does so to clear more land. He shows no desire to live in the wilderness, only to control it. Thus, I see the two lifestyles as fundamentally opposed.

⁴³ Girard, *Official Report, Debates of the House of Commons*, 3d sess. 9th parliament, 3 Edward VII, 1903, vol. 61, 10000. *Pulp and Paper Investigation Hearings*, House of Representatives, 60th Congress, 2d sess., doc. 1502, Feb. 8–19, 1909, "Statements Showing Trade in Wood Pulp, Cellulose, and Other Articles Used in the Manufacture of Paper and Print Paper by Principal Countries of the World, excluding the United

States, for the Latest Available Years from Official Sources,” Bureau of Statistics, Department of Commerce and Labor, 2955.

⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 1* (Editions de minuit, 1972–73), 120.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

⁴⁶ Nixon, “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism,” 203.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 171.

⁴⁹ Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 110.

⁵⁰ Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1990).

⁵¹ Ibid., 79.

⁵² Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 178–79.

⁵³ As one example, Gerard J. Brault, “Maria and Her Mother: Conflict and Continuity in *Maria Chapdelaine*,” *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal In Modern Literatures* 50, no. 2 (summer 1996): 88-100.

⁵⁴ Demers, *A Seasonal Romance*, 54.

⁵⁵ Duchatelet, “La lisière sombre de la forêt, especially 109 and 113.

⁵⁶ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 272.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁸ Lisa Gasbaronne, “Love, Loss, and the Sacred in *Maria Chapdelaine*,” *Quebec Studies* 54 (fall 2012–winter 2013): 31–46. Robidoux and Renaud, *Le roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle*, 32–33.

⁵⁹ Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, 284.

⁶⁰ Biographical details from Julia Richer, *Introduction à l'oeuvre de Léo-Paul Desrosiers* (Montreal: Fides, 1966), 9–28; and Michelle Gélinas, *Léo-Paul Desrosiers ou le récit ambigu* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1973), 5–10.

⁶¹ “Bourassa was at this point [in 1914] an odd mixture of religious fervour, Canadian nationalism, and ‘good government,’ meaning an end to the old patterns of corruption he correctly identified with Laurier’s Liberals. In response, the Liberals called Bourassa’s journal and other similar papers ‘la bonne presse.’ In this context ‘bonne’ translates as ‘goody-goody’” (Bothwell, *Penguin History of Canada*, 554 n.5. See also 289).

⁶² Felix Walter, “French-Canadian Letters,” *Letters in Canada* 1938, A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *University of Toronto Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1939): 478–90. Pieter H. Kollewijn, review of *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* by Léo Paul Desrosiers, *Books Abroad* 21, no. 4 (autumn 1947): 424.

⁶³ Robidoux and Renaud, *Le roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle*, 57–71. Robidoux and Renaud note that the fur industry is shown through Montour’s actions (61–62), but they do not further develop the idea.

⁶⁴ Gélinas, *Léo-Paul Desrosiers ou le récit ambigu*, 59–60; 66–68.

⁶⁵ Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760 to 1945*, 899. *L'Accalmie: Lord Durham au Canada* is actually historical nonfiction, which Desrosiers also wrote extensively and to favorable reviews.

⁶⁶ “Nicolas Montour,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (1801–1820), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/montour_nicholas_5E.html. Father Dugré was a Jesuit

proponent of agriculture and rural life who in 1916 published *Les avantages de l'agriculture* (the advantages of agriculture). Historians Linteau, Durocher, and Robert categorize him as an advocate for the “social model proposed by the clerical-nationalist ideology” (Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, *Quebec: A History*, Robert Chodos, trans. [Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983], 533–34).

⁶⁷ Léo-Paul Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (Montreal : Fides, 1946 [1938]), 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷² Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 107–8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 155–6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁷⁸ Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 198.

⁷⁹ The actual area in which the *voyageurs* operated has (ironically) been set aside in northern Minnesota, bordering Canada, as Grand Portage State Park. Its history is explained on its web page: “The falls, the highest in the state, presented a serious obstacle to river travel, so a ‘carrying place,’ or portage, was necessary. American Indians created the ancient nine-mile trail from Lake Superior to bypass the falls. This

trail became known as ‘The Grand Portage.’ . . . The park lies within the Grand Portage Indian Reservation and is bordered by Canada on the north and east. Lake Superior is about one mile east of the park” (Grand Portage State Park, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/grand_portage/index.html).

⁸⁰ Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 38.

⁸¹ Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 103.

⁸² Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 38–39.

⁸³ Eva Darias Beutell, “Where has ‘Real’ Nature Gone, Anyway: Ecocriticism, Canadian Writing and the Lures of the Virtual,” *Revista Canaria De Estudios Ingleses* 56 (2008): 94.

⁸⁴ Thomas Vauterin, “Aventures urbaines et géographies forestières dans le roman canadien-français des années 1930,” *Geo/Graphies: Mapping the Imagination in French and Francophone Literature and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003): 179–89.

⁸⁵ Kate Soper, “The Discourses of Nature,” *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, 272.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁸⁷ Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹² Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* (London: Routledge, 1992), 24.

⁹³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Frederick Engels, ed.; Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1906), 153.

⁹⁴ Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 15.

⁹⁵ Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 165.

⁹⁶ For more on this dynamic, see, for example, Beaudoin, *Le Roman québécois*, 48–50; and Vauterin, “Aventures urbaines et géographies forestières.”

⁹⁷ David R. Boyd, ed., *Northern Wild: Best Contemporary Canadian Nature Writing* (Vancouver and Toronto: Greystone Books, 2001), 5.

⁹⁸ Boyd, ed., *Northern Wild*, 5–6.

⁹⁹ Serres, *Le Contrat naturel*, 53.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe*, see, for example 44, 65, 288–89; 291, 416, 419, 421.

¹⁰² Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 112.

¹⁰³ Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, 205.

¹⁰⁴ Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, 202.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter 5. *Coureuses* and *Coueurs de Bois*: A People's Becoming in Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-charrette*

Antonine Maillet's 1979 novel *Pélagie-la-charrette* tells the story of the return of Acadians after the English violently expelled them in 1755 during the Seven Years' War (a.k.a. the French and Indian War), taking possession of their lands. This chapter traces the development in the novel of the role played by *coueurs de bois* in the Acadians' survival, physically and culturally. *Coueurs* are gradually revealed to be connections between the people and life, and by the end, the author has claimed the woodsmen (and women) as a French Canadian emblem signifying endurance and identity formation.

The novel is based on the historical event known as le Grand Dérangement (the great upheaval), "a sinister chapter in English colonization during which the English army performed an 'ethnic cleansing' of the Catholic Francophone populations of what is now New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."¹ *Pélagie-la-charrette*, often described as a historical novel, is more accurately based on historical events. It captures the emotional and cultural truths of a people's story, but the timing and deportations are dramatized versions of history, aside from the key dates of 1755 and 1880, when Acadians were finally able to openly reemerge in Acadia.² Maillet's story inevitably and repeatedly evokes the initial expulsion in 1755 by the British, who had wrested definitive power from the French after more than 100 years of struggle for domination in Canada.

Historically, many Acadians had sufficient warning to relocate themselves elsewhere or hide in the woods, but the others were forcibly removed and taken by ship to areas ranging from Georgia to Boston, English colonies where, it was thought, the French would be monitored and unable to regroup. Their farms and homes were destroyed. Some Acadians found their way to Louisiana to establish the Cajun population there, including those transported by the ship captain Beausoleil on whom the hero of Maillet's novel is based. His real name was Joseph Broussard (1702–65), today a legendary figure in Acadian traditions. Beausoleil led his people in several efforts to repel the English before the *Dérangement*, and he was among the first to lead Acadians to Louisiana. Following the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years' War, Acadians were officially allowed to return (but not to their former lands). Individual groups immediately began coming back to Canada.³ Those who had never left had faded into the woods and endured.

In Maillet's novel, the protagonist, Pélagie LeBlanc, is twenty years old at the time of the *Dérangement*, with four children and another on the way. During the chaos of the forced removal she loses her husband and their oldest son, but manages to keep the rest of the family together in the ship that transports them to Georgia over the course of several miserable months. There she toils on a plantation for fifteen years before leading a caravan of carts (*charrettes*) from Georgia back to Acadia, an epic journey that takes another ten years as the group grows. By the time she dies at the end, Pélagie has metaphorically become the vehicle that has brought everyone home. This impression is reinforced by her burial container—the cart that transported her so

the group could also be transported. Her literary and physical function in the novel gives rise to its title, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, Pélagie-the-cart.

During the entire trip north, Pélagie's cart is shadowed by another, the cart of death, seen only by the group's octogenarian, Bélonie-le Vieux. Also a *Dérangement* survivor, he annoys everyone from the beginning of the journey with tales of a phantom black cart. Pélagie immediately challenges him by demanding that he explain why no one has ever seen it. "Verrait qui verrait" (All would be revealed), Maillet writes:

Aucun vivant n'a encore vu la Mort et tout le monde la connaît. Tout le monde connaît le Diable encorné, l'Archange saint Michel accoté sur la lance, et la charrette fantôme, noire, sans portières, tirée par trois paires de chevaux, voilà. Et qu'on n'en parle plus.

(No living person has yet seen Death but everyone knows it. Everyone knows the Devil with horns, St. Michael the Archangel leaning on his lance, and the black phantom cart with no doors, pulled by three pairs of horses, and that's that. Let us speak of it no more.)⁴

But of course they will speak again, voluminously. Coming at the start of the novel as the journey begins, this good-natured squabble between the two storytelling "poles"—those who will descend from Pélagie and those who will descend from Bélonie—establishes the prevailing tone as well as several main themes of the book. Despite the necessity of confronting often fatal obstacles, this is a group ("everyone") that carries in its vivid collective imagination beliefs and superstitions that it articulates through vocal disagreements as to factuality and origin, as well as through detailed pictorial

elaboration. The themes of mortality, collective expression, orality, and the life of the spirit, all expressed in this passage, are embroidered into the novel's unfolding and play themselves out through the forward movement of the carts. The collective progression of the group always prevails, and inevitably many die en route, including both Bélonie and Pélagie.

The passage quoted above also reveals the tension between truth and lie that pervades the novel's development, an underlying theme that is established in the prologue. Here, the reader is informed of the storytelling structure. The novel begins:

Au dire du vieux Louis à Bélonie lui-meme, ce rejeton des Bélonie né comme moi de la charrette, seuls ont survécu au massacre des saints innocents, les innocents qui ont su se taire (According to old Louis Bélonie himself, this descendant of the Bélonies born of the carts, as was I, the only ones who survived the massacre of innocent saints, were those who remained silent).⁵

Readers glean from this that there are two people telling the story they are about to hear, and both are descendants of those who lived through the horrific events.

Apparently their ancestors did not remain quiet with everyone, however, since the story was passed down through the generations. The qualifier "according to" makes it clear that readers should beware: this is a story that likely comes in numerous subjective forms. The "I" narrator descends from Pélagie of the novel's title, and two versions of the story have been passed down through the two families. Thus, the group survived and grew, continuing to squabble and disagree about exactly how things transpired. Among other critics, Jean-Jacques Thomas has noted that Maillet signals

clearly to readers that they are “in the presence of fiction” and not a historical account, even if the invention is based on factual events.⁶

Together with the beginning of the journey previously discussed, this dynamic between the voluble tellers of the story propels the action forward through numerous digressions. As various characters fill in different pieces of the collective narrative, they disagree at regular intervals and often go off on tangents into other stories, all of which has the effect of creating a tapestry in the reader’s imagination, but not a static one. Rather the effect is like that of a tableau overflowing with life—action, movement, and color, like a 16th century painting of feasting peasants by Pieter Breughel the Elder, or like a riotous episode from Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* or *Gargantua*. In *Pélagie-la-charrette*, shared storytelling is rendered through time and space around the framework of the journey’s progression back to the people’s “promised land” of Acadia, evoking a Chaucerian pilgrimage to Canterbury or a biblical Moses leading his people back to Egypt.

Kathryn J. Crecelius has studied the dispersion of narrative voices. As noted previously, the role of Pélagie’s complement during the voyage, chronicler Bélonie-le-Vieux, is to preserve the people’s oral history, but narration of events is complicated in time and dispersed among several characters. Thus, “*Pélagie-la-Charrette* est un récit encadré aussi bien qu’un récit à tiroirs, car tous les personnages se font conteurs au besoin” (*Pélagie-la-Charrette* is a story in a framework as well as one containing drawers, because all the characters become storytellers as needed).⁷ Two simultaneous narrations from two centuries are interwoven throughout the novel. The 19th century, specifically 1880, is the earlier of these, when Acadians finally dared to reemerge

openly and identify themselves with a flag and anthem, as well as acknowledging the English presence as part of their new reality. Representing this timeframe are Bélonie III (great-grandson of Bélonie-le-Vieux) and Pélagie-la-Gribouille (Pélagie-la-charrette's great-granddaughter), who tell their ancestors' story. Meanwhile, in the 20th century, specifically 1979, Louis Bélonie, another descendant, takes charge of the oral history, complemented by the initial "I" of the prologue who is the book's narrator, and of whom Pélagie-the-cart is the ancestor. In both of these timeframes, the 19th and 20th centuries, the storytelling is periodically passed to other contemporaneous characters, sometimes in the form of a dialogue:

Le rythme des récits parallèles suit celui de la charrette: il avance, il s'arrête pour un temps, il rebrousse chemin, mais toujours avec l'arrivée en Acadie pour but.

Il y a une multiplicité de voix qui contestent et contredisent, mais qui veulent toutes la même chose: la transmission de l'histoire d'un peuple.

(The rhythm of the parallel stories follows that of the carts: it moves forward, stops for a while, turns back, but always with the arrival in Acadia as the goal.

Multiple voices challenge and contradict one other, but all want the same thing: the transmission of the people's story).⁸

These characteristics of individuals' connection to political realities and collective utterance constitute two of Deleuze and Guattari's criteria for a minor language.

Though Crecelius does not specifically address the third, deterritorialization of the language, the substance of her analysis is continual movement, through time, space, and narrative agency. Her entire argument identifies and describes a permanent chronotopic state of deterritorialization. This is the post-Dérangement Acadian reality

that Maillet captures, and it is the state that the novel's *coureurs de bois* embody, as will be seen.

Ben-Z. Shek traces the chroniclers in *Pélagie-la-charrette* to show that by transcending time while also preserving it, they achieve continuity of the culture and its traditions, allowing the Acadian experience to be felt “at a distance of 100 years.”⁹ The work's cornucopia of themes and aspects has given rise to a very large field of criticism. Among myriad other interpretations and readings, Denise Merkle has engaged the work's use of the vernacular; Marie-Linda Lord the vernacular, collectivity, and territoriality; Hala M. Fathy humor and myth; Ylâng Nguyễn Phú and Paul Socken the biblical aspect; and Jacqueline Couti wandering and exile.¹⁰

An ecocritical perspective brings to this rich mix a consideration of the environment in which the characters journey and survive and how they interact with and make use of it. *Pélagie-la-charrette* is an epic about the Acadians, a displaced, in-motion, and previously neglected people who succeed in surviving as a group because of their connection to the land through the skills of a few. Building on (or countering) ecocritical studies ranging from Michel Serres' *Contrat naturel* to Ken Hiltner's recent collection of essays in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, the present chapter attempts to show that in *Pélagie-la-charrette*, Maillet constructs *coureurs de bois* as an Acadian motif of survival and an essential element of cultural identity. As always throughout this dissertation, the concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari inspire and frame my analytic approach, in this chapter particularly those pertaining to the rhizome, becoming, and minor language. Here again, the French woodsmen and their activities serve to illuminate these notions.

The Rabelaisian Author

Born in 1929 in Bouctouche, New Brunswick, Maillet was one of nine children.¹¹ Her father, a teacher during the great depression, turned to general-store management but never tired of teaching his children and discussing current events and culture with them. From a very early age Maillet loved stories and storytelling; by age twelve she knew she wanted to be a writer. After completing her BA degree, she taught in public school for a year before becoming a nun at Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur. However, her reasons were not entirely religious:

Je peux vous avouer, en toute simplicité et honnêteté, je sais que Dieu y trouvera son compte de quelque façon, mais ce n'est pas pour lui que je suis allée là. Je suis entrée là parce que je voulais enseigner à des classes supérieures. Et je voulais travailler pour l'Acadie.

(I can tell you, simply and honestly, I know God will be the judge one way or the other, but it is not for him that I went there. I went because I wanted to teach at a higher level. And I wanted to work for Acadia).¹²

Maillet was on a mission, albeit not for Catholicism, and on a deeper level this passage reveals her candor and humor, qualities that animate her writings. With a penchant to help poor and underserved populations, Maillet was encouraged when she heard the mother superior charging a graduating class with the future of the culture. As she recalls this speech:

En 50 ans, c'est vous qui aurez décidé si l'Acadie survivra, ou pas. C'est votre génération qui va le faire, et ce sont les femmes qui le feront. Parce que c'est

l'éducation, la culture, la mémoire, la transmission du savoir qui va décider si on garde l'Acadie vivante. L'Acadie est là parce qu'elle a gardé sa langue et son histoire

(In 50 years, it is you who will have decided whether Acadia survives. It is your generation who will do it, and the women who will carry it out. Because it is education, culture, memory, and the transmission of knowledge that will determine whether Acadia remains alive. Acadia is here because it retained its language and its history).¹³

These words stayed with Maillet and guided her on a career path that she had already chosen, and that would go through several more major changes. Having realized it was possible to pursue her quest beyond the convent walls, she left the order in 1967. She completed a doctorate from Laval University in Quebec, under the guidance of preeminent folklore scholar Luc Lacourcière. Maillet's dissertation, on the influences of François Rabelais on Acadian folklore, led to a book titled *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 1971). The subject was of particular interest to her because, as she explains in her dissertation, Acadia's vernacular French retains elements of the 16th century, if not the medieval language, that in the 17th century traveled to Canada.¹⁴ More precisely, those who settled in Acadia came largely from France's central-west region, "terrain de chasse de notre humaniste curé-médecin, lui-même bon Tourangeau" (the hunting grounds of our good priest-doctor humanist [François Rabelais, 1494– ca. 1553], himself from Touraine).¹⁵ Maillet went on to teach at several universities and work at CBC Radio Canada, Moncton. Her most famous award is the Prix Goncourt (1979) for *Pélagie-la-*

charrette, but she has received numerous other accolades for her novels, plays, short stories, children's books, and nonfiction.

The Acadians that Maillet portrays, her people, are of French origin, but they are themselves Canadian francophones, which is to say that they have, over time and distance, evolved what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call *une langue mineure*, a minor language, characterized by three features: “la déterritorialisation de la langue, le branchement de l'individuel sur l'immédiat-politique, [et] l'agencement collectif d'énonciation” (deterritorialization of language, an individual connection to the immediacy of politics, [and] a collective pattern of utterance).¹⁶ These three conditions apply to the language that Maillet reproduces/creates in the novel (as she has done elsewhere, notably and perhaps most famously in the play *La Sagouine*, a monologue by an Acadian washerwoman). Before Maillet's work, the Acadian minor language had been transmitted only orally, and among her recognized achievements has been to bring the language into the realm of literature.¹⁷

Pélagie-la-charrette brims with themes, characters, and exuberance, like the works of Rabelais that are Maillet's academic specialty.¹⁸ However, the novel does not approach the outrageous level of unreality in Rabelais' five uproarious books of farce and the promotion of humanist ideals, delivered in the stories of giants Pantagruel and his father Gargantua (1532–64). Maillet does make extensive use of folklore, and her humor reflects the sharp Rabelaisian wit, but *Pélagie-la-charrette* is based on a historical event, whereas Rabelais carries out a “gigantic” critique of his society within the narrative vehicle of pure fantasy. Rabelais' influence on Maillet is seen more in her characters' resourceful behavior, intelligence, mischief, humor, exaggeration, and

talents for weaving stories upon stories, as well as in the pure complexity of her storyline(s), as will be seen.

A Deterritorialized and Reterritorialized *Évangéline*

Pélagie-la-charrette is a response to, or a revision of, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's renowned epic poem *Évangéline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), as Maillet has explained in interviews, and as noted by numerous scholars.¹⁹ Longfellow's story initially inspired surviving or returning Acadians to regroup as a culture; Maillet's fiction follows this lead while making changes such as endowing more characters with more defiance, to consciously bolster and increase the socio-ethnic movement.²⁰ *Coueurs de bois* appear in Longfellow's poem, but, by contrast with Maillet's novel, their role is incidental. Longfellow mentions them almost in passing, even though their numbers eventually include the story's love interest, Gabriel. During *Évangéline*'s long frustrated wanderings in search of her betrothed, sometimes she just misses Gabriel; at other times she only hears news of him.

“Gabriel Lajeunesse!” they said; “Oh yes! we have seen him.

He was with Basil the blacksmith, and both have gone to the prairies;

Coueurs-des-Bois are they, and famous hunters and trappers.”

“Gabriel Lajeunesse!” said others. “Oh yes! we have seen him.

He is a Voyageur in the lowlands of Louisiana.”²¹

Such qualifiers appear again, but the roles played by hunters and trappers represent life conditions on the same level as those of blacksmiths and other trades. They are not given any other significance in the poem, serving only to indicate ways in which

various men earn their livings. At one point Evangeline meets a Shawnee woman whose “Canadian husband, a Coureur-de-Bois, had been murdered”;²² at another, when she finally finds Gabriel’s father it is only to learn that he has left to “follow the Indian trails to the Ozark Mountains, / Hunting for furs in the forests, or rivers trapping the beaver.”²³ These activities exist in Longfellow’s work in the same way as do many others, and the significance accorded the role of Evangeline’s priest friend is far more important in the work. In terms of their reflection in Maillet’s work, the closest similarity is toward the beginning of Longfellow’s poem, before the expulsion begins. When all the Acadians are commanded to assemble in the church of Grand-Pré, some—likely the strongest survivors—immediately embark on another clandestine path. “Many already have fled to the forest, and lurk on its outskirts.”²⁴ These are the people who will remain in hiding in or near Acadia, and who will succeed by living as *coureurs de bois*, as Maillet’s novel reveals in the end.

In a major departure from Longfellow’s telling, in *Pélagie-la-charrette* Maillet makes a clear and developed, if not immediately obvious, use of the woodsmen. Led by a woman of exceptional strength named Pélagie, a group of deportees return to their homeland after a fifteen-year exile, taking another ten years to complete the journey from Georgia. It is an epic tale of return, an odyssey in which the *coureurs de bois* are initially only a whispered suspicion, but in the end become central to the endurance of a whole people.

The language that Maillet chooses as the communicative vehicle for her story is of central importance and reflects the larger aim of recreating a strong and defining sense of an Acadian identity. Fundamental to all French-origin identities in Canada, as

elsewhere, is a claim of cultural inheritance. The Acadian vernacular is a piece of living history, in that it preserves 16th-century expressions and terminology, as Maillet reveals and analyzes in her dissertation.²⁵

She introduces the vernacular early in *Pélagie-la-charrette* with no explanations, after which it appears increasingly. This has the effect of forcing the reader who is unfamiliar with “traditional Acadian” to infer meaning by context and guessing.²⁶ By the novel’s end, the reader is inferring and guessing with great success, because the author has woven the vernacular into standard French with such skill that the meaning can be gathered from the text that precedes or follows each instance. For example, having arrived at long last in Maine, the Acadians wonder how they will know when they have actually crossed the border, and no one they encounter is able to help them because they have never heard the name “L’Acadie.” Someone says not to worry, they will know their country:

Les rivières seront encore là, et les vallées, et la baie Française que d’aucuns appellent déjà la baie de Fundy. On leur changera leurs noms aux terres et aux eaux du pays, et ça risque de changer la couleur du temps.

– Le temps est beau, arrêtez de vous plaindre. Encore un souffle et je sons rendus.

(The rivers will still be there, and the valleys, and la baie Française that some are already calling the Bay of Fundy. They will change the names of the country’s lands and waters, and that might change the color of time.

– The weather is beautiful, stop complaining. One more push and we’re home).²⁷

Here most of the narrative and dialogue are in standard French, except for “je sons.” The author weaves it into the narrative in a way that echoes her linguistic treatment in her body of work as a whole, a progression studied by Marie-Linda Lord.²⁸ This steady infiltration of argot into literature is an expression of Maillet’s mission of identity building, which Lord also traces. Maillet’s valorization of her Acadian people through a concerted effort to valorize their language has been studied by many and is beyond my purview here, except to make note of it so that the following citations are understandable, and also to note the similarity of Maillet’s nationalistic mission to that of Taché. He also aimed to construct for his people a stronger sense of their own individuality and distinctiveness, and, as shown in Chapter 3, like Maillet he made use of the *coureur de bois* in his construction. Taché explains terms that may be unfamiliar to many of his readers, but Maillet, writing a hundred years later, feels no need to. Let them figure it out, she seems to say, and we do.

Maillet’s intrepid introduction of new terminology into the written language reflects her desire to have her people and their expression recognized and accepted in the larger world, as she stated in her acceptance speech for the Prix Goncourt.²⁹ Because of their isolation since their arrival in the early 17th century, the Acadians retained essential and rich aspects of the language of the French Old Regime,³⁰ thus their language is deterritorialized; because of the further isolation and disruption later brought about by the Grand Dérangement, all individual actions pertain necessarily to the people’s immediate political environment (as a matter of survival—or not); and linguistic structures such as *je pourrions* express a communal voice from the mouth of the individual.³¹ Because of these characteristics, the Acadian minor language

represents a type of Deleuzo-Guattarien rhizomatic spread from the French origins in both time and space. The deterritorialized, destabilized, disrupted French root has nevertheless survived and taken root in a new environment in which it has both preserved its initial form and been altered, so that in a new area of time and space, in the 18th century of which Maillet writes, this language is that of a specific and unique people.

By contrast with an established literature which, say Deleuze and Guattari, is able to proceed from content, or substance, directly to expression because the possibility of it having a substance has been accepted in the larger world,

une littérature mineure ou révolutionnaire commence par énoncer, et ne voit et ne conçoit qu'après. . . . L'expression doit briser les formes . . . Une forme étant brisée, reconstruire le contenu qui sera nécessairement en rupture avec l'ordre des choses

(a minor or revolutionary literature begins by enunciating, and sees and conceives only thereafter. . . . The expression must break the [established] forms . . . A form having been broken, [it is possible to] rebuild the content which will be necessarily a rupture with the established order).³²

Thus, the first step in this activist process is to make the spoken communication enter the domain of what it is possible to enunciate in writing. By its nature, this involves bringing into the wider public eye a new form of expression, in a literal sense. To do so illuminates the Deleuzo-Guattarien principles of lines of flight (in this case, from the original language and setting into new territory, both physically and in the abstract sense), deterritorialization, and rhizomatic movement. “Les lettres sont un rhizome, un

réseau, une toile d'araignée" ([Kafka's letters are] a rhizome, a network, a spider's web),³³ because they create a new reality while at the same time mirroring what exists or has existed, which is the function of literature. Symbolically, Deleuze and Guattari say, this is rebellious and experimental, thereby paving the way for new forms of language and writing to emerge in the *mineur* space.³⁴ Postcolonial studies continue to illustrate realities that have previously been neglected by dominant cultures, while adding pages to the history of world literature.

Maillet's Acadians have been oppressed and expelled from their home, yet they survive directly from the environment that surrounds them as they progress. Their sustainment comes not from any human system outside of their own network, but from the earth and sea.³⁵ The role played by the novel's *coureurs de bois*—who link earth, sea, and people—in large measure makes this possible. In *Pélagie-la-charrette*, the backwoodsmen represent not the development of economic treatments of the earth, as seen in previous chapters of this dissertation, but the direct connection with earth that allows people to survive.

The skills of *coureurs/coureuse*s will be needed on more than one occasion to tip the life-death balance, as will be seen, but the Acadians are already gifted with quite a bit of resourcefulness in this regard, as Maillet portrays them. When Pélagie asks her daughter, Madeleine, to find milk five days after the convoy of carts has gotten gets under way, Bélonie-le-Vieux questions why this thirty-five-year-old woman would be asking milk from the stones of the fields.

Pas aux pierres, non, Bélonie, à la vie, la vie qui grouillait tout autour de la charrette, comme autour de leur cabane de planches durant quinze ans, comme

en pleine mer durant des mois, comme au temps du bonheur durant un siècle d'Acadie. La vie ne s'arrête pas de respirer simplement parce qu'elle prend le chemin du Nord, voyons, et n'est pas plus au logis que sur la grand-route (Not from the stones, no, Bélonie, from life, life that swarmed all about the cart, just as it had about the boards of their cabin for fifteen years, just as it had at sea for months, just as in the happy days of an Acadian century. Life does not stop breathing just because it takes the northern route, does it? It exists no more at home than it does on the open road).³⁶

Those making this pilgrimage will feed themselves from the world that surrounds them, as they always have. Accordingly, Madeleine sneaks around and discovers a goat that she brings back to the caravan—which keeps moving before some goatherd discovers the missing beast. However, as the odyssey continues, it will become increasingly difficult to find food from this world, and the talents of those who know the secrets of the wilderness will increasingly be required. In an ecocritical reading of the novel, this portrays *coureurs de bois* as a connection between earth and human life.

Female Leaders and *Coureuses de Bois*

The first mention of *coureurs de bois* is no more than a whispered suspicion. While speculating about the origins of a healer orphaned from birth, “Certains avaient chuinté entre leurs dents qu'elle aurait pu sortir d'un père micmac, Céline, et d'une mère sorcière ou coureuse de bois” (Some had hissed that Céline could have come from a micmac father and a witch or a woman *coureur de bois*).³⁷ The word *coureuse*

startles because references to the French wilderness inhabitants are normally masculine, and women who accompanied *coureurs* were Indians, as historian Gilles Havard explains, and as shown in accounts such as that of Pierre-Esprit Radisson.³⁸ Therefore, Maillet clearly has a purpose in referring to a woman in this role that could not be more stereotypically masculine.

With its required skills of hunting and sometimes tough negotiating along with the capacity to withstand extremely uncomfortable living conditions, weather, and torture, as seen repeatedly in the accounts of Radisson, Perrot, and Henry, this was not a place where ethnically European women normally ventured. But Maillet's Acadian odyssey is led by a woman accompanied by several others who are equally strong, each in her own way, and key to the action. By feminizing the traditionally male role of woodsman, Maillet lends greater strength and endurance to all the novel's female characters. Not only are they capable, they are trailblazers, and the fact that it was not normal to see women in these roles lends them more power and is in conformance with one of Maillet's aims. She has specifically focused on the feminist experience in interviews, for example in this one quoted in Hala M. Fathy's dissertation:

Le peuple a de ces personnages exceptionnels. L'Acadie en a eu beaucoup. Moi, j'ai l'impression que plus un peuple est opprimé ou plus un peuple est minoritaire, plus il aura de ces femmes exceptionnelles. Vous savez les femmes-héroïnes, dans mes romans, symboles d'un peuple

(Peoples have these exceptional characters. Acadia has had many. I have the impression that the more a people is oppressed or the more it is a minority, the

more exceptional women there will be. You know, the heroine women in my novels, the symbols of a people).³⁹

Maillet alludes here to *Les Cordes de bois* (1977), a novel about an entire defiant Acadian community run by women who are outcasts in their region's mainstream society and succeed despite overt efforts to destroy them. Not only do they prevail, they also develop their own social system that makes room for other outcasts.

Similarly, in *Pélagie-la-charrette*, Maillet enlists feminism to illustrate not just daring and wildness, but also leadership and ultimate deliverance. These characteristics are not wrested from men, as shown by the authority of Beausoleil and the audaciousness of the young men he sends into the woods, as will be discussed presently. Rather, the two genders share traits traditionally portrayed as male. In the novel, this rhetorical move on the part of the author opens paths to her female characters that previously would not have been available to them. The question of gender, though not central to the ecocritical inquiry of his dissertation, pertains in this chapter because of the effect that Maillet's strong female characters have on the entire population. A woman is the leader, and a previous woman was a *coureuse de bois*. However, Beausoleil also leads his group, and later in the novel all the *coureurs* will be men. The male contribution is, thus, far from devalued; instead, all the people are necessary in this collective story. Acadia needs them all to survive in the wilderness and, eventually, to emerge from it.⁴⁰

The role of the *coureurs* in Maillet's Acadian epic allows the survival and subsequent (re)development of an entire people who, the British authorities had hoped, would assimilate into the existing cultures of geographical regions to which they were

deported, including back to France and along what is now the U.S. Eastern seaboard as far south as Georgia. Thus, it was hoped, they would essentially disappear entirely. Assimilation did occur, but so did reemergence. In this sense, Maillet's novel can be seen as an illustration of Deleuze and Guattari's process of *le devenir*, becoming. "Devenir n'est pas progresser ne régresser suivant une série" (becoming is not progressing or regressing as part of a series), the philosophers explain in *Mille Plateaux*.⁴¹ Instead, it is the *process* of turning into something new, while also retaining elements of the previous state and incorporating new elements encountered in the new situation, setting, environment, or phenomena. "Surtout devenir ne se fait pas dans l'imagination, même quand l'imagination atteint au niveau cosmique ou dynamique le plus élevé" (Above all becoming does not happen in the imagination, even when the imagination attains the most elevated cosmic or dynamic level).⁴² It is a material, physical event, and, in this sense, the *coureurs de bois* embody the concept.

By embodying a direct relationship with nature that allows survival, both physical and cultural, eventually the *coureurs de bois* bring to the whole of the community this defining link. The becoming thus incorporates nature itself, which becomes an essential element of the Acadian people.

After Pélégie dies, in Acadia but not yet at her ultimate destination farther north, she is buried in "les restes de sa charrette . . . dans les marais de Tintamarre, berceau du pays, là où étaient tombées ensemble Pélégie et sa charrette" (what was left of her cart . . . in the marshes of Tintamarre, the cradle of the country, at the spot where she and her cart fell together).⁴³ This tidal saltmarsh at the head of the Bay of Fundy (Baie Française) is in the region of Beaubassin, which the French settled in 1671–72, where

they built ships, and where British Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Lawrence, who would be charged with the 1755 expulsion, attempted to establish British authority in 1750.⁴⁴ It is near Fort Beauséjour, site of the initial deportations in 1755.⁴⁵ This is also one of areas where Acadians drained saltmarshes for farming, an agricultural innovation dating from medieval times in the Poitou region, in central-west France from where many Acadians had emigrated. They applied the land-reclamation technique with great success in the New World.⁴⁶ Finally, the large number of migratory birds in Tintamarre marshes may have given it its name. Rabelais uses the word in *Le Tiers Livre* to describe a terrible and chaotic loud noise. The term, likely with a medieval origin, came to designate noisy folk music made with loud singing and spoons, pots, whatever is at hand.⁴⁷

Thus, this little passage describing the burial of Pélagie is saturated with historical and geographical significance. The leader of the Acadian odyssey falls in the earth where her people were born, after bringing them home to it. In 1780 they must tiptoe in because the British occupy their lands, but later they will celebrate with clanging and noisy *tintamarre*, as they still do today during annual festivals. Pélagie is buried right there in the vehicle that carried her. Symbolically, it carried them all, signifying and also describing physically that this people have rejoined their chosen parcel of this planet, which has become a part of them just as they are and will remain a part of it.

From an ecocritical perspective, Abram sees processes such as this in a phenomenological framework that he contrasts with Aristotle's classical hierarchical system inherited by Western culture:

Such hierarchies are wrecked by any phenomenology that takes seriously our immediate sensory experience. For our senses disclose to us a wild-flowering proliferation of entities and elements, in which humans are thoroughly immersed. [. . .] We find ourselves in the midst of, rather than on top of, this order. [. . .] *Is the human intellect rooted in, and secretly borne by, our forgotten contact with the multiple nonhuman shapes that surround us?* [emphasis in original].⁴⁸

Human awareness and perceptions are, Abram maintains, shaped by the environment in which they develop. Rather than becoming aware of it and controlling or possessing increasing parts of it, Abram says, people emerge from it, including mentally. For phenomenology founder Edmund Husserl, who made a science of the study of consciousness in the late 19th/early 20th century, structures of awareness are formed by direct experience that the mind processes into meaning. “Conscious experience is the starting point of phenomenology, but experience shades off into less overtly conscious phenomena. As Husserl and others stressed, we are only vaguely aware of things in the margin or periphery of attention, and we are only implicitly aware of the wider horizon of things in the world around us.”⁴⁹ Thus, phenomena that we do not consciously notice also affect our perceptions, and this is what Abram wants to bring to the fore.

Michel Serres pushes this phenomenological awareness further, proposing in *Le contrat naturel* a deliberate human commitment to work with the rest of nature as partners:

Le monde, globalement, et les phénomènes, prochains, locaux ou lointains, nous sont donnés; il y aurait de l'injustice, un déséquilibre, à ce que nous recevions ce donné gratuitement, sans jamais rendre quoi que ce soit. . . . Que rendre à la nature qui nous donne la naissance et la vie? Réponse équilibrée: la totalité de notre essence, la raison elle-même.

(The world, globally, and phenomena, whether near, local, or distant, are given to us; there would be an injustice, an imbalance, for us to receive this given freely, never giving anything in return. . . . What to give back to nature, which gives us birth and life? The balanced answer is: the totality of our essence, reason itself).⁵⁰

This crux of Serres' eloquently delivered environmental exhortation can be seen, ironically, as overly anthropocentric, in that the nonhuman world, at least on Earth, has no feelings of justice or balance in the sense of equality, as anyone knows who has spent time observing or trying to assist wildlife. Survival by any means is the only rule, and it is entirely unforgiving. By human standards, the wilderness is devoid of emotion. But Serres' treatise is addressed to humans, with the aim of altering behavior to save the planet from nuclear or other devastation. His natural contract is based on the premise that as a species, humans have already succeeded in surviving, to the point that they are now in the position of negotiating an agreement with the (mute) rest of the planet. Thus the long-standing, Aristotelian conceptual division between people and nature endures in Serres, albeit in a completely new form. By contrast, the human-nature link in *Pélagie-la-charrette* features nothing of the abstract. The connection is completely material, but its results will be both physical and mental.

While rushing toward the sea and the planned rendez-vous with Captain Beausoleil at Baltimore, Pélagie finds she must urge on the others, who are tired and hungry. The whole group wants a rest, but at the complaint of Jeanne Aucoin, who once saved shipwrecked people from the Baie Française, to which she responds:

Mais quoi c'est qui vous effraie ou vous chagrine? La mer, j'en sors tous, très-tous. Et de temps en temps, j'avons besoin de l'éventer et de nous en remplir les bronches des poumons

(Just what is it that is frightening or upsetting you? The sea, we all came from it, every one of us. And now and then, I need to feel its breezes and fill the airways of my lungs with it).⁵¹

Knowing that Jeanne also is so much at home near the salty cold waters that she was able to manage a daring sea rescue, Pélagie goes on the offensive. By reminding the group that they are all products of the sea, Pélagie metaphorically extends her own body into it so that she can lead them to reimagine and thus recapture their traditional connection with it. These descendants of French fishermen have built and sailed ships for centuries, and the sea is in them all. As Pélagie describes it, their connection to this watery part of nature is not abstract but is intimately, in their lungs, material. Through it, through breathing in its airs, they will find the strength and the inspiration to continue their hard journey, which has already been fatal to several even as several more have also joined it.

Just so, in the forest the French immigrants learned the skills of Amerindians and thus connected the people to nature in new ways at the same time as they also drained and farmed its marshes at the seashore. By the end of the novel, it is clear that

the familiarity of those who know how to hunt and collect fruits of the forest allows the group's survival. Their knowledge is transmitted to all who are able to endure. A direct connection between the wilderness and survival underpins the structure of the entire novel, in a progressive development that results from an accumulation of facts and allusions.

These occur amid the well-populated “micro-world” that is the caravan of traveling carts, in motion and continuous contact with alternatively friendly and hostile elements of the larger world. The exchanges continuously transform the caravan, which continues in its altered states on its inexorable mission to return to Acadia. Because of these aspects of movement, pause, transformative action of some sort, and then movement again, Maillet's work illustrates the essential phenomenological dynamic that Deleuze and Guattari elaborate in *Mille Plateaux*, where the flux of being is continuously being coded, deterritorialized, recoded, and reterritorialized, only to begin again. Phenomena—represented here alternatively by the carts and the world in which they travel continuously—settle temporarily in a state or plateau, from which a line of flight escapes into its own new and alternative trajectory, traveling like a rhizome to find, transform, and be transformed by a new environment. This is the always-changing process of becoming, and this is why only the becoming itself is real.⁵² It is a verb, alive and moving like *coureurs de bois*. “Devenir est un verbe ayant toute sa consistance; il ne se ramène pas, et ne nous amène pas à ‘paraître,’ ne ‘être,’ ni ‘équivaloir,’ ni ‘produire.’” (To become is a verb with all its consistency; it does not return, and does not lead us to “appear” nor to be “equivalent” nor to “produce”).⁵³ The state of becoming is, thus, fully self-contained

within its own reality, as were the woodsmen who effected changes in both the world from which they originated and the one into which they rhizomatically penetrated. In *Pélagie-la-charrette*, this dynamic is first seen in the descriptions and behavior of two pivotal characters, Céline and Catoune.

The reader feels a growing wild presence as the direct connection with nature grows through the actions of these two women. As the story unfolds, it is they who bring to the group their discoveries of nature's secrets. Céline, the quasi-witch and child of a *coureuse* and Indian, finds "de nouvelles plantes médicinales" (new medicinal plants) and serves as a midwife for "les enfants des autres" (the children of others). The younger woman, Catoune, is even more intimately linked with the wilderness. "Toute son enfance, elle l'avait courue dans les bois, au creux des marais, ou le long des dunes" (throughout her childhood, she had run in the woods, deep into the marshes, or along the dunes).⁵⁴ Catoune basically grew up with in-depth knowledge of the Acadian wilderness, and the image of this child in continuous motion has the effect of making her seem a part of it herself. In particular, the specific reference to running in the woods suggests that Catoune is, like Céline, a *coureuse de bois*.

Catoune was orphaned during the Grand Dérangement, when she was discovered with no family accompanying her. Pélagie accepts responsibility for this "orpheline de tout un peuple" (orphan of a whole people), making Catoune in effect her daughter.⁵⁵ This closeness with two women who are very comfortable dealing directly with and in the natural world lends to Pélagie's authority a further impression of solidity. Both will know how to survive during the journey. Céline heals ailing

travelers with herbs and her savoir-faire, while Catoune disappears at regular intervals into the woods—and returns with much-needed help that she has somehow discovered. By extension in the reader’s imagination, the two *coureuses* endow the group with an aura of human intelligence that is almost as acute as an animal’s, in the sense that through the women’s comprehension of plants and forest navigation, everyone is enabled. Such knowledge is, of course, essential for *coureurs de bois*, whose presence as the novel progresses becomes increasingly visible, but whose central role emerges slowly, as if only with the caution that is vital for survival.

At first only a hinted, exclusively female presence in the novel, *coureurs* become identifiable as a possible facilitating factor when the “caravane des exilés” encounters Beausoleil’s ship off Charleston, South Carolina, having long believed the *Grand’ Goule* to be lost with all hands. The jubilant reunion includes the novel’s main love story, between the dashing captain and Pélagie, both of whom find renewed hope in the possibility of a shared future. As news is exchanged between the two groups of Acadians, mariners and landsmen, their minor language is overlaid with the presence of a century-later narrator (Pélagie-la-Gribouille, “scribbler” or “doodler”), who argues with her contemporary Bélonie, thus mirroring the good-natured squabbling between the two Grand Dérangement families that will last into the chronotope of Maillet’s writing, as seen in the prologue that first sets up this narrative structure. In sections of text set off by line spaces, the 1880s Gribouille and Bélonie argue over details of historical accuracy. “Vous viendrez pas me dire [. . .] Tout, Céline, on allait tout vous dire, même l’alliance des Allain aux Therriot, même le mariage en troisièmes noces du dénommé Joseph Guéguen, sieur de Cocagne, en train de

s'amasser une jolie et rondelette de petite fortune dans la fourrure" (You're not going to tell me [. . .] Everything, Céline, you were going to be told everything, even the joining of the Allains and the Therriots, even the third marriage of one Joseph Guéguen, sieur de Cocagne, who was making himself a very tidy small fortune in the fur trade).⁵⁶

The narrator's mention to Céline of money made in the fur trade by one Guéguen, who amassed a nice bundle from it, necessarily implies the work of *coureurs de bois*, who worked directly with the Indians and served as interpreters. But at this point in the novel they are not named, only inferred in a passing allusion that segues into how the Grand Dérangement came about. Considering this transition through an ecocritical lens, and not likely one the author had in mind, the attentive reader will recall that the fur trade became an environmental disaster for the relentlessly hunted beaver population, which was all but decimated as Indians, *coureurs*, and *voyageurs* headed ever-farther north in their pursuit. From this point of view, the novel moves from a reference to the abused beaver directly to an account of the Acadian population's elimination from its homeland. This parallel illuminates the second-wave ecocritical concern with displaced populations that until relatively recently were neglected in historical, cultural, and critical studies.

Aside from its correspondence with Deleuze and Guattari's minor-culture definition, such a link also points to a subconscious, "natural" exploitative human mentality that does not hesitate to kill as needed to ensure what it perceives to be its own survival or that of its group. Among those who have pondered this characteristic of the earthly life force in whatever form it takes, Serres concentrates on the effects of

the apparent human victory in the struggle: “Il existe désormais des lacs d’hommes, acteurs physiques dans le système physique de la Terre. L’homme est un stock, le plus fort et connecté de la nature. Il est un être-partout. Et lié” (There are now lakes of men, physical players in the physical system of the Earth. Man is livestock, the strongest and most connected in nature. He is an everywhere-being, and one that is linked).⁵⁷ It is precisely because humans have become so powerful that Serres places hominoid authority on an ontological level, describing our physical weight on the world and claiming that we are in a position to make an agreement with nature, one to ensure our mutual survival.

However, he cautions, this seemingly obvious solution to contemporary problems such as pollution and the threat of nuclear weapons is far from clear to all humans because of a persistent mentality that he originates in a 17th century scientific mindset based on domination and possession. “Maîtrise et possession, voilà le mot maître lancé par Descartes, à l’aurore de l’âge scientifique et technique quand notre raison occidentale partit à la conquête de l’univers. Nous le dominons et nous l’approprions: philosophie sous-jacente et commune à l’entreprise industrielle comme à la science dite désintéressée, à cet égard non différenciables” (Mastery and possession, this is the key term introduced by Descartes at the dawn of the scientific and technical age when our Western reason set out to conquer the universe. We dominate and appropriate it: this is the underlying philosophy that is common to industry and supposedly disinterested science, which in this respect are indistinguishable).⁵⁸

Leaving aside the fact that appropriative and violent thinking started thousands of years before the beleaguered Descartes introduced his existential and mathematical concepts based on empirical experience, Serres' point of departure in *Le Contrat naturel* about human power is important and relevant to an ecocritical consideration of long-ingrained human selfishness. His linking of this now-ubiquitous influence to an invasive and dominating tendency is important because it resonates with a Marxist analysis of the power of capital, which if unchecked invades, controls, and appropriates whatever it can. But in the process it overlooks or fails to concern itself with the needs of the people and other life forms involved, and this is a critical area that ecocriticism tries to illuminate.

The author of *Pélagie-la-charrette* deliberately set out to make known the story of her oppressed and abused "minor" people, who were ejected and transported because they no longer fit into the dominant culture's social design. They survived, returned, and reinvented themselves in the new/old terrain like rhizomes that had simply remained in continual motion in search of nourishment and sustainment. Their survival was enabled in large part by *coureurs de bois*, themselves part of a capitalist economic paradigm that could and did historically become exploitative of natural resources. Ecocritically, the problematic is as complex as the history of human behavior that it parallels and reflects. The main drive is always, as Samuel Beckett minimalistically stages in *Waiting for Godot*, to continue, to press on, to keep going until we cannot, like Pélagie.

Storytellers, Chroniclers, and Narratives Continuously Destabilized

The novel's foundational chronotopic feature, reminiscent again of Rabelais' byzantine abundance, superimposes several examples of what Bakhtin explains as events and time motifs that are "related in an essential way to the particular spatial place of their occurrence. . . . Everything in this world is a *time-space*, a true *chronotope*" (emphases in original).⁵⁹ Bakhtin refers to the complexity of the author's task in creating a sense of reality in a single given epoch; Maillet handles this in three interwoven chronotopes, resulting in a nested narration that interweaves clearly defined multiple temporalities.

By weaving together three centuries—that of the events, that of the people's reemergence, and the present day—Maillet brings material, concrete history fully into the relevance of the present, exemplifying what Bakhtin says the large epic novel should achieve: to "provide an integrated picture of the world and life, it should reflect the *entire* world and *all* of life. . . . the entire world and all of life are given in the cross section of the *integrity of the epoch*" (emphases in original).⁶⁰ It does this through a portrayal of events and characters that can not only represent, but actually take the place of the "total life of the epoch," Bakhtin explains. This necessarily involves the writer's judicious selection, dramatization, and the whole painstaking craft of building a complex novel. When done successfully, Bakhtin says, "These novels depend above all on their realistic penetration into this real-life integrity of the world, from which the formalized essentiality shaped in the novelistic whole is extracted."⁶¹ Through her artfully delivered penetration into the three essential centuries that together tell her

people's story, in *Pélagie-la-charrette* Maillet accomplishes a tour de force that is the novel's vehicle through time, much like the carts that return to Acadia.

For example, when the Acadians finally enter the far north almost ten years after setting out (meaning about 1779), they are in northern Maine when autumn becomes more menacing. Pélagie warns:

– Plus je montons au nord, et plus les hivers seront durs, qu'avertit Pélagie. C'te année, je crois bien que je devons camper quelques mois.

Le chef du clan des Bastarache s'en vint, inquiet, s'émoyer:

– Tu veux pas dire figer là?

– Point figer, non, mais reprendre souffle en laissant passer le mauvais temps.

J'avons point de raquettes pour tout le monde. J'en avons point pour les boeufs, surtout. Vous chausseriez, vous, des raquettes aux sabots fourchus des boeufs?

L'Acadie, c'est point une Caroline, François à Philippe Basque.

(– The farther north we get, the harsher the winters will be, Pelagie warned. This year I think we will have to stop for a few months.

The head of the Bastarache family, worried, questioned this idea said to her emotively:

– You don't mean settle here, do you?

– Not settle, no, just catch our breath while letting the bad weather pass. We don't have enough snowshoes for everyone, especially not for the oxen. Would you put snowshoes on an ox's cloven hooves? Acadia is not Carolina, François Philippe Basque).⁶²

This passage captures the late 18th century reality of modes of transportation, including the necessity of using snowshoes in northern winters. As well, in this scene the reader is reminded that oxen, which were needed to draw the carts, do not have this help for moving through the snow, and thus this mode of travel is not possible at this time of year, especially in areas with no roads. Here Maillet selects details from the period she portrays that represent not just the Acadian experience, but that of anyone at that time who tried to travel in the northern wilderness in winter. She penetrates the real-life integrity of the world she is showing through both that judicious selection of realistic particulars and her creative reinvention of the spoken language of the period. By consistently rendering this combination of chronotopically realistic characters, environmental conditions, and the tools with which they were addressed, Maillet creates a whole world that she is also reflecting. The chronotopic technique suits Maillet's desire to preserve and endow her people with their own story. It is a collective story, again identifying it as one fitting Deleuze and Guattari's description of a minor language, and one that effervesces with people and activities.

When the Acadians from land and sea are reunited and rediscover one another, their dialogue is again, as throughout the novel, conveyed in authentic minor-language terms.

Vous m'en direz tant!

– Et l'abbé LeLoutre?

– Cestuy-là!

[. . .] Taisez-vous, ne touchez point à la religion.

– Sa religion l'a pourtant point empêché de nous trahir, nous.

– Point nous trahir, Anatole, nous défendre.

[. . .] Touchez point aux prêtres.

– Prêtre ou pas, c'est un félon. Sans lui et ses rebelles de Sauvages, les Anglais nous aurions quitté la paix; et je planterions encore nos navots au bassin des Mines.

– Sans lui, j'aurais fini par oublier que j'étais Français.

– Mais avec lui, nos descendants risquent d'oublier qu'ils ont été Acadiens.

Les Girouard, les Thibodeau et les Bourgeois étaient bien partis pour le déchirer en petits morceaux, l'abbé Le Loutre, déchirure que l'Histoire n'a pas encore raccommodée, à l'heure qu'il est.

(You don't say!

– And Father LeLoutre?

– Oh, that one!

[. . .] Quiet, don't touch religion.

– But his religion didn't stop him from betraying us, did it.

– Not betray us, Anatole, defend us.

[. . .] Don't touch the priests.

– Priest or not, he is a traitor. Without him and his savage rebels, The English should have left us alone; and we would still be planting turnips on the Bassin des Mines.

– Without him, we would have wound up forgetting we are French.

– But with him, our descendants run the risk of forgetting they're Acadians.

The Girouards, Thibodeaus, and Bourgeois were off to a good start in ripping him into small pieces, this Father Le Loutre, a ripping that history has not yet been able to patch up to this day).⁶³

Here Maillet touches on several major threads of the Acadian historical tapestry that she weaves with this novel: the story itself; the use of a non-dominant language to tell it; the highly individual, opinionated, expressive, and thoroughly Gallic characters who experience it; their agriculture; their Catholic religion that distinguishes them from the English; the Indians and the wilderness among which they cleared the land and with whom they share the environment; and the continuing controversy about the origins and legacy of the Grand Dérangement. In short, while creating a theatrical piece that stages the Acadians, Maillet defines her people, a definition that is elaborated throughout the novel.

The reference to Le Loutre evokes the legendary and controversial Spiritan priest Jean Louis Le Loutre (1709–72), a missionary from France who became a military leader and did his best to convince Acadians *not* to sign an oath of allegiance to the British during the period of contested regional control. His methods included convincing the Micmac (the region's main group of Amerindians who were very welcoming to the French) to help him by threatening the Acadians, while he threatened their ultimate salvation.

In the passage quoted above, Le Loutre serves in the novel, as he did in real life, as a dividing line between opposing points of view. Was he responsible for the great dispersion of the Acadians, or did he save them by saving their souls? Disparaged by many over the course of history since he contributed to it, Le Loutre has also been the

object of more balanced inquiries focusing on his motivations and seeking to place him in the context of his brutal times.⁶⁴ Maillet's narrator sums up the continuing disagreements his name evokes and carries on with the larger Acadian epic. But the reference and the passage are also illustrative of the many cultural ramifications that interweave to determine the fate of this minor people. Such complications are well suited to the chronotopic layers that Maillet creates to tell a multifaceted story of continual motion, change, and a quest for both a reaffirmation of self and a sense of home. Crecelius points to Maillet's use of duplication and mirroring (including the shadowing of Pélagie's cart by the invisible cart of death; her twin sons, Charles et Jacquot, collectively nicknamed Charlécoco; and many more *dédoublements* and *abîmes* interwoven throughout the novel) as rhetorical means of echoing the oral history that she is reproducing and at the same time creating.⁶⁵

Michèle Lacombe unpacks this oral tradition in her focus on the postmodern discourse of intertextuality in the novel, isolating "the presence in the intertext of a considerable body of Acadian legend, myth, and folklore in addition to echoes of the Bible (specifically Exodus), the *Odyssey*, Rabelais' *Gargantua*, and Longfellow's *Evangeline*, among other texts."⁶⁶ Folk elements spun into this complicated weave, Lacombe explains, "illustrate the billingsgate aspect of popular speech located by Bakhtin at the heart of Rabelais' work."⁶⁷ Lacombe refers to Bakhtin's study *Rabelais and His World*, in which the use of coarse language is thoroughly considered, beginning with a definition of the term and its forms and uses. As Bakhtin elaborates also in "The Problem of Speech Genres," when real-life expressions historically began to be used in writing, this "opened literature up to layers of language that had

previously been under speech constraint,” leading to greater understanding on readers’ part of how characters related to and interacted with their actual world as it really existed.⁶⁸ With Rabelais’ work and the Acadian vernacular as her linguistic and cultural models, Maillet also transcribes expressions with no attempt to alter their full meaning and implications as she brings Acadian orality into the written domain.

For example, in one of many digressions to tell folktales, a peasant owns only one white hen that lays one egg per day, and for this reason he knows he should not eat the bird. Despite his great hunger one evening, he again limits himself to just the one egg.

Mais en voulant envaler l’oeu’, dans sa gran’ faim, il planta-t-i’ point sa dent de chien dans un jaune plus dur que d’accoutume. Ca le surprit et il le crachit. Et au lieu d’un jaune d’oeu’, figurez-vous, il trouva un anneau d’or. V’la notre vilain tout ébaubi et réjoui et qui voit déjà sa fortune faite.

– Drès demain, qu’il se dit, je m’en serai chez le roi et on vouèra bien ce que j’en tirerai.

(But in his great hunger and desire to swallow the egg, he planted his sharp tooth into a yolk that was harder than usual. This surprised him, so he spit it out. And instead of a yellow yolk, just imagine it, he found a gold ring. So here is our peasant all flabbergasted and delighted and already seeing his fortune made.

– First thing tomorrow, he says to himself, I will go see the king and we will see what I can get out of this).⁶⁹

Aside from setting up what is clearly going to be a long and involved tale of detours and bad decisions, this passage conveys in understandable terms a scene in language

that many readers will never have encountered. Again, Maillet succeeds at doing this because she weaves it in with the standard French, resulting in coherence despite many new and unfamiliar words and spelling. This is language deterritorialized, and here we see Maillet showing its process of becoming as rhizomes from the vernacular grow into the accepted form of written expression, resulting in a new territory in a new form.

The image of continuously deterritorialized rhizomes complements and further complicates Maillet's echoing and reverberating chronotopes, as both Beausoleil and Pélagie must remain in continual motion. Having been reunited, they deliberately then re-separate their groups to return to the road and the sea—and miss their rendezvous in Baltimore. To avoid the English fleet, “de plus en plus soupçonneuse et vigilante” (increasingly suspicious and vigilant), the ship is forced to take a long detour, with the result that “*La Grand' Goule* eut beau déployer tout son génie et tout son courage, elle aborda Baltimore quatre mois après le départ des charrettes” (the *Grand' Goule* deployed all her genius and courage in vain, she arrived in Baltimore four months after the carts' departure). But Beausoleil is determined to join Pélagie in Philadelphia (a quest in which he succeeds, and again in Salem), and to ensure this meeting, he sends “à grandes enjambées sur la terre d'Amérique trois jeunes messagers” (three young messengers running onto the land of America) to find the carts and point them toward Philadelphia, while also defending them, if necessary, in an atmosphere of the burgeoning American Revolution.⁷⁰

The Acadians, themselves initially deterritorialized and then reterritorialized French rhizomes, have been displaced and dispersed by the Grand Dérangement. In a

state of ongoing movement and disruption since that time, they now seek stability in their former environment, but are repeatedly perturbed in this quest. Ultimately it is their ability to live off the land directly that enables success for the survivors, again like plants finding nourishment in the soil and water. They effect this direct connection with earth through the skills of a few, rather than the majority, who guide and teach the others. Ecocritically, this process represents an example of humans behaving as part of nature—unstable and fraught with the peril of death at every turn, yet relentlessly finding ways to survive until it is stopped. In fact, death is necessary for life to continue, as occurs in the novel with Pélégie's demise but the success of her mission.

In Serpil Oppermann's view, "Ecocriticism's biggest achievement has arguably been its global cognitive mapping of the environmental space for more responsible engagement."⁷¹ But it can equally be argued that the chief relevance of this still-emerging field lies less in politically charged areas (though these are certainly at issue) than in a fuller understanding of the human trajectory to date. Earth would likely have been in the cosmos with or without the emergence of the human species, and the questions at play in ecocriticism center on human activities more than on those of the rest of nature, though the latter are necessarily involved. Earth can exist without us; it is we who count on it, and yet we unthinkingly pollute and damage our host, as Serres elaborates in *Le Contrat naturel*. Focusing closely on specific interactions through various times and places sheds light on the reasons for this and can, but does not necessarily, point the way to improvements. Study of this type may simply explain more about human behavior, which may or may not help the group as a whole.

If the Acadians in *Pélagie-la-charrette* had believed Céline, Catoune, and the *coureurs de bois* to be misguided, insane, or not acting in their best interest, they would not likely have welcomed their assistance. But in the novel the dividing line between survival and death is very clear; in the real world of today, political strife and capitalist power struggles continue to complicate matters. These factors lie beyond the purview of some, but far from all ecocritical studies. All, however, have something to contribute to the overall understanding. This in itself is a major contribution of the field, and, as Oppermann notes, one that can be viewed as postmodern because of its very diversity.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic concept, Oppermann writes: "What other metaphor could better explain the many pathways we witness in ecocriticism in its third wave of development?"⁷² What Oppermann sees as a third wave is, in my own view, still clearly part of the second wave, precisely because of its widening and expanding, rhizomatic explorations. For her, the fact that ecocriticism has developed in this way, becoming ever more robust through greater "diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity . . . [and] plurality, situatedness, contextuality, and subversion of unitary categorization and master narratives" identifies it as a postmodern field of study that she labels postmodern ecocriticism.⁷³

However, this could be evidence more of Oppermann's impatience for innovative ideas than it is of a new ecocritical wave. As Ken Hiltner elaborates in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, the traits that Oppermann lists are already included among the principal concerns of ecocriticism's second wave of thought. "Second-wave ecocritics have taken up a range of issues," Hiltner notes, from

environmental justice to “race, class, gender, and sexual preference,” along with a growing overlap with postcolonial studies.⁷⁴ Aside from that critical stretch, Oppermann’s use of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept is apt and very useful in understanding how contemporary ecocritical studies may increasingly “inform other approaches,” as Hiltner says, even if they are not themselves “primarily works of ecocriticism.”⁷⁵ In this way, ecocriticism may be among developing lines of thought that have the capability to contribute to the eventual formation of what Oppermann terms:

a new cognitive paradigm . . . [that] encourages a praxis that embraces diversity and holism without subsuming either term to the other. This is the direction ecocriticism is taking, an engagement in what Guattari calls “processes of *heterogenesis*,” a term he uses to signify “a becoming that is always in the process of adapting, transforming and modifying itself in relation to its environment.”⁷⁶

It would be difficult to find a better characterization of the Acadians’ trajectory in *Pélagie-la-charrette*—with the phenomenological addition of the carts and Beausoleil’s ship, all of which mirror, duplicate, and serve as metaphors for this continual movement, adaptation, and modification.

***Coueurs de Bois* as Rhizomes of Survival and Narrative**

Jean à Pélagie, the heroine’s oldest son who had embarked with the ship, is part of the threesome (soon to become *coueurs de bois*) that Beausoleil sends to find the

caravan. Meanwhile, the American Revolution is increasingly agitating, in the woods around Philadelphia as elsewhere, and both sides need reinforcements.

Au point que les deux camps ennemis cherchaient dans les rangs de Pélagie, qui continuaient de grossir à mesure qu'on montait vers le nord, la relève des morts qui pourrissaient dans les foin

(To the point that the both sides sought among Pélagie's ranks replacements for their dead who lay rotting in the hay, while Pélagie's group continued growing as they traveled northward).⁷⁷

Pélagie, naturally sympathetic to those fighting the detested English, provides refreshment and a ride in passing, but mainly she stays on task.⁷⁸ Her mission is to bring her people to their homeland, not to help the Americans create a new one.

Beausoleil, her double and opposite in the shared quest to find new homes for Acadians, does detour more to help the American revolutionary effort, aside from relocating Acadians to Louisiana to start new lives. He cannot convince Pélagie to be among them, though some among her group do leave.

Pélagie will complete her mission at the cost of many detours and sacrifices, including the need to kill one of the oxen during this winter of hunger. Meanwhile, her son and his two companions travel through Pennsylvania “sans trop se presser” (without rushing too much), taking the time to eat well, including wild boar, rabbit, porcupine, and marmot that they capture in abundance with traps.

Les trois coureurs de bois connurent ainsi une liberté à laquelle ils auraient pris goût et qu'ils auraient volontiers prolongée s'ils n'avaient été mandatés d'une mission dont on ne se départit pas pour le seul plaisir de manger du lièvre, des

châtaignes et des baies de bois. De la faine surtout, ce fruit des grands hêtres d'Amérique à la saveur de pépin de pomme. Mais la faine est minuscule et longue à éplucher. Pour s'en rassasier, les trois compagnons devaient perdre beaucoup de temps.

(The three *coureurs de bois* thus experienced a freedom to which they could have become accustomed and that they would have gladly prolonged had they not been charged with a mission that one does not abandon for the simple pleasure of eating rabbit, chestnuts, and berries. Especially beechnut, the fruit of the big American beech tree, with an apple-seed flavor. But beechnut is tiny and takes a long time to peel. To get their fill of them, the three companions had to lose a lot of time.)⁷⁹

In this passage, the *coureurs de bois* exceed their previous state in which they were only a hint in the novel, a presence implied by the actions and habits of certain characters, while the entire caravan is increasingly forced to subsist in and from nature. The group as a whole does not succeed as well as do a few individuals— young, strong, and clever men, of the *coureur de bois* type. As the novel develops, Maillet regularly alludes to living off the land in various ways, but now the *coureurs de bois* become an articulated and active presence. They change from a suggested presence into agents that by their actions modify circumstances, just as the young Frenchmen of history transformed themselves into men of the wilderness over time in a process of continual movement, adaptation, and modification that changed both themselves and their environments of origin and reterritorialization.

After having endowed them with the power of a name in the passage quoted above, the author expands a bit on their well-known characteristics: independence of spirit, a taste for life in the woods, an intimate knowledge of nature and the means to reap its benefits. In terms of an ecocritical function, here the *coureurs* serve as a counterpoint to what their French compatriots are experiencing at the same time in the carts. While the latter are forced to sacrifice one of their beasts of burden, the three young men have time to discover that it takes too long to peel a beechnut, however delicious it may be; it is better to stick to berries and chestnuts. By their *savoir-faire* in the woods, these men become in a sense themselves a part of nature, while for their countrymen on the road, nature remains beside or outside the major events. Only Céline and Catoune venture into it regularly, but this winter exhausts even their abilities. Thus, in both a literal and a literary sense, the *coureurs de bois* link humanity to nature, which holds the secrets of survival.

They also serve to connect the French and the Indians, as Jean à Pélagie experiences. Captured by British troops and forced into service, the three young men escape, an event one of them, Benjamin Chiasson of Madame Island, later reports. After finally reaching the Acadian caravan, he tells

deux ou trois versions [d'une] indigestion collective du régiment qui avait accueilli les coureurs de bois. Comme si le conteur-témoin ne se rappelait plus lui-même les faits; ou comme s'il hésitait entre la variante la plus héroïque, la plus plausible ou la plus vraie. Ce qui a fait dire aux Bélonie [une lignage de conteurs acadiens], par la suite, que nos trois héros n'avaient dû empoisonner personne, même pas réussi à bailler le va-vite au capitaine, mais qu'ils avaient

tout simplement levé le pied avant l'aube, à la première occasion, et bâsi [disparu] à la manière de chats cerviers.

(two or three versions [of a] collective indigestion of the regiment that had taken the *coureurs de bois*. As if the narrator-witness could not himself recall the facts; or as if he hesitated between the most heroic, plausible, and true variants. Which caused the [storytelling lineage of] Bélonies thereafter to say that our three heroes could not have poisoned anyone, could not even have succeeded in outrunning the captain, but had simply slipped out before dawn, at the first opportunity, and disappeared like lynxes).⁸⁰

This passage again reflects Maillet's strong Rabelaisian influence, in this case through a humorous relation of events that playfully blends facts with inventions to infuse the story with life and hence, because the reader's imagination is actively and delightfully engaged, with a greater, almost literally "bigger," impression of reality. The author's mimesis of real-life language further invigorates her larger purpose of (re)creating the written Acadian story, and in so doing, making it something to be remembered, worthy of passing on. Maillet enlists this basic creative technique that has been in use since Homer and surely long before, as Daniel-Henri Pageaux observes in his introduction to Katia Bottos's study of Maillet.⁸¹ Storytelling, Maillet's legacy, has the power to convey both information and lessons, including unintentional ones. To separate completely "reality" from human interpretation is impossible, as demonstrated by philosophers and linguists ranging from Plato to Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, and many others; additionally, when attempted it makes for a far less

compelling experience for the audience, from both a mnemonic and an artistic perspective.

If Maillet consulted the accounts of historical *coureurs de bois* such as Radisson, his 17th-century contemporary Nicolas Perrot, or, later, Alexander Henry, there she found a similar fact-fiction *mélange*. In telling of their own exploits, these woodsmen portrayed themselves in largely favorable terms, likely with their employer and/or investor audiences in mind, as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. These writers also knew the importance of a story conveyed engagingly enough to sustain interest and improve the likelihood that the information would be retained.

For 17th- and 18th-century Jesuits such as Charlevoix (1744), this facet of the act of reporting resulted in frequent spiritual judgments. Among the *coureurs de bois*, surely more interested in entertaining and impressing their audiences (and investors or employers), it is hardly surprising that the result would at times have been exaggeration, nor that it can be difficult to separate fact from embellishment. Maillet plays with these inherent aspects of conveying something that happened or that a person thought, in the Rabelaisian model that inspired her, with its caricature and extravagant, ribald stories.

Marginalized by mainstream French society that prioritized agriculture and urban life, the *coureurs de bois* indeed became during the eighteenth century almost a caricature, a subject of fabulous and extravagant stories for the diversion of “civilized” society. This is evident in *Les aventures du Monsieur Robert Chevalier, dit de Beauchêne*, a serial novel based on the notes of a historical figure, but embellished to the point of being worthy of a theatrical adaptation (indeed Le Sage, famous author of

Gil Blas, is known for his theater). The protagonist moves from one far-fetched series of circumstances to the next, with occupations ranging from *coureur de bois* to pirate. In a vein of adventures similar to those Voltaire created for his *Candide*, it is a romp across the geography and history of the time, but without Voltaire's serious philosophical critique. For Le Sage, the point is rather to entertain using the quasi-savage type that his audience imagines to be that of someone who would choose to live in the wilderness, among the Indians.

With their longstanding reputation for audacity, wildness, and exaggerated stories, the woodsmen find a natural place in Maillet's panoramic saga. She creates a young Acadian-turned-*coureur-de-bois*, Benjamin Chiasson of Madame Island, who, when he is reunited with his people, tells several versions of the same story—a story that is recent enough for him to know which version is closest to “objective” truth. This is certainly in the Gallic storytelling tradition and echoes that foundational aspect of the novel, but Benjamin has other reasons as well, as we shall see forthwith.

In another of the novel's use of factual historical events, Indians capture and hold European colonizers. Here it is the three young *coureurs de bois* who are taken prisoner after falling into an animal trap. They thus come to live among the Iroquois, providing the author with the opportunity to take advantage of another fact often associated with the woodsmen: intermarriage with Indians. Jean à Pélagie falls in love and, so that his two comrades can leave to rejoin the Acadians, he offers himself as husband to the beautiful Iroquois.

Despite the pain this causes to his mother, Pélagie understands there is nothing she can do about it: whether he sacrificed himself or not, Jean chose to remain in the

forests of Pennsylvania, and she will likely never see him again. The two other young men, Benjamin and Maxime Basque, having found their compatriots' carts, tell versions of this story that are designed to confuse and hide some of the facts. For example, Jean gave "Katarina," his *sauvage*, his rosary beads with which to make a necklace.

Si Céline l'avait su!

Mais ni Céline, ni même Pélagie ne l'apprirent. Car Jean avait bien chargé ses compagnons d'épargner sa mère et de ne lui servir que des parcelles de la vérité. À tel point que les Bélonie eux-mêmes se sont longtemps demandé . . .

On se le demande encore.

(If Céline had known!

But neither Céline nor even Pélagie ever learned it. For John had made his companions promise to spare his mother and give her only pieces of the truth.

So much so that the Bélonies themselves wondered for a long time . . .

We are still wondering).⁸²

And here the story becomes once again that of Acadian storytellers who pass on their people's culture and history, which now includes the *coureurs de bois* reporting their own adventures. In this way, the woodsmen are portrayed as being emblematic not just of survival, but also of the transport of history and story through time. In the context of Maillet's novel this conveyance occurs on the three chronotopic levels previously considered, and at the same time, in the larger frameworks of French Canadian and global literature, the *coureurs de bois* carry the stories of an entire people and their direct connection with the earth that allowed them to survive.

The *coureurs* are a lifeline for the people to the earth that feeds and sustains them, and as they run through the woods and in and out of European-immigrant settlements in the New World, they also collect and pass on stories, while transforming both worlds with which they interact as well as themselves. Meanwhile, in a parallel and duplicating physical and cultural movement, the caravan that the three young Acadians-become-*coureurs de bois* “rush” to save in *Pélagie-la-charrette* are transported by carts through continuously changing environments. But the carts alone cannot accomplish the objective, even with Pélagie’s leadership. They also need the skills of those who know how to live off of nothing but what they discover and can process in the surrounding world beyond European towns and villages.

The human-nature link in *Pélagie-la-charrette* is not abstract but entirely material, as noted previously, with results that are both physical and cultural. Through the acquired familiarity of a few with the wilderness, the group is able to accomplish its mission and to endure for another century before emerging from the woods that sustain them. As the Acadian carts make their painstaking way north, their alternatively friendly and hostile contacts with the world beyond this caravan, itself in upheaval, continually alter both the size and interactions of the caravan. Eventually, *coureurs de bois* sent out like rhizomes from the Acadian ship of would-be salvation find and guide the group, which in the end will again be saved by *coureurs* appearing out of the woods.

Phenomenologically, the flux of being is in a continuous state of becoming: coded, deterritorialized, recoded, reterritorialized . . . and then coded again, and so on. The phenomena of the carts, the various environments, and the human consciousness

that attempt to manage and contend with this moving world settle only temporarily before changing again. *Coueurs* (and *coureuses*) *de bois* can be seen as Deleuzo-Guattarien lines of flight that escape from various resting states or temporary states of being into new and alternative trajectories. Like rhizomes, they travel to find, transform, and be transformed by new environments.

In *Pélagie-la-charrette*, the skills of *coueurs/coureuses* become increasingly noticeable as a transformative and life-saving force, not just in their own lives but in those of the group. This becomes a declared and decisive factor when the caravan finally arrives in Acadia. “On était à la porte du pays, on serait à la Grand’ Prée avant l’hiver” (They were at the doors of the country, they would be in Grand’ Pré before winter). But winter comes on faster than usual, suddenly and brutally.

Quand l’hiver 1779–1780 s’abattit sur [les charrettes] au début de novembre, prématuré de quarante jours, sautant l’été des Sauvages et la Saint-Martin, elles virent s’ouvrir devant elles, sans préambule et sans ménagement, la gueule du cheval de Troie.

Comme un monstre, la tempête s’écrasa sur l’Acadie en marche, au lendemain de la Toussaint [. . .] On n’avait pas eu le temps d’envelopper les enfants d’Acadie dans la laine et la fourrure des bêtes

(When that winter of 1779–80 struck in early November, early by forty days, having skipped Indian summer and Saint Martin’s summer [11 November], the carts saw opening in front of them, with no prelude or mercy, the mouth of the Trojan horse.

Like a monster, the storm smashed into Acadia in motion, the day after All Saints [. . .] There was not even time to wrap the Acadian children in woolens and animal furs).⁸³

The Acadians are finally in the north country, but this is where they almost perish as a group. They need all their knowledge of the wilderness to survive.

Les hommes chaque jour s'arrachaient à leurs iglous et partaient chasser le rare gibier qui n'hiverne pas entre la Saint-Nicolas et la mi-carême; le lièvre, le madouesse ou porc-épic, le castor, le chevreuil

(Every day the men tore themselves from their igloos and went hunting for the rare game that does not hibernate between Christmas and Lent: hare, *madouesse* or porcupine, beaver, deer).⁸⁴

This is the work of *coureurs de bois*, but the men of the Acadian caravan do not carry it out for trade, they do to avoid starving, as did many other settlers and Indians before and after them. In this case, the recent experience of Maxime and Benjamin as *coureurs de bois* remains fresh in the mind of the reader, who can speculate reasonably that their skills likely facilitate the survival of those who succeed. Toward the end of this murderous winter, the allusion to competence in the wilderness inspired by *coureurs* becomes specific:

C'est un Godin qui les déterra, un Godin de la branche de Beauséjour, chasseur, trappeur, coureur de bois à la mode acadienne, c'est-à-dire un éclaireur avant tout. Un Acadien, comme eux, mais resté en ancienne Acadie, caché et traqué durant toutes ces années du Grand Dérangement

(It was a Godin who dug them out, a Godin from the Beauséjour branch, a hunter, trapper, *coureur de bois* Acadian-style, that is, above all a pathfinder. An Acadian like them, but one who had stayed in old Acadia, hidden and hunted during all these years of the Great Upheaval).⁸⁵

And so the reader learns, at the same time as do the Acadian exiles, that their compatriots who managed to endure after the mass deportation did so expressly by becoming *coureurs de bois*. Combined with the forced experience of the caravan, which relied on these same skills for survival, this development leads the reader to begin to form an impression that they have all become *coureurs de bois*. Perhaps only fleeting thought at first, it is reinforced and strengthened all the returning exiles must hide in the northern woods, because they cannot recover their land from the occupying—and well-armed—English.

Just as did the Godins before them, the French who now survive the English invasion in Acadia do so by hiding in the woods and living directly from nature. They become *coureurs* “Acadian-style.”

The returning exiles have not contended with a winter this brutal in fifteen years. This environment and their carts are phenomena with which their awareness and perceptions interact, resulting in changed mentalities and the development of new skills and abilities. Those who had survived in Acadia as *coureurs* now had accumulated survival experience, which had also changed them, and which they would now share with the returnees. In keeping with Husserl’s original thinking on phenomenology, they process mentally their direct experience with living in the wilds, in a conscious process that becomes structures of awareness that they then pass on. For

the group, this becomes the meaning of survival in both a material and an abstract sense, and it allows them to endure quietly in the northern woods for another century before they feel they can safely reemerge as a people.

The Acadians do not make a contract with nature in the sense that Serres would like to see, because this would have been an anachronistic authorial decision on Maillet's part and may not even have been on the radar of her concerns, because Maillet's purpose was to show how her people were able to survive despite conscious and brutal efforts to eradicate them. In *Pélagie-la-charrette* the Acadians learn how to endure and, eventually, to thrive. Today this group is in a position to concern itself consciously and purposefully with the rest of the planet, but in 1880 the people were just themselves emerging from survival mode.

Edouard Glissant elaborates this aspect of the human-life experience at various times and places, as discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. It is a very important point and one that continues to be often overlooked or given insufficient emphasis in ecocritical studies. Kate Rigby, while arguing that writing emerged as early as or earlier than *Gilgamesh* in tandem with increasing human domination of the rest of nature, concludes with an exhortation to "recall the extent to which the devastation of the earth is intertwined with the oppression, exploitation and marginalization of subordinate humans,"⁸⁶ and in so doing, begin the development of a new kind of literature . . . beyond the opposition of naïve naturalism and sentimental yearning, . . . [one] that, in responding to the social and ecological brokenness of our world, however inadequately, might conjoin concern with the

flourishing of all life, human and otherwise, with respect for the claims of human justice and freedom.⁸⁷

But Rigby attempts to inspire others from a position of comfort in which she has the time to think in depth about such issues. Amid the “subordinate humans” to which she refers and of which she is herself not a part, those who are able to perceive these larger problems are few and are (very important) leaders and writers, while most must use all their energy just to ensure continuing life for themselves and their families. Because so many critics (myself included) think and write from a relatively privileged position, it is important to keep in mind that the first instinct for all of life is self-preservation, followed by self-defense. Therefore, as a relative minority of the human species becomes more aware of its environment and the need to cease harming and destroying it, those among us who already enjoy basic comforts should turn the critical eye upon ourselves, striving to become more aware that most of the world’s population is still not in this happy position. It can even be argued that environmental concerns for the rest of the planet constitute a “luxury” that many people(s) cannot or do not yet see themselves as affording. The ability to consider such matters is a state resulting from having prospered sufficiently to worry about the fate of others.

Our contemporary world faces potential human self-annihilation, as many have observed while pleading for course changes. These considerations are, obviously, valid, but they often overlook the historical trend of gradual changes in ways of seeing the world and in dealing with it. Historically, *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* were not environmentalists, as has been noted. Rather, they were survivalists who had learned in-depth about the wilderness and its inhabitants. Following their literary trajectory

from an ecocritical point of view reveals no particular environmental concern, because they were too busy surviving, providing food for themselves and others, and trying to accumulate stores (of food, wealth, sustainment). In this way they embody not just the Deleuzo-Guattarian continual rhizomatic movement and change that has been highlighted throughout this dissertation, but also the fundamentally enabling basis of the human life form in survival mode. It is continuing existence that leads to the possibility of intellectual and metaphysical questions, and in *Pélagie-la-charrette*, this hard reality is echoed and treated with playful humor.

***Coueurs de Bois* in Acadian Identity**

Even before but especially after two of the three young *coueurs* are reunited with the Acadian caravan, an independent and inventive spirit permeates the novel. It is characterized as being specifically Gallic, and it plays an active, if not decisive, role in the story's development. This aspect becomes more accentuated after the designation of the *coueurs de bois* as such. The heroic Captain Beausoleil remains in the reader's imagination as a potential source of help, but he can do nothing for the caravan when he is at sea. However, it is he who sends the three messengers who become *coueurs de bois* and bring their knowledge of nature to augment the expertise of Céline and Catoune. The ability to survive in wilderness, while cohabiting and collaborating with the, becomes more manifest because of them, and this impression remains in the mind of the reader.

Whatever the case—whether they applied in the woods the stereotypically Gallic features of craftiness, intelligence, and adaptability that Maillet portrays, or whether

they further developed those traits in the woods (or both)—these men occupy an important place in the evolution of a culture that is specifically French Canadian. Through the ways in which their history is reflected in literature, they play a role that can today be considered from an ecocritical perspective. They do not represent, as has been pointed out, a perfect way to treat nature. In fact, it is their collaboration with the Indians, who like them wanted merely to survive and thrive, that nearly eliminated the beaver population in the eastern part of Canada. But they are the only French settlers, as a group, to have interacted with the Indians without trying, for the most part, to convert or change them in any way, or to express commonly a sense of cultural superiority such as that seen so often in Jesuit writings; on the contrary, as Havard shows, many *coureurs*, like Maillet's fictional Jean à Pélagie, became "white Indians."

At the beginning of the novel, the author appropriates the traditionally male profession to give it to a woman (Céline's mother), and by the end she confers it to the entire group, thereby making survival skills achieved out of desperation part of the Acadian legacy and identity. In so doing, Maillet claims the *coureurs de bois* as a tradition that is not only French, but specifically not English and deployed as a kind of defense weapon against the English occupation. When the Acadians come out of the woods in the 1880s, this represents their cultural triumph, made possible by the aptitudes of the *coureurs* that they have all become. The motif is now theirs, culturally and, through Maillet's novel, literarily. The emergence of the people from the woods also echoes the gradual emergence of the *coureurs de bois* as a central enabling presence throughout the novel, reflecting the vigilance, prudence, and courage that are among the essential attributes for all enduring life forms, at least on earth.

Thus, at the end of the 20th century, Antonine Maillet reappropriates *coureurs de bois* to make use of them as emblems in the (re)construction of a population that until recently had been neglected. During the course of the 19th century, their job became that of the more respected *voyageurs*, as discussed previously. By the time of Maillet's writing, they are not only once again commonly referred to by the original terms that referred to these independent-minded men of the wilderness, but are even claimed. Their characteristics, most notably their knowledge of wilderness areas and their abilities to hide in and survive in it, have become desirable in helping to describe, identify, and symbolize a once-oppressed people.

¹ Jean-Jacques Thomas, "Texts versus Documents: The Case of *Pélagie-La-Charrette*," *Esprit Créateur* 49, no. 4 (2009): 82.

² *Ibid.*, 79–93. Ben-Z. Shek, "Antonine Maillet: A Writer's Itinerary," *Acadiensis* 12, no. 2 (spring 1983): 172, 177, 179.

³ Thomas, "Texts versus Documents: The Case of *Pélagie-La-Charrette*."

⁴ Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette* (Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1979), 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶ Thomas, "Texts versus Documents," 83. On the complexity and implications of situating the concept of a historical "witness" in its social environment, see Andrea Frisch, "The Ethics of Testimony: A Genealogical Perspective," *Discourse* 25, nos. 1 and 2 (winter and spring 2003): 36–54.

⁷ Kathryn J. Crecelius, "L'Histoire et son double dans *Pélagie-la-charrette*," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 6, no. 2 (1981).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Shek, “Antonine Maillet,” 177.

¹⁰ Denise Merkle, “Francophone Dynamics in a Translated Canada: From the Margins to the Centre and Back,” Dipti Pattanaik and Paul St-Pierre, dirs., *Translation Today* 7, nos. 1 and 2 (2011): 69–95. Marie-Linda Lord, “Territorialité et identité dans l’œuvre romanesque d’Antonine Maillet et de David Adams Richards,” *Francophonies d’Amérique* 14 (autumn 2002): 117–30. Hala M. Fathy, “Jeux d’humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d’Antonine Maillet,” Ph.D. diss., University of Montréal (UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2000). Ylâng Nguyễn Phú, “Antonine Maillet et l’univers mythologique de la Bible, une analyse selon Northrop Frye,” Ph.D. diss., University of Moncton, fall 2003. Paul G. Socken, “The Bible and Myth in Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-charrette*,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 12, no. 2 (1987). Jacqueline Couti, “L’errance d’exil et le recadrage mémoriel dans *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet et *Chronique des sept misères* de Patrick Chamoiseau,” *Romance Studies* 29, no. 2 (2011): 93–107. Among the many others who have studied Maillet’s work are Claude La Charité, Birgitta Brown, Renato Venâncio Henriques de Sousa, Jeanne Demers, Marjorie A. Fitzpatrick, Jean Cléo Godin, Michèle Lacombe, Jean-Michel Lacroix, Yves Lacroix, Paula Gilbert Lewis, Robert Mane, Marie Naudin, Nathalie Verdier, and Karolyn Waterson.

¹¹ Biographical information from Robert Viau, *Antonine Maillet: 50 ans d’écriture* (Ottawa: Les Editions David, 2008); Jean Saint-Cyr, “Antonine Maillet: Destinée à l’écriture,” *Acadie Nouvelle*, 15 August 2014; and Shek, “Antonine Maillet: A Writer’s Itinerary.”

¹² Maillet, quoted in Saint-Cyr, “Antonine Maillet: Destinée à l’écriture.”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Fathy, citing Maillet’s dissertation in her own: “Jeux d’humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d’Antonine Maillet,” 44. Claude La Charité, “Antonine Maillet et Rabelais: Contexte, originalité et fortune de sa thèse *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie*,” in *Lire Antonine Maillet à travers le temps et l’espace*, Marie-Linda Lord, ed. (Moncton: University of Moncton, Institut d’études acadiennes, 2010), 35–48. Notably, Maillet worked on her dissertation in the late 1960s, when Joual orality had already “aggressively” entered Quebecois literature. Réjean Beaudoin, *Le roman québécois* (Quebec : Boréal, 1991), 68.

¹⁵ Georges Cerebelaud Salagnac, review of Maillet’s book *Rabelais et les traditions populaires in Acadie*, in *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer* 64, no. 236 (1977): 418.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka : Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1975), 33.

¹⁷ Fathy, “Jeux d’humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d’Antonine Maillet,” 44–47. Viau, *Antonine Maillet*, 182–88. See also Lise Gauvin, preface, 15; and Marie-Linda Lord, “Antonine Maillet: Un monde, une langue et une oeuvre,” 23–25, both in *Lire Antonine Maillet à travers le temps et l’espace*, Marie-Linda Lord, ed.

¹⁸ Katia Bottos, *Antonine Maillet, conteuse de l’Acadie, ou L’encre de l’aède* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011), 46–47; Fathy, “Jeux d’humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d’Antonine Maillet,” 44–47; La Charité, “Antonine Maillet et Rabelais,” 46.

¹⁹ For example, Viau, *Antonine Maillet*, 180. See also “Antonine Maillet,” Auvidec interview with the author, Emission Parole et Vie, YouTube, published 17 July 2013.

²⁰ Bernadette Marie Donahue, “Voices Past, Present, and Future: Acadian Social Identity in the Novels of Antonine Maillet,” Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University (UMI Dissertations Publishing), 1999.

²¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (Halifax : Nimbus Publishing, 2013), 41 (Boston: William D. Ticknor & Company, 1847).

²² Longfellow, *Evangeline*, 62.

²³ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁵ Fathy, “Jeux d'humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d'Antonine Maillet,” 45.

²⁶ Lord, “Territorialité et identité dans l'œuvre romanesque d'Antonine Maillet,” 210.

²⁷ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 272.

²⁸ Lord, “Territorialité et identité dans l'œuvre romanesque d'Antonine Maillet,” 210–22; 256–64; 329.

²⁹ Shek, “Antonine Maillet: A Writer's Itinerary,” 178.

³⁰ Fathy, “Jeux d'humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d'Antonine Maillet,” 45; Bottos, *Antonine Maillet*, 132–42.

³¹ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 20.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 51–52.

³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁴ Valerie Orlando, *Nomadic Voices of Exile: Feminine Identity in Francophone Literature of the Maghreb* (Ohio University Press, 1999).

³⁵ Robert Viau deconstructs the significance of the names Pélagie and Broussard (Beausoleil), tracing their etymologies to words designating the sea and earth respectively (*Antonine Maillet*, 190).

³⁶ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁸ Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages : Indiens et français dans le Pays d'en Haut, 1660–1715* (Sillery : Les éditions du septentrion, 2003). Pierre-Esprit Radisson, *Voyages or Peter Esprit Radisson, Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences Among the North American Indians, from 1652 to 1684*, transcribed from original manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and the British Museum (Boston: Prince Society, 1885).

³⁹ Fathy, “Jeux d'humour et mythe personnel dans le récit d'Antonine Maillet,” 76 (quoting from interview with Antonine Maillet in *La Presse*, 18 May 1974, p. D7).

⁴⁰ Among the critics who have pursued the feminist aspect of Maillet's work are Robert Viau, *Antonine Maillet*, 191–94; and Eloise A. Brière, “Antonine Maillet and the Construction of Acadian Identity,” in *Postcolonial Subjects: Francophone Women Writers*, Mary Jean Green et al., eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–21.

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1980), 291.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 307.

⁴⁴ Bona Arsenault, *Histoire des Acadiens* (Montreal: Fides, 2004), 170. “Beaubassin National Historic Site of Canada,” *Canada’s Historic Places*, Parks Canada, <http://historicplaces.ca/en/rep-re/g/place-lieu.aspx?id=13964>.

⁴⁵ Viau, *Antonine Maillet*, 195.

⁴⁶ Kevin Leonard, “The Organization and Dispersal of Dykeland Technology,” *Les cahiers de la Société Historique Acadienne* 22, no. 1 (1991): 31–59.

⁴⁷ François Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chap. 3, in *Oeuvres de Rabelais*, vol. 4 (Paris: Chez Dalbion Librairie, 1823) [1546], 256, 311. Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 321 n. 90.

⁴⁸ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 49.

⁴⁹ David Woodruff Smith, “Phenomenology,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 16 December 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>.

⁵⁰ Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1990), 141.

⁵¹ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 156.

⁵² Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, see, for example, 249, 250–53, 269, 291–92, 307, 335–37, 443.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁴ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 26, 24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 78–80, 90–91.

⁵⁷ Serres, *Le Contrat naturel*, 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel),” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, Vern W. McGee, trans., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, eds. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 273.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Norman McL. Rogers, “The Abbé Le Loutre,” *Canadian Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (1930): 105–28.

⁶⁵ Crecelius, “L’Histoire et son double dans *Pélagie-la-charrette*.”

⁶⁶ Michèle Lacombe, “Narrative, Carnival, and Parody: Intertextuality in Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-charrette*,” *Canadian Literature* 116 (spring 1988): 44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44

⁶⁸ M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, 97.

⁶⁹ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 72.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 186–88.

⁷¹ Serpil Oppermann, “The Rhizomatic Trajectory of Ecocriticism,” *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture, and Environment* 1, no. 1 (spring 2010): 17–18.

⁷² Ibid., 19.

⁷³ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁴ Ken Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 132.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁷⁶ Oppermann, “The Rhizomatic Trajectory of Ecocriticism,” 20, citing Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, trans. (London, Continuum, 2008).

⁷⁷ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 189.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 191–92.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 198–99.

⁸¹ Bottos, *Antonine Maillet*, 14.

⁸² Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charrette*, 204.

⁸³ Ibid., 284–85.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 286.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 291.

⁸⁶ Kate Rigby, “Writing after Nature,” in Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism*, 365.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 6. Conclusions: Motifs of Capitalist Expansion, Socialist Cooperation, and Intercultural Connections

This dissertation traces the portrayals of and roles played by *coureurs de bois* and/or *voyageurs* in four works of in 19th- and 20th-century French Canadian literature: Joseph-Charles Taché's *Forestiers et voyageurs: Moeurs et légendes canadiennes* (1863); Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916); Léo-Paul Desrosiers' *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (1938); and Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979). The theoretical framework is provided chiefly by the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari, Glissant, Serres, Bakhtin, and contemporary ecocritics as noted. Isolating the literary role of the *coureur* reveals chronotopic attitudes toward and uses of nature and its resources, a perspective of ecocritical relevance in that it pertains to the problematic of human interactions with the rest of the planet. Additionally, the *coureurs* in these works serve as connections between radically different human cultures, through their engagement with Amerindians on their terms and in their environment. They both link wilderness to the French and the French to the Indians. In this way they are material rhizomes, and they represent changing attitudes toward other cultures and toward the earth. Of course, historically some *coureurs* and *voyageurs* also sold very harmful eau-de-vie in great abundance to Indians without regard for their welfare, as seen in Montour's misconduct in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, discussed in Chapter 4. But all the other *coureurs* in the works studied here evidence respect for their Amerindian counterparts.

Because of their direct connection and interaction with wilderness, native peoples, and natural resources, *coureurs de bois* can, through our 21st-century lens, be identified as ecocritically related figures in French Canadian literature. They both altered their environment and were altered by it, making them cultural rhizomes of the type described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2*, with the difference that the *coureurs* serve as physical embodiments of the rhizome that moves from one territory into another, and in the process of this deterritorialization destabilizes and transforms both.

The *coureurs* also incorporate the process of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as *le devenir*, the becoming, referenced periodically throughout this dissertation. In Chapter 4's study of Hémon's and Desrosiers' novels, becoming pertains to a process of change and transformation so continuous that it is, finally, its own reality, as the philosophers describe: "Le devenir ne produit pas autre chose que lui-même. Ce qui est réel, c'est le devenir lui-même" (The becoming produces no more than itself. What is real is the becoming itself).¹ Thus, the emphasis is on the activity, which Deleuze and Guattari qualify as a verb and a rhizome moving in a way that "ne se fait plus seulement ou surtout par des productions filiales, mais par des communications transversales entre populations hétérogènes" (is no longer accomplished only or even primarily in a linear trajectory, but by transversal communications between peoples of dissimilar genetic makeups).² This describes precisely how *coureurs de bois* moved through the New World; it is because of this movement that they can be interpreted as embodying the rhizomatic notion.

In this dissertation, other than survival three overarching modern concepts emerge from a comparison of the treatment of *coureurs* in the four works studied: capitalist development and socialist efforts to humanize it; intercultural connections; and anthropocentrism. The remainder of this concluding chapter considers these themes and their implications.

***Coureurs* in—and Outside of—the Capitalist Machine**

In *Forestiers et voyageurs*, the growing logging industry is presented as an exclusively positive development, while *coureurs de bois*, portrayed in nostalgic terms, are becoming legend. They are romanticized only to a point, because readers must also be reminded of the extreme physical hardships of this type of work, so that while Taché portrays it with some nostalgia, the fact that it is already passing into the national legends is not entirely regrettable, in the author's view. The work done by men of the woods is the main topic, but Taché's mission is not simply to describe, it is to incorporate these men into the prideful ethos he is methodically attempting to construct. Hence, for his rhetorical purposes, the unlicensed, independent *coureurs de bois* must be replaced with law-abiding, licensed *voyageurs*—who do not “go native” (in Taché's telling), but remain good, solid Catholics of French stock. The status of an official employee is a standing that the book portrays as the direction of the future.

Forestiers et voyageurs is an appreciation for workers who penetrate and use natural resources for the advancement of industry. This is the type of activity that ecocritic William Cronon identifies as potentially necessary (even as we also must continue to protect the natural environment, as he also acknowledges), for humans

also are part of nature and must use part of the rest of it to survive, as do all the other parts. Cronon warns: “At its worst, as environmentalists are beginning to realize, exporting American notions of wilderness . . . can become an unthinking and self-defeating form of cultural imperialism.”³

As part of his recognition of lumberjacks’ work, in the 19th century Taché depicted the independent, individual *coureur de bois* as already in the process of becoming a story, while busy colonies of forest-clearing were the order of the day. This was progress; for Taché it was inevitable, and his romantic use of *coureurs* reflects nostalgia for lost wild places, though he never loses sight of the actual work that they did. Cronon observes that much contemporary environmental thinking is a legacy of wealthy 19th century conservationists: “The dream of an unworked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living.”⁴ But this is not Taché’s problem. Though he did not himself work the land, his medical practice in Rimouski attended to a population of farmers, thus he was very close to them, understood them, and represented them in the national government.

Taché himself was also a hard worker, as a doctor, a French Canadian nationalist politician, and a writer with a passion.⁵ He saw the need for his people to gain self-respect, and believed that one of the best ways to accomplish this was through taking pride in their work. Thus Taché promoted not just agriculture but other labor that would advance the cause of his people, highlighting in *Forestiers et voyageurs* occupations that French Canadian young men often chose. These men needed not just jobs but skilled professions, respected employment that the English

had been monopolizing with impunity since their 18th-century victory. Taché described wild places as locations where people lived and worked, unlike those of Cronon's premise. In *Forestiers et voyageurs*, the enterprise of logging is presented as beneficial for the workers, and in this way they are portrayed as willing participants in a Marxist-inspired Deleuzo-Guattarian capitalist "desiring machine."

Louis Hémon, in his 1916 novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, creates the vibrant and appealing *coureur de bois* François Paradis, who cannot be allowed to survive because his lifestyle is extinct and agriculture must be valorized. Hémon explores the tension between the agricultural and woodsmen communities, and eventually the more "civilized" farming population prevails, typically of the *roman du terroir*. This does not represent the advancement of capitalism *per se*, but more of the conservative values that supported its progress. Of course, farming does not necessarily imply conservatism, but the *roman du terroir* promotes an "anti-wild" mindset through its valuing of Catholicism and land-owning. In *Maria Chapdelaine*, the author romantically conflates the lone dying/dead *coureur de bois* with a nostalgia for disappearing wild places and people, however necessary this may be for the inevitable and desirable progression of agriculture.

The trend toward devaluing wilderness and those who inhabit it continues in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (1938), where Desrosiers portrays a whole subculture of men, *voyageurs*, who penetrate the wilderness to transform raw materials into capital through their human labor. A continuing and intensifying movement of separation is detectable between spaces over which humans have gained power and those in which

they have not, or to a lesser degree. The dynamic moves in a line that parallels the growth of big-business enterprises.

Published toward the beginning of World War II hostilities, Desrosiers' historical novel portrays a complicated economic situation and a stark view of the worst and best aspects of the human psyche, as 19th-century *voyageurs* struggle with the growing forces of capitalist encroachment in the wilderness and its moral implications. While telling a story about the fur trade, in a larger historical sense the novel also illuminates realities about the ongoing clash between the two major economic forces of the early 20th century, capitalism and socialism.

The historical tension between the rise of capitalist industrialism and humanitarian concerns is central to this struggle. Its implications point toward an influence of socialist reactions to the capitalist machine, even if the author's intent was to show the need for simple public-spirited caring for one's fellow man. This same caring is the driving force of the socialist push against capitalism and in this way is measurable as an influence, by whatever name, in efforts to curtail the economic desiring machine and its voracious need to expand and move ever forward. The *voyageurs* who endure within (and as part of) the wilderness are captured in this inexorable movement and must somehow accommodate it. These are the moralistic questions with which Turenne struggles and that Montour disregards because of his unique focus on his own survival, like a microcosm of the capitalist desiring machine. If we see Turenne as a microcosm of the opposing humanitarian/socialist pushback, the two characters represent the socioeconomic forces that had already been clashing for some time as Desrosiers composed his novel. Notably, at the end Turenne removes

himself from the capitalist enterprise while Montour remains and advances further in it, but Turenne does not leave defeated, nor has Montour succeeded in destroying him. Both forces simply continue to exist in the world.

Finally, in Antonine Maillet's novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979), the skills of *coureurs de bois*, those who depend on the wilderness for sustenance, enable the reemergence of an entire people. Maillet reappropriates *coureurs* to use them as emblems in the (re)construction of a population that until recently had been neglected, making Acadians what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a minor culture speaking a minor language. The *coureurs* in this novel operate entirely outside of any economic system other than that of sustenance.

During the course of the 19th century, the job of the *coureur* became that of the more respected *voyageur*, as discussed especially in Chapter 3 during the analysis of *Forestiers et voyageurs*. By the time of Maillet's writing, *coureurs de bois* are not only once again commonly referred to by the original term that designated these independent-minded men of the wilderness, they are even claimed by the author. Their characteristics, notably their knowledge of wilderness areas and abilities to hide in and survive in it, are essential to describe, identify, and symbolize the trajectory of a once-oppressed people and show how they were able to endure.

Intercultural *Coureurs*

The *coureurs* occupy the interesting and perhaps unique position of contributing both to environmental abuse, which eventually takes humans and our planet down a path of destruction, and to greater acceptance of the cultural "other," which holds the promise

of collaboration and the joint search for realistic solutions. Unlike the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries who also penetrated into the deep wilderness to encounter its inhabitants, *coureurs* did so not to change them but simply to trade and hunt. This process of encounter was also a becoming, in that many *coureurs* married and remained in the Amerindian communities, while those who returned to the French colonies brought with and in them elements of the wilds, along with information and goods to trade. Ongoing change and transformation were thus occurring in a material, phenomenological sense.

Michel in *Forestiers et voyageurs* loves both the wilderness and its inhabitants, to the point that “il ne s'en est guère manqué que je me sois *mis sauvage*” (I almost went native).⁶ He lives with eastern Canada's Micmac Indians for several winters and two entire years. While depicting Michel as a lifestyle already lost, Taché also captures the appeal for many *coureurs* of the Amerindian lifestyle, an attraction studied notably by historian Gilles Havard. Michel enthuses:

J'aimais tant cette vie-là que j'abandonnai tout-à-fait la pêche à la morue, pour vivre entièrement avec les micmacs. Or, vous savez que les sauvages sont comme les caribous, ils ne s'arrêtent jamais, ils marchent continuellement: pendant quelques hivers et deux années entières, j'ai fait la chasse avec eux, j'ai parcouru tous les bois et toutes les rivières, depuis- la Baie-des-chaleurs jusqu'à la rivière Rimouski

(I loved that life so much that I completely gave up cod fishing to live entirely with the micmacs. And as you know, savages are like caribous, they never stop, they walk continuously: for a few winters and two entire years, I hunted with

them, I traveled all the woods and all the rivers, from the Baie des Chaleurs [on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, just south of the Gaspé Peninsula] to the Rimouski River [which spills into the St. Lawrence River at Rimouski, halfway between Gaspé and Quebec City)].⁷

Michel does not “go native.” He returns to Kamouraska to reconnect with his family, then sets off on a new enterprise with a partner. This takes them to the Pays d’en Haut (“up country”), where they trade with the Montagnais Indians. Michel admires them in part for their Catholicism, marveling at the good work done by missionaries, but he does not himself participate in evangelizing.⁸ Michel’s focus is on trade and profit for both sides, a significant point for the purposes of this discussion:

Nos échanges avec les Montagnais allaient à merveille pour les deux parties, attendu que nous donnions aux sauvages des prix beaucoup plus élevés que ceux que donnait alors La Compagnie [of Hudson’s Bay]

(Our trade with the Montagnais was going marvelously for both sides, since we paid the savages much higher prices than did the Company at that time).⁹

Michel and his partner do not seek ways to exploit the Montagnais, as does the Company. Instead, they go to meet them on their territory and pay a fair price for the furs. Of course, it is also true that here the *coureurs* are trading illegally and that by paying higher prices, they are competing on a business level. They also are capitalists in this enterprise, but at the same time another dynamic is at play, one in which the Montagnais are accepted on their own terms and in their own place. Similarly, Michel makes no effort to influence their spiritual beliefs and practices, even if he is pleased when he sees missionary Catholicism at work in the community.

François Paradis in *Maria Chapdelaine* also loves hunting and trading with Indians, explaining that “ça, c'est mon plaisir” (that's what I enjoy) as opposed specifically to farming.¹⁰ In Hémon's novel Amerindians remain transparent, a presence that is alluded to in order to help define François, but again we see no effort on his part to change them or their world. Rather, he goes into it peacefully to temporarily join the people of the forest in a type of work that he has chosen while rejecting the agricultural alternative that was open to him.

In *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, Turenne is appalled by the North West Company's exploitation and poor treatment of Indians. He befriends and helps individuals, even when he must do so in secret. Turenne immediately recognizes the company's motive when it offers him a bit more power: “Ce n'est pas pour accomplir des réformes, mais bien pour exploiter l'affections que les naturels éprouvent à son endroit” (It is not to carry out reforms, but to exploit the affections that the indigenes feel for him.)¹¹ Turenne does wish to effect change, but not in the Amerindian lifestyle. Rather, the changes this *voyageur* wishes to make pertain to ethical treatment of the cultural other.

Maillet's *coureurs* in *Pélagie-la-Charrette* include her son Jean, who remains in the forest of Pennsylvania either because he falls in love with Katarina, an Iroquois whom he marries, or because he offers himself in exchange for the freedom of Benjamin and Maxime, his two *coureur* companions. As throughout the novel, multiple possible interpretations are entertained. What is sure is that Benjamin and Maxime come out of the forest and at last find the Acadian caravan, where they tell a story (or several versions of one) that Jean has crafted for his mother's easier

digestion. Pélagie, the group's collectively minded Acadian leader, will more easily be able to accept her son's cultural defection, he reasons, if she sees his departure as self-sacrifice.

C'était le prix à payer pour la liberté des deux autres. Une certaine princesse iroquoise qui s'appelait vaguement Katarina avait obtenu de son père la libération de deux prisonniers, à la condition d'épouser le troisième. . . . Jean se sacrifiait et envoyait à sa mère, en gage de filiale affection et de fidélité indéfectibles à son peuple, en attendant mieux, dix peaux de renards rouges pour se garder contre le froid

(This was the price for the freedom of the other two. Some Iroquois princess, named Katarina they thought, had obtained from her father the release of two prisoners, on condition that she marry the third. . . . Jean had sacrificed himself and sent to his mother, to demonstrate his love and unwavering loyalty to his people, until he could send something better, ten red-fox furs to protect her from the cold).¹²

Because readers have already been shown the developing affection between Jean and Katarina, as she brings him water and he notices her beauty, they are inclined to believe that Jean made his choice without unmitigated regret, even if in so doing he had to give up his original culture. Thus, Jean goes native. Godin, the *coureur* who rescues the frozen Acadians toward the novel's end, plays the role of connection with the wilderness that allows the survival of the people, while Jean symbolizes the intercultural link that also characterizes *coureurs de bois*.

In all four works considered in this dissertation, a *coureur* or *voyageur* enters a cultural domain that is foreign to him and does not try to change it. *Forestiers et voyageurs*, *Maria Chapdelaine*, and *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* portray encounters with the other on the playing field of trade, in which a *coureur* or *voyageur* treats the other as different but equal. In *Pélagie-la-charrette* the *coureur* who encounters the other initially has no choice, since he has been taken prisoner, but he embraces the lifestyle and marries into it, with no suggestion that he will attempt to alter or escape from his new world.

Thus, the works all portray a backwoodsman who interacts with and accepts the other. At the same time, as noted earlier, the purpose of these forays is usually trade, and *coureurs de bois* participated, with their Indian business partners, in the depletion of the beaver population, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 4.

People and/in the World

The *coureur* figure contributes to the increase of both capitalist exploitation and intercultural exchanges in the works of literature studied here. From an ecocritical standpoint, the woodsmen's activities represent human patterns of behavior that have been highly problematical and increasingly destructive, as well as others that point to more hopeful future directions. In all cases, the concern is strictly anthropocentric.

Anthropocentrism is one of the main cultural trends identified and questioned by ecocriticism. For Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, this is a global mindset that they deplore: "Within many cultures—and not just western ones—anthropocentrism has long been naturalised. The absolute prioritisation of one's own species' interests over

those of the silenced majority is still regarded as being ‘only natural.’¹³ But Edouard Glissant offers a radically different perspective:

Esthétique de la terre? . . . Oui. Mais esthétique du bouleversement et de l'intrusion. Trouver des équivalents de fièvre pour l'idée ‘environnement’ (que pour ma part je nomme entour), pour l'idée ‘écologie,’ qui paraissent si oiseuses dans ces paysages de la désolation. Imaginer des forces de boucan et de doux-sirop pour l'idée de l'amour de la terre, qui est si dérisoire ou qui fonde souvent des intolérances si sectaires

(An aesthetic of the earth? . . . Yes. But an aesthetic of upheaval and intrusion. Find equivalents of fervor for the ideas of “environment” [which for my part I call surroundings] and “ecology,” which seem so pointless in these landscapes of desolation. Imagine forces of rampage and sweet syrup for the idea of the love of the land, which is so ridiculous or frequently the basis of such sectarian intolerance).¹⁴

In other words, of course people prioritize themselves. As Glissant suggests, it is not surprising or even undesirable that humans should protect their own life form first. Every being on planet Earth does the same, as a matter of the biological struggle to exist for as long as possible. We need to work within that reality rather than trying to deny or change it, as recent ecocritics such as William Cronon agree. At the same time, as he, Rob Nixon, and many others argue, humans must work toward greater inclusiveness of both their own species and different life forms, since we are all linked. These values are, arguably, those of basic traditional (greatly expanded and updated) humanism and the Enlightenment.

For humans as for all beings, survival of the species takes priority over all other concerns and instincts. The immediacy of survival exigencies trumps everything, and the *coureurs de bois* symbolize this fundamental element of the life force in literature, as seen especially in Chapter 5's analysis of *Pelagie-la-charrette*. Beyond this, Michel Serres argues that humans have not yet developed effective long-range thinking. In *Le contrat naturel*, he elaborates a potentially counterintuitive course of action in his concept of the need for a contract with nature that extends the (unwritten) social contract between humans. All the major human "agreements" have historically been tacit yet nevertheless real, Serres maintains, and we have now arrived at a point in our evolution where it is necessary to include the entire Earth in our considerations:

De même que le contrat social reconnaissait quelque égalité entre les signataires humains de son accord, que les divers contrats de droit cherchent à équilibrer les intérêts de parties, de même que le contrat savant s'oblige à rendre en raison ce qu'il reçoit en information, de même le contrat naturel reconnaît d'abord l'égalité nouvelle entre la force de nos interventions globales et la globalité du monde.

(Just as the social contract acknowledged some equality between the human signatories of its agreement, just as various law contracts seek to balance parties' interests, and just as the scholar's contract obligates him to render in reasoned analysis that which he receives as information, so the natural contract recognizes first of all the new equality between the strength of our global interventions and the entirety of the world).¹⁵

This thinking is counterintuitive for those who continue to see humans as separate from the rest of nature in the *scala naturae*. In this way Serres can be seen as another forerunner, with Glissant, of second-wave ecocriticism (commonly seen as arising since about 2000, identified and named by Lawrence Buell in 2005), which is more encompassing in scope than the more conservationist trend of the initial 1990s. The division is, of course, no clearer a line than that which separates centuries; rather, as always, cultural and socioeconomic changes tend to develop slowly. Most of first-wave of ecocriticism focused on what was seen as “pure” nature—lands from which, as Cronon observes, Indians in the United States were expelled. Concerns in the second wave of the still-emerging ecocritical field have widened to encompass not just humans’ treatment of the planet, but also our treatment of one another, as elements ourselves of the natural world.¹⁶ Questions of definition include exactly what “nature” comprises, leading to issues of phenomenology, materialism, colonialism and postcolonialism, capitalism, and socialism, among others.

Serres’ concept carries a radical notion that may be beyond what many second-wavers could abide: his natural contract acknowledges human power rather than attempting to mitigate it. Serres wants us to “considérer le point de vue du monde en sa totalité. . . . aujourd’hui la nature se définit par un ensemble de relations, dont le réseau unifie la Terre entière (consider the world’s point of view in its entirety. . . . today nature is defined by a set of relations, of which the network unifies the entire Earth).¹⁷ Even though he deplores pollution, Serres also sees it as simply existing. To begin repairing the damage wrought by humans, he expresses an all-inclusive view of the planet as it actually is.

In some ways this acceptance of ugly reality is similar to Glissant's view, as he articulates it in his novel *Tout-monde*. Glissant conceptualizes a unified whole as the functioning of chaos:

“L’immobile, le sur place, c’est au plein de Rond. L’éclat des pays crépète là comme une apparition. Ce qui est fixe pour vous éclabousse alentour. Pas besoin de bouger”

(The still, the on-site, this is actually the fullness of the circle. There, the splendor of countries blazes like an apparition. That which for you is stationary splashes elsewhere. No need to move).¹⁸

Where Serres sees a network, Glissant sees a world that coheres through the dynamism of forces in continuous movement, so that everything returns to its former place. In both visions everything in the world, including people, plants, animals, air, and sea, is bound together and also separated continuously. Rather than denying or trying to overcome anthropocentrism, as does much of ecocriticism, the more realistic approach is to accept it within the context of one's environment, which must also be considered fully and accepted. The fictional *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* Michel, François, Turenne, and Jean all do this to varying degrees.

They penetrate the wilderness for their own interests or those of their people, and they make use of it to ensure survival. They work with Indians as partners, but both sides of the partnership also deplete natural resources, despite the Indians' loud objections to this, as discussed in Chapter 4's analysis of *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*.

Tiziana Terranova addresses this question of the tension between human survival and that of other life forms through engaging Foucault's concepts relative to nature and ways in which humans perceive and use it. Citing mainly *Naissance de la biopolitique*, Terranova relies on its principal notions to identify mental paradigms that have resulted in contemporary systems where nature appears to exist solely for human consumption. "Can relations of cooperation displace the mechanisms of competition as the basis on which to found a new political rationality?"¹⁹ The question is echoed by other second-wave ecocritics including Nixon. In his effort to bring about a rapprochement between postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, he urges that we "reimagine the prevailing paradigms" by engaging "environmental politics through conflicts between subnational microminorities . . . and transnational macro-economic powers."²⁰ Put more simply, Nixon wants more cooperation between the two schools of thought that have neglected one another or even been dismissive, even though they share common concerns and can mutually strengthen their arguments and ultimate effectiveness in trying to improve the state of people and the planet.

Terranova concludes that for a cooperative model to displace competition, mental paradigms that motivate political action must change. The psychological model that places humans above all other life forms has been a foundation of Western thought since Aristotle's *scala naturae* and probably long before. Devious machinations for one's own advancement, equally ancient and possibly related to the survival instinct, constitute one of the main themes in *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*.

The analysis of these novels' portrayals of *coureurs* and *voyageurs* reveals a problematic that pertains to ecocriticism's quest to better understand the psychological

and material history of human-nature relations in order to improve prospects for the future. Greater environmental and intercultural awareness are needed for this, and the *coureurs de bois* can be seen as literary motifs representing both, even if not always in a positive way.

As the figure of the *coureur de bois* moves through the chronotopes expressed in *Forestiers et voyageurs*, *Maria Chapdelaine*, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*, and *Pélagie-la-charrette*, views of him change in ways that reveal big unconscious societal movements and preoccupations of each period. Taché, in his focus on national-identity creation, uses his period's preferred term of *voyageur* to give the work of the *coureur de bois* greater cachet while he enters folklore; Hémon kills him so that agriculture can thrive, reflecting his chronotope's priorities; Desrosiers explores his virtues and vices at a time when capitalist industrialism continues to gain momentum, as do moral social concerns; and Maillet, in the postcolonial period of Acadian cultural renaissance, paints him as a lifeline. In all of these works, *coureurs* go to the encounter of wilderness and Amerindians. They learn new languages and lifestyles, sometimes joining the cultural other. Some participate willingly in the capitalist machine; others represent a "counter-discourse" that opens up new horizons of thinking and possible modes of more collaborative living. When Jean à Pélagie stays in the forest of Pennsylvania with his Iroquois wife, he establishes a new intercultural family. As Birgitta Brown sees it, this marriage is instance of the "othering" that is "a precondition for situations of transculturation, signifying that othering is frequently dissolved by contacts of transculturation."²¹ Brown uses Maillet's novel to illustrate

these points. Serres' *Contrat naturel* would have us all take these concepts further and include nature in the family.

The way forward, as much of ecocriticism argues, must include intercultural efforts and collaboration as equals. The four novels analyzed in this dissertation portray *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* who operate in this collaborative mode within the realistic context of the need to make money. Far from perfect models, they nevertheless continue to serve as guides, even in today's tremendously diverse field of ecocriticism.

Future research could build on this dissertation or branch out from it. Staying with Taché alone, this author's extremely wide range of scientific writings (agriculture, entomology, "generalities," geology, horticulture, and zoology), along with his position as deputy minister of agriculture, holds possibilities for an inquiry into how these studies affected his creative writing. Maillet's Acadian focus, Rabelaisian influence, and large oeuvre also suggest fertile fields for mining literary tropes of ecocritical relevance. Beyond an ecocritical lens, or perhaps still within its purview, Métis authors who write in French may offer areas of research through their portrayals of connections, alienations, or both. How *coureurs de bois* appear in English Canadian literature could be of interest, especially if they are used differently than in French Canadian works. A comparison of novels from several Canadian cultures around a single theme could be revealing. For example, does Dany Laferrière see and use Canadian wilderness in his writings, and if so, how? Such an inquiry could be broadened to study trans-border literature from an ecocritical francophone point of

view. Potential future critical explorations, whether from perspectives of ecocriticism, postcolonialism, francophonie, or all of those, appear to abound.

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1980), 292.

² Ibid.

³ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, Ken Hiltner, ed. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 111.

⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁵ *Nationaliste* in the context of French-Canadian history refers not to all of Canada but exclusively to those lobbying for French-Canadian interests. See Robert Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 338.

⁶ Joseph-Charles Taché, “Le passeur de mitis,” *Forestiers et voyageurs: Moeurs et légendes canadiennes* (Montreal: Librairie Saint-Joseph, 1884 [1863]), 78.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Taché, “Les missionnaires,” 114, *Forestiers et voyageurs*.

⁹ Taché, “Les postes du roi,” 124, *Forestiers et voyageurs*.

¹⁰ Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine, Récit du Canada français* (Paris: Nelson Editeurs, 1938 [1916]), 51.

¹¹ Léo-Paul Desrosiers, *Les Engagés du Grand Portage* (Montreal: Fides, 1946 [1938]), 198.

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- ¹² Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1979), 206.
- ¹³ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.
- ¹⁴ Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 165–66.
- ¹⁵ Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1990), 78–79.
- ¹⁶ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005); Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*; Hiltner, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*.
- ¹⁷ Serres, *Le Contrat naturel*, 79.
- ¹⁸ Edouard Glissant, *Tout-monde* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1993), 495.
- ¹⁹ Tiziana Terranova, “Another Life: The Nature of Political Economy in Foucault’s Genealogy of Biopolitics,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (2009): 256.
- ²⁰ Rob Nixon, “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism,” in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, 205.
- ²¹ Birgitta Brown, “Transculturation in Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-Charrette*,” in *Lire Antonine Maillet à travers le temps et l’espace*, Marie-Linda Lord, ed. (Moncton: University of Moncton, Institut d’études acadiennes, 2010), 109.

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