

1987

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Elizabeth Helen Thompson

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THE PIONEER WOMAN: A CANADIAN CHARACTER TYPE

by

Elizabeth Helen Thompson

Department of English

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
June 1987

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ISBN 0-315-43315-9

other emigrant women to master the difficulties encountered and the skills required in the course of the pioneering experience. Yet Traill offsets her basic pragmatism with a strong moral bias and an obvious tendency to colour real events with a cheerful idealism. The highly idealized figure of the Canadian pioneer woman which results from this combination of realism and idealism is transposed by Traill into her fiction with the consequence that Traill has created what is, in effect, a new fictional character type: the pioneer heroine. When Canadian Crusoes is viewed against the background of The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, it becomes clear that Traill's pioneer heroine, Catharine Maxwell, is a mixture of fact and fancy--an idealistic reinterpretation of real life on the frontier of nineteenth-century Upper Canada.

The continuity between Traill's characterization of women and the characterization of women in subsequent Canadian fiction cannot be denied or ignored. Various versions of the pioneer woman appear with great regularity in English-Canadian fiction throughout the hundred years following her development of the character type in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, frontier days in Canada, certainly in eastern Canada, were rapidly coming to an end, and the pioneer woman, as she had been identified by Traill, was becoming a figure from the past. Yet, the pioneer woman continued to appear in English-Canadian fiction, as for example, Sara Jeannette

The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Character Type

ABSTRACT

A female character type, one which is arguably unique to Canada, can be found in English-Canadian fiction from the time of the earliest creative writing, up to and including the present time. By virtue of her historical origins, this character type should be labelled the "pioneer woman" since her creation was, in fact, grounded in the actuality of the pioneer experience, and on details of that experience that were reconstructed and reinterpreted in fiction, often through a moralistic or idealistic filter.

In The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855), Catharine Parr Traill described a pioneer woman's role on the Ontario frontier of the mid-nineteenth century, mingling fact with fancy to paint an idealized portrait of the Canadian pioneer woman. Traill's transposition of this figure into fiction, as for example, Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes (1852), resulted in her creation of what was, in effect, a new fictional character type: the pioneer woman.

Various versions of the pioneer woman appear in English-Canadian fiction throughout the hundred years following Traill's development of the character type. Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) and Ralph Connor's The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902) feature pioneer women who cope on a real physical

frontier and also cope with a new type of frontier environment, one grounded in social and personal concerns rather than in the physical landscape. The longevity of the pioneer woman as character type in fiction is further demonstrated in the fiction of Margaret Laurence. Hagar Shipley of The Stone Angel (1964), Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God (1966), and Morag Gunn of The Diviners (1974) inhabit an internal, personal frontier. Like Duncan's Advena Murchison and Connor's Mrs. Murray, they are more contemporary versions of Traill's pioneer woman. All exhibit traits which link them to Traill's original model of the pioneer; all are part of a creative continuity which extends from Traill to Laurence and beyond.

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Introduction

A female character type, one which is arguably unique to Canada, can be found in English-Canadian fiction from the time of the earliest Canadian creative writing, up to and including the present time. By virtue of her historical origins, this character type should be labelled the "pioneer woman" since her creation was, in fact, grounded in the actuality of the pioneer experience, and on details of the experience that were reconstructed and reinterpreted in fiction, often through a moralistic or idealistic filter. The pioneer woman has become a part of Canadian social mythology, and appears to have made the transition from being the creation of a "mythical concept" evident in the work of the pioneer writer Catharine Parr Traill, as in her The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855), to being an accepted and essential aspect of female characterization in Canadian fiction. As Northrop Frye says in his "Conclusion" to the Literary History of Canada:

Literature is conscious mythology: as society develops, its mythical stories become structural principles of story-telling, its mythical concepts, sun-gods and the like, become habits of metaphorical thought. In a fully mature literary tradition the writer enters into a structure of traditional stories and images.²

The direct antecedents of the pioneer woman as character type in fiction were the real pioneers who settled in Upper Canada during the early nineteenth century and who created a new life and a new social mythology for themselves.

Pioneering in Canada must have been a disorienting experience.

rience for the nineteenth-century female emigrants.³ Far from home, separated from friends and family, such emigrants as Catharine Parr Traill, who documented her pioneer experiences in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, faced daunting new tasks in a strange and occasionally dangerous environment. In order to cope with their situation, women were forced to learn new domestic skills and to redefine their feminine role within the family unit and within the society around them. In "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Pioneering in Canada," Virginia Rouslin defines Canadian pioneer women as "heroines,"⁴ drawing attention specifically to a small group of highly educated and articulate settlers--Susanna Moodie, Mary O'Brien, Catharine Traill, and Anna Jameson (Rouslin includes Jameson despite the fact that this particular woman was a pioneer traveller rather than a pioneer settler)--women who were able not only to cope with their new environment but also to provide suggestions for others. Drawing upon her academic background and upon her social training as an English gentlewoman, each woman outlines a new role for women, a role suited to "a new land which had not yet had the time to make social proscriptions as to who should do what...."⁵ The picture of the typical pioneer woman which emerges from these (and other)⁶ pioneer writings is of a self-assured, confident woman, one who adapts cheerfully to adverse circumstances, one who is capable and active in an emergency, one who plays a vital role in pioneering. In short, in the course of their own pioneer-

ing endeavours, women such as Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie outlined a new feminine ideal--the Canadian pioneer woman. As Rouslin points out:

...one sees that these women writers were fighting to establish a new tradition in non-fiction for female readers, both in Europe and in Canada. It involved reflecting, as best they could, the actual environment in which they lived, from the distinctly female point of view--something that was not covered in male versions, which often idealized pioneering. It was an attempt to translate and transmit what might well be termed a minority point of view, in terms of its publication....Jameson (along with the other writers), recorded and gave to us a new role for the intelligent and well-educated woman. It was a celebration of another facet of women's lives--and not the dirge we might have believed was the only song written for our pioneer women.⁷

As has been noted, Catharine Traill was one of these articulate women who defined a pioneer woman's role on the Canadian frontier. Because she published her conclusions in fiction such as Canadian Crusoes (1852) as well as non-fictional works such as The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill becomes the single most important contributor to the creation of a new, Canadian, concept of women--the pioneer woman--in both an historical and a literary sense. Through an examination of Traill's work, it will be seen that Rouslin's analysis of the creation of the pioneer "heroine" in non-fiction applies equally well to fiction.

In The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill was as accurate as possible in her depiction of a Canadian settler's life because she was attempting to help

other emigrant women to master the difficulties encountered and the skills required in the course of the pioneering experience. Yet Traill offsets her basic pragmatism with a strong moral bias and an obvious tendency to colour real events with a cheerful idealism. The highly idealized figure of the Canadian pioneer woman which results from this combination of realism and idealism is transposed by Traill into her fiction with the consequence that Traill has created what is, in effect, a new fictional character type: the pioneer heroine. When Canadian Crusoes is viewed against the background of The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, it becomes clear that Traill's pioneer heroine, Catharine Maxwell, is a mixture of fact and fancy--an idealistic reinterpretation of real life on the frontier of nineteenth-century Upper Canada.

The continuity between Traill's characterization of women and the characterization of women in subsequent Canadian fiction cannot be denied or ignored. Various versions of the pioneer woman appear with great regularity in English-Canadian fiction throughout the hundred years following her development of the character type in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, frontier days in Canada, certainly in eastern Canada, were rapidly coming to an end, and the pioneer woman, as she had been identified by Traill, was becoming a figure from the past. Yet, the pioneer woman continued to appear in English-Canadian fiction, as for example, Sara Jeannette

Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) and Ralph Connor's The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902).

The pattern of settlement in Canada--a slow movement from the East to the West and the North--ensures that any date assigned as the ending period of a Canadian frontier must surely be an arbitrary one. It is certain, however, that by the end of the nineteenth century, pioneer days in southern Ontario, and in eastern Canada generally, had ended, while the northern and western frontiers were still being settled well into the twentieth century. (Indeed, the Canadian North can, with some justification, be regarded as the last remaining frontier.) The turn of the century, then, constitutes a turning point of sorts in the settlement of English Canada and, in their fiction, Duncan and Connor document this period of transition from frontier to civilization. Consequently, their novels echo back to the past to feature pioneer women who cope on a real, physical frontier, and echo forward to the future to feature pioneer women who cope with a new type of frontier environment, one grounded in social and personal concerns rather than in the physical landscape.

In The Imperialist Duncan creates an heir to Traill's ideal pioneer woman in her characterization of Mrs. Murchison. With the figure of Advena Murchison, however, Duncan creates a revitalized version of the pioneer woman as character type in fiction, one which is influenced by her awareness of contemporary social issues in Canada. A

will be demonstrated, Advena's frontier--her choice of a career as a teacher--is closely related to the social theories of Canadian feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his Glengarry books Connor also utilizes the character of the pioneer woman as she had been defined by Traill. His Mrs. Murray in such novels as The Man From Glengarry and Glengarry School Days is based on his knowledge of the lives of pioneer women in nineteenth-century Ontario, and his Mrs. Mavor of Black Rock (1898) is based on his knowledge of pioneer life in the Northwest. Like Duncan, Connor continues to develop and to expand the character type so that the pioneer woman can have relevance in a post-frontier society. Thus, while the historical origins of Connor's female pioneers are always apparent, his modification of the pioneer woman and the frontier that she inhabits ventures into the realm of religious metaphor. It will be argued in the following pages that these later appearances of the pioneer woman in fiction, for example Duncan's Advena Murchison and Connor's Mrs. Murray, are derived from Traill's pioneer woman, or, when no such debt can be demonstrated, that all exhibit traits which link them to the original model.

The longevity of the pioneer woman as character type is further demonstrated in the twentieth-century fiction of Margaret Laurence. Hagar Shipley of The Stone Angel (1964), Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God (1966), and Morag Gunn of The Diviners (1974) inhabit a frontier which would be unfamiliar

territory to Traill since, in Laurence's work, the frontier is an internal, personal one. Yet, each of Laurence's protagonists, like Duncan's Avena in The Imperialist and Connor's Mrs. Murray in The Man From Glengarry and Glengarry School Days, is a contemporary version of Traill's pioneer woman. The appearance of Traill in The Diviners effectively establishes a connection between Catharine Traill, the nineteenth-century backwoods pioneer, and Morag Gunn, the twentieth-century pioneer. While the differences between Catharine and Morag are immediately obvious to Morag, she learns, in the course of the narrative, to recognize and to appreciate their similarities. Morag admires Traill and seeks her counsel only to discover that she already knows what Traill has to say; furthermore, she realizes that she already acts correctly on her individual frontier. Traill's advice to pioneer women is a part of her personal legacy; Morag is the descendent of pioneers and is a pioneer herself.

The appearance of the pioneer woman as character type changes and evolves in the century which separates Traill's work from Laurence's fiction. The frontier is redefined several times, and with the redefinition comes a corresponding change in the nature of the pioneering process. (or, the pioneer woman's interaction with the frontier). To begin with, the term "pioneering process," used in connection with Traill's fiction refers to the pioneer woman's interaction with a real, physical place. Then, in later fiction, such as that of Duncan and Connor, the pioneering process

also becomes a metaphor for social and religious conflict. Finally, in the contemporary fiction of Laurence, the pioneering process is internalized, referring to a personal dilemma to be solved by the pioneer protagonist. Despite the shifting nature of the frontier territory, however, the pioneer woman as character type remains readily identifiable. Certain essential qualities are retained: the ability to act decisively and quickly in cases of emergency, and the strength to accept adverse circumstances on the frontier, combined with the courage to attempt an improvement of these frontier conditions. Finally, then, in Canadian fiction, "the gray little woman back home, standing over the coal stove"¹⁰ is often a heroine. While Frederick Philip Grove may be correct when he says, "A pioneering world... is a man's world,"¹¹ a world in which "woman is the slave,"¹² and is "relegated to the tasks of a helper,"¹³ it becomes clear that many writers have approached the pioneering experiences of Canadian women with a much more positive attitude.

Rouslin comments:

...it seems fit to reconsider whom we should include in our list of past heroes and heroines who have gone before us into the wilderness, prepared the way for others to follow, and who have left us, as Frye believes, a "legacy of dignity and high courage."¹²

Chief among any list of Canadian heroines should be Catharine Parr Traill. Traill's model for the ideal Canadian pioneer woman, described by her in non-fiction such as The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, and incorporated into her fiction, as Canadian Crusoes, "prepared the way for

others to follow." Traill's "conscious mythology"¹³--her creation of the pioneer woman--left a "legacy of dignity and high courage"¹⁴ which other women might emulate in their lives and which other writers might employ in their fiction.

Notes

¹ Northrop Frye, "Conclusion" to the Literary History of Canada, in The Bush Garden. Essays on The Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 232.

² Frye, "Conclusion," pp. 232-233.

³ See Jean Burnet, ed., Looking Into My Sister's Eyes: An Exploration in Women's History (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1986) for an exploration of the ways in which emigration to a new country was the same for a wide variety of women, from nineteenth-century English gentlewomen to twentieth-century Italian women.

⁴ Virginia Watson Rouslin, "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Pioneering in Canada," Dalhousie Review, 56, No. 2 (Summer 1976), 319.

⁵ Rouslin, "Pioneering," p. 328.

⁶ See also Anne Lancton, A Gentlewoman in Upper Canada, The Journals of Anne Lancton, ed., H. H. Lancton (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1950) and Louis Fivv, ed., Your Loving Anna, Letters From the Ontario Frontier (1972; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

⁷ Rouslin, "Pioneering," p. 331.

⁸ Rouslin, "Pioneering," p. 319.

⁹ Frederick Philip Grove, In Search of Myself, introd. D. O. Sottique, New Canadian Library, No. 94, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 224.

¹⁰ Grove, Myself, pp. 223-224.

¹¹ Grove, Myself, p. 224.

¹² Rouslin, "Pioneering," p. 319; see also Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," p. 251; Rouslin cites Kildare Dobbs, "Canadian Heroes?" in Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, ed. William Kilbourn (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 23.

¹³ Frye, "Conclusion," p. 232.

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Frye, "Conclusion," p. 251.

The Fiction of Catharine Parr Traill

Catharine Parr Traill is probably best known for her two non-fictional accounts of pioneer life in Upper Canada--The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855). In both of these works Traill wrote about her personal experiences in the Canadian backwoods, describing Canadian life for a primarily British reading public and offering useful advice to new and prospective Canadian emigrants. What is less commonly known, however, is that, in addition to The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill also produced a large quantity of fiction. Although Traill's best fiction, such as Canadian Crusoes (1852), was written in Canada, and hence probably reflects her Canadian experiences, her writing career did not begin here. Nor were her fictional topics restricted to the retelling of her Canadian adventures. Pearls and Pebbles, for example, published in 1895, contains a collection of stories which span Traill's long career as a writer, from "The Swiss Herdboy and his Alpine Mouse," written when Traill was fifteen years old, to "The First Death in the Clearing," a story based on Traill's own Canadian experiences that originally appeared as "The Bereavement" in The Literary Garland in 1866. Unfortunately, much of Traill's fiction seems dated and tedious today. This stems from Traill's apparent desire to instruct rather than to entertain her reader. Traill continually interrupts her narratives to clarify a point, to relate an anecdote that is somehow connected to the main narrative, to add details of

natural history which are, at best, only tenuously relevant to the story, or to reiterate and to reinforce a moral issue. Consequently, Traill's fiction is, for the most part, incompatible with contemporary tastes, and has remained in relative obscurity.

Yet the obscurity into which Traill's fiction has fallen remains regrettable because, despite the unevenness of a narrative style that derives from the author's determination to instruct and to enlighten her reader, some aspects of Traill's fiction were fresh and innovative at the time of writing. Even in her earliest works she was, on occasion, a breaker of new fictional ground, particularly in the realm of female characterization.

Of central importance for the present discussion is the fact that a number of Traill's female protagonists--most notably the women in her Canadian books--differ markedly from standard depictions of women in popular mid-nineteenth century British fiction. While she could recreate common type characters in her fiction (as for example, Emma in "The Primrose Girl," of 1823), Traill was able to go beyond the boundaries imposed by type-casting and to create some unique and truly memorable heroines (such as Downy in Little Downy of 1822).

Moreover, in her Canadian books, Traill was somewhat of a pioneer in the writing of fiction that could with some justification be labelled "Canadian." She was one of the first writers to use a Canadian setting throughout a work

of fiction and one of the first to feature a Canadian-born heroine in a novel--the Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes. Other writers, such as Traill's own sister, Susanna Moodie, who was also a Canadian emigrant, continued to produce fiction with a British setting and to employ female protagonists who were representative of the most commonly selected heroine of nineteenth-century British fiction--the English lady.¹

A standard and relatively unchanging list of traits continued to define an English lady throughout the greater part of nineteenth-century British fiction, and a lady was always immediately recognizable as such by her appearance, her skills, her manners, and her way of life.² In brief, the lady belongs to the middle and upper classes of English society, and is accustomed to a life of leisure in which she can display her many decorative, drawing-room talents. Catharine Traill was no doubt aware of this particular tradition of female characterization in fiction. Indeed, Emma, the youthful protagonist of "The Primrose Girl," is a stereotypical example of a lady of the period: she is wealthy, pampered, accustomed to an idle existence. Yet one of Traill's most important contributions to literature, specifically to Canadian literature, was to break with this tradition of female characterization and to begin the development of a character type which did not fit the rather rigid set of conditions and terms defining a lady. While the inclination to literary independence that would lead to the development of the pioneer

heroine may have begun before Traill's emigration to Canada, it was quite likely aided by her exposure to a new way of life in the Canadian backwoods, where old standards governing the behaviour appropriate to a lady were no longer applicable.

One of Traill's earliest and most enjoyable children's books, Little Downy; or, The History of a Field-Mouse (1822), a work which sets a precedent for much of the later female character delineation in Traill's Canadian-based books, features the life and times of a female field-mouse. While this particular work has no connection with Canada, with Traill's subsequent emigration to Canada, or with her production of literature with Canadian settings, themes, and characters, it is an important beginning-point in a study of Traill's fiction from a feminine perspective. It substantiates the idea that Traill was capable of ignoring, or, rather, of rising above, the limitations imposed by a strict observance of convention. Despite her evident belief that moral instruction was an essential aspect of children's literature, Traill produced in Little Downy a work that was innovative and, more important, a heroine who is engaging and real--both as a mouse and as a female. For example, Downy's lapse into slothful enjoyment of the kitchen garden, after her previous experiences of constant hard work and danger, makes her one of the most delightfully fallible heroines of Traill's fiction. And this early refusal to be bound by convention in the development of a female character anticipates the

characterization of women in Traill's Canadian books.

Little Downy was published in 1822, while Traill was still living in England. In the following year, "The Primrose Girl, or, Little Emma's Birth-day," was published as one of a series of short stories in The Tell Tale: An Original Collection of Moral and Amusing Stories. Both Little Downy and "The Primrose Girl" were written for children; both revolve around the actions and the personality of a central female character; both are intended to be moral tales. Yet the two narratives are often extremely dissimilar. On the one hand, in Little Downy, Traill occasionally ignores the common conventions of characterization in a moral tale, and produces an engaging and unique heroine. On the other hand, however, in "The Primrose Girl," Traill falls victim to her own overriding sense of moral purpose. The heroine is never very real; Traill seemingly cannot break free from the restrictions imposed by type-casting. This difference in the stories and in their female protagonists ensures that Emma Selwyn, the heroine and model Tady of "The Primrose Girl," provides an interesting foil and counterpoint to Downy, the field-mouse heroine of Little Downy.

Aside from the fact that they are both female, Little Downy and Little Emma are vastly dissimilar. Their differences extend beyond the obvious biological gulf which exists between a rodent and a human child. Emma is a flat, wooden, one-dimensional character, used by Traill primarily to illustrate a specific moral precept, namely the virtue of

charity. Little Downy is a more realistic character, true to the biological traits and the life of a field-mouse. In addition, she is, paradoxically, more "human" than is Emma.

Emma is a version of the English "lady," a character type used extensively in the English fiction of the period, and who generally exhibits the way of life, the traits, and the behaviour expected (rather, demanded) of the proper lady of the nineteenth century. Emma is an exact replica of a lady and never deviates from the norm.³ She possesses no traits that are less than perfect. She is intended to be an exemplary child, a character to be emulated. She belongs to a leisured, privileged, upper-middle-class society which can afford to support the relatively idle existence of its female members, a society which is eternally aware of its social status, and which reinforces perpetually a rigid class structure. When Emma's beloved old nurse, Susannah, arrives for a visit, Emma is friendly and welcoming, but Susannah is sent to the housekeeper's room for refreshment. As a member of the privileged section of society, Emma has been surrounded by material comforts and beauty; she has been catered to by loving parents; she is accustomed to the services of a large number of devoted servants. Consider the contrast between the life of Emma, a "blooming rose"⁴ who has her own flower garden to enjoy, and that of the poor primrose girl who must sell flowers to eke out a survival for herself and her mother. Emma is the protagonist, the character chosen to be the model, the heroine. The beggar girl is included only to

serve as the object of Emma's charity. Emma also possesses the education, the decorative skills and accomplishments, and the appearance of a lady:⁵ she is beautiful; she can recite flawlessly the "Beggar's Petition" at her birthday party; and she is also becomingly modest about her talents. A lady does not flaunt her abilities⁶ and Emma accepts her well-deserved praise with a lady's habitual modesty. Rich, pampered, idle, well-educated, morally sound, possessing decorative skills, and decorative herself--these are, as has been seen, trademark qualities of the lady of the nineteenth century, and Emma has them all.

Emma's primary reason for existence in fiction is to display acts of charity: Indeed, her character has been created to personify charity and the plot is designed to demonstrate charity in action. In case anyone has missed the point, Traill interrupts her story to observe:

...we must not look with contempt upon servants because they are our inferiors; for they are not only useful to us, but they are also our fellow-creatures, and sometimes prove our friends, and there is nothing more unbecoming in young persons than to speak uncivilly to those who are employed in their service. I hope you will remember this, my young reader, and never pout, or look cross at persons who do their duty towards you, in that humbler station in which it has pleased Providence to place them. (p. 167)

The various objects of Emma's charity are, without exception, individuals belonging to a lower class in society. Her good deeds include buying flowers from the primrose seller, as well as giving her a piece of birthday cake, giving money to her nurse and serving her some refreshments. These are small

but tangible deeds of charity. But, in Traill's view, the acts alone are not enough. Much is made of the fact that Emma does these things 'naturally'. Although she belongs to the upper stratum of society, she is neither proud nor ashamed to be seen talking to poor people. Because of her "amiable disposition and gentle manners" (p. 167) she is universally loved by her social inferiors. This innate goodness is a common trademark of a lady, who dispenses charity as naturally as she breathes.⁷

Emma's social exchanges with her inferiors never overstep the boundaries imposed by the rules of polite society: she is always the beggar girl's social superior. Just as Emma is a lady who is meant to give charity, so the Primrose girl is a beggar who, by virtue of her inferior station in life, is meant to receive charity. The beggar, like Emma, is an ideal of her type: she is extremely poor, but she works hard, is kind to her mother, and accepts Emma's assistance with genuine gratitude as a good beggar girl should. Neither girl is a rounded character, or particularly interesting. Finally then, in "The Primrose Girl," Traill follows the dictates of type-casting. Emma Selwyn is a lady. Hers is the dull, flat, uninteresting portrait of an ideal child, ideal by virtue of her social background, by virtue of her possession of the appearance, accomplishments, manners, and moral attitudes which define an English lady. Emma's character has been created solely to illustrate a moral precept; her actions illustrate the precept in action. For the

the experiences of these women as pioneers in Canada. The central dilemma of the book--the question of most concern to the young female emigrants, and also, one would assume, of greatest interest to a British middle-class reading public--is the issue of one's social status in Canada. Can a woman remain a lady in Canada, living as a Canadian pioneer, and performing what are essentially "unladylike" tasks? Each section of the story tackles this crucial issue.

The Clarence women are most definitely ladies. The social status of the Clarence family, and by extension the status of its female members, is established quite quickly in the first segment of The Young Emigrants. Because of the family's middle-class background, certain assumptions can be made about the daily life, the education, and the social habits and skills of its female members. The women, Ellen, Agnes, and Mrs. Clarence, have been sheltered and protected; they have been accustomed to a life in which women are expected to be somewhat frail, decorative ornaments rather than robust, useful household workers. Consider the reactions of the women to the news of the declining family fortunes which will necessitate giving up the family estate and accepting a lower rank in society:

"Give up Roselands, papa!" exclaimed Ellen, bursting into tears. "Where shall we go if we leave this place, so dear to us all?" "Ah! dearest mamma, what will become of us all?" asked Agnes, in a tone of great distress.¹³

The women are not alone in expressing fear of the future.

This is a genuine concern of a suddenly impoverished family,

detached, almost scientific, eye far exceeds her ability to invent sentimental, moral tales such as "The Primrose Girl."

A clue to understanding the greater readability of Little Downy and to appreciating the unique nature of the field-mouse heroine can be discovered in the knowledge that, unlike "The Primrose Girl," which emphasizes moral instruction, Little Downy is essentially an amoral tale. The underlying amorality of the story derives from the fact that Traill is describing an animal rather than a human world. Downy is first introduced living with her family, quite contentedly and comfortably, in a farmer's wheat stack. The wheat stack is destroyed subsequently by the farmer, and dogs are turned loose on Downy and the others. Most of the mice are killed but, by a stroke of luck, Downy manages to escape. Although Downy proves to be a superior mouse, the most kind-hearted, the "prettiest," "the wisest and the best" of her family, her narrow escape is not due to any intrinsic moral virtue. She is "the most worthy" (p. 8), but it is a simple (amoral) fact of life that, in an animal world, death may come at any time, from any direction, and even the wisest and best mouse cannot escape her fate. Downy is merely luckier than the rest of her family and hides underneath a clod of earth during the slaughter.

Thus, while in "The Primrose Girl," everything plot, setting, character--serves to body forth the story's moral, in Little Downy, the abstraction of a moral purpose is made more difficult by the amorality of an animal world where vir-

tue may not be rewarded. From the story of Downy alone a moral is not clear. The element of chance dominates the action. To offset the amorality of Downy's life, Traill sets the mouse's adventures within a frame. A woman, Mrs. Clifford, is telling her son, Alfred, the story of Downy's life. As Mrs. Clifford narrates the story, she reminds Alfred of his minor transgressions, and attempts by means of awakening his sympathies to teach him compassion towards all less fortunate creatures. He has called for the death of a marauding mouse and this has upset his mother:

Mrs. Clifford was much grieved that her little Alfred shewed so much inclination to be cruel and revengeful, two qualities so dangerous in a child, or in any one; and she knew that, unless it was timely checked, it would grow into a habit. (p. 7)

In itself, the frame is uninteresting and not essential to the main plot, being connected only tenuously by the suggestion that the "ugly brown mouse" (p. 5) which has eaten Alfred's plum cake, thereby arousing his ire and his desire for revenge, is Downy's daughter Velvet. The frame exists solely to aid the advancement of a moral thesis, and in the overall narrative structure, the story of Mrs. Clifford and her son Alfred recedes into the background as Downy dominates the tale.

Traill's attention to biological detail in Little Downy has ensured that Downy is a more true-to-life character than Alfred, who, like Emma Selwyn, exists only to serve a moral function. The real strength of the characterization of Downy, however, stems from her human and undeniably female

qualities, qualities that invite comparison with others of Traill's female protagonists. When Downy makes mistakes which endanger her life, for example, these errors can be excused partially by the amoral nature of the animal world. The realization that Downy is a mouse, and therefore possesses a limited intelligence, makes these mistakes probable and, indeed, inevitable. Yet, Traill also intends these mistakes to be perceived as errors in judgment or as "human," particularly female, fallibility. As soon as Downy discovers the farm garden, she begins to luxuriate in idleness: "Downy did nothing but eat and enjoy herself the whole day, and did not think of returning home that day, nor for many days afterwards..." (p. 20). The result is that Downy becomes fat and lazy; she is nearly caught and killed by the farm cats. As a female protagonist, Downy is a more dynamic, balanced, and rounded character than is Emma Selwyn. Emma is almost a caricature because she epitomizes only good qualities, whereas Downy, a basically "good" character, is allowed to have faults. Downy makes mistakes and learns from these mistakes.

Also very feminine, and very human, is Downy's love of fair and "marriage." She has the great misfortune to meet and to fall in love with an idle, though very handsome, young mouse, Silket. Seduced by his great beauty, she is made very unhappy by his actions until she manages partially to reform him. Many of the ingredients for sentimental fiction exist in this situation--the honest, hard working young woman falls

in love with and marries the handsome and indolent scoundrel--but this line of development is never followed fully. Perhaps Downy has made a mistake but she lives with the consequences. Traill's narrative continues to combine human and animal probability.

There are some other factors which separate Downy from the general rank and file of ordinary heroines of English fiction and which anticipate Traill's creation of a new character type in her Canadian fiction. For example, although Downy could perhaps be termed "ladylike" in her habits and her appearance, she is not a "lady." She is neat, but plain in appearance. She is neither beautiful nor delicate, and her daily existence in no way resembles the life of a lady. Except for a brief hiatus in the kitchen garden when she lives in "idleness and luxury" (p. 25), Downy is hard-working. She builds her own house, finds her food, and supports her family, including her husband. Unlike Emma Selwyn, she must fend for herself. She is never sheltered or protected. Her survival depends on her consistently quick reactions in times of danger. This is a daily struggle which is far removed from the pampered life of the English lady. Indeed, Downy's working-class experiences bear more resemblance to the life of the primrose seller in "The Primrose Girl" than to the life of the lady. The living conditions can, of course, be explained by noting that Downy is a mouse. Yet the fact remains that the character of Downy promotes a vastly different image of femininity than that projected by

Emma Selwhyn.

The appearance of the worker, Downy, as opposed to the lady, Emma, as protagonist is relatively rare in English fiction of the early nineteenth century. Independent, self-sufficient, working-class women were seldom the topic of fiction. When they appeared, they were often unimportant, peripheral figures, or they were rapidly promoted to a higher class. By using a mouse as heroine Traill can begin to explore the possibilities of development and change in female characterization without challenging her readers' expectations or offending their sensibilities. Downy can thus be seen as a cautious experiment. On the one hand, Traill conforms to social and literary tradition by insisting that appropriate behaviour is defined by one's background and personal life. On the other hand, through Downy, Traill begins to redefine appropriate behaviour for female protagonists in fiction and to indicate that more than one female character type may be a suitable heroine.

The other female protagonists in Traill's pre-Canadian fiction, characters such as Ellen and Agnes Clarence in The Young Emigrants (1826) generally fail to live up to the promise indicated in the characterization of the field-mouse in Little Downy. By and large, the women in The Young Emigrants, Mrs. Clarence, Ellen, and Agnes, resemble Emma Selwhyn of "The Primrose Girl" and are recreations of a model English lady of the nineteenth century. For the most part, the stories that feature these stereotypical female charac-

ters are moral tales. The result is that plot action revolves around the development of the moral purpose and that characterization is flat and one dimensional, designed to illustrate and to augment the story's moral precepts.¹¹ In The Young Emigrants, for example, Traill employs standard character types and continues her practice of using fiction to instruct. But, to a certain extent, the novel deviates from the ordinary, and Ruth Marks in her Preface to The Young Emigrants notes that this particular story is an important, and, indeed, a pivotal one in the development of Traill's fiction:

In surveying Catharine Parr Traill's work it is apparent that the major factor in its development was her emigration to Canada. It released her from the strictures which made her early stories for little children immature in style, palely reflecting the qualities of warmth and grace, honesty and candor which she later revealed. The Young Emigrants anticipated the vigorous writer she was to become.¹²

While Marks may be overstating the case somewhat, The Young Emigrants does illustrate some of Traill's major concerns as a writer, as well as indicating the direction her later fiction was to take.

In The Young Emigrants Traill follows the fortunes of an English family which is forced to emigrate to Canada because of financial problems. Written before Traill herself had emigrated, the book demonstrates her early interest in Canada, and her readiness to incorporate new settings and new ideas into her fiction. Traill further deviates from the ordinary in The Young Emigrants in her confrontation and

analysis of the problems which beset the pioneer emigrant.

Forced by decreased income to choose between the reduced circumstances and the inevitable fall in social status which would accompany poverty, and the possibility of building a new life in Canada, the middle-class Clarence family decides to emigrate. As characters, the female members of the family are, like Emma Selwyn of "The Primrose Girl," included in the narrative primarily to serve a purpose; distinct from Emma, however, that purpose is not limited to the illustration of a particular moral precept. Like the Selwyns, the Clarence women belong to an affluent English middle-class and have been accustomed to a life of ease and luxury; they are members of a class which pampers and protects its female members. As a result, Ellen and Agnes Clarence are, at the outset of The Young Emigrants, essentially uninteresting representatives of the standard English lady. They possess the traits and qualities typical of their social rank, and are reproductions of the ideal pattern. Their story becomes interesting (and Ruth Marks' high praise of The Young Emigrants somewhat justified) when Traill deals with the plight of this type of woman in a Canadian frontier environment and analyzes the changes in daily life which would necessarily accompany a move to the new world.

The Young Emigrants can be divided into three interconnected and overlapping sections: the life and habits of the Clarence women as middle-class English ladies; the preparations made for emigration by the Clarence family; and

the experiences of these women as pioneers in Canada. The central dilemma of the book--the question of most concern to the young female emigrants, and also, one would assume, of greatest interest to a British middle-class reading public--is the issue of one's social status in Canada. Can a woman remain a lady in Canada, living as a Canadian pioneer, and performing what are essentially "unladylike" tasks? Each section of the story tackles this crucial issue.

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"Give up Roselands, papa!" exclaimed Ellen, bursting into tears. "Where shall we go if we leave this place, so dear to us all?" "Ah! dearest mamma, what will become of us all?" asked Agnes, in a tone of great distress.¹²

The women are not alone in expressing fear of the future.

This is a genuine concern of a suddenly impoverished family,

a family unaccustomed to the thought of working to survive. Both Richard and Mr. Clarence are apprehensive about the possible loss of a "genteel livelihood" (p. 4). They are "loath" to "descend into the lower ranks of society" (p. 4). The men generally are made of sterner stuff than the women, however, and Mr. Clarence proposes emigration. Richard supports the plan. As befits their frail, emotional, female nature, the women are less optimistic. Ellen says, "I am sure I never can bear to live in America" (p. 5). Agnes is reduced to total silence: "Agnes did not speak but her tears flowed silently over the work she vainly attempted to continue" (p. 5). The real concern of these women is the consequence to them of a fall in social standing. Since Ellen and Agnes define themselves as ladies, a loss of status would be tantamount to a loss of personal identity. Moreover, being pampered, they are physically untrained and mentally unprepared for the impending switch to a labouring-class existence in either North America or England. Ellen raises the most important issue confronting the prospective gentlewoman emigrant when she asks her brother:

In America, what will be the use of those accomplishments, that Agnes and I have spent so much time in attaining? Will not our skill in music, French, and drawing, be all thrown away, among the wild woods of Canada? (p. 11)

Richard Clarence's response indicates Mill's own solution to the problem, and, incidentally, anticipates her backwoods books of advice to emigrant women. Richard feels that the girls will be able to reconcile the apparently incompat-

ible roles of refined lady and hard-working pioneer woman. He further states that the accomplishments known only to a lady will be certain to enrich her life as an emigrant, making her a better pioneer. He says to Ellen:

"My dear sister"... "if you see things in their right light, you will perceive that your French will be useful to you in conversing with the Canadians, who speak that language. MUSIC will cheer our evenings, after the toils of the day; and as to drawing, remember, Ellen, how many beautiful flowers Canada produces, which will form new and interesting studies for your pencil. You have hitherto made these accomplishments the sole employment of your life; but now a higher duty awaits you, and more active pursuits. Your more elegant attainments will still serve as a pleasing relaxation from graver studies, and more toilsome occupation; but they must no longer form the business of your life."

(pp. 11-12)

Traill indicates here that a lady will always maintain her status as a lady, even on a wild Canadian frontier, and, moreover, she states her enduring belief that a lady's many decorative accomplishments will continue to enrich her life no matter what her circumstances.

The Clarence girls accept Richard's well-meant and extremely optimistic advice and, in the second segment of The Young Emigrants, Agnes begins to seek practical solutions to her dilemma, and to prepare for emigration. In the process, she starts to alter some of her normal patterns of behaviour. Agnes' first practical decision is to follow the lead of her brother Richard. She stays on an English farm for a short period of time in order to acquire the knowledge and skills she will need in the Canadian backwoods. In what is seen as

kind condescension by the farmer and his wife, Agnes lives in the farmer's "humble home" (p. 19) and learns the tasks of a farm woman. For example, she is taught "the management of cows and poultry" (p. 19). This, of course, is not ordinarily part of the education of the English lady, and may be perceived as degrading, since, in the Clarence family's experience, menial tasks are more commonly performed by members of an inferior, labouring class. Yet, in this portion of The Young Emigrants, Traill endeavours to preserve the illusion of the gentility of her characters. She insists that Agnes is no less a lady because she can make butter and cheese. Mrs. Clarence is pleased with her daughter's pragmatism and defends her actions: "Why," said she, "should these offices be unbecoming to a lady, merely because they are useful?" (p. 20). With the expression of this point of view by Mrs. Clarence, Traill has begun her crusade of insisting that the tasks performed by Canadian pioneer women are not incompatible with gentility, and are, in fact, appropriate duties for a lady on a frontier. In The Young Emigrants, Traill is developing her own theories about emigration and about a woman's role in a new environment. These theories are repeated at greater length in Traill's two backwoods memoirs, The Backwoods of Canada, and The Canadian Settler's Guide, and are most fully utilized in fiction through the creation of Catharine Maxwell, the Canadian-born pioneer heroine of Canadian Crusoes.

The pivotal moral issue in the story of the young

emigrants in the Clarence family, as well as the major determining factor in the girls' change of heart regarding emigration and the single most important ingredient in successful pioneering, is the belief that one must submit cheerfully to the will of God. Once the Clarence girls have faced the fact that their poverty and their emigration are the will of God, they become resigned to their fate. They decide to accept willingly the necessary changes which will accompany emigration. Traill notes with approbation that the Clarence women have found "mental strength enough to determine on doing their duty, in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call them" (p. 19). The desirability of cheerful submission to providence is the central moral lesson in The Young Emigrants. According to Traill, the success of the attempt to emigrate depends on the emigrant's willingness to accept his lot in life. This theme dominates the novel and reappears throughout the work written by Traill after her own emigration to Canada. There is, generally speaking, a decline in moral emphasis in Traill's later works, with the exception of this single theme which continues to dominate and to shape both the fiction and the non-fiction--the cheerful acceptance of God's will that is essential to all pioneer women. As Traill emphasizes in The Young Emigrants: "It is always wisest and best to submit; without murmuring, to those things which we have not the power to remedy" (p. 28).

In the third segment of The Young Emigrants, the Clarence ladies have relocated in Canada. They begin to

perform new tasks, tasks which in England (or in English fiction) would be deemed inappropriate for a lady. Agnes' tasks include the management of the poultry. She also supervises and takes an active part in the baking, the preserving, and the sewing. In addition, she establishes a school and takes pride in her garden. This union of a working-class daily existence with gentility represents a notable departure in fiction; in her creation of pioneer lady, Traill has few, if any literary precedents. The optimistic tone and moral orientation of the narrative are carefully preserved in the final section of The Young Emigrants where the Clarence women jealously guard their illusions of gentility on the frontier, maintaining that despite their new working habits, they are ladies. In fact, it is hinted that they may be even better persons as a result of emigration since they have demonstrated a superior moral ability to bow obediently to the will of God in all things.

It should be noted that the inclusion of the description of typical Canadian pioneer activities in the final part of The Young Emigrants gives Traill the opportunity to instruct her readers in little-known facts about Canada. She was still a resident of England at the time of writing The Young Emigrants, and her knowledge had been collected from sources other than direct experience of Canadian life. Limited information does not hinder Traill; however, she loves to teach her reading public. It is also worth mentioning that Traill obviously has by this time developed some quite decided views

on pioneers and pioneering, specifically with respect to the role of women ("ladies") on the frontier. The view that a lady could remain identifiable as a lady no matter where she might be and no matter what she might be doing, and the idea that one must always seek to obey the will of God willingly and cheerfully, are frequently reiterated in Traill's Canadian non-fiction, and were apparently part of her own efforts to adapt to her new country.

In the Canadian fiction, Traill's moralizing tends to become rather more muted and subtle. Following the lead of The Young Emigrants, she focuses in Canadian Crusoes only on the moral aspects of successful pioneering. Traill's natural inclination to instruct her readers, especially in natural science, is perhaps better suited to a Canadian background as well, since the details she is providing would, for the most part, be foreign to an English reading public. Although in Traill's later work there is a decline in moral instruction (which is in proportion to the increase in the number of Canadian anecdotes and the amount of natural history instruction) Traill continues to quote from the Bible to prove a point, and to interrupt her narratives to give moral advice and direction. But stories no longer hinge entirely on a moral issue as did, for example, "The Primrose Girl;" and, in broad terms, the detached stance of the scientist and observer, first apparent in Little Downy, is used more extensively in Canadian works such as Canadian Crusoes (1852), Lady Mary and Her Nurse (1856), and Pearls and Pebbles

(1894). For Traill, the detached stance is perhaps a more natural, and therefore a more successful, approach to fiction than the sentimental, moralistic perspective adopted in earlier works in which the main emphasis is on a central moral issue. The descriptions of Canadian people, plants, and animals, the Canadian anecdotes and asides, based on facts and experiences, have a greater ring of truth than do the artificially contrived English tales.

On the negative side, however, it must be reiterated that Traill's fiction, even the middle and later work, is seldom entirely successful. Major narrative problems continue to mar her stories. The digressions which explain, describe, and elaborate a point are often the best part of such works as Lady Mary and Her Nurse and Canadian Crusoes, even as they interrupt and destroy the flow of a narrative. It is a paradox of Traill's writing that in the longer narratives--Lady Mary and Her Nurse and Canadian Crusoes--the digressions into natural history, the activities of the animal characters, and the "true" stories about Canadian settlers tend to be more vividly written than the main story and its characters. The interaction of Mary and her nurse, Mrs. Frazer, in Lady Mary and Her Nurse, for example, serves only as a frame upon which to hang various Canadian anecdotes.

While it continues to demonstrate Traill's narrative weaknesses and irregularities, Lady Mary and Her Nurse is a useful work to examine from the point of view of Traill's awareness of, and ability to reproduce, standard representa-

tions of fictional female characters as well as her ability to break away from the norm and to develop a new type of female character in her fiction. Lady Mary juxtaposes two vastly different character types: Lady Mary, a young English lady, and Mrs. Frazer, a Canadian pioneer. Unfortunately, Mary and Mrs. Frazer are interesting only as types. They merit critical attention in a study of female characterization, but they are never very engaging as people.

Mary is an example of a common character in nineteenth-century fiction--the English lady. A visitor to Canada--like Mrs. Jameson in real life--she is allowed to observe and to comment on the local scene. Her father has been appointed governor, and, hence, the family will, at some point, return to England with its social standing unharmed by the Canadian visit. During her stay in Canada, Mary remains a lady, and follows the habitual pursuits of an English lady. In short, she belongs to an upper-class, wealthy, leisured, social elite, and she maintains this status in Canada by virtue of her father's distinguished position in the government.

Throughout Lady Mary and Her Nurse, Mary displays the standard qualities of Traill's young lady protagonists and she leads a relatively idle existence. In a typical day she pursues various leisure activities: riding in the sleigh with her parents, playing with her dolls, taking care of her pet animals. In the midst of pioneer Canada, where the majority of little girls Mary's age are performing important household tasks, Mary is being given drawing lessons by her governess.

Mary's pastimes are chiefly those of a leisured segment of society, neither useful nor essential for survival, and vastly different from the pastimes of another of Traill's young protagonists, Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes, a true Canadian with little, if any, leisure time, no servants, and a scanty education. By contrast Mary's life is related in only a peripheral way to the Canadian setting. Indeed, her principal contact with the country comes through her nurse, a Canadian woman who is instructing her in facts about Canada. This structure means that the book consists of a series of short anecdotes and descriptions of Canadian customs, and Canadian plant and animal life.

The social background, wealth, and daily habits of Mary's family indicate that Mary has been brought up as a lady. But it is not only family background that indicates a lady, and Mary is a lady by virtue of her actions as well. She is a lady both outwardly and inwardly. Like Emma Selwyn of "The Primrose Girl," for example, she practices the art of charity. She adopts and cares for several stray wild Canadian animals. In addition, Mary is always courteous and obedient to her parents, her governess, and her nurse.

At one point, Mrs. Frazer must return to her backwoods home because of her brother's illness. When she returns, she is "dressed in deep mourning."¹⁴ Mary behaves with the natural thoughtfulness and decorum of a true lady toward her servants:

The kind little girl knew, when she saw her nurse's black dress, that her brother must be dead, and

with the thoughtfulness of a true lady, remained very quiet, and did not annoy her with questions about trifling matters; she spoke low and gently to her, and tried to comfort her when she saw large tears falling on the work which she held in her hand, and kindly said, "Mrs. Frazer, you had better go and lie down and rest yourself, for you must be tired after your long journey." (p. 97)

Traill does not linger on this point since, in this book, she is not concerned with establishing definitions of proper behaviour for a lady. In this respect, the Canadian orientation of Lady Mary and Her Nurse ultimately outweighs the English traditions of ideal feminine behaviour.

Although she does not engage the reader's interest and never becomes a fully rounded character, Mary serves a relatively important narrative function in Lady Mary. Occasionally, Traill uses her to isolate a particular bit of moral advice. For example, Mary's kindness to her nurse should be noted and emulated. More importantly, though, a character like Mary is necessary to provide an audience for the nurse, a listener to Mrs. Frazer's stories about Canada. As already intimated, the instruction of Mary becomes the narrative excuse for the book's digressions into natural history, plant life, animal life, Canadian Indians and their customs, northern lights, maple syrup, lost children, snakes, bears, and wolves. Since Mary is a model child, she listens eagerly:

Many little girls, as young as the Governor's daughter, would have thought it dull to listen to what her nurse had to say about plants and trees; but Lady Mary would put aside her dolls and toys, to stand beside her to ask questions, and listen to her answers; the more she heard, the more she desired to hear, about these things. (p. 105)

Like the mother and son in the frame of the story of Downy, the human characters in Lady Mary are not essential to the main events in the story. The function of one character (Mary) is to be the avid listener; the function of the other (Mrs. Frazer) is to be the narrator.

In Lady Mary, it is only when one abstracts and examines the two major female protagonists as character types that they become at all interesting. Mary's nurse, Mrs. Frazer, is quite unlike Mary because of a vastly different social background. Mrs. Frazer possesses different knowledge and skills. Her function is to pass on her unique knowledge to Mary, and to the reader as well. A Canadian pioneer woman who was born in a log cabin in the Canadian backwoods, Mary's nurse is accustomed to a life of hard work. She is a widow and has had to support her son by herself. In an English sense, she belongs to a lower, labouring class in which women (and men) must earn their living, a class in which women cannot lead a pampered and leisured existence. Traill modifies her description of Mrs. Frazer somewhat by claiming that the woman has known better days:

...she was a person of good education, who had seen and noticed as well as read a good deal. She had been a poor woman, but had once been a respectable farmer's wife, though her husband's death had reduced her to a state of servitude; and she had earned money enough while in the Governor's service to educate her son, and this was how she came to be Lady Mary's nurse. (p. 203)

The implication here is that Mrs. Frazer is somewhat of a "distressed gentlewoman." This concession to popular social

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and literary taste (the lady is a "better" woman, more worthy of inclusion as a protagonist in fiction, more likely to be educated, and to possess the various social graces) may perhaps have seemed necessary to Traill for, in Lady Mary, the roles of the servant and the lady tend to be reversed. Mrs. Frazer is given the superior role of instructor. She has useful information, something of value to give to her pupil. Lady Mary listens obediently and willingly to her nurse's stories.

This is quite different from the situation in "The Primrose Girl" where Emma Selwyn, the young lady, is in a position to dispense charity to her poor old nurse, Susannah, and to the flower seller. In "The Primrose Girl," the lady has something of value to give to her social subordinates; they receive her charity with gratitude, whether the gift be money, food, or kind condescension. By contrast in Lady Mary the wealthy young lady is the recipient from her social subordinate of a gift of knowledge, knowledge which, in Traill's eyes at least, is not to be undervalued. Mrs. Frazer is not an object of pity; she is, rather, a woman worthy of a great deal of respect. Capable of earning her own living, she possesses important information and is very ladylike but has none of the social background necessary to define herself as a lady equal in status to Lady Mary. At the conclusion of Lady Mary, the Governor gives Mrs. Frazer a deed for land as a gift. The gift establishes the fact that Mrs. Frazer, despite her low social status in an English frame of reference,

is a woman to be respected. The gift of land ensures that she no longer has to work for a living. She has gained her independence. Yet, the gift also represents a return to the established English social order in which the wealthy, upper-class family can dispense charity while the poor, lower-class family must accept it. Mrs. Frazer may in fact be financially independent, but she owes it to the charity of another person.

The most successfully realized female characters in Lady Mary are the squirrels, the protagonists of one of the book's digressions. As in Little Downy, the adventures of a rodent family, in this instance a family of squirrels, dominate the tales, and the humans seem to have been added merely to narrate the story and to provide it with a frame. In the short story about Canadian squirrels, Traill proves once again that she is more at ease in the role of scientific observer of animal life than as analyst of human behaviour. The squirrels are accurately described as animals, and, like Downy, are engagingly human and fallible as well. As in Little Downy, the consequences of error or of poor judgment on the part of an animal are both swift and severe. Silver-nose is caught and tamed by Indians; Velvet-paw is crushed to death by a mill-wheel. Although these disasters could quite conceivably happen to a real squirrel, Traill makes them appear to be the result of human frailties. Velvet-paw meets her untimely demise, for example, because she has grown fat and lazy living in the mill and cannot escape the mill-wheel.

The animal characters emerge as more believable, more fully realized, and, paradoxically, more human, than the human characters for precisely one reason: they are permitted to have flaws. Traill's animal characters (and, to a lesser extent, this includes Downy as well) are often used as moral examples in a negative rather than a positive sense: their errors stand as warnings to the human reader. This contrasts sharply to other female protagonists (the human protagonists) who remain static, unchanging representations of perfection throughout Lady Mary. Just as Mary is the perfect English lady so Mrs. Frazer is the ideal pioneer woman. Perhaps the underlying amorality of animal life and the natural world temporarily frees Traill from her efforts to depict in her fiction a moral, balanced, and Christian view of the world. It seems a pity that Traill was unable to utilize her accurate scientist's eye more freely in her fiction, and that she limited her honest reporting to animal and plant life rather than to the creation of realistic and believable characters.

Although Canadian Crusoes (1852) was written before Lady Mary and Her Nurse (1856), it actually represents a further development in Traill's conception and use of a Canadian female character type in fiction. While Mrs. Frazer can be seen as an adult version of the Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes, the latter character is more fully realized as a person, and more fully developed as the typical representative of the Canadian pioneer woman. Yet both characters were doubtless intended to represent typical Canadian pioneer

women. They share a similar background, common experiences, and display the same skills and knowledge. In the later book, Mrs. Frazer's own life and her personal experiences as a pioneer are seldom mentioned, except in a peripheral, allusive sense when she relates a truly amazing number of Canadian facts and anecdotes to Mary. In the earlier story, Catharine Maxwell's life and actions are essential to the narrative. As a result, Catharine Maxwell in Canadian Crusoes is ultimately the more important female protagonist of the two.

In many ways, Catharine Maxwell is the literary antithesis of Lady Mary and Emma Selwyn. Certainly, her way of life is quite different from that of a young English lady. Catharine's family background, her education (or rather her lack of education) and her skills and daily habits, are not at all similar to those of the English-born characters found in Traill's fiction. As a type, Catharine Maxwell probably has more in common with Traill's animal characters than with her human characters. Moreover, the characterization of Catharine Maxwell represents an important departure from standard depictions of women in English popular fiction. Catharine is not an English lady. Nor is she intended to embody and to demonstrate one particular moral virtue. She does become a model of perfection and is someone to be emulated, but for neither of the above reasons. She is, rather, a model pioneer, the ideal Canadian girl.

Catharine's uniqueness as a female protagonist is

grounded in her social background--her ancestry. She is a Canadian-born girl with no pretensions to gentility. Her family is not connected to the British middle- or upper-classes. Before settling in Canada, her father was a British soldier; he was neither an officer nor a member of the gentry. Maxwell met and married a French-Canadian girl while he was on duty in Canada. His daughter, Catharine, is, therefore, a native-born Canadian. Furthermore, with her French-English heritage, Catharine represents an ideal, almost allegorical, union of Canada's two founding cultures. (Unfortunately for her significance as a Canadian symbol of perfect union, Catharine Maxwell has no Indian ancestry but Traill later adds this motif when Catharine's brother marries the Indian girl adopted by the children during their residence in the bush and, thus, Catharine becomes the Indian girl's sister-in-law.) In any event, Catharine is a truly Canadian girl with no connection by birth or by marriage to the English gentility. Indeed, the Maxwell family could for all intents and purposes be members of a lower, labouring class. They have no servants to perform the menial household chores. Catharine can and does handle much of the responsibility of the home. She is first introduced to the reader as she stands working industriously at her spinning wheel:

Under the shade of the luxuriant hop-vines, that covered the rustic porch in front of the little dwelling, the light step of Catharine Maxwell might be heard mixed with the drowsy whirring of the big wheel, as she passed to and fro guiding the thread of yarn in its course....²⁰

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The background is set. The Maxwell family has no middle class pretensions. They have little money, and they survive by working hard.

Nor are Catharine Maxwell's personal traits those of an English lady. Not only does she possess none of the decorative skills of the typical English gentlewoman but she is poorly educated--in fact, virtually illiterate. Traill comments, "...of book-learning she knew nothing beyond a little reading, and that but imperfectly, acquired from her father's teaching" (p. 6). And at one point in her adventures in the bush, Catharine wonders if the hills she can see in the distance are the highlands of Scotland. A poor, ignorant girl growing up in the Ontario backwoods seems an unlikely heroine. Certainly, few of the nineteenth-century English readers of Canadian Crusoes would be able to sympathize with Catharine or to understand even remotely her origins and her way of life. Yet Traill defends both herself and her ignorant young heroine. When Catharine has mistaken the hills in the distance for the highlands of Scotland, Traill says:

Let not the youthful and more learned reader smile at the ignorance of the Canadian girl; she knew nothing of maps, and globes, and hemispheres, --her only book of study had been the Holy Scriptures, her only teacher a poor Highland soldier. (p. 87)

By creating an illiterate and socially unskilled female protagonist, and by indicating at this and at several other points in Canadian Crusoes that she is to be viewed with sympathy, Traill reverses some common notions of the way of life and the habits of the ideal woman, the woman suitable for use

as heroine in fiction. Traill takes her sympathetic stance one step further when she insists that, despite her lack of a "proper" education, Catharine Maxwell is not to be pitied. She is, rather, an example of a model child, worthy of respect and emulation. Catharine's performance of household chores is, according to Traill, a source of pride rather than a cause of shame. Traill points out that, although her heroine is uneducated and has none of the correct drawing-accomplishments of a lady, she is, nevertheless, clever and skilled in other areas of expertise. For instance, Catharine is especially skilled in the performance of the functions which are commonly the lot of Canadian pioneer girls.

Perhaps a new interpretation of education and of "accomplishment" is being proposed by Traill in her spirited defense of Catharine Maxwell. Catharine has been educated in the ways of the Bush rather than in the social or literary skills known to English ladies. She knows and understands her own world and her role in that world. She is able to perform her special duties well. In Canadian terms, she is a model woman. Despite her lack of the social background and/or the acquired accomplishments common to female protagonists in the English fiction of the period, she is someone to be admired and copied.

Catharine Maxwell demonstrates a further exploration by Traill in Canadian Crusoes of the possibilities inherent in developing a working-class pioneer heroine in fiction. Like Little Downy, Catharine is practical, capable, and

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hard-working; she is able to support herself and to take care of others. Downy's traits are linked to her unique experiences as a mouse, and are well-suited to biological fact; Catharine's traits are the product of her pioneer background. The descriptions of her duties are historically accurate, and undoubtedly are based on Traill's own knowledge of pioneer life in Canada. In Little Downy, Downy is the strongest member of her family. She is able to build a home for herself and her growing family; she can find food for herself and children. And it is Downy, not Silket, who takes care of the children. Like Downy, the Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes is a strong, practical, and intelligent member of her small family group. But Catharine is more fortunate than is Downy since her brother and cousin are both helpful and sensible. They shoulder much of the work when the children are lost in the bush. Nevertheless, Catharine plays the important role of the mother of the lost children. She becomes the emotional centre of her bush "family:"

Ardently attached to each other, they seemed bound together by a yet more sacred tie of brotherhood. They were now all the world to one another, and no cloud of disunion came to mar their happiness. Hector's habitual gravity and caution were tempered by Louis's lively vivacity and ardour of temper, and they both loved Catharine, and strove to smoothe, as much as possible, the hard life to which she was exposed, by the most affectionate consideration for her comfort, and she in return endeavoured to repay them by cheerfully enduring all privations, and making light of all their trials, and taking a lively interest in all their plans and contrivances. (p. 94)

Catharine is responsible for her fair share of the work re-

quired for survival. Yet she is, in a sense, stronger than the two boys; she is the moral centre of the family. It is because of Catharine that the group of children is harmonious in spite of the apparently hopeless situation.

In both Little Downy and Canadian Crusoes, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the value of industry and activity. Like the characterization of Downy which relies on biological facts and probable incidents, Catharine Maxwell's characterization is true to life, an accurate representation of the life of a pioneer. In addition, both characters owe a debt to a Puritan work ethic, to an ideal of behaviour which stresses the value of hard work, rather than to the tradition in fiction which demands that the ideal woman be an idle, decorative member of a leisured class. By taking this point of view, Traill broke with a tradition of feminine characterization that endured in popular English fiction throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet it is important to qualify this praise somewhat, and to point out that Traill neither denies nor ignores a tradition of femininity which emphasizes the benefits to be gained by membership in the English middle and upper classes. Her protagonists are not removed entirely from the traditional depictions of women in fiction. Catharine, like her predecessor Downy, and like her fellow pioneer, Mrs. Frazer, has enough of the qualities of a lady to make her a more appropriate heroine in the eyes of an English reading public. Catharine is stripped of the non-essential traits of an English lady (the decorative

skills that serve no practical purpose on a frontier), but she retains some of the essential traits of a lady. Her appearance, her good manners, her gentle, loving nature, all mark her as someone who is naturally "ladylike." Near the beginning of Canadian Crusoes, Traill says:

With the gaiety and naïveté of the Frenchwoman, Catharine possessed, when occasion called it into action, a thoughtful and well-regulated mind, abilities which would well have repaid the care of mental cultivation. . . . (p. 6)

Thus, Catharine is not an entirely new and different character type, despite her foreign habitat and foreign customs. She is given some of the easily recognizable qualities of the English lady to soften the impact of a working-class Canadian heroine. What Traill has done in essence is to rewrite and revise the definition of a feminine ideal so that it becomes compatible with a backwoods, Canadian setting.

Possibly the single most important feature of Canadian Crusoes, certainly the feature of the book which dramatically complements Traill's delineation of the pioneer heroine, is Traill's application of the Robinson Crusoe story in a Canadian context.¹⁶ Although Traill's version of the Crusoe story features three children who are lost in the Canadian bush rather than an English man who is a castaway on a tropical island, there are many parallels between Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Catharine Traill's Canadian Crusoes. Like Crusoe, the Maxwell children and their cousin Louis are, through misadventure, cut off from civilization and must rely on their own resources to survive.

Again like Crusoe, they develop ingenious methods to aid their survival: they build a home; they learn to survive without help; they plant and harvest crops; they make clothing from animal skins; they "tame" and Christianize a native. At the end of both Robinson Crusoe and Canadian Crusoes, the lost characters are rescued.

The use of the Crusoe story permits Traill to embark on descriptions of the Canadian landscape, to describe Canadian plants and animals, and to study at length the daily life of the Canadian pioneer. While such digressions are by no means uncommon in Traill's fiction, the use of the Crusoe plot warrants, and may even demand, digressions which in other works appear to be the result of personal indulgence on the part of the author. In this type of story, Traill can be permitted her descriptions of the surroundings and the survival methods of her young Crusoes. The result is that Canadian Crusoes is a more cohesive story than many of Traill's works of fiction. More significantly, perhaps, the Crusoe motif complements Traill's development in fiction of a Canadian, working-class pioneer heroine. The Crusoe story, reworked in Canadian Crusoes with a Canadian setting and characters, promotes and justifies Traill's personal vision of Catharine Maxwell as the representative of a new feminine ideal. Only a pioneer girl, one who is accustomed to the rigours of Canadian life, and who is already proficient in the performance of the duties of a pioneer household, could survive in this particular Crusoe-like situation. Although Traill's presentation of



Catharine as an ideal is related to a number of the themes, moral attitudes, and views on emigration which she has expressed elsewhere, the Crusoe story is an ideal way in which to introduce a particular type of character in fiction.

Catharine Maxwell is a Canadian, feminine, and idealized version of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.

Catharine, in her role as a female Crusoe, must work hard to survive. This is not a new attitude for Traill.

Little Downy features a hard-working, self-reliant heroine.

In this later example, however, the work ethic is linked to the Crusoe situation where a heroine who is willing to work hard is very much required. Furthermore, Traill indicates that English children, despite any commendable willingness to submit to their fate and despite any laudable efforts to learn new skills, would not survive alone in the Canadian bush. The Canadian pioneer children are superior in this situation because they have been accustomed to hard work and already possess the skills necessary for survival:

Early accustomed to the hardships incidental to the lives of the settlers in the bush, these young people had learned to bear with patience and cheerfulness privations that would have crushed the spirits of children more delicately nurtured.... Now it was that they learned to value in its fullest extent this useful and practical knowledge, which enabled them to face with fortitude the privations of a life so precarious as that to which they were now exposed. (p. 28)

The practical self-sufficiency of Catharine, her brother, and her cousin, allows them to perform better in a Canadian use of the Crusoe situation than English children of the same age. The pioneer is, therefore, established as a type of

ideal character in this particular situation, in spite of his or her lack of education, gentility, or wealth. It is very important for an understanding of Traill's creation of a new type of female protagonist that there be a recognition of the fact that the pioneer girl must be perceived as an ideal, at least in her native backwoods setting. Traill takes great pains to foster this attitude in her readers.

It should be noted in conclusion that several themes, interests, and preoccupations reappear frequently throughout Traill's fiction. An important theme is the way in which a woman relates herself to the world around her. Each of Traill's female characters from Little Emma of "The Primrose Girl" to Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes is defined by her environment, and defines herself in relation to that environment. Chief among Traill's personal interests as becomes evident in The Young Emigrants, Lady Mary and Her Nurse, and Canadian Crusoes is her love of new, or little known, facts and anecdotes. Very evidently, her fascination for the New World, its social customs, and its natural history influenced her writing, even before her departure for Canada. Traill also loves to display her erudition and her collection of little-known facts to her readers, often interrupting a narrative to instruct or to offer bits of advice, as in Lady Mary and Her Nurse and Canadian Crusoes. Her calm assumption that her readers will find her experiences and her information fascinating is a constant motivating factor in her writing. Traill brings an inquiring mind to her fiction,

whether she is explaining obscure points of natural history or of pioneer life in Canada. She approaches all new situations as problems to be confronted and solved. She has a strong moral bias which colours and influences all her fiction. Finally, she attempts to understand, to analyze, and to explicate, what she sees around her. This last point is most evident in her use of Canada in her fiction from The Young Emigrants to Canadian Crusoes. Traill not only describes the Canadian backwoods, but also develops a female character-type who will suit that particular setting and set of circumstances. While Traill had experimented with the characterization of women as early as Little Downy, one of her major accomplishments in the writing of fiction is her creation in Canadian Crusoes of a backwoods heroine, a uniquely Canadian character type. The importance of this literary legacy should not be ignored in any consideration of versions of the pioneer woman who appear in Canadian fiction up to and during the present time, and who are still perceived as the representatives of a particular type of ideal.

Notes

Susanna Moodie was a prolific writer of fiction. See for example, Flora Lyngsav; or, Passages in an Eventful Life (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, n.d.); Geoffrey Moncton; or, The Faithless Guardian (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, 1855); Mark Hurdlestone, The Gold Worsnipper (London: Richard Bentley, 1853); Matrimonial Speculations (London: Richard Bentley, 1854); "The First Dept: A Tale of Every Day," in Literary Garland, OS 3 (1841).

One of Susanna Moodie's plot situations is quite similar to Traill's The Young Emigrants. In "Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes," one of the stories in Matrimonial Speculations, Moodie deals with the plight of a middle-class English family which is faced with the spectre of declining fortunes and reduced circumstances. As in Traill's The Young Emigrants, the family discusses the possibility of emigration. Some of the family members finally emigrate to Canada; some remain behind. But Moodie's development and treatment of this plot situation differs radically from Traill's treatment of the same situation. Moodie does not follow her characters to Canada, choosing instead to concentrate on the characters who remain behind in England, and who preserve their status as middle-class gentlefolk. This may indicate that Susanna Moodie was unable or unwilling to reconcile a pioneer way of life with the concept of English gentility. The fact that this story was written after Moodie's own emigration, and that she certainly could not claim ignorance of Canadian life, seems to indicate this writer's choice to avoid Canada and the Canadian frontier in her fiction. This avoidance of the frontier illustrates the single most important difference in the Canadian-produced works of the Strickland sisters. On the one hand, Moodie, like Lot's wife, turns behind her to look at her English home, and refuses to incorporate a Canadian setting into her fiction. In addition, in her non-fiction, as to be trusted, she herself had a difficult time adjusting to Canada since she could not reconcile her new role as a Canadian pioneer with her inherited status as an English lady. Traill, on the other hand, wrote The Young Emigrants before her settlement in Upper Canada. After her emigration she commonly used a Canadian setting. Judging by the tone of her non-fiction, Traill had less difficulty than her sister adjusting to frontier conditions. Unlike Moodie, she could apparently continue to define herself as a lady no

matter what her living conditions were like.

2

There are many studies dealing with the role of the British woman in fact and fiction; the points mentioned in this particular study reflect commonly accepted theories. For some typical analyses see. Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Ideal Victorian Woman." Wife's Consciousness Raised (New York: Harber & Row, 1974); Sandra Barman, ed., Fit Work for Women (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979); Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Vineta Colby, Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Duncan Crow, The Victorian Woman (New York: Stein and Day, 1972); Dr. C. Willett Cunningham, Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Haskel House Publishers, 1973); Lenore Davinoti, The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season (London: Croom Helm, 1975); Janet Dundar, The Early Victorian Woman, Some Aspects of Her Life, 1800-50 (London: George G. Harrad & Co., 1953); Susan Gorsky, "The Gentle Doubters: Images of Women in Englishwomen's Novels, 1840-1920." in Images of Women in Fiction, Feminist Perspectives, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular Press, 1972); Georgiana Hill, Women in English: Life from Medieval to Modern Times, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1876); Hazel News, Prill Versels: Woman's Role in Women's Novels: from Fanny Burney to Gertrude Stein (London: Athene, 1969); Susan Siefert, The Heroines of the Talented Heroine: A Changing Ideal (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Martha Vicinus, ed., Surfer and He Still: Women in the Victorian Age (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972).

3

For some representative definitions of the perfect lady from a late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century point of view, see the following books of advice: Sarah Stickney Ellis, The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits (London: Fisher, Son, 1847); Dr. Gregory, A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774; rpt. London: Minerva Press, n.d.); Hannah More, Worth, 2 vols. (New York: Harber, 1801).

4

Catharine Parr Trail, "The Primrose Girl, or, Little Emma's Birthday." in The Tale Teller: An Original Collection of Moral and Amusing Stories (London: Rivington, 1801), p. 156. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

5

Dr. Gregory, Hannah More, and Sarah Ellis offer invaluable advice to their gentle readers. Dr. Gregory, for example, has the following words to speak about the accomplishments for women:

The intention of your being taught needle-work, knitting, and such like, is not on account of the intrinsic value of all you can do with your hands, which is trifling; but to enable you to judge more perfectly of that kind of work, and to direct the execution of it in others. Another principal end is to enable you to fill up, in a tolerably agreeable way, some of the many solitary hours you must necessarily pass at home.--it is a great article in the happiness of life, to have your pleasures as independent of others as possible.

See Dr. Gregory. Legacy, pp. 62-3.

6 See Hannah More, "Coelebs in Search of a wife." in Works (New-York: Harper, 1854). II, 309-436.

7 See for example, Hannah More, "Structures on the Modern System of Female Education," in Works, I, 332:

Young ladies should also be accustomed to set apart a fixed portion of their time, as sacred to the poor, whether in relieving, instructing, or working for them; and the performance of this duty must not be left to the event of contingent circumstances, or operation of accidental impressions; but it must be established into a principle, and wrought into a habit.

8 Catharine Parr Traill. Little Downy; or, The History of a Field-mouse. A moral Tale (London: Dean and Munday, 1822), p. 8. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

9 For some examples of working-class protagonists, see George Eliot, Adam Bede, introd. Robert Speaight (1903; rpt. London: J. M. Dent, Everyman, 1973); Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Barton, A Tale of Manchester Life (England: Penguin books, 1978); Mrs. Gaskell, Ruth (London: J. M. Dent, Everyman, 1967).

10 For an important and influential literary source of the "virtue-rewarded" theme, see Samuel Richardson, Pamela, ed. T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimock (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971).

11 Others of Traill's early works include a strong moral and didactic bias. See for example, Catharine Parr Traill, Happy Because Good; The Tame Pheasant, and the Blind Brother and Kind Sister (London: Thomas Dean and Son, n.d.); Catharine Parr Traill, The Keepsake Guineas; or, The best Use of Money (London: A. K. Newman; London: Dean & Munday, 1828); Catharine Parr Traill, Sketches From Nature; or, Hints to Juvenile Naturalists (London: Harvey and Darton, 1830).

Ruth Marks, Preface, The Young Emigrants or Pictures of Canada, by Catharine Parr Traill (London, 1826; rpt. Wakefield, England: S. R. Publishers; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), pp. xi-xii.

Catharine Parr Traill, The Young Emigrants or Pictures of Canada (London, 1826; rpt. Wakefield, England: S. R. Publishers; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), pp. 2-3. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

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Catharine Parr Traill, Laov Mary and Her Nurse; or, A Peep into the Canadian Forest (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1856), p. 97. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

15

Catharine Parr Traill, Canadian Crusoes, A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains, ed. Rupert Schieder (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986), p. 8. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

16

For further analysis of the Crusoe theme in Traill's writing see T. D. MacLulich, "Crusoe in the Backwoods: A Canadian Fable?" Mosaic, 9, no. 2 (winter 1976), 115-126; Clara Thomas, "Crusoe and the Precious Kingdom," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2 (spring 1972), pp. 18-69.

The Non-Fiction of Catharine Parr Traill

Catharine Parr Traill's emigration to Canada coincides with a major shift in the focus and the subjects of her writing. After her settlement in Upper Canada in the 1830s, she began--as has already been seen--to use Canada in her writing and to incorporate her collection of facts and anecdotes about pioneering into both her fiction and her non-fiction. As has also been seen, a literary interest in Canada had, in fact, been indicated earlier, specifically in Traill's short novel, The Young Emigrants or Pictures of Canada (1826) which deals with the emigration to Canada of a middle-class English family. The focus in this particular story remains fixed on the English characters, however, while the later fiction, as for example, Canadian Crusoes (1852), utilizes Canadian characters. The later work's greater appeal, particularly to Canadian readers, is related to the author's first-hand knowledge of Canada. A further shift in the major focus of Traill's writing is evident in her general movement away from the writing of fiction to the production of non-fiction. This shift probably reflects the fact that non-fiction could more directly reproduce Traill's own experiences as a pioneer, and provided a better forum for the expression of her views on pioneering. In any event, Traill's two most important and accomplished works, The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855) are non-fiction, and both are based on the author's life as a pioneer in the Ontario backwoods. Other Canadian

non-fiction, such as Pearls and Pebbles; or, Notes of an Old Naturalist (1894) and Cot and Cradle Stories (1895) are collections of brief stories and anecdotes, most written by Traill during her residence in Canada, and the majority drawing on her personal knowledge of life in the backwoods. While Traill's literary focus narrows in the course of her life to concentrate on Canada and on all things Canadian, her way of perceiving Canada, and of describing her Canadian experiences is extremely varied. She speaks both as a scientist and as a poet, as a social historian and as a creative writer. The result is that, within her larger, more important subject of Canada, Traill introduces a number of smaller, less important and possibly contradictory opinions. To put the matter differently: Traill approaches the topic of Canada with a single-minded devotion, but expresses this devotion through many different points of view.

It is unfortunate that relatively few first-hand accounts, particularly accounts written from a woman's perspective, of pioneering in nineteenth-century Ontario are available. The diaries and letters of a small number of female pioneers have been published, notably Frances Stewart's Our Forest Home (1889), Anne Langton's A Gentle woman in Upper Canada, The Journals of Anne Langton (1950), and Mary Gapper O'Brien's The Journals of Mary O'Brien, 1828-1838 (1968). The scarcity and inaccessibility of other pioneer writing by women ensures that Traill's non-fiction is a valuable source of historical information. Furthermore,

Traill's ability to describe Canadian pioneering with careful and concise accuracy means that her work is readable and attractive. Unlike the other pioneer women mentioned above, Traill oriented her writing for immediate publication; she was continually aware of a large reading audience. In contrast, the other women related their experiences either for their own benefit or for the purpose of maintaining contact with a small intimate circle of friends and family in Britain. Publication of their writing came long after the time of actual pioneering. Traill, however, had a different orientation. In The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide she described a particular place and time as accurately as possible for the benefit of a curious, intelligent, and more general reading public. While Traill's larger focus results, to some extent, in a more general, less intimate tone in her work, a personal quality is maintained in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide because Traill also interprets what she sees, again so that she may instruct her audience. She adds her opinions and comments to her lists of facts and to her narration of anecdotes. In the process of explicating Canada for her readers, Traill thus applies her own system of values to the world about her. Her background, her personality, and her values, all influence her observations and help to change her non-fiction from simple factual reports to highly creative interpretations of pioneer life. The result of all this is that in her non-fiction Traill displays both her talent as a

creative writer and her ability to observe and to report on the world about her with a great deal of accuracy. In other words, she applies her ideals to the reality of Canada, creating a diverse, multifaceted, and entertaining glimpse of nineteenth-century Ontario. In her description of the life of a female pioneer in Upper Canada, Traill colours factual reporting with an idealistic and interpretive bias. Thus, the pioneer woman, as she is envisioned by Traill, creatively synthesizes practicality with sensibility, and the central consciousness (or, the preconceptions and the biases) of the English gentlewoman is the medium through which the reality of pioneer life is filtered to produce Traill's Canadian pioneer woman.

It could even be said that the greatest strength of The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide is derived from Traill's ability to make observations from two distinctly different perspectives--to juxtapose the real with the ideal. Like the other first hand accounts of pioneer life, Traill's non-fiction provides important historical information, but, unlike the works of her fellow pioneers, Traill's non-fictional books are spaced with her readers in mind. Accurate reporting is varied with creative, fanciful, idealistic, and philosophical asides. These guides provide a marked contrast to the relation of cold facts and, moreover, they strengthen and broaden the literary and historical value of the works in question.

A dual mode of perception at once scientific and poetic

permeates all of Traill's non-fiction. For example, she observes Canadian plant life with the scientific detachment of a botanist. But, at the same time, she is strangely excited by the plants which are foreign to her, and takes great pleasure in naming them. It is also notable that in her major botanical work; Canadian Wild Flowers (1868) there is a juxtaposition of poetry with the scientific descriptions of the various native plants. On the one hand, Traill records geographic and topographic details with the eager curiosity of an explorer; on the other hand, she occasionally becomes lost in a Romantic and abstract contemplation of Nature. She lists facts, and provides survival instructions for new emigrants but she also retains a sense of overall perspective, and attempts to instill in her readers an appreciation of the beauty and the future promise of her adopted country. When discussing pioneer facts she does not try to disguise her opinion that her duties seem endless but, in a manner consistent with her social perspective, she also begins to develop an attitude or an ideal that other women can adopt. She proposes that there is something intrinsically valid in pioneer life, and she creates a model of an ideal pioneer woman, a model which combines the real physical necessities of life on a frontier both with her own personal system of values and with her continued perception of herself as an English lady.

Throughout her writing there is no indication that Traill is aware either of a possible discrepancy in her,

views, or of a split in her focus as she describes Canada. Yet it is notable that the various, diverse modes of perception which are so obvious in the two longer works, The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, achieve a more harmonious union in a later, shorter, prose passage, "The Bereavement," first published in the Literary Garland in 1866, and revised and republished in Pearls and Pebbles (1894) as "The First Death in the Clearing." As will be seen in due course, this particular sample of Traill's writing contains a shorter, sharper focus that often leads directly into a larger view and/or into contemplative thought. This is to anticipate a later stage of the discussion, however, and for the present the argument will turn to The Backwoods of Canada.

The Backwoods of Canada is Traill's first major work to confront directly and honestly the reality of life in pioneer Canada. As has been seen, The Young Emigrants, written before Traill's emigration, demonstrates the author's early interest in Canada, but must, of necessity, have been based on second-hand knowledge. In contrast, The Backwoods of Canada is derived from Traill's own experiences during the early years of her residence in Upper Canada. The book consists of a series of letters, ostensibly letters written to family and friends in Britain. The letters are set in a roughly chronological sequence and cover the first few years of the Traills' settlement in Ontario--that is, from 1832 to 1835. Traill's purpose in publishing such a work was evidently to

explicate Canada and Canadian society for the benefit primarily of British and uninformed readers.

Whether addressing a private audience (the recipients of the original letters) or a later, larger audience (the readers of the published work), Traill seems to have assumed that she has attracted a certain type of readership--a readership comprised of people from her own social background: educated, reasonably affluent, members of the middle class. The apparent assumption of a relatively uninformed but highly literate and intelligent audience probably heightened and encouraged Traill's propensity to approach her writing from the two separate points of reference--the scientific and the artistic--already described. Certainly, in The Backwoods of Canada she describes places, events, objects, and characters in minute detail so that her readers will see nineteenth-century Canada as it really is and interprets these descriptions, adding comments which employ the terms and perspective of an English lady, a woman of refined and informed sensibilities, so that her readers will see and comprehend Canada from another less tangible, but more familiar point of view.

From the tone of the letters in The Backwoods of Canada, it would appear that Catharine Traill approached Canada with the eager curiosity of an explorer. While still on board ship, she studies maps so that she can better understand her new country. As the ship makes its way up the St. Lawrence River she constantly wants to know the names of the

Quebec villages on either side. She is dismayed when she cannot disembark with the men at the Isle of Bic, but is placated to some extent when her husband brings her a bouquet of flowers from the island. Traill derives pleasure from identifying and naming the flora, and her curiosity is piqued when she discovers several strange new plants: "Besides these were several small white and yellow flowers, with which I was totally unacquainted." This desire to know and to understand, to define, and to list all aspects of Canada's terrain is an important component of Traill's ability to enjoy her new surroundings. She trains the observant eye of the amateur scientist on the scene about her and comments:

It is fortunate for me that my love of natural history enables me to draw amusement from objects that are deemed by many unworthy of attention. To me they present an inexhaustible fund of interest. The simplest weed that grows in my path, or the fly that flutters about me, are subjects for reflection, admiration, and delight. (p. 17)

Yet Traill's interest in nature can also be that of a landscape artist rather than that of a botanist. Before her husband returns from the Isle of Bic, she solaces herself by looking at the scenery and enjoying her distant perspective of the island. She writes that she allays her resentment at her confinement by "...feasting my eyes on the rich masses of foliage..." (p. 16). This skipping back and forth between the careful scrutiny of minute details and the long-range observation of picturesque nature is one of Traill's personal quirks as a writer--a quirk which she continues to employ at.

regular intervals throughout the remainder of the narrative in The Backwoods of Canada. This particular passage provides early evidence of the bifocal vision that later enables Traill to list and describe the many tasks performed by the Canadian pioneer woman as well as to place these tasks within a larger perspective.

After the arrival of the ship in Canada, Traill is doomed to further disappointments at both Gros Isle and Quebec City. Because of a cholera epidemic, she cannot disembark and explore. But, as she has already observed, she is quite capable of amusing herself in most situations. At Gros Isle she is sent a basket of strawberries, raspberries, and flowers which she examines and enjoys. In a demonstration of her artistic sensibilities, Traill comments on the colourful and picturesque quality of the scene on the island as, from her distant perspective, she watches the emigrants move about Gros Isle. Traill further amuses herself "...with making little sketches of the fort and the surrounding scenery" (p. 21). The gentlewoman's appreciation of the picturesque beauty of nature is offset partially by the practical pioneer's interest in the minute particulars of the vegetation indigenous to her new country, and is dampened slightly by the information that "... 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view" (p. 21) of the island. A friendly officer tells her that closer examination of the picturesque scene will reveal the underlying grotesque qualities:

...disease, vice, poverty, filth, and famine--

human misery in its most disgusting and saddening form. Such pictures as Hogarth's pencil only could have portrayed or Crabbe's pen described. (p. 22)

Also noteworthy is the fact that the last sentence in this passage, with its references to the William Hogarth of such works as A Rake's Progress (1735), and Marriage à la Mode (1745) and the George Crabbe or such works as The Village (1783), and The Parish Register (1807) demonstrates that, although Traill has been enlightened as to the true state of affairs on the island, and has been given the ugly, close-range details, she continues to be able to step back and to take a long-range perspective--to see the reality in terms of art. The picturesque nature-painting is undercut by a reference to Hogarthian or Crabbean realism: the images are still pictorial, however, and the long-range perspective balances the closer scrutiny. So too, Traill's interpretation of a pioneer woman's life creatively combines the reality of pioneer life with the artistic sensibility and perspective of an English gentlewoman.

The dichotomy between the explorer who examines the details of her surroundings, and the nature lover who becomes lost in a contemplation of the natural scenery is quite evident at Quebec City as well. Traill is once again confined to the ship. On the one hand, she notes the impressive natural location of Quebec City, and lards her description with stock romantic phrases. Quebec City is "imposing," "magnificent," "highly picturesque" (p. 25); it has a "romantic situation," a "superb view," and a "noble prospect".

(p. 25). On the other hand, Traill turns from this high-brow description of picturesque, even sublime, nature, to a detailed description of an amusing ferry boat in the St.

Lawrence River:

They carry a strange assortment of passengers; well and ill-dressed; old and young; rich and poor; cows, sheep, horses, pigs, dogs, fowls, market-baskets, vegetables, fruit, hay, corn, anything and everything you will see by turns.

The boat is flat, railed round, with a wicker at each end to admit the live and dead stock that go or are taken on board; the centre of the boat (if such it can be called) is occupied by four lean, ill-favoured hacks, who walk round and round, as if in a threshing machine, and work the paddles at each side. There is a sort of pen for the cattle. (p. 26)

No detail is too small or too unimportant to escape her analytical, observant description. And she shifts from one focus to another with abrupt facility. The pioneer woman that Traill is (or is creating) combines a romantic with a realistic attitude to Canada, so as to mediate for her readers the harsh and the romantic (adventuresome) aspects of the emigrant experience.

Traill's ability to remark on the overall picture and also to itemize the parts that make up that picture from a much closer perspective indicates the wide scope of her literary imagination. She is interested in truth and accuracy, and writes so that her readers will see Canada as it really is. But she also appeals to the sensibilities of her audience. Specifically, the application of the principles of the picturesque and the sublime to a Canadian landscape seems de-

signed to appeal to the understanding and the sympathies of her educated, middle-class readers. Much of what Traill describes would be strange or amusing to an English reader. But an appeal to the artistic awareness of this reader is calculated to awaken a sympathetic interest in Canada. Her reader will "see" Canada; ideally, he will "like" Canada.

An extremely important passage in the interpretation of Canadian nature by Traill is found in the episode later in The Backwoods of Canada during which she and her husband are lost at night in the bush. Shortly after their arrival in Canada, while the Traills are travelling to the home of Mrs. Traill's brother, they lose their way. This particular episode is a central example of Traill's dual approach to the natural world: her practical account is juxtaposed with her appeal to the Romantic sensibilities of her readers. At a time when many women might well succumb to hysterics, Traill forgets her fear and doubt in a meditative, Romantic, contemplation of nature:

A holy and tranquil peace came down upon me, soothing and softening my spirits into a calmness that seemed as unruffled as was the bosom of the water that lay stretched out before my feet. (p. 118)

The implication that one can sense the existence of the deity through an appreciation of nature is found elsewhere in Traill's writing. In Peterborough, for example, she notes that she has felt close to God in the primitive backwoods church: "Never did our beautiful Liturgy seem so touching and impressive as it did that day, -- offered up in our lowly, log-built church in the wilderness" (p. 92). It is the great

beauty of the natural setting which enhances this particular church in Traill's eyes. Later in the narrative, in her description of being lost, Traill juxtaposes sublime nature with the more prosaic aspects of the situation. Traill's episodic writing style, her ability to leap from one topic to another with almost alarming rapidity, prevents too frequent rhapsodizing on the glories of Nature. In this case, she balances occasional Romantic indulgence with factual reporting, with no apparent sense of incongruity. The story ends when she cheerfully settles in at her brother's home.

The necessary co-existence of utility and beauty is a recurring topic of discussion in The Backwoods of Canada, and is related to Traill's dual approach to nature. She comments on the great natural beauty of Peterborough, and notes, with approbation, the growing industry in this small town. While she perceives the advantages inherent in the development of industry, she is apprehensive about the potential loss of the scenic beauty of Peterborough. She says:

The plains are sold off in park lots, and some pretty little dwellings are being built, but I much fear the natural beauties of this lovely spot will be soon spoiled. (p. 89)

Traill faces a similar problem when she and her husband begin clearing the trees from their land. She understands the necessity for chopping down the trees but would like to leave a few trees about her home to add picturesque beauty to the setting. This proves to be impossible: the older trees are not strong enough to exist without support, the saplings she

asks her husband to spare are scorched in a fire, and she admits disappointment in her failure.

More commonly Traill is pragmatic and sensible, even when that pragmatism dictates the acceptance of a loss of picturesque beauty. Take, for example, the English lady's dilemma when she faces, for the first time, the reality of the backwoods log cabin: small, cramped, ugly, a far cry from any middle-class English woman's previous experience. When Traill's sister, Susanna Moodie saw her cabin, she was overwhelmed, and sat down to cry in helpless despair.² Fortunately, as she demonstrates in The Backwoods of Canada, Traill adopted a far different approach. She examines a log cabin with eager curiosity:

As I felt a great curiosity to see the interior of a log-house, I entered the open door-way of the tavern, as the people termed it, under the pretext of buying a draught of milk. (p. 72)

She then notes the flaws and deficiencies of this structure with detached, scientific interest:

Besides the various emigrants, men, women, and children, that lodged within the walls, the the log-house had tenants of another description. A fine calf occupied a pen in a corner; some pigs roamed grunting about in company with some half-dozen fowls. The most attractive objects were three snow-white pigeons, that were meekly picking up crumbs, and looking as if they were too pure and innocent to be inhabitants of such a place. (p. 73)

From such an unappealing beginning, Traill moves to an explanation of the advantages and the practical usefulness of these Canadian dwellings. She explains that all bush settlers, regardless of rank, must live in a similar cabin until they have the time and the money to build something better.

She counsels a mental acceptance of such houses, through an understanding of their function, and demonstrates her own ability to do so by saying:

...for all its roughness, I love Canada, and am as happy in my humble log-house as if it were courtly hall or bower; habit reconciles us to many things that at first were distasteful. It has ever been my way to extract the sweet rather than the bitter in the cup of life, and surely it is best and wisest so to do. (p. 310)

A determined optimism and an ability to bow to the inevitable are trademark qualities of Traill--mental qualities which ideally suited her role as a Canadian pioneer. As she says, "Nothing argues a greater degree of good sense and good feeling than a cheerful conformity to circumstances, adverse though they be, compared with a former lot" (p. 182).

Traill's love of beauty cannot be ignored, however, for time and again she insists that a vital function of women in the backwoods is to ensure that grace and beauty exist in even the rudest dwellings. Her first view of Canadian log homes, seen from the distant perspective of the river, disappoints her, but she argues that it is not the dwellings themselves that are unacceptable:

It was not the rudeness of the material so much as the barn-like form of the buildings of this kind, and the little attention that was paid to the picturesque, that displeased me. (p. 29)

In this case, Traill sets an example for her neighbours and, by extension, to future readers seeking instances of the correct conduct for a pioneer woman. She and her husband make a number of picturesque improvements to their log house.

As soon as possible Traill plants a garden. She grows vegetables to feed her family, and also transplants wild flowers, native plants, and shrubs into her garden. She has an aversion to the appearance of the more common rail fences and has her garden enclosed with a "wattled fence" (p. 309) which, she notes with approval, "forms a much more picturesque fence than those usually put up of split timber" (p. 309). Finally, the Traills add a stoop, or verandah, to their log house. In Mrs. Traill's opinion, a verandah greatly enhances the beauty of any log building. To add a final touch of picturesque beauty to the scene she plants hops and grapes at the base of the verandah pillars.

The tensions between the picturesque and the mundane, between the beautiful and the practical, between a long-range perspective and a closer scrutiny, and between the ideal world and the real world, dominate all aspects of Traill's backwoods writing, and are also evident in The Backwoods of Canada in her depiction of her own life as a pioneer. Traill describes the tasks and the way of life of a pioneer woman; she lists the many unpleasant duties which would be perceived as menial and degrading by an English gentlewoman but she continually returns to her theme of practical necessity. Most important, she clings to her belief that she is a lady, and that she will always remain a lady, no matter what circumstances might dictate. Nevertheless, Traill confronts the reality of the life of a backwoodswoman with direct, unflinching honesty:

The female of the middling or better class, in her turn, pines for the society of the circle of friends she has quitted, probably for ever. She sighs for those little domestic comforts, that display of the refinements and elegancies of life, that she had been accustomed to see around her. She has little time now for those pursuits that were even her business as well as amusement. The accomplishments she has now to acquire are of a different order: she must become skilled in the arts of sugar-boiling, candle and soap-making, the making and baking of huge loaves, cooked in the bake-kettle, unless she be the fortunate mistress of a stone or clay oven. She must know how to manufacture hop-rising or salt-rising for leavening her bread; salting meat and fish, knitting stockings and mittens and comforters, spinning yarn in the big wheel (the French Canadian spinning-wheel), and dyeing the yarn when spun to have manufactured into cloth and coloured flannels, to clothe her husband and children, making clothes for herself, her husband and children;--for there are no tailors nor mantua-makers in the bush.

The management of poultry and the dairy must not be omitted.... (pp. 183-184)

In this passage and others like it, Traill notes the lack of domestic comforts, the loneliness of the pioneer, and lists the new and arduous tasks which the emigrant woman will confront.

It is interesting to see the subtle ways in which Traill seeks to impress upon her readers that, while the life of a pioneer woman may be difficult, it is not degrading. Although she sets two female roles in opposition, in the passage just quoted--the cultivated lady with a great deal of time to develop leisured pursuits and accomplishments is juxtaposed to the eternally busy Canadian pioneer woman--Traill continues to assume that the pioneer woman will be able to define herself as a lady, even in the backwoods. Note, for example, the softening of the details of pioneer life by the use of

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"accomplishment," a word previously connected to such decorative pursuits as music or painting, but now used to signify tasks of a "different order." In this way, household chores such as baking bread, making soap and candles, are equated by Traill with (and shown to be superior to) the decorative, idle skills of an English lady. The pioneer woman should be "skilled in the arts" of the backwoods housewife; she must become a manufacturer of various items, and a manager in several domestic departments. Traill's perspective presents a novel interpretation of the pioneer woman's role: the refined gentlewoman merely switches her area of expertise, losing none of her gentility in the process.

This is Traill's method of explicating Canada to her British readers in The Backwoods of Canada. She is honest in her descriptions. She outlines the reality of her situation. But she uses a British frame of reference so that her audience will understand and accept the customs of Canadian pioneer life. Despite her honesty in admitting the hardships, the loneliness, and the despair faced by herself and by other pioneer women, Traill continues to insist that she is a lady. In one breath, she reiterates her view that all emigrant women must, because of frontier conditions, face unpleasant tasks. In the next, she claims that Canadian society can be very pleasant and congenial. She says, for example:

Our society is mostly military or naval; so that we meet on equal grounds, and are, of course, well acquainted with the rules of good breeding and po-

lite life; too much so to allow any deviation from those laws that good taste, good sense, and good feeling have established among persons of our class.

Yet here it is considered by no means derogatory to the wife of an officer or gentleman to assist in the work of the house, or to perform its entire duties, if occasion requires it; to understand the mystery of soap, candle, and sugar-making; to make bread, butter, and cheese, or even to milk her own cows; to knit and spin, and prepare the wool for the loom. In these matters we bush-ladies have a wholesome disregard of what Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so thinks or says. We pride ourselves on conforming to circumstances; and as a British officer must needs be a gentleman and his wife a lady, perhaps we repose quietly on that incontestable proof of our gentility, and can afford to be useful without injuring it. (pp. 270-271)

This is a central, essential statement of the position taken by Traill with respect to her role in Canada. It combines and contrasts her pragmatic acceptance of adverse circumstances with her idealism. In essence Traill at once admits that all bush settlers, regardless of their rank and previous experience, must work hard and claims that this change in daily habits does not endanger one's social standing.

Traill displays a curious and creative mixture of attitudes. She guards many of her old social standards and definitions while, at the same time, accepting her role as a pioneer. In other words, Traill is very sure of her status as an English gentlewoman and seeks to reassure her reader that she is still a lady, and that she enjoys her new life in Canada. Women in Canada often lack any kind of domestic assistance; servants are scarce; female emigrants must be prepared to do any and all household work. Traill reports all this without attempting to disguise the fact that her female

role in Canada differs greatly from anything she has experienced before. She urges her reader to believe, however, that despite the change in her work habits, she can still be a lady, that she enjoys her life, and that she is proud of her new accomplishments.

In spite of her claims that she herself retains her status as a lady, Traill notes a general levelling of social rank in Canada. Her reactions to social change are thus somewhat ambivalent, for while she asserts that she is a lady, and therefore superior to many of her fellow-emigrants, she also appears to enjoy a great deal of personal independence which has resulted from the social freedom of Canadian pioneer life, noting with approval the lack of constricting rules of etiquette and behaviour which are more commonly connected to the rigid class structure of British society, and confessing that she had found life in Britain somewhat constricting:

I was too much inclined to spurn with impatience the fetters that etiquette and fashion are wont to impose on society, till they rob its followers of all freedom and independence of will.... (p. 269)

And Traill admits that she has found greater freedom in Canada: "And I must freely confess to you that I do prize and enjoy my present liberty in this country exceedingly..." (p. 269). A positive result, then, of the backwoods emphasis on practicality is a greater freedom from social restraint. Because of the nature of her role as a backwoods pioneer woman, Traill has been forced to ignore some of the rules governing the appropriate behaviour of a lady. Traill ac-

knowledges this, and obviously enjoys her new-found liberty:

Now, we bush-settlers are more independent: we do what we like; we dress as we find most suitable, and most convenient; we are totally without the fear of any Mr. or Mrs. Grundy; and having shaken off the trammels of Grundyism, we laugh at the absurdity of those who voluntarily forge afresh and flug their chains. (p. 270)

While she revels in her personal freedom, Traill finds other aspects of the levelling of social rank distinctly unappealing. She continues to stand on her dignity as a lady, and would like to ensure the retention of the willing servility of a lower, labouring class. The arrogance and affectation of servants in Canada apparently causes Traill, like Susanna Moodie, some feelings of uneasiness. Unlike the upper classes, the lower classes should not shake off their chains, and laugh at Grundyism. Traill quite openly disapproves of what she considers an inappropriate assumption of equality by the lower classes in Canada. She complains to her reader:

You would be surprised to see how soon the new comers fall into this disagreeable manner and affectation of equality, especially the inferior class of Irish and Scotch; the English less so. (p. 83)

Oddly enough, Traill does not seem to feel any sense of incongruity in her opinions on new-world freedom.

In certain circumstances in The Backwoods of Canada Traill actually defends the levelling of class structure in Canada. For example, when she compliments Peterborough on its "genteel society" (p. 81), she notes that this "society is composed of officers and their families and professional men,

as well as storekeepers (and here one is reminded of the Murchisons of Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist [1904]) and that many of the Canadian merchants are "persons of respectable family and good education" (p. 81), thus warranting their inclusion in a list of "genteel society."

Traill tells her readers that the social standing of a storekeeper in Upper Canada is superior to that of a shopkeeper in an English village, chiefly because, in Canada, all men and women, regardless of rank, must take part in the active physical labour of pioneer settlement. This is the one great leveller of rank in Canadian society. Yet Traill refuses to discard all of her preconceived ideas of rank and privilege.

She says:

After all, it is education and manners that must distinguish the gentleman in this country, seeing that the labouring man, if he is diligent and industrious, may soon become his equal in point of worldly possessions: (p. 81)

While Traill acknowledges the inevitability of social leveling in Canada, she seems to anticipate the formation of a new aristocracy, in effect, a meritocracy based on education and manners, an upper-class segment of society which is composed of the well-educated, not necessarily of the well-born or the wealthy. To an extent, then, Traill guards the intangible proofs of her own gentility and despairs of the social presumptions of her neighbours; but she also takes an active and eager part in the pioneering process, enjoys her freedom from social constriction, and hopes that the final, positive result of the social

levelling apparent in a frontier society will result in the creation of a new, ideal aristocracy, a meritocracy based on qualities of the mind.

In The Backwoods of Canada Traill has, in effect, produced a spirited defense of Canada and of her life as a pioneer woman. She has faced the difficulties of pioneering, and has admitted that her role forces her to cope with situations far different from any of her previous experience. The mingling of honesty with idealism leads Traill to conclude: "...I find, by impartial survey of my present life, that I am to the full as happy; if not really happier, than I was in the old country" (p. 268). A sense of determined optimism is a trait of Traill's pioneer writing. It is evident in her first pioneer narrative, and continues to be a dominant force throughout the rest of her writing career. It influences the way in which she perceives herself and her surroundings. It is the guiding principle in her development of a plan for successful emigration and in her creation of a model pioneer woman for other emigrant women to emulate.

Like The Backwoods of Canada, The Canadian Settler's Guide confronts the reality of pioneer life in the backwoods. The later work is, however, more immediately practical in its orientation than its predecessor, and is intended to serve as "a useful guide" to Canada, to be "a Manual of Canadian housewifery" (p. xviii) for female emigrants. In The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill attempts to help British female emigrants to cope with the stresses and the "emergencies of

their new mode of life" (p. xvii) in the Canadian backwoods. She knows from personal experience that a book of basic instructions would be a welcome addition to any pioneer home:

Having myself suffered from the disadvantage of acquiring all my knowledge of Canadian housekeeping by personal experience, and having heard other females similarly situated lament the want of some simple useful book to give them an insight into the customs and occupations incidental to a Canadian settler's life, I have taken upon me to endeavor to supply this want, and have with much labour collected such useful matter as I thought best calculated to afford the instruction required. (p. xvii)

Never averse to tackling a difficult task, Traill seeks in The Canadian Settler's Guide to fill a need and to help other women by providing them with a Canadian housekeeping manual.

The Canadian Settler's Guide was, like The Backwoods of Canada, intended for publication. But while her first major work of non-fiction was written for a wealthy, middle-class audience, her second assumes a more general readership and is written to help all Canadian emigrants rather than to enlighten and entertain a sophisticated social group. Consequently, the style of writing differs in the second book. In her Preface Traill writes:

As this little work has been written for all classes, and more particularly for the wives and daughters of the small farmers, and part of it is also addressed to the wives of the labourer and mechanics, I aimed at no beauty of style. It was not written with the intention of amusing, but simply of instructing and advising. (p. xviii)

Very evidently Traill wishes to create a practical, useful guide; she hopes primarily to instruct rather than to entertain. As a result, her book covers a wide variety of topics,

and presents a large number of facts about pioneering. Her writing style tends to reflect her apparent intention to focus on use and practicality rather than on beauty. There are fewer rambling excursions into philosophic thought, fewer asides, and fewer anecdotes. Traill covers her topics as thoroughly as possible and as concisely as possible. Nevertheless she cannot avoid entirely her propensity to moralize, speculate, or entertain, and her work continues to mirror a tension between pragmatism and sensibility. Despite what seem to have been her intentions, Traill offers in The Canadian Settler's Guide both practical advice and moral and/or philosophic musings to her readers.

Moreover, while Traill defends the propriety of concentrating on what is useful and practical in a pioneer setting, she cannot eliminate the importance of beauty in her world view. Consequently, she insists that beauty and grace should be included in pioneer life as well. In her section on gardening in The Canadian Settler's Guide she tells her readers when and how to plant the various essential fruits and vegetables. A garden is a necessary addition to every pioneer home, and Traill not only describes the uses of each plant but also provides instructions for planting and harvesting the crops. Nevertheless, Traill veers from merely pragmatic towards aesthetic concerns when she urges her readers to pay attention to the potential beauty of the backwoods garden. She quotes from the Old Countryman when she writes, "...give a thought and an eye occasionally to the beautiful" (p. 53).

Traill advocates, for example, the removal of the surface stones around the garden for both practical and aesthetic reasons. She says:

These surface stones may be made very serviceable in filling up the lower part of the fence, or, piled in large heaps, be rendered ornamental by giving them the effect of rockwork. (p. 55)

In this instance, Traill gives her settlers the option of employing the garden stones in either a useful or an ornamental way, of being either--or both--practical and artistic. Later in this section on gardening in The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill repeats her theory that the garden serves a dual purpose in pioneer life, when she describes the many ways in which superfluous stones may be used;

Thus by the exertion of a little ingenuity, the garden of the settler may be rendered not only highly useful, but very ornamental. A little taste displayed about the rudest dwelling, will raise the inmates in the eyes of their neighbours. (p. 55)

It is appropriate that Traill concludes her section on gardens with an excursion into her personal theories on nature and the natural world. Whereas she began by giving practical advice, even though she modifies her practicality with her theories on garden beautification, she concludes by noting that, through an appreciation of beauty, specifically an appreciation of the beauty of nature, one can sense the presence of God:

There are very few persons totally insensible to the enjoyment of the beautiful, either in nature or art, and still fewer, who are insensible to the approbation of their fellow men; this feeling is no doubt implanted in them by the Great Creator, to encourage them in the pursuit of purer, more intel-

lectual pleasures than belong to their grosser natures. As men cultivate the mind they rise in the scale of creation, and become more capable of adoring the Almighty through the works of his hands.--I think there can be no doubt but that whatever elevates the higher faculties of the soul, brings man a step nearer to his Maker. (pp. 55-56)

In spite of her primary emphasis on practical advice in The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill thus demonstrates a Romantic belief in the immanence of God in nature, as, of course, she had done in The Backwoods of Canada when she described the experience of being lost in the bush..

Traill advises the female reader of The Canadian Settler's Guide to spend some time beautifying the appearance of her home. She insists on the importance of "comfort and convenience before show and finery" (p. 13), and manages to make each beautification project a practical necessity. After stating that a verandah is a sensible addition to a backwoods cabin, she notes that a verandah adds beauty to the building, and, in a further return to practical advice, adds that it serves as a useful extra room during the summer months. Traill further recommends that settlers plant vines at the base of the verandah pillars. The hop plant provides a "graceful drapery of leaves and flowers" (p. 15) which adds a touch of beauty and refinement to the home. The hop plant is also a common source for the yeast used in the baking of bread and Traill provides instructions in her book for making bread with home-grown yeast. In this way, Traill justifies her beautification projects with a practical dimension, and, by extension, indicates the way in which the ideal pioneer

woman can honour the needs of both practicality and sensibility.

Although a log house will always have a rough exterior, even with the addition of a verandah, a garden, and various graceful climbing plants, Traill feels that the interior can, and should, be made attractive as well as functional. The functional aspect is of primary concern; good sense comes before sensibility. Traill lists the practical items required in a log home, explains their use, and estimates the probable cost. She emphasizes the importance of adornment in addition to these basic furnishings because she feels that mental delight is almost as important as physical comfort:

A few prints, or pictures, in frames of oak or black walnut, should not be omitted, if you can bring such ornaments with you. These things are sources of pleasure to yourselves, and of interest to others. They are intellectual luxuries, that even the very poorest man regards with delight, and possesses if he can, to adorn his cottage wall, however lowly that cottage may be. (p. 19)

Once again, although the major emphasis in The Canadian Settler's Guide is on practical utility, beauty is an essential aspect of Traill's approach to pioneering. She even manages to imply that beautiful objects can be a useful and even necessary addition to a home.

Traill's eclectic mingling of the mundane and the ideal dominates all of her attempts at useful instruction, and is exemplified in another section of The Canadian Settler's Guide, this time in a passage on Indian corn. The section is a typical one in its demonstration of Traill's multi-faceted or bi-focal approach to her subject as well as her redefini-

tion of a woman's ~~role~~ to suit new world conditions. She begins by instructing her readers, first in the identification and function of Indian corn, then in the explanation of the proper planting and harvesting procedures for this North American crop. The practical, detailed instructions follow closely Traill's mandate to teach emigrant women the basic skills required by frontier living. This section is followed by an anecdote about one woman's experiences with Indian corn, and Traill then moves into a discussion of woman and her role in Canada, beginning with a warning to her readers that a woman's role on the frontier is quite different from anything an emigrant woman has experienced before:

I have been particular in describing, as minutely as I could, all these things relating to the cultivation of this crop, so universally grown in Canada; for though it is not often left to the management of females, yet such things have sometimes occurred through sickness or accident befalling the head of the family, that the work or the direction of it, has fallen upon the wives and daughters of the farmer.

I have known women in Canada, who have not only planted and hoed the corn, but have also harvested it. (pp. 113-114)

This is a frank acknowledgment that life is difficult on the Canadian frontier where any woman can be called upon to do, not only her own housework, but also the field work which is more commonly the domain of her husband.

At this point in The Canadian Settler's Guide Traill moves into her anecdote about a particular woman's experience in the backwoods. She uses the story to alter her focus as a writer, and she begins to proselytize. The main elements of

the anecdote can be easily summarized. A pioneer woman with a sick husband is forced by necessity to take charge of the harvesting of their corn crop. Although she is unused to field labour, and unsuited physically to do men's work, she finds the strength to complete the harvesting, to nurse her husband, and to amuse her baby:

At first she was inclined to fret, and give up in despair, but when she looked upon her sick husband and her helpless babe, she remembered that duty required better things from her than to lie down and weep, and lament: she knew that other women had their trials, and she braced up her mind to do what was before her, praying to God to give her strength to do her duty, and she went on cheerfully and with a brave spirit. (p. 114)

A cheerful conformity to adverse circumstances, and a willing acceptance of necessity--these are the basic requirements of a pioneer woman, and Traill is merely repeating her earlier arguments from The Backwoods of Canada.

In The Canadian Settler's Guide Traill insists that, aside from the chance to display one's moral fortitude, pioneer chores offer certain rewards to women who bravely accept their new lot in life. In The Backwoods of Canada, Traill, as has been seen, comments on her sense of greater personal freedom from constricting social rules. In the story about Indian corn, in The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill claims that the heroine of her story is not ashamed of her field work. She proposes that the performance of menial tasks is not a degradation in Canada, but is, rather, a source for pride:

In after years she has often with honest pride related to her children, how she gathered in the

first Indian corn crop that was raised on their bush farm. Possibly this very circumstance gave a tone of energy and manly independence of spirit to her children, which will mark them in their progress in after life. (p. 115)

Thus, the pioneer woman reaps a lasting reward for her cheerful response to adverse circumstances. Traill claims in The Canadian Settler's Guide that she has received similar benefits from her residence in Canada:

At first I could hardly understand why it happened that I never felt the same sensation of fear in Canada as I had done in England. My mind seemed lightened of a heavy burden; and I, who had been so timid, grew brave and fearless amid the gloomy forests of Canada. (p. 46)

Pride, self-confidence, independence--these are the rewards for the courageous pioneer woman. Traill ends the story of the Indian corn on a moral note, and once again turns her attention to recipes. As usual, her focus changes with great rapidity. She has provided the solution for one problem; she can turn to the solution of another.

The Preface of The Canadian Settler's Guide is quite specific in its definitions of the ideal candidate for pioneer life, and various pithy sayings, pertinent stories, and short exhortations which reinforce and repeat Traill's ideas are scattered throughout the book. Here, as always, Traill admits that life in Canada is arduous and, and to the uninitiated, strange. To ameliorate this problem she advises the immediate acquisition of household skills by prospective emigrants: "...all practical knowledge is highly valuable in the land to which they are going" (p. 2). Useful knowledge and practical skills are essential, but in themselves do not

provide the perfect solution to the problems of emigration. Women must also adopt a correct attitude towards pioneering, and this is by far the more difficult task:

The necessity of becoming acquainted with the common branches of household work may not at first be quite agreeable to such as have been unaccustomed to take an active part in the duties of the house. Though their position in society may have been such as to exempt them from what they consider menial occupations, still they will be wise to lay aside their pride and refinement, and apply themselves practically to the acquirement of such useful matters as those I have named. (pp. 2-3)

Traill advocates a shifting of focus for emigrant women, and a redefinition of pride in accomplishment:

Instead of suffering a false pride to stand in their way of acquiring practical household knowledge, let it be their pride--their noble, honest pride--to fit themselves for the state which they will be called upon to fill.... (p. 4)

Her conclusion is that a cheerful resignation to the inevitable will lead to ultimate rewards:

The greatest heroine in life is she who knowing her duty, resolves not only to do it, but to do it to the best of her abilities, with heart and mind bent upon the work. (p. 4)

Traill assures her reader that the woman who accepts her duty gladly is a heroine--it could even be said, an ideal pioneer woman. At any rate, she attempts to infuse her rather gloomy portrait of the daily life of a pioneer woman with some sense of glamour.

The combination of "cheerfulness of mind and activity of body" (p. 1) as outlined in the Preface to The Canadian Settler's Guide, is the main ingredient in Traill's ideal pioneer woman, a figure in whom pragmatism must co-exist with

assembling her details so that, in a pictorial sense, she can create a larger picture. In addition, she interprets what she sees; a small point, or a scene, or an incident, will act as a springboard for her movement into philosophic thought and speculation. Traill reassembles and rearranges the minute details of her landscape on a larger canvas so that she may narrate a story that has a moral purpose at its heart. In effect, the moral perspective of the author unites the various disparate points of view. That "The Bereavement" is based on the relation of one incident only, the death of a child, means that Traill has less opportunity to depart from her topic in order to impart useful or moral bits of wisdom. While Traill has not designed "The Bereavement" as a treatise on pioneering, she repeats many of the themes developed in earlier non-fiction, most notably her creation of an ideal Canadian pioneer woman.

In her initial evocation of a specific time and place in "The Bereavement," Traill produces minute details, things which would be noted only by the careful observer--the person who is interested in all parts which make up a composite whole. The episode begins on a spring morning:

The air was filled with insects which had either revived from their winter torpor or been prematurely awakened to the enjoyment of a bright but brief existence. A few sleepy, dusty looking flies had crept from their hiding places about the window--while some attenuated shadowy spider made vain attempts at commencing a web to entangle them.

No object is seemingly too small or unimportant to escape

inner spiritual beauty. The pioneer woman must be physically capable as well as mentally prepared to meet all exigencies with immediate activity: "In cases of emergency, it is folly to fold one's hands and sit down to bewail in abject terror: it is better to be up and doing" (p. 204). While all of this activity must have seemed quite foreign and very bewildering to some English emigrant women, Traill reiterates her firm belief that, despite her changed circumstances, a woman's self-definition can remain intact on the frontier: "One thing is certain, that a lady will be a lady, even in the plainest dress; a vulgar minded woman will never be a lady, in the most costly garments" (p. 10). Traill forges ahead, confidently and serenely. Secure in the knowledge that she herself is a lady and will always remain a lady, she advocates some quite radical changes in a woman's role. The pioneer woman must revise her focus, accept adversity with a brave and confident spirit, perform new and arduous tasks in the kitchen and in the fields. Her rewards for cheerful service are intangible but the implication is that, if she can perform her tasks in the right spirit, she can define herself as a heroine, that she will feel a lasting sense of pride in accomplishment and a new sense of self-confidence, that she will undoubtedly be rewarded in the after-life.

The differences between The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide are marginal. The later book is oriented towards a wider reading public and is intended to be a practical guide to emigration. It develops more fully many

of Traill's theories about pioneering in Canada. In it Traill continues to employ various disparate points of view, and to vacillate between her accurate portrayal of the real world of the Canadian backwoods and her idealized interpretation of pioneering. Her ideas may, however, be better integrated in The Canadian Settler's Guide for here Traill tends to point out the ideal aspects of every situation and a certain balance is achieved. There is, for example, the story of the pioneer woman who harvests the corn. Traill comments that incidents such as this one are common in pioneer life. Women are called upon to perform work which is generally not within their sphere of duty, discover that they can carry out their repugnant tasks, and that, surprisingly enough, they enjoy certain aspects of their work. As in The Backwoods of Canada, Traill insists on the propriety of conforming to necessity. But she insists equally that virtue is always rewarded; that there are intangible benefits which result from dutiful obedience. The woman who harvests the corn is merely bowing to the inevitable, and the reward she reaps is intangible as well as tangible. Traill is continually, as already suggested, on the defensive in both books. She is aware that her readers may find her stories about Canada strange and even repulsive. She attempts to soften her tough stance by adopting a moral attitude which gives the reassurance that a cheerful acceptance of unpleasant tasks is both necessary and virtuous. According to Traill, virtue is often rewarded in Canada by a sense of pride in accomplishment and

by a feeling of freedom from social restriction.

The defensive tone is missing from Traill's shorter non-fiction. In fact, Traill's best, most cohesive writing is found in her later collections of short stories, Pearls and Pebbles (1894) and Cot and Cradle Stories (1895) and in the anecdotes which are included as digressions within longer narratives. The majority of these shorter narratives and digressions are derived from Traill's personal experiences in the backwoods; hence their inclusion in a discussion of Traill's non-fiction. Many, including "The First Death in the Clearing" and "Something Gathers Up the Fragments" in Pearls and Pebbles, achieve what Clara Thomas has termed "a vignette perfection."³ In the shorter works Traill is less concerned with developing her theories about pioneering and with justifying her ideas to her readers. Furthermore, the concentration on a single thought or incident means that the works are better unified. Otherwise, the themes and motifs of the longer non-fiction--particularly with respect to the ideal of the pioneer woman--seem to be essentially unchanged as they appear in the short stories. As intimated near the beginning of the chapter, the short prose passage, "The Bereavement," first published in the Literary Garland in 1866 and later rewritten and republished in Pearls and Pebbles in 1894, as "The First Death in the Clearing,"⁴ is an example of Traill's literary ability to balance successfully several disparate points of view within a single work. In "The Bereavement" Traill's accurate observation of the small fore-

ground details in her backwoods surroundings is juxtaposed, as in her descriptions of Gros Isle and Quebec City in The Backwoods of Canada, with her tendency to perceive the world about her with the eye of a poet or a landscape artist. This dual focus--Traill as scientist, Traill as artist (or pioneer woman as scientist and artist)--is put to a more creative and better crafted literary use in this shorter work than in the longer narratives.

Traill's inclusion of herself as a character in "The Bereavement" results in a more personal tone in this particular work than in the longer narratives where, more generally, she speaks with some detachment. Whereas in The Canadian Settler's Guide she frequently relates the experiences of other settlers, in "The Bereavement" she is relating one of her own experiences. Traill continues to play a series of dual roles: she is a participant and an observer, she is the chief character in the drama and the narrator, she is an artist and a scientist, she is an English lady and a Canadian pioneer. Yet "The Bereavement" is unified and cohesive, largely because Traill, as a character, is at the centre of the work.

In "The Bereavement" Traill pays close attention (as always) to small details. No object escapes her notice. In this story, unlike the more cumbersome longer works, however, this careful attention to detail is evident in her prose style. "The Bereavement" is carefully crafted as Traill reconstructs a scene or an incident as accurately as possible,

assembling her details so that, in a pictorial sense, she can create a larger picture. In addition, she interprets what she sees; a small point, or a scene, or an incident, will act as a springboard for her movement into philosophic thought and speculation. Traill reassembles and rearranges the minute details of her landscape on a larger canvas so that she may narrate a story that has a moral purpose at its heart. In effect, the moral perspective of the author unites the various disparate points of view. That "The Bereavement" is based on the relation of one incident only, the death of a child, means that Traill has less opportunity to depart from her topic in order to impart useful or moral bits of wisdom. While Traill has not designed "The Bereavement" as a treatise on pioneering, she repeats many of the themes developed in earlier non-fiction, most notably her creation of an ideal Canadian pioneer woman.

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No object is seemingly too small or unimportant to escape

enumeration by the scientist. But it takes the imaginative eye of an artist to portray these humble insects with sympathy, to grant them a "bright," albeit "brief" life. As she stands in her doorway, Traill, the scientist, observes the natural world outside her cabin. It is typical of Traill that she provides the proper, latinate names for the plants and animals of the Canadian backwoods. She comments on "the neat snow-bird (fringilla nivalis)" (p. 69). This display of erudition, unnecessary to the narrative, adds a rather odd effect. Nevertheless, it is part of Traill's general attempt to define and to classify the environment of the pioneer woman in her non-fiction.

Despite her scientific inclination and despite her propensity to list and to catalogue her surroundings, Traill is, as has been seen, almost always capable of observing the natural world with an artist's appreciation for colour and perspective. In all her descriptions of Canadian scenery Traill is as appreciative of the whole picture as she is of the picture's component parts; indeed, it could be said that the dual perspective is here again the epistemological counterpart of the ideal of the pioneer heroine, a figure who must be oriented toward both the useful and the beautiful. The writer who in "The Bereavement" comments on the flies in her window, and who can give the snow-bird its proper name, also reveals an awareness of the Romantic and picturesque value of nature:

I...looked forth upon the face of Nature--and a lovely sight it was! The frosty earth was gemmed

with countless diamonds--the mimic picture of those bright orbs above, which were still gleaming down from the clear blue sky; the saffron tint of early dawn was streaking the East. A light curling mist was gathering on the face of the rapid river, which lay before my eyes in all the majesty of its white crested waves, darkly shaded by the then unbroken line of forest on the opposite bank. (pp. 70-71)

An artistic awareness of the patterns of light and dark, of colour, and of foreground and background perspective, permeates this particular passage. Here, as in her account of being lost in the bush in The Backwoods of Canada, Traill, the narrator of "The Bereavement," demonstrates her belief in a God immanent in a nature that is comfortingly humanized: she looks upon "the face of Nature," and "the face of the rapid river." She loses herself in a Romantic contemplation of the beauty of nature; a contemplative side of her personality appears and balances the earlier glimpse of a practical orientation. Traill has once again demonstrated an ability to juxtapose, or perhaps to combine, several seemingly disparate ways of viewing the natural world. Yet, as already suggested, in "The Bereavement," the distinctions between the scientist and the artist tend to be less clearly marked and less important. There is more of an artistic balance between the two areas, less of a possible confusion in priorities.

The use of a single incident as the basis for "The Bereavement" allows the development of a more complex series of images in this story than in Traill's longer, rambling narratives, or in the shorter sketches based on the description of a single plant or animal. The longer narratives tend to be choppy and uneven. The shorter sketches, as for example, the

flower sketches published in the Literary Garland or the descriptions of plants in Canadian Wild Flowers (1868), while they display Traill's eclectic ability to perceive and portray a natural object in several ways, lack the greater artistic development of "The Bereavement." Furthermore, "The Bereavement" contains a series of consistent and well-developed patterns of imagery that augment and shape the narrative. One such pattern of imagery juxtaposes the interiors of various buildings with the exterior natural world. In this story, man-made buildings are associated with imprisonment and death while nature is associated with springtime and new life. Yet, in both settings, Traill can sense the existence of the deity, and a consistent moral point of view unites the imagery. The narrator's desire to escape from the confinement of her cabin into the freedom of the spring sunshine is established in the initial scene:

Bright and blue as was the sky above, warm and genial as was the air around, and inviting as were the sounds of nature abroad, I yet found myself obliged to be an unwilling prisoner.... (p. 69)

The three senses of sight, touch, and sound unite in extending an invitation to this pioneer woman. She is held prisoner in her cabin, and is unable to escape into the free natural world.

Traill states here and elsewhere (in both The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide) that she has noticed a feeling of personal freedom and independence in the backwoods. In "The Bereavement," the narrator's freedom

would stem from her inclusion in the world outdoors:

How I envied the more fortunate flocks of wild geese and ducks that were revelling in the azure pools, that lay so invitingly open to them, on the ice-bound lake in front of our log house. Sorely tempted as I was by the bright sunshine, and all spring's pleasant harmonies, to go forth into the newly uncovered fields.... (p. 69)

Prevented by mundane human problems from going out into the spring sunshine (she has been ill and cannot risk getting wet feet), the narrator gazes longingly from behind her prison bars into a bright and vitally alive nature. In her earlier defenses of Canada and of all things Canadian, Traill would have insisted on practical necessity; she would have noted that it is infinitely more sensible to remain indoors for a good reason. One ought to be pragmatic and practical. Certainly, she would not have referred to her cabin as a prison. Here in "The Bereavement" she seems no longer to be developing theories, with the result that she can relax and can use effective imagery, regardless of the impression she may be giving her readers concerning the interior of a log cabin.

In a further metaphoric use of building interiors, the narrator of "The Bereavement" describes the log cabin where a child has died. The narrator has been called from her own home to assist another woman with her sick baby, and, after the death of the child, the narrator returns to comfort the mother. The dim interior of the house and the child's death are juxtaposed with the brightness and the vitality of the spring day. Traill takes time to comment, "It was a day of sunny brightness" (p. 71), before she enters the cabin.

Inside the house, however, the light dims, and as the narrator confronts sickness, grief, and death, her mood suffers a radical change: "A solemn feeling came over me, as I stepped across the threshold, from the broad glare of daylight into the dim religious light of the darkened room" (p. 71). The evocation of the darkness of a tomb or of a prison is softened here by the narrator's strong religious faith. She qualifies her description of the house of death so that it becomes a holy place.

Traill's religious convictions permeate and unite "The Bereavement." Religious metaphors and motifs, Biblical allusions and parallels are used frequently in the narrative. Even the potentially threatening interior of a house where a child is dying holds no fears for the narrator. The child is dying in her arms, but the thought of its death does not frighten her for, as she says: "...it breathed its little life away so peacefully, that it might indeed be said, that it fell asleep and wakened in Heaven" (p. 71). The cabin, while it contains death, is, paradoxically, the centre of religious conviction as well, and becomes a holy place. The narrator watches over the child throughout the night before its death; the third day after the death is a Sunday, and on this particular morning, the narrator returns to the cabin in order to assist the mourning parents. As she arrives she notes, "The door of the dwelling stood open, and I entered unbidden" (p. 71). These parallels with the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ--parallels which, of course, blur

the distinctions between fiction and non-fiction--are augmented by the descriptions of the grief-stricken parents.

The mother sits in the pose of a Madonna, "her face bowed over the pale shrouded form of the idol of her heart" (p. 72) and mourns her loss with "the holy weeping of maternal love" (p. 72). The father, a priest-like figure, is reading his Bible when Traill enters the cabin/tomb:

As I entered, he raised his head, and bowed with an air of deep reverence, but spoke no word, and I passed on, unwilling to intrude upon his wholesome meditation. (p. 72)

Through the grief of its inhabitants, the log cabin becomes a church. With an allusion to Milton's "Il Penseroso," Traill observes the "dim religious light of the darkened room. In the centre was a table, decently covered with a snow white damask cloth." That there is even a communion table of sorts in the centre of the room covered with a "snow white...cloth" indicates that the death of the child becomes a commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ.

These Biblical allusions and parallels are strengthened by the use of the springtime season, by Traill's firm belief in the renewal of all life, and by the departure of the dead child from its temporal home in the cabin into the spring sunshine for burial in the colonial cemetery. This movement, from a cabin to the outside world, typifies, for Traill, a movement into a freer, happier world. It denotes a movement from death into life, and it signifies a time of rejoicing rather than of mourning. The child's soul is in heaven. Its body, buried in the quiet Canadian cemetery, is surrounded by

the beauty of nature and by nature's constant reminder of the existence of God:

...the pines sigh above them a solemn requiem, the wild birds of the forest sing their lullaby, and the pure white lily of the woods and the blue violet, grow as freely on their green mossy graves, as though they slept within the holy shadow of the sanctuary. (p. 72)

Despite the wealth of religious imagery surrounding the description of the interior of the log cabin, it is evident that Traill derives greater comfort from a contemplation of the outside world. Beauty is always a source of emotional strength and reassurance for Traill.

A particularly beautiful passage in "The Bereavement" is that of the dawning of the new day. The dying child is lying in the narrator's lap; she has watched the child through the night. With the arrival of the dawn, the woman's focus shifts from the sick baby to the outside world, and, once again, the change of focus to the external world, results in a change of mood. The narrator notes "the face of Nature" (p. 70) which surrounds the cabin. She reconfirms her conviction that God can be seen in nature, and reiterates her religious belief in the renewal of human life:

There is no season when gratitude seems more naturally to fill our hearts, than at early dawn--it is the renewal to us of our existence....
(p. 71)

The narrator gains inner peace and confidence when she surveys God's hand in nature. When she again looks inside, her focus and her mood change once more:

From the contemplation of things like these, I

turned with a subdued and humbled heart to look upon human suffering and human woe. Without all was beauty and magnificence, for I gazed upon the works of God. Within was sorrow and death--the consequence of man's sin. (p. 71)

Much of the power of Traill's writing derives from her ability to switch her focus in this manner. In "The Bereavement," such changes are smooth and an integral part of the narrative; in other works, as for example, The Backwoods of Canada, an abrupt change of focus is often rough and may prevent a smooth narrative flow.

One of the most interesting aspects of "The Bereavement" is Traill's portrayal of herself, the pioneer woman, as narrator and as participant. She first describes herself as a woman torn between the desire to go outside on a beautiful day and the knowledge that there is a good, practical reason for staying inside. As elsewhere in her writing, she is clearly motivated by the pioneer heroine's devotion to both beauty and practical necessity, and clearly in possession of the ability to describe the natural world from both a scientific and a scenic perspective. A new note, however, is added in "The Bereavement" in the form of her role as healer. She has been called to assist with a sick child, and, later, she presides over the death of that child. The parents seem to perceive her as an almost holy figure: the father bows to her with reverence; she comforts the grieving mother. Traill has watched simultaneously a child dying and a spring day dawning. In both events, she can see the hand of God. Despite being given a somewhat mystical frame of reference, the

Traill, "Bereavement," p. 71; see John Milton, "Il Penseroso," in The Poems of John Milton, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler, Longmans Annotated Poets, ed. F. W. Bateson (London: Longmans, Green, 1968), p. 146:

But let my due feet never fail,
To walk the studious choister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars' massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.

10

For a listing of relevant source material concerning the literary history of the "lady" as character type, see note numbers 2 and 3 at the end of the preceding chapter on Traill's fiction.

feminists as pioneers is, in fact, a common one in Canadian social history.² The portrayal of feminists as pioneers was, moreover, a logical step in the evolution of the perception of the pioneer woman as a feminine ideal. When the physical frontiers had been conquered, Canadian women were obliged to look elsewhere for proof of their competence or, as the case may be, their superiority. As a result, the definition of a woman's proper role changed somewhat. The major emphasis was shifted from her contribution to the metamorphosis of a hostile physical frontier to her participation in the process of improving an unfriendly, discriminating social frontier. Feminist crusaders in Canada were optimistic about their efforts and perceived themselves as powerful agents for positive social change. Theirs was a global point of view in many cases,³ and they anticipated the advent of the millennium.⁴ Evidently the definition of the frontier had expanded far beyond the small backwoods farms to include humanity in general. It is important to note, however, that none of this process of the expansion of woman's proper sphere of activity involved a rejection of what was now seen as traditional feminine values in Canada.⁵ The precedent of a capable, active, pioneer woman who could overcome any obstacles in her path had been established by the earlier pioneers, by women such as Traill. Many of the qualities possessed by the original pioneers--for instance, activity in the face of an emergency,⁶ a cheerful acceptance of adverse circumstances, the courage and pragmatism necessary to begin to effect

of pioneering as well as on a long-range perspective and the ideal aspects of pioneering--specifically those aspects which relate to a woman's role on the frontier--has facilitated her creation of an idealized portrait of a multi-faceted and talented pioneer woman.

Notes

1

See also Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush, or, Forest Life in Canada (1913; rpt. Toronto: Coles Canadiana Collection, 1980); for an account of pioneer life in the Maritimes see Mrs. Frances Bevan, Life in the Backwoods of New Brunswick (London, 1845; rpt. St. Stephen, New Brunswick: Print 'N Press Ltd., 1980); for a listing of material available from prairie pioneer women see note number 1 in chapter 3.

2

Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America (London, 1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles Canadiana Collection, 1971), p. 16. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

3

See Susanna Moodie, Roughing It, p. 111.

4

Catharine Parr Traill, Preface, The Canadian Settler's Guide, introd: Clara Thomas, NCL, No. 64, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. xix. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

5

Clara Thomas, Introduction, The Canadian Settler's Guide, by Catharine Parr Traill (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart NCL, 1969), p. xiii.

6

I have chosen "The Bereavement" rather than "The First Death in the Clearing" as a topic for critical discussion. The earlier work is more appealing. Later changes and revisions have altered the story only slightly and have not improved the narrative in any way.

7

Catharine Parr Traill, "The Bereavement. A Fragment from Forest Gleanings," in The Literary Garland, NS 4 (Feb. 1866), p. 69. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

8

Catharine Traill wrote a number of "Floral Sketches" which were published in The Literary Garland in 1843. See Catharine Parr Traill, "Floral Sketches: The Violet," in The Literary Garland, NS 1 (Feb. 1843), 87-90; Catharine Parr Traill, "The Rose," in The Literary Garland, NS 1 (March, 1843), 129-131.

9

Traill, "Bereavement," p. 71; see John Milton, "Il Penseroso," in The Poems of John Milton, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler, Longmans Annotated Poets, ed. F. W. Bateson (London: Longmans, Green, 1968), p. 146:

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The Pioneer Woman as Character Type in Sara Jeannette
Duncan's The Imperialist

By the end of the nineteenth century, pioneer days had ended in Ontario, and the Canadian frontier had moved into the North and the West. In the West, as earlier in the East, pioneer women were required to perform superhuman feats of endurance, courage, and household skill as they faced the difficulties inherent in the settling of an often hostile physical environment.¹ While western women were taking an active part in the process of pioneering, eastern women were leaving pioneer days behind. In Ontario the role of the pioneer woman, as this role had been described by Catharine Parr Traill in The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855) had ended with the completion of the frontier era. Despite the social changes which were an inevitable result of the increasing wealth and urbanization of Ontario, the concept of the pioneer woman as a feminine ideal continued to flourish. Since the frontier no longer existed in a real physical sense, however, it became necessary to redefine the nature of the frontier. While the ideal of the pioneer woman remained intact, the frontier which she inhabited was redefined and relocated.

Social change was a direct and unavoidable result of the ending of the pioneer society in Ontario, and Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) illustrates some of the major issues and dilemmas that were confronted by Ontario women at the turn of the century. To cite one example, in

The Imperialist, Duncan defends the new career options which were becoming increasingly available for women in a post-frontier society. Her protagonist, Advena Murchison, has a university education, and supports herself by working outside the home. Yet Duncan is also a traditionalist in her portrayal of female characters in The Imperialist. Advena's mother, Mrs. Murchison, resembles the ideal pioneer woman as this woman was described by Catharine Parr Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide. It is imperative to note, however, that the two women (Advena and her mother) are surprisingly similar, despite their vastly different career choices. Advena is, in fact, a new version of the pioneer woman, a pioneer woman on a new frontier. Through her characterization of Advena Murchison, Duncan redefines the frontier and the frontier woman to suit a new set of social circumstances.

Advena's frontier in The Imperialist is one which is composed of social attitudes and issues, a frontier which she could have chosen to avoid, as do her peers, Abby Murchison Johnson and Dora Milburn. Abby and Dora choose to emulate the circumscribed, outmoded roles of the women of their mothers' generation while Advena moves confidently into a new frontier region. At a time when few women worked for a living, and fewer still had acquired a university education, Advena has done both, making her something of a pioneer feminist. The perception of the development of women's rights as a pioneering process, and the portrayal of

feminists as pioneers is, in fact, a common one in Canadian social history.² The portrayal of feminists as pioneers was, moreover, a logical step in the evolution of the perception of the pioneer woman as a feminine ideal. When the physical frontiers had been conquered, Canadian women were obliged to look elsewhere for proof of their competence or, as the case may be, their superiority. As a result, the definition of a woman's proper role changed somewhat. The major emphasis was shifted from her contribution to the metamorphosis of a hostile physical frontier to her participation in the process of improving an unfriendly, discriminating social frontier. Feminist crusaders in Canada were optimistic about their efforts and perceived themselves as powerful agents for positive social change. There was a global point of view in many cases,³ and they anticipated the advent of the millennium.⁴ Evidently the definition of the frontier had expanded far beyond the small backwoods farms to include humanity in general. It is important to note, however, that none of this process of the expansion of woman's proper sphere of activity involved a rejection of what was now seen as traditional feminine values in Canada.⁵ The precedent of a capable, active, pioneer woman who could overcome any obstacles in her path had been established by the earlier pioneers, by women such as Traill. Many of the qualities possessed by the original pioneers--for instance, activity in the face of an emergency,⁶ a cheerful acceptance of adverse circumstances,⁷ the courage and pragmatism necessary to begin to effect

positive change on the frontier"---were seen as useful weapons on the new social frontier, and a relatively easy transition was made from a physical landscape to a social arena. It is thus evident that, while Advena Murchison of The Imperialist is undoubtedly a new, independent, woman, she can still be defined as a pioneer. Like her mother, she is a feminine ideal; and, like her mother before her, Advena faces and seeks to change a frontier landscape.

Mrs. Murchison conforms in virtually every aspect to Traill's definition of the woman who is suited to life on a frontier. When she is introduced in The Imperialist, Mrs. Murchison is working in her kitchen, surrounded by her children. The kitchen, the centre of domestic activity, is an ideal backdrop for Mrs. Murchison, and, with gentle humour, Duncan uses this introductory setting and activity to establish certain essential aspects of Mrs. Murchison's personality. More specifically, the setting is ideally suited to a demonstration of the sterling traits of the pioneer housekeeper. These traits, as they are demonstrated by Mrs. Murchison, include the active participation in all aspects of domestic duties, a cheerful disposition, a pragmatic approach to adversity, and an appreciation of grace and beauty.¹⁰

The use of the house to define the character of the chief female inhabitant is an important part of the introductory scene and is a technique which is used throughout The Imperialist to describe Mrs. Murchison. Mrs. Murchison's struggles as a pioneer during the transition of Elgin from

its rough frontier beginnings to its later prosperity are not described in any great detail. Rather, the changes made in the Murchison home throughout a period of several years are used to parallel the gradual shift in emphasis from a concentration on what is strictly necessary (the major focus of the pioneer struggle to survive) to an appreciation of comfort and luxury (the reward for success on the frontier) which denotes financial success.¹¹ In effect, Mrs. Murchison's personal battle with her house becomes a metaphor for her pioneering years.¹² The metamorphosis of the house follows the transition of Elgin from frontier to establishment, the growth of the Murchison family from youth to maturity, and the fortunes of the Murchison family from poverty to material wealth:

They had grown up sturdily, emerging into sobriety and decorum by much the same degrees as the old house, under John Murchison's improving fortunes, grew cared for and presentable. The new roof went on, slate replacing shingles, the year Abby put her hair up; the bathroom was contemporary with Oliver's leaving school; the electric light was actually turned on for the first time in honour of Lorne's return from Toronto, a barrister and solicitor; several rooms had been done up for Abby's wedding.¹³

While the Murchison house is ultimately a show place, in its initial state it was, for Mrs. Murchison, "the bane of her existence" (p. 28). At first the house had required "far more looking after than the Murchisons could afford to give it" (p. 28). The initial state of the Murchison family fortunes had required Mrs. Murchison's application of the various pioneer virtues and skills listed by Traill. In

short, Mrs. Murchison's early management of her home has demonstrated her capability, her adaptability, and her pragmatism. Mrs. Murchison is among the last of the original pioneers in Elgin.²⁴ When she set up housekeeping, the town was rapidly changing from a small frontier town to a larger, more prosperous urban centre:

...Elgin had begun as the centre of "trading" for the farmers of Fox County....Main Street...was now the chief artery of a thriving manufacturing town, with a collegiate institute, eleven churches, two newspapers, and an asylum for the deaf and dumb, to say nothing of a fire department unsurpassed for organization and achievement in the Province of Ontario. (p. 25)

The process of material improvement which results from a successful pioneering venture²⁵ has been condensed in The Imperialist by Duncan through her use of the Murchison home as a metaphor for the pioneer situation in general. Moreover, Mrs. Murchison's status as a pioneer woman is revealed by Duncan through a series of scenes which feature Mrs. Murchison at work in her home.

As has been indicated, the initial scene introduces Mrs. Murchison in a situation which demands her immediate, active, and capable participation in a domestic crisis. The servant has left without notice, and without having completed her work. Like a true pioneer, Mrs. Murchison is equal to the occasion. She calls upon her children for assistance, and faces the calamity with poise and equanimity. She is obviously quite at home in the kitchen; the servant has been a luxury rather than a necessity. It also becomes apparent in

this opening episode that Mrs. Murchison retains many of the practical skills possessed by the frontier woman. For example, the servant has left her job because she objects to the home-made carpet in her room. Mrs. Murchison takes offense at this because she has made the rag carpet herself. The offending rag carpet, now significantly relegated to a servant's room, had at one time been the ornament of the spare room. Despite its fall in decorative status, the carpet is still a source of pride for the creator: "'Dear me!' she went on with a smile that lightened the whole situation, 'how proud I was of that performance! She didn't tell me she objected to rag carpet'" (p. 16). Several pioneer traits are demonstrated in the making of the rag carpet in question. While the primary motivation in the making of the carpet has obviously been practical and pragmatic (reshaping rags to make a useful household object), the carpet has also been perceived by Mrs. Murchison as a beautiful and decorative object, and the necessity to combine use and beauty in any situation is a central issue in Traill's philosophy of successful pioneering.¹⁶ Finally, the making of the carpet has obviously given Mrs. Murchison a great deal of pride in accomplishment. She remembers, "...sixty balls there were in it, and every one I sewed with my own fingers" (p. 16).

Like the changing appearance of the Murchison home, the fortunes of the rag carpet follow the changes that take place within the Murchison family. Made during a pioneer era, at a time when economy was essential, it has since been relegated

to the decoration of a servant's bedroom. Furthermore, the rag carpet is no longer considered to be aesthetically pleasing. It is strictly functional, if it is necessary at all. The rag carpet is, in fact, a symbol of a past way of life, and of an outdated mode of perception. Yet, despite her present material prosperity, Mrs. Murchison cannot forget her pioneer skills and economies. She continues to live as though pioneer days may return at any minute.

The soft soap that she uses in her kitchen is further evidence of Mrs. Murchison's mastery of difficult pioneer tasks, as well as evidence of her later reluctance to abandon her pioneer economies:

The soft soap--Mrs Murchison had a barrelful boiled every spring in the back yard, an old colonial economy she hated to resign--made a fascinating brown lather with iridescent bubbles. (p. 16)

Mrs. Murchison's insistence on maintaining an outdated form of economy is emblematic of her difficulty in adapting to a modern, affluent, way of life. Moreover, in this particular scene, Duncan points out a basic contrast in point of view between Mrs. Murchison and her daughter Advena. Both like the soft soap, but Mrs. Murchison likes the economy while Advena likes the bubbles. The contrast which is established here becomes more pronounced as Advena proves to be almost totally lacking in the domestic skills which are the pride of her mother's existence.

In spite of her retention of various out-of-date pioneer practices, Mrs. Murchison is neither an inadequate nor an unimportant figure in The Imperialist. She dominates the ini-

tial scene during the family crisis, surrounded by her children, and in control of the activity around her:

Mrs Murchison remains the central figure, nevertheless, with her family radiating from her, gathered to help or to hinder in one of those domestic crises which arose when the Murchisons were temporarily deprived of a "girl." (p. 15)

Duncan's portrayal of Mrs. Murchison as the dominant character in this particular family scene is augmented by the images of the family "radiating from her," like spokes from the hub--not to say the still centre--of a wheel. Mrs. Murchison is evidently the centre of her own small universe. In this instance the other family members revolve around her, seeming to derive much of their strength from her.

A similar tableau is arranged later in the narrative when the Murchisons entertain Dr. Drummond and Mr. and Mrs. Williams. Once again Mrs. Murchison's family is grouped around her, responding to her instructions. The movement in the characterization of Mrs. Murchison from the kitchen to the dining room follows the movement of the Murchison family from poverty to prosperity; the action shifts from a strictly functional room to a more formal one with a primarily social orientation, and from a family domestic crisis, Duncan moves to a scene of entertainment.

But, while the different background for Mrs. Murchison follows the changing family fortunes, both locations allow Mrs. Murchison to dominate the action, and both permit her to demonstrate the many excellent domestic skills she has developed. Her capable management ensures that the meal served

to her guests is a good one, eagerly anticipated and greatly enjoyed by her guests and her family alike. She controls the action by assigning various tasks to her children throughout the meal:

Lorne had charge of the cold tongue and Advena was entrusted with the pickled pears. The rest of the family were expected to think about the tea biscuits and the cake.... (p. 38)

The strongly protective maternal instincts which have led Mrs. Murchison in the first chapter of The Imperialist to give her children money to buy ice cream here prompt her to guess Lorne's news about a court case before he tells the family: "'Lorne, you've got it!' divined his mother instantly" (p. 41). Practical housewifery skills and maternal domination are typical traits of Mrs. Murchison, regardless of her surroundings in The Imperialist.

Throughout the dinner party Mrs. Murchison demonstrates other excellent qualities which would have been recognized by Catharine Parr Traill as those belonging to a capable woman. For example, personal charm is clearly one of Mrs. Murchison's traits, and the arrangement of her dinner table reveals her appreciation of beauty and elegance:

It was a table to do anybody credit, with its glossy damask and the old-fashioned silver and best china that Mrs Murchison had brought as a bride to her housekeeping--for, thank goodness, her mother had known what was what in such matters--a generous attractive table that you took some satisfaction in looking at. Mrs Murchison came of a family of noted housekeepers; where she got her charm I don't know. (p. 38)

* Mrs. Murchison's table, elegance and competence are dis-

played simultaneously. It will be recalled that in her analysis of backwoods life, Catharine Traill had insisted that beauty and practicality must ideally co-exist. Duncan uses a similar approach in The Imperialist as one basis for her characterization of Mrs. Murchison, by using the woman's home as evidence of the woman's personality.

True to the spirit of the pioneer woman, Mrs. Murchison accepts her lot in life, if not always cheerfully (she often resents the amount of work involved in the upkeep of a large house), then at least with resignation. She has developed the skills necessary to succeed in a frontier environment. While she may not have chosen to be a pioneer, she evidently has decided to be good at her work. If there is a fault in Mrs. Murchison, it is her lack of ability to accept prosperity and to change with the times. When she has more money, more material possessions, and more leisure time, she continues to keep her old ways and habits. On the one hand, Mrs. Murchison is less than perfect as Duncan attempts to create a realistic character.²⁷ On the other hand, Mrs. Murchison, despite her faults, is a close approximation of a feminine ideal. At any rate, she has been a role model for her daughters Advena and Abby. To some extent, both follow in her footsteps.

The younger generation of women, as represented in The Imperialist by Advena, Abby, and Dora, has been influenced only indirectly by pioneer life in Ontario. These girls are at least one generation removed from the active process of

pioneering; their actions are not dictated by the needs of survival. They have had access to a good education, and they enjoy the advantages of a more-than-adequate number of material goods and possessions. More important, they are self-determining in ways foreign to the women of their mothers' generation. They can choose from various career options, and their actions are governed by an element of personal choice. This second generation of Canadians, one generation removed from pioneering, is at liberty to redefine itself (if it wishes to do so) by seeking new areas of interest, new types of employment.²⁰ The demands imposed by a physical frontier on its inhabitants no longer form the basis for the development of the ideal woman. This one factor causes, to a large extent, the ambivalence in Duncan's characterization of Mrs. Murchison who is, perhaps, an ideal figure from an earlier time, but whose admirable qualities are not always relevant in a modern era. Certain of her traits stand the test of time; others do not.

Abby Murchison Johnson has chosen to emulate her mother, to extend the tradition of the active, capable woman who controls a domestic sphere with admirable efficiency. She marries early, and chooses her partner wisely; her husband is a doctor who is popular in Elgin. Abby begins almost immediately to start her own family circle, and she is well versed in the domestic skills that elude her less practical sister, Advena. Mrs. Murchison is proud of Abby and boasts of her daughter's abilities as a housewife. Although Abby

more passive feminine way of life, and, at the same time, to impress others with the Milburn social superiority. These particular values are often at odds with the bustling, active Canadian town of Elgin, a town which is only one step removed from frontier conditions. The Milburn vision of ideal femininity is one which was discarded by pioneers like Catharine Parr Traill as they learned to set aside merely decorative pursuits and to take pride in their acquisition of new domestic accomplishments.

The Milburns are introduced to the reader as they sit, posed and poised, in their drawing room. Duncan's choice of the drawing room as a suitable frame of reference for the family group is significant. It is a room without a useful function in the daily life of the typical Canadian family of the period. Mrs. Murchison also has a drawing room, but is more often found in her kitchen, or, when she entertains, in her dining room.²⁹ Once again the situation and the activity in which the female characters are first discovered help to define the personalities of the women in The Imperialist.

Whereas Mrs. Murchison is found in the kitchen, Mrs. Milburn, Miss Filkin, and Dora Milburn are introduced in lady-like attitudes in the drawing room. They present the illusion that they have had nothing to do with the work of the party they are giving, and that their lives are spent in the pursuit of idle, decorative activities. Yet the irony of the situation is that this inactivity is merely an illusion:

No one would have supposed, from the way in which the family disposed itself in the drawing-room,

lead to anything whatever, a kind of bowing recognition, to be formally returned and quite possibly to end there. With Abby, in a good many cases, it hadn't ended there; she was doing very well.... (p. 45)

Abby is popular with her peers, and is visited often by her family: "Abby's housekeeping made an interest and Abby's baby a point of pilgrimage" (p. 32). In spite of these hints given by Duncan concerning Abby and her habits, Abby remains an essentially flat character, important only for her acceptance of her mother's interests and way of life.

Abby may imitate her mother but she is not as admirable as her mother. While she possesses the practical skills of a pioneer woman, the skills which she has learned from her mother, she lacks a frontier environment in which she may prove her superiority. Abby has no major problems to solve, and, therefore, there is no evidence in her character of the mental and emotional strength of the pioneer woman who faces adversity with cheerful fortitude. Quite simply, Abby is a woman without a frontier, a housewife who has inherited some basic household skills from her mother.

Like Abby Murchison, Dora Milburn emulates her mother and accepts her mother's ideas about a woman's role. But Mrs. Milburn and Dora project a far different image of femininity than that embodied in Mrs. Murchison and Abby, --an image that has very little in common with the tradition of an active, capable, pioneer woman. The role adopted by the Milburn women is that of the English gentlewoman. The Milburns wish to emphasize the decorative helplessness of a

more passive feminine way of life, and, at the same time, to impress others with the Milburn social superiority. These particular values are often at odds with the bustling, active Canadian town of Elgin, a town which is only one step removed from frontier conditions. The Milburn vision of ideal femininity is one which was discarded by pioneers like Catharine Parr Traill as they learned to set aside merely decorative pursuits and to take pride in their acquisition of new domestic accomplishments.

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No one would have supposed, from the way in which the family disposed itself in the drawing-room,

that Miss Filkin had only just finished making the claret cup, or that Dora had been cutting sandwiches till the last minute, or that Mrs Milburn had been obliged to have a distinct understanding with the maid--Mrs Milburn's servants were all "maids," even the charwoman, who had buried three husbands--on the subject of wearing a cap when she answered the door. Mrs Milburn sat on a chair she had worked herself, occupied with something in the new stitch; Dora performed lightly at the piano; Miss Filkin dipped into Selections from the Poets of the Century, placed as remotely as possible from the others; Mr Milburn, with his legs crossed, turned and folded a Toronto evening paper....when Mr Lorne Murchison arrived...they looked almost surprised to see him. (pp. 52-53)

The Milburn family probably works as hard as any family in Elgin, and Dora may be able to tackle any household chore, but this aspect of their lives is carefully disguised. The drawing room plays an important part in the life of this particular family. Not without significance, it is the room where Dora entertains Lorne Murchison. When the Milburns pose themselves in the drawing room, they create the illusion of leisure and ignore the reality of hard work; similarly, Dora's relationship with Lorne is based on illusion, and Lorne's courtship of Dora quite rightly belongs in the drawing room.

While the Milburn assumption of superiority is apparently accepted by the other residents of Elgin (it is considered an honour, for example, to be invited to the Milburn parties), their pose is clearly an artificial one, and clashes with the direct honesty and the pride in accomplishment common to many of the other characters in The Imperialist. The bustling activity of Mrs. Murchison contrasts with Mrs. Milburn's affectation of leisure. A sample of Mrs.

Murchison's handiwork is her useful, practical, rag carpet; Mrs. Milburn sits on a sample of her embroidery and fancy-work in her drawing room. Two vastly different women have developed quite different skills to suit their personal views of a woman's role. Mrs. Milburn, her sister, and her daughter attempt to retain the attitudes, the appearance, and the skills of the English gentlewoman, the woman who could come to grief on the frontier.²⁰ Like her mother, Dora Milburn attempts to create the illusion of English gentility and leisure time in the Canadian town of Elgin. She has cultivated an English accent (or, rather, what she believes is an English accent), and she displays various decorative skills; for example, she is first seen in The Imperialist performing at the piano. Rather than accepting Canadian conditions, the Milburns have held on to their English heritage, and have ignored the social levelling which is a common characteristic of the new world:

Almost alone among those who had slipped into wider and more promiscuous circles with the widening of the stream, the Milburns had made something like an effort to hold out. (p. 48)

Such an attitude is rare in Elgin. Oddly enough, the Milburn foibles are accepted (or at least tolerated) by the people of Elgin:

Crossing the Atlantic they doubtless suffered some dilution; but all that was possible to conserve them under very adverse conditions Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin made it their duty to do. Nor were these ideas opposed, contested, or much traversed in Elgin. It was recognized that there was "something about" Mrs Milburn and her sister--vaguely felt--that you did not come upon that thinness of

nostril, and slope of shoulder, and set of elbow at every corner. They must have got it somewhere. A Filkin tradition prevailed, said to have originated in Nova Scotia: the Filkins never had been accessible, but if they wanted to keep to themselves, let them. In this respect Dora Milburn, the only child, was said to be her mother's own daughter. The shoulders, at all events, testified to it; and the young lady had been taught to speak, like Mrs Milburn, with what was known as an "English accent." (pp 48-49)

Duncan's opinion of the Milburns is expressed with subtlety.

It becomes apparent throughout the above passage that even though Elgin chooses not to censure the Milburn attitude, the Milburn family is guilty of pretense and deceit. Typical of this is the fact that Dora speaks with an unnatural accent; from the beginning, in fact, Dora personifies artifice and pretense.

The attitude of social superiority assumed by the Milburn family is as false and as incongruous as their carefully planned pose in the drawing room. Other pioneer families learned to change their preconceived social views when they moved to Canada. Faced with an overwhelming sense of dislocation in Canada, many emigrants held on to their social values for as long as possible, but, as Duncan points out, most of them changed to suit the situation. Of the original social "elite" Duncan says:

Such persons would bring their lines of demarcation with them, and in their new milieu of backwoods settlers and small traders would find no difficulty in drawing them again. But it was a very long time ago. The little knot of gentry-folk soon found the limitations of their new conditions; years went by in decades, aggrandizing none of them. They took, perforce, to the ways of the country....Trade flourished, education improved, politics changed....The original digni-

fied group broke, dissolved/scattered. Prosperous traders foreclosed them, the spirit of the times defeated them, young Liberals succeeded them in office. Their grandsons married the daughters of well-to-do persons who came from the north of Ireland, the east of Scotland, and the Lord knows where. It was a sorry tale of disintegration with a cheerful sequel of rebuilding, leading to a little unavoidable confusion as the edifice went up. Any process of blending implies confusion to begin with; we are here at the making of a nation. (p. 47)

In the preceding passage Duncan has provided a brief summary of one inevitable consequence of the participation in the pioneering process in Canada--the initial levelling, and the subsequent restructuring of society.²¹ The Murchisons have followed the common pattern; the Milburns have clung to their old ways.²² Mrs. Murchison is the product of a Canadian pioneer environment. Her children, specifically Lorne and Advena, are members of a new social elite, a meritocracy based on intelligence and ability rather than on ancestry and material wealth.²³

As has been indicated, Dora has inherited the artificial posturing of her mother. Both generations of Milburn women cling tenaciously to the remnants of the life of an English lady, and, as far as she is able, Dora mimics an English gentlewoman. She assumes a primarily decorative role at home; she is pampered by her parents; she has cultivated various leisure activities; and she speaks with an "English" accent. Moreover, in her relationship with Lorne Murchison, Dora plays the part of a coquette, a role which is compatible with the artificiality which she demonstrates elsewhere in her life and which is, arguably, incompatible with Canadian

social conditions.²⁴ Dora's coquetry and misleading behaviour clash with Lorne's straightforward, honest approach to romance. Generally speaking, then, Dora ignores the more recent traditions of the Canadian pioneer woman as an ideal and turns to the past for her role model, making her an unsuitable mate for Lorne. For, despite his reverence to Britain, the Empire, and the concept of Imperialism, Lorne is definitely the product of a pioneer environment. Hard-working, forthright, and honest, he epitomizes the virtues of young people in a frontier society:

Youth in a young country is a symbol wearing all its value. It stands not only for what it is. The trick of augury invests it, at a glance, with the sum of its possibilities, the augurs all sincere, confident; and exulting. They have been justified so often; they know, in their wide fair fields of opportunity, just what qualities will produce what results. (p. 80)

The loss of Dora to Hesketh is a surprise and a disappointment to no one but Lorne; others, including Lorne's sister Stella are of the opinion that "...Mr Hesketh's engagement to Miss Milburn was the most suitable thing that could be imagined or desired" (p. 268). Lorne has failed to notice that Dora is not in love with him, and that much of her life is based on pretense and affectation.

Dora suffers a fate suitable for a coquette. She jilts Lorne to marry Hesketh, primarily because she considers Hesketh, with his English background, his money, and his accent, to be superior to Lorne. But, in Duncan's view Lorne is the better man. He is more intelligent, a visionary, and

a leader of men rather than a follower. He certainly deserves a better destiny than marriage to Dora Milburn. It is ironic that the man chosen by Dora fails to recognize the effort that the Milburn family has made to remain aloof from other families in Elgin. In fact, Hesketh perceives the family to be "typically Canadian":

He described them in his letters home as the most typically Canadian family he had met, quite simple and unconventional, but thoroughly warm-hearted, and touchingly devoted to far-away England.
(p. 211)

Hesketh condescends to say of Dora that she "will compare with any English girl" (p. 265) he knows. Duncan is not notably sympathetic to either Dora or Hesketh. They are described as somewhat inferior beings, lacking the energy, resolve, intelligence, and vision typical of the other protagonists who, like Lorne, are more representative products of a Canadian frontier environment.

Advena Murchison is the most problematic of the young female protagonists in The Imperialist, less easily defined than either Abby or Dora. She is, first of all, quite different from her sister Abby. While Abby has chosen to emulate Mrs. Murchison, the efficient housekeeper who is proud of her role, Advena would seem to be the antithesis of her mother. To many Elgin observers, Advena appears to be an unfeminine "new woman" who works for her living, and who lacks the traditional feminine household skills which Abby and her mother display so proudly. Mrs. Murchison, in fact, openly despairs of Advena's matrimonial prospects:

I don't call Advena fitted to be a wife, and last of all a minister's. Abby was a treasure for any man to get, and Stella won't turn out at all badly; she's taking hold very well for her age. But Advena simply hasn't got it in her, and that's all there is to say about it. (p. 104)

Thus, in the eyes of Mrs. Murchison, and in the view of Elgin generally, Advena and Abby are quite dissimilar: Abby is accepted and Advena is viewed with suspicion. Advena is also juxtaposed to Dora Milburn, albeit less directly. On the one hand, Dora is a coquette, distinguished by her pretenses, her dishonesty, and her role-playing. The course of Dora's love affair with Lorne is dominated by Dora's inability to tell Lorne the truth about her feelings (or perhaps, more to the point, her inability to admit the truth to herself). Advena, on the other hand, is almost frightening in her direct honesty and lack of pretense. In her love affair with Hugh Finlay, Advena confesses her feelings to herself, and demonstrates them openly to her lover.

From an early age, Advena is considered odd by Elgin's standards: "Advena, bookish and unconventional, was regarded with dubiety" (p. 45). She prefers daydreaming and reading to doing housework. Mrs. Murchison is proud of the economy she displays by making soft soap; Advena looks at the bubbles in the sink, and dreams:

Advena poured cupfuls of it from on high to see the foam rise, till her mother told her for mercy's sake to get on with those dishes. She stood before a long low window, looking out into the garden, and the light, filtering through apple branches on her face, showed her strongly featured and intelligent for fourteen. (p. 16)

Nor does Advena prefer to learn any of the more artistic and

less practical skills demonstrated by Dora Milburn. Dora is proficient at playing the piano; Advena refuses to take lessons, and announces that it will be a waste of time. Advena, then, would appear to be a unique character type in The Imperialist, quite unlike the other women in Elgin. She pursues her own interests; she has an education; she works for a living; she has always ignored rules and social convention; she has an almost total lack of interest or expertise in the most basic household tasks; and she refuses to waste her time in the pursuit of impractical, decorative drawing room skills. At first glance, Advena seems to be a "new woman," the type feared by non-feminists and, indeed, by many Canadian feminists, at the turn of the century.²⁵

While Duncan's narrator notes the differences between Advena and those about her, she also defends her young protagonist. She indicates the general disapproval expressed towards Advena by Elgin residents but she undercuts the opinions of Advena's critics. Mrs. Murchison is presented as the representative of an ideal feminine type yet her views about Advena are subtly refuted by Duncan:

When you have seen your daughter reach and pass the age of twenty-five without having learned properly to make her own bed, you know without being told that she will never be fit for the management of a house--don't you? (p. 32)

Duncan introduces an element of doubt into the recitation of Advena's inadequacies with the sudden changing of a statement of fact into a question: "You know...don't you?" In the first family scene in the Murchison house in The Imperialist,

Advena annoys her mother by playing with the soap; here also Duncan balances the maternal criticism by adding a comment about Advena's "strongly featured and intelligent" (p. 16) face. On the one hand, Duncan indicates that Mrs. Murchison has many worthy qualities, and that she is to be respected and emulated--to a point. On the other hand, although Duncan admits that Advena is hopeless as a housekeeper, she points out that when Advena is judged by other standards, Advena too is worthy of respect and emulation.

Upon closer examination, Advena's superiority as a character asserts itself in a number of ways. She does not need the intercession and defense of Duncan's narrator. For example, it becomes apparent that in her criticism of her daughter, Mrs. Murchison is ignoring the many ways in which Advena actually resembles her mother. In fact, Advena more nearly approximates Catharine Traill's definitions of an ideal pioneer woman than does her sister Abby. Like the majority of early Canadian feminists, Duncan tends to be cautious in her expression of new ideas.²⁶ Nevertheless, Advena undoubtedly is a "new woman:"

Advena justified her existence by taking the university course for women at Toronto, and afterward teaching the English branches to the junior forms in the Collegiate Institute, which placed her arbitrarily outside the sphere of domestic criticism. (pp. 32-33)

In spite of this relatively bold step into the depiction of an alternative feminine lifestyle, Duncan adheres to previous definitions of femininity in her characterization of Advena.

Although Advena creates a new life for herself outside the home, she is not unfeminine, and Duncan establishes links between Advena and more traditional female rôles so that Advena displays many of the traits essential to the woman on the frontier. Furthermore, Duncan justifies Advena's departure from tradition by defining it as a natural response to the Canadian social environment of the period at the end of the nineteenth century. Advena is both a "new woman" in the feminist sense of the word, and a "new world" woman, meaning that she is a new type of pioneer, a woman who inhabits a far-different frontier environment than that confronted by her mother, perhaps, but still recognizable as a frontier. Skills which are not essential to the woman on the new frontier (as for example, making soft soap), are ignored and left undeveloped as Advena learns new skills more compatible with the frontier environment which surrounds her. Advena has not inherited the housekeeping skills of her mother, since, unlike her mother, she has not needed to learn and to practice the various pioneer economies familiar to her mother and to her mother's generation. Despite her mother's low opinion of this, Advena represents an ideal of sorts in The Imperialist. She has her faults; none of Duncan's protagonists is without flaw. But she demonstrates many of the mental strengths of the pioneer. She is a readily recognizable version of the pioneer woman, once the common perception of the frontier as a place has been revised to include a social background, and a sociological orientation. As Duncan devel-

ops the characterization of Advena as a modern pioneer, Advena's likeness to her mother becomes more pronounced.

Advena is a teacher, a role which involves the control and the instruction of others. It will be remembered that this is a vital element in Traill's vision of the pioneer woman; her youthful protagonist, Catharine Maxwell of Canadian Crusoes (1852) assumes the role of the mother in the small group of lost children and becomes the emotional centre of the family unit. Advena's position as a teacher can be perceived as a role compatible with maternity and with a woman's role as a mother. Duncan does not show Advena at work in her classroom, however, and her maternal qualities, her ability to provide emotional strength to those around her, are more readily demonstrated in her relationship with Hugh Finlay. Like Abby and Dora, Advena reveals many of her character traits through her handling of a love affair.

Advena loves Hugh, accepts his decisions, and is proud of his work and his intelligence. Underlying this devotion is more than a hint of maternal indulgence, and Advena emerges as the stronger character:

She watched his academic awkwardness in church with the inward tender smile of the eternal habile feminine, and when they met she could have laughed and wept over his straightened sentences and his difficult manner, knowing how little significant they were. With his eyes upon her and his words offered to her intelligence, she found herself treating his shy formality as the convention it was, a kind of make-believe which she would politely and kindly play up to until he should happily forget it and they could enter upon simpler relations. She had to play up to it for a long time, but her love made her wonderfully clever and patient; and of course the day came when she had

her reward.²⁷

The Advena revealed here, the "eternal feminine" of Goethe's Faust, is most definitely feminine. Her attitude towards her lover borders on the maternal and is fiercely protective. This echoes her mother's role within the Murchison family unit and bodes well for Advena's future success as a wife and mother, even if she is inept in the kitchen.

In an earlier demonstration of her maternal instincts Advena brings home an Indian baby for her family to adopt. Although her mother dismisses this gesture as one of Advena's "queer satisfactions and enthusiasms" (p. 45), it actually shows a generalized love of humanity and a desire to change the world about her. Thomas Tausky has said of Duncan's work in general:

"Woman's World," then in Sara's definition of it, was not the traditional "woman's sphere" but rather the enlarged possibilities suggested by full participation in the wider, public world.²⁸

In fact, many of the early feminist crusaders in Canada perceived their social role as a mothering one.²⁹ Women could make improvements in the world because their maternal orientation made them ideal agents for social progress and amelioration. Advena's "queer," humanitarian ideas about her responsibility to those less fortunate are evidence of her maternal sensibilities and of her related desire to improve the living conditions of those persons less fortunate than she. Mrs. Murchison, unfortunately, does not assess Advena's gesture correctly, and criticizes it rather than defending it.

The maternal streak in Advena's personality demonstrates

her adherence to a traditional female role, traditional in a Canadian sense of the pioneer woman as feminine ideal. Advena's latent maternal instincts are among the traits which identify her as a pioneer; but Advena shows other qualities of the pioneer woman as well. For example, the two vital elements in the creation of the ideal female pioneer, as the pioneer is defined by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide are the woman's acceptance of the adverse circumstances inherent to a frontier landscape²⁰ and an immediate, active response to that adversity²¹ as the pioneer woman combats the difficulties of the frontier situation. In these two aspects Advena clearly shows her superior worth and indicates that she, like her mother, is a version of the pioneer woman.

Advena ignores her mother's opinions and the attitude of the town of Elgin in general. She refuses to be ruled by others and she redefines her role to suit her own circumstances. She copes with social hostility by ignoring it and by following her own inclinations. Advena's ability to act decisively is demonstrated constantly; she is seldom passive despite her propensity to daydream. She announces to her parents that she will not take piano lessons and makes good her statement by escaping to the roof of the house. Later she pursues a career in the face of real opposition from those who see her choice as a refutation of a proper female role. Advena never acknowledges the criticism; she goes her own way.

As has been indicated, many of Advena's personality traits, specifically those traits which mark her as a pioneer woman, are revealed throughout the course of her love affair with Hugh Finlay. Advena accepts the bad news of Hugh's engagement to Christie Cameron with cheerful resignation. She accepts an undesirable situation and gives Hugh no hint of her anguish, continuing instead to be his good friend. But Advena's original acceptance of Hugh's engagement comes into conflict with her active energy, her seemingly innate, idealistic desire to change an undesirable situation by positive action. This conflict echoes back to the essential dichotomy of Traill's blueprint for pioneering; the pioneer woman accepts her lot in life, then attempts, through her active participation in the pioneering process, to change her fate. Advena challenges her fate when she confronts Hugh's fiancée Christie Cameron. This confrontation is perhaps the most important example of Advena's behaviour as a "new world" woman. The honesty and personal sense of freedom shown by Advena in this case are part of her inheritance as the daughter of pioneers; they are traits which link her to her mother, and are evidence of Advena's own pioneering spirit. The old world, as represented by Christie, the refined gentlewoman, meets the new world, as represented by Advena, the pioneer spirit. Advena's courage, conviction, freedom of speech and movement confuse Christie and her companion Mrs. Kilbannon. The Scottish ladies' actions are still influenced by social rules, propriety, and class definitions:

Their special virtues, of dignity and solidity and frugality, stood out saliently against the ease and unconstraint about them; in the profusion of the table it was little less than edifying to hear Mrs Kilbannon invited to preserves, say, "Thank you, I have butter." (p. 216)

Advena's actions come as a shock to the old world women.

They cannot define her social status, for her actions and her speech defy classification, and they look at each other in "blank astonishment" (p. 219):

"When she sat down," as Mrs Kilbannon said afterward, "she seemed to untie and fling herself as you might a parcel." Neither Mrs Kilbannon nor Christie Cameron could possibly be untied or flung, so perhaps they gave this capacity in Advena more importance than it had. But it was only a part of what was to them a new human demonstration, something to inspect very carefully and accept very cautiously--the product, like themselves, yet so suspiciously different, of these free airs and these astonishingly large ideas. (p. 218)

To Advena, it seems natural that she, as Hugh Finlay's best friend, should welcome his fiancée in spite of her personal feelings about his marriage. To Christie Cameron, this action is lacking in propriety and is, therefore, quite wrong.

One positive result of the pioneering process had been a sense of freedom from the restraint of social rules which did not apply to the new world. Trail comments on this feeling in her work, most notably, as has been seen, in her discussion of Grundyism in The Backwoods of Canada.²² The feeling of freedom and its companion, pride in accomplishment, is a direct result of the pioneer woman's active participation in the process of pioneering. In the process of changing the frontier, the pioneer woman changes as well. In his Intro-

duction to The Imperialist, Claude Bissell comments on one aspect of this interaction when he notes that the new world is an "active agent"³³ and that the old world is "subjected to a refining influence."³⁴ At any rate, both the frontier and its inhabitants interact to create change. The awareness that women are not limited by physical or mental frailty to the performance of one particular social role, and the knowledge that, on a frontier, women are not constricted by rules of social propriety and social convention, result in a welcome sense of freedom, felt by the majority of emigrant women.³⁵ Advena, as a pioneer's daughter, and as a pioneer herself, has become part of this process of discovering independence. Indeed, it is worth noting that Hugh defines the freedom which is an essential element of the inhabitant of the new world in a discussion with Advena:

I sometimes think that the human spirit, as it is set free in these wide unblemished spaces, may be something more pure and sensitive, more sincerely curious about what is good and beautiful....
(p. 111)

At this point Advena blushes, and Finlay recognizes her as "his idea incarnate" (p. 111). As a more recent emigrant, Christie Cameron can also discover the freedom inherent in the new world. She has two options: to accept the spirit of change and freedom which is typified by Advena, or, like Dora, to hold on to an old way of life which is outmoded in Canada and not suited to Canadian social conditions. She can choose to interact with the frontier, and to accept change within herself, or she can attempt to deny the possibilities

of the frontier.

Advena's pioneer spirit leads her to challenge her fate when she confronts Hugh after his trip to the West. Her visit to Christie has obviously been somewhat of a failure and she tries an even more direct approach. When Hugh expresses his uncertainty--"I don't know...how we are to bear this" (p. 249)--Advena immediately asserts her opinion:

"We are not to bear it," she said eagerly. "The rose is to tell you that. I didn't mean it, when I left it, to be anything more--more than a rose; but now I do. I didn't even know when I came out tonight. But now I do. We aren't to bear it, Hugh. I don't want it so--now. I can't--can't have it so." (p. 249)

The conflict is a central one between these two young people. Hugh, the recent emigrant, stands "helplessly, clinging to the sound and the form of the words" (p. 250). Advena, "so greatly the more confident and daring" (p. 250), is also the more pragmatic of the two. She tries to convince Hugh that their ideal of platonic friendship is impossible to achieve, that they must act: "Indeed I know now what is possible and what is not" (p. 250). But Hugh, holding to his words, his promises, and his sense of propriety, dominates the discussion to the extent that Advena again accepts an undesirable fate, this time in a spirit of "hapless defeat" (p. 250). Advena eventually proves to have been the wiser, and Hugh's stubborn insistence on form and his renunciation of Advena have been pointless. Hugh discovers that Christie Cameron has decided to marry Dr. Drummond, who, unlike Hugh, has acted quickly and decisively to gain his matrimonial objec-

tive, ignoring in the process the conventions which dictate that Christie must marry Hugh.

Advena, alone among the younger women of The Imperialist, takes full advantage of the choices available to the women of the period. She seizes the opportunity to redefine a woman's role in the changing social background of the early twentieth century in Ontario. Lacking the adventurous spirit, and perhaps also the confidence of the pioneer, Abby and Dora have chosen to follow safe, established patterns of behaviour. Advena, however, has inherited the pioneer traits of her mother and has put them to work on a new frontier, a frontier of her own choosing. It seems appropriate that Hugh and Advena will be moving to western Canada when Hugh goes to his new charge of the White Water Mission Station in Alberta since the West represents the last physical frontier in Canada at this period. In Alberta, Advena will have an opportunity to prove her worth on a physical frontier, having already proved her worth on a social one. It is perhaps unfortunate that she has not acquired the housewifery skills of her mother, but it is probably more important that she is able to learn than that she already possess the knowledge.

In The Imperialist, Duntan has confronted some of the major social issues facing Canadian women at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the West was still being settled, Ontario had passed through its pioneer era. The greater prosperity which had resulted from a longer period of settlement was giving women in eastern Canada an increased

amount of leisure time. Social problems rather than personal survival had begun to assume an increased importance in the lives of many women. Duncan herself was a pioneer feminist; she was, for example, a newspaper reporter at a time when such jobs were not generally available for women. Rights for women, education, and career options are issues addressed by Duncan in The Imperialist, chiefly through her depiction of her protagonist Advena Murchison. Like the majority of Canadian feminists of the period,³⁶ however, Duncan is sympathetic to the more traditional perceptions of a feminine ideal, traditional, of course, in a Canadian context. Her portrayal of Advena places this young female character within the tradition of the pioneer woman as fictional heroine, in spite of the new definition of the pioneer woman's frontier surroundings.

Notes

1

There are many published accounts of pioneer life in western Canada written from a woman's point of view. For a representative listing see the following: Georgina Binnie-Clark, A Summer on the Canadian Prairie (London: Edward Arnold, 1910); Georgina Binnie-Clark, Wheat and Women, introd. Susan Jackel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Maryanne Caswell, Pioneer Girl, pref. Grace Lane (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964); Mrs. George Cran, A Woman in Canada (London: W. J. Ham-Smith, 1911); Mrs. Cecil Hall, A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba (London: W. H. Allen, 1884); Mary Hiemstra, Gully Farm (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955); Susan Jackel, ed., A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1982); Nellie McClung, Clearing in the West: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1976); Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945); Elizabeth Keith Morris, An Englishwoman in the Canadian West (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1913); Emily Murphy, Seeds of Pine (Toronto: Musson, 1922); Jessie Browne Raber, Pioneering in Alberta (New York: Exposition Press, 1951); Sarah Ellen Roberts, Of Us and the Oxen (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1968); Jessie M. E. Saxby, West-Nor'-West (London: James Nisbet, 1890); Kathleen Strange, With the West in Her Eyes (Toronto: George J. McLeod; New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1937); Ella Sykes, A Home Help in Canada (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912); Emily Weaver, Canada and the British Immigrant (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1914).

2

Early feminists were aware of the tension which existed between their role as reformers and their more traditional roles as wives and mothers. Consequently, efforts to effect change were explained as a natural evolution of a woman's role in a changing society; this theory is expressed by the Countess of Aberdeen, president of the National Council of Women of Canada, in her address to the delegates at the Council's first annual national convention in 1894:

Our mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers have worked nobly along the lines open to them; and if we are to be worthy of them we must work on the lines which their experience has opened up for us.

See National Council of Women of Canada, Women Workers of Canada. Being a Report of the Proceedings of the First Annual

Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada (Ottawa: National Council of Women of Canada, 1894), p. 178.

3

Once again the National Council of Women provides a representative, albeit highly rhetorical, analysis of woman's role as it was perceived by the Canadian feminists of the late nineteenth century:

The old century is on the wane. Through the shadow of the globe we shall usher into the new century a splendid army of organized womanhood, and in that glorious dawn we catch a vision of a brighter day. When the interests here represented shall be wrought out into living truths, it will bring humanity into more harmonious relations by infusing justice into citizenship, purity into social relations, and the spirit of the Golden Rule into all life.

See National Council, Women Workers, p. 17.

4

The optimism of the Canadian feminists did not last past the Depression and the second world war, but for many years, women actually had hoped to change the world and to usher in a gold age. Nellie McClung remembers the spirit of the times in her autobiography:

I knew life had reached a pinnacle and we were standing on a high place, a place easier to achieve than to maintain. We were in sight of the promised land, a land of richer sunshine and brighter fruitage, and our heads and hearts were light. Whatever else can be said about us, one fact remains: We were in deadly earnest and our one desire was to bring about a better world for everyone....Ours was not a rage, it was a passion.

See Nellie McClung, Stream, p. 134.

5

Virtually every leading feminist claimed to be conservative in her views. Letitia Youmans, an advocate of temperance laws and of the vote for women, was being more honest than many when she admitted, "I saw, in this respect, the necessity of being as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove." See Letitia Youmans, Campaign Echoes, introd. Miss Frances E. Willard, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1893), p. 206..

As an interesting parallel study, for an analysis of the connection between feminist theory, social history, and the gradual evolution of female characters in British fiction see Patricia Thomson, The Victorian Heroine. A Changing Ideal, 1837-1873 (1956; rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978). Thomson posits that writers of British fiction began to incorporate, almost imperceptibly, feminist theories and the "new woman" into their fiction, and that the work of even the most conservative writers reflects changing interpretations of woman's role at home and in society.

For a more radical interpretation of the "new woman" and her impact on English fiction see Gail Cunningham, The New Woman and the Victorian Novel (London: Macmillan, 1978).

6

One of the most frequently cited passages from Traill's Canadian Settler's Guide concerns the necessity for taking immediate action during an emergency:

In cases of emergency, it is folly to fold one's hands and sit down to bewail in abject terror: it is better to be up and doing.

See Catharine Parr Traill, The Canadian Settler's Guide, introd. Clara Thomas, NCL, No. 64, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 204.

7

Traill has much to say about the need for a cheerful acceptance of one's duty on the frontier. The following is only one example among many:

The greatest heroine in life is she who knowing her duty, resolves not only to do it, but to do it to the best of her abilities, with heart and mind bent upon the work.

See Traill, Settler's Guide, p. 4.

8

It is difficult to isolate the various aspects of Traill's definition of the personality of the ideal pioneer woman. The anecdote found in The Canadian Settler's Guide of the woman who manages to plant and to harvest the first crop of Indian corn serves to reinforce her recommendation of immediate activity in the face of an emergency and to point out the important qualities of fortitude, courage, and pragmatism:

At first she was inclined to fret, and give up in despair, but when she looked upon her sick husband and her helpless babe, she remembered that duty required better things from her than to lie down and weep, and lament: she knew that other women had their trials, and she braced up her mind to do what was before her, praying to God to give her strength to do her duty; and she went on cheerfully and with a brave spirit.

See Traill, Settler's Guide, p. 114.

9

It becomes clear from her writing that Sara Jeannette Duncan defined herself both as a modern woman and as a traditionalist. Like many other Canadian feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she was apparently unaware of any possible discrepancy in her views. Thomas E. Tausky has noted the dual emphasis in Duncan's writing, and comments on Duncan's awareness of herself as a modern pioneer:

Despite the variety of subjects, a consistent habit of mind manifests itself in Sara Jeannette Duncan's work, whatever the issue at hand. She was always conscious of being a modern woman,

of being a pioneer in the struggle to evolve a new type of self-definition. Yet at the same time she had conservative instincts of loyalty to and faith in her country, and the social order. So, in discussing almost any issue, she seeks to discover what seems to her to be a sensible middle course, rejecting both the advanced position which she finds too radical, and the traditional position which she regards as outmoded.

See Thomas E. Tausky, Sara Jeannette Duncan, Novelist of Empire (Port Credit: P. D. Meany Publishers, 1980), pp. 20-21.

10

See Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant-Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America (London, 1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles Canadiana Collection, 1971); Traill, Settler's Guide.

11

In her creation of the character of Mrs. Murchison Duncan generally adheres to the definition of the ideal pioneer established by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada, and The Canadian Settler's Guide. For example, Mrs. Murchison is clearly aware that usefulness and beauty should ideally co-exist in household objects. Yet Duncan's interpretation of the relationship between a woman and her house indicates a major difference in the focus of the two writers. Traill objectifies her house in her backwoods writing. Her home is a thing which is both necessary and attractive; it is an object which contains both useful and decorative items. Furthermore, when Traill includes herself as narrator and as character in her writing, as for example, "The Bereavement. A Fragment from Forest Gleanings," she seems perpetually to be looking out of the house, to be venturing outside, and to be describing external events. Duncan's approach is quite different. She personifies the homes of her characters, or, rather, makes the houses and their inhabitants mirror images of each other. The interiors assume greater significance, and the appearance of the home becomes a vital element in the delineation of character. As will be noted in a later chapter, in The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902), Ralph Connor also uses the interior of a house to indicate the personality of the homemaker.

12

Clara Thomas has also commented on the symbol of the house. Her analysis includes the importance of the home to Mr. Murchison and the Murchison children:

The house is unique among houses in Elgin and it is a very real symbol of John Murchison's place in his own concept of Canada, and even more so, of his idea of the future progress of his family in Canada. The house is a fitting shelter for his family, a setting for their growth and a launching-point for their future. By so far had

John Murchison come from his origin in Scotland to become a leading citizen of Elgin, by so much the farther did he have every reason to believe that his children would progress in prosperity and in influence from Elgin, their centre, to all Canada beyond.

See Clara Thomas, "Canadian Social Mythologies in Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist," Journal of Canadian Studies, 12, No. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 41-42.

13

Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Imperialist, introd. Claude Bissell, NCL, No. 20, ed. Malcolm Ross (1904; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), pp. 31-32.

14

When the Murchisons set up housekeeping, Elgin is still a relatively new town. What the narrator of The Imperialist says of Mr. Murchison and Dr. Drummond applies equally well to Mrs. Murchison:

So the two came, contemporaries, to add their labour and their lives to the building of this little outpost of Empire. It was the frankest transfer, without thought of return; they were there to spend and be spent within the circumference of the spot they had chosen, with no ambition beyond. In the course of nature, even their bones and their memories would enter into the fabric. The new country filled their eyes; the new town was their opportunity, its destiny their fate.

See Duncan, Imperialist, pp. 21-22

15

Like the Murchison home, the store has also changed with the times. Its transition from carrying a "light stock" to a "heavy stock," from selling a "kitchen stove that burned wood," to selling a "new gas cooking-stove" indicates the improvement in the Murchison family fortunes. In addition, the expansion of the store and its increased emphasis on "luxury" items, parallels the change in Elgin as it evolves from a frontier town into a prosperous manufacturing town. Finally, the advancement in technology indicated by the modern cooking stoves sold by Mr. Murchison points to the greater freedom from domestic drudgery, and the corresponding increase in leisure time, enjoyed by Canadian women at the turn of the century as pioneer days came to an end.

See Duncan, Imperialist, pp. 23-24.

16

In The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill mentions rag carpets. Like Duncan's Mrs. Murchison, Traill is aware that these carpets have both a useful and a decorative function:

To the more wealthy class this humble manufacture may seem a very contemptible affair; but it is not for the gay and luxurious that such things are suitable; though I have seen them in the houses of some of our best settlers, who were

picture of life in the great and wonderful new country in Western Canada....Then, the pictures were from personal experience. I knew the country. I had ridden the ranges. I had pushed through the mountain passes. I had swum my bronco across its rivers. I had met the men--Hi Kendal and Bronco Bill and the rest were friends of mine. (p. 150)

Connor had grown up in Glengarry, Ontario during the last years of its frontier period--the mid- to late-nineteenth century--and he had been a missionary in the West during the early years of western settlement--the end of the nineteenth century. The novels which feature one of these two settings rely on the author's personal experiences and, in his fiction, Connor presents an accurate portrait of a particular time in Canadian social history.

At a time when many godly persons "regarded novel reading as a doubtful indulgence for Christian people,"³ Connor's fiction enjoyed great popularity⁴ even among the more religious segment of society. One reason for this popularity was undoubtedly the "truthful" or realistic portrayal of characters, places and events in his fiction.⁵ The other was the strong religious bias which characterizes Connor's writing, and which was, in fact, a bias common to much of the Canadian fiction of the period.⁶ Thus, while Connor's writing paints a valuable picture of pioneer life in several areas of Canada, it also becomes a vehicle for the author's moral purposes. It is thus not surprising that in his fiction Connor uses what is essentially a sermon method of writing:

Paradoxically the secret of Ralph Connor's astonishing vitality may lie in the fact that he was a novelist second, a man with a message

had been implanted by previous forms of control, they had to leave behind, or cast off on the way, the great body of habits not fitted to the new conditions of life. Habits, like tools, were abandoned through non-usage because they failed to work. Whether this represented a failure to maintain conditions of life which had been considered desirable, or a release from social obligations which had been felt as irksome, the effect was to emancipate the individual from controls to which he had been accustomed. He was left to work out by himself a code of conduct and philosophy of life which more nearly satisfied his present needs. The immediate reaction was one of uneasiness, relieved partly by a feeling of exhilaration. The ultimate result, if new group attachments failed to be forged, was complete personal disorganization. Problems of mental health and suicide, and to some extent of intemperance, in periods of rapid social development, were an indication of the failure of individuals to resolve the personal crisis in face of radically new conditions of living.

See S. D. Clark, The Developing Canadian Community, 2nd ed. (1968; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 11.

22

In her article "Canadian Social Mythologies in Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist," Clara Thomas has noted the polarization of two racial strains--Scottish and English--in Duncan's social mythology:

In Canada she shows the Scotch and their offspring to be builders, men to usher in the future; the English are reactionary, cautious, conservative and ridiculously class-ridden in a society which sees itself as classless. In effect, Duncan polarizes the two racial strains to the point of substituting her own elite establishment, Scotch and Presbyterian, for the old colonial criticism of British and Anglican.

See Thomas, "Social Mythologies," p. 42.

23

For a similar view of a Canadian meritocracy see Traill, Backwoods, p. 81. In both The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill describes the dislocation of the pioneer which is combined with the inevitable social levelling that takes place in a frontier society. Traill provides advice on the best method of dealing with the situation. She is somewhat ambivalent about the levelling process and the subsequent removal of class barriers. Her defense of the social equality found in Canada contrasts with her own sense of superiority, and her resentment of the assumption of independence by the lower class emigrants contrasts with her personal appreciation of freedom from social constraint and "Grundyism." Despite some evidence of her

distaste for the loss of old world standards or class distinction, however. Traill is an optimistic social observer. She anticipates the rebuilding and restructuring of society to form a meritocracy; she advocates social advancement which is based on personal worth rather than on birth or wealth.

Unlike Traill, Duncan writes of the pioneer process and of the restructuring of society with the authority of hindsight. On the one hand, she criticizes the Milburn women who attempt to maintain what they believe to be old world customs and values. On the other hand, she praises the Murcison family who cheerfully help to create a new social edifice, a structure, incidentally, which closely resembles Traill's vision of a Canadian meritocracy.

24

For an example of one of the new Canadian coquettes in fiction see A. S. Holmes, Merinda, or, The Rivals, introd. Carl F. Klinck (Vancouver: The Alcuin Society, 1971); see also the character of Maimie St. Clair in Ralph Connor, The Man From Glengarry, introd. S. Ross Beharriell, NCL No. 14, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969); see too Frances Brooke, The History of Emily Montague, introd. Carl F. Klinck, NCL No. 27, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961). The protagonists of this last work are worth mentioning in spite of the fact that they are merely visitors to Canada. Like Lady Mary of Traill's Lady Mary and Her Nurse (1856), Emily and Arabella are affected in only a peripheral way by their period of residence in Canada, and return to England with their gentility intact. Thus, while Brooke's Arabella is undoubtedly a coquette (albeit a more sympathetic portrait of a coquette than painted by any of the other writers listed here), she remains an English rather than a Canadian figure.

25

Canadian reformers tried to reassure their opponents that they were not unfeminine. Letitia Youmans, for example, actively campaigned for temperance regulations and often spoke in public. But she defined her role as a feminine one:

It seemed imperative that I should define my position: accordingly I assured the audience that I had not come there to advocate women's rights, but that I had come to remonstrate against women's and children's wrongs. But there is one form of women's rights in which I firmly believe, and that is, the right of every woman to have a comfortable home, of every wife to have a sober husband, of every mother to have sober sons.

See Youmans, Campaign Echoes, p. 128.

26

Tausky, Duncan, Novelist of Empire, pp. 20-21.

27

Duncan, Imperialist, p. 70; see Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Faust, Part Two, trans. Barker Fairley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 203: "The eternal in woman is the gleam we follow."

28

Fauskv, Duncan, Novelist of Empire, p. 34.

29

See Nellie McClung, Stream; National Council of Women, Women Workers; Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Roots of Modern Canadian Feminism, The National Council of Women, 1893-1929," Canada, An Historical Magazine, 3, No. 2 (Dec. 1975), 22-33; Wayne Roberts, "Rocking the Cradle for the World: The New Woman and Maternal feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914," in A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Educational Press, 1979), pp. 15-45.

Female reformers genuinely perceived their role as a maternal one. Nellie McClung's sentiments were typical of the turn of the century feminist in Canada:

Women must be made to feel their responsibility. All this protective love, this instinctive mother love, must be organized some way, and made effective. There was enough of it in the world to do away with all the evils which war upon childhood, undernourishment, slum conditions, child labor, drunkenness. Women could abolish these if they wanted to.

See McClung, Stream, p. 27:

30

Trail, Backwoods, p. 162; Trail, Settler's Guide, p.

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31

Trail, Settler's Guide, p. 204.

32

Trail, Backwoods, pp. 270-271.

33

Claude Bissell, introd., The Imperialist, by Sara Jeannette Duncan. NCL. No. 20, ed. Malcolm Ross (1964; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. viii.

34

Bissell, introd., Imperialist, p. viii.

35

Trail, Backwoods, pp. 269-270; Trail, Settler's Guide, p. 46.

36

For further essential reading on the early women's movement in Canada see the following: Janice Acton et al., eds., Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930, introd. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Educational Press, 1974); Catherine L. Cleveland, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, introd. Ramsay Cook, 2nd ed. (1974; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Wayne Roberts, Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914 (Toronto: New Woodtown Press, 1976); Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History (1977; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981).

Ralph Connor's Pioneer Heroine

On a superficial level Ralph Connor's fiction treats of the heroic struggles of men and women on a Canadian frontier landscape, whether that landscape is the Glengarry backwoods of Ontario, as in The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902) or the Canadian North-West and prairie foothill country as in Black Rock (1898) and The Sky Pilot (1899). At a deeper level, Connor's use of metaphor, specifically of religious metaphor, adds a spiritual dimension to his depiction of the Canadian frontier. When account is taken of both these levels, it can be argued that in his fiction Connor redefines the process of settling the frontier so that it becomes the metaphoric equivalent of a Christian struggle for salvation. In "Ralph Connor and The Canadian Identity," J. Lee Thompson and John H. Thompson define the spiritual dimension to Connor's fiction as:

...the playing out of a morality in a magnificent natural setting, with colourful characterizations and vivid descriptive passages to put flesh on the archetypal confrontation of men with their unruly souls.²

Connor's female protagonists, the women such as the Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry books, who inhabit the frontier landscapes, are brave and competent pioneers. Yet these women perform an equally important, possibly a more important function: the function of pioneers on a spiritual frontier. Like Sara Jeannette Duncan in The Imperialist, Connor in The Man From Glengarry seems to accept and treat the pioneer woman as a genuine Canadian social type, and, like Duncan, he

transfers this type into fiction. In other words, both Duncan and Connor continue to develop this character type beyond the original model advanced by Catharine Parr Traill in The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855) into a female character type which is more compatible with post-frontier Canadian social conditions and attitudes than is Traill's description of an emigrant woman's life in the backwoods. Whereas Duncan's Advena Murchison of The Imperialist is a pioneer woman who moves into a primarily social frontier, Connor's Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry books is a pioneer woman who seeks to improve conditions on a spiritual frontier. In Connor's interpretation, the frontier becomes a concept, as well as a real place, and the pioneer woman becomes an abstract ideal, as well as a real woman.

In addition to being a novelist, Charles Gordon, who of course wrote under the pseudonym Ralph Connor, was a Presbyterian minister. This factor goes a long way towards accounting for Connor's re-interpretation of reality through the use of religious metaphor. But while Connor is primarily a writer of stories with a religious motif, one equally distinctive feature of his fiction is that much of the background detail is both realistic and historically accurate. In his autobiography, Postscript to Adventure (1938), Connor claims, "All that is set down in Glengarry School Days is true," and says that in many of his novels he has described places and people he knew well:

Black Rock and Sky Pilot gave up an authentic

picture of life in the great and wonderful new country in Western Canada....Then, the pictures were from personal experience. I knew the country. I had ridden the ranges. I had pushed through the mountain passes. I had ~~swum my bronco across its rivers. I had met~~ the men--Hi Kendal and Bronco Bill and the rest were friends of mine. (p. 150)

Connor had grown up in Glengarry, Ontario during the last years of its frontier period--the mid- to late-nineteenth century--and he had been a missionary in the West during the early years of western settlement--the end of the nineteenth century. The novels which feature one of these two settings rely on the author's personal experiences and, in his fiction, Connor presents an accurate portrait of a particular time in Canadian social history.

At a time when many godly persons "regarded novel reading as a doubtful indulgence for Christian people,"² Connor's fiction enjoyed great popularity³ even among the more religious segment of society. One reason for this popularity was undoubtedly the "truthful" or realistic portrayal of characters, places and events in his fiction.⁴ The other was the strong religious bias which characterizes Connor's writing, and which was, in fact, a bias common to much of the Canadian fiction of the period.⁵ Thus, while Connor's writing paints a valuable picture of pioneer life in several areas of Canada, it also becomes a vehicle for the author's moral purposes. It is thus not surprising that in his fiction Connor uses what is essentially a sermon method of writing:

Paradoxically the secret of Ralph Connor's astonishing vitality may lie in the fact that he was a novelist second, a man with a message

first. Like the preacher of all ages he tells a tale to point a moral.⁷

The typical narrative structure of a Connor novel consists of a series of anecdotes strung together, following a loose plot line, and illustrative of a specific moral precept. Every story has an obvious point so that the narrative and the religious message are inseparable. The protagonists are chosen to demonstrate either a particular character weakness or to represent human virtue. In the best of Connor's writing, as for example The Man From Glengarry and Glengarry School Days, his adherence to historical accuracy and his recreation of real life through the perspective of the Presbyterian moralist work together to produce a cohesive moral and historic view of pioneer life in the Glengarry backwoods.

The most common setting in Connor's fiction is the frontier. From this it follows that the character type that appears most frequently is the pioneer--the western rancher, the backwoods farmer, the itinerant preacher, or, most important for present purposes, the frontier wife and mother. The use of the frontier complements Connor's dual role as historian and moralist and, stated briefly, in Connor's work, the frontier and pioneering become metaphors for Christian struggle.⁸ Each character confronts a personal spiritual dilemma, a frontier of the mind. Difficulties and moral dilemmas are conquered by faith in a manner comparable to the process of pioneering on a real, physical frontier. Furthermore, the crusading Christian pioneers prove to be adept on either frontier and the traits which ensure success on the

one are readily transferable to the other. Finally, in Connor's view, the non-Christian will probably not be as successful as the Christian on a frontier landscape; he or she must reform to become a better person and a better pioneer. The fact that the underlying structure of Connor's works is always a moral one means that there is always a clear differentiation made between right and wrong actions and between good and bad characters.

One "good" character who moves easily through both the physical and the spiritual frontier is the Connor heroine. There is, in fact, only one female character type in Connor's fiction, perhaps only one female character who merely assumes a variety of different names. There are no bad women, and all of Connor's female protagonists are approximations of one particular idealized interpretation of the frontier woman.

As Edward McCourt puts it:

The women of Ralph Connor's novels are even more limited in range than the men. The men at least fall into two broad divisions--good and bad. But Ralph Connor created no "bad" women. One suspects that he found it hard to acknowledge the fact of their existence. And yet his stereotyped heroines, like so many of his heroes, carry a kind of conviction because their creator never doubts their reality. To him Mrs. Mavor of Black Rock, Lady Charlotte Ashley of The Sky Pilot, and Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry books are living persons because they are idealizations of his own mother.

In Postscript to Adventure, Connor acknowledges his literary debt to his mother, Mary Robertson Gordon. His memory of her certainly influenced his fiction, and he says of The Man From Glengarry:

...the soul of the book...its response to the appeal of beauty whether of the woods and wild flowers or of the things of the spirit and all that is best in it Ralph Connor had from the Lady of the Manse. (p. 153)

Mrs. Murray of The Man From Glengarry and Glengarry School Days is very similar to Connor's mother. Both women come from wealthy, cultivated backgrounds. Both marry Highland Presbyterian ministers and move to the backwoods settlement of Glengarry where they minister to the needs of their families and their parishioners with the untiring devotion of a saint. If the fictional character seems at times to be unbelievable--too saintly, too capable--one needs only to examine Connor's Postscript to Adventure to see that he perceived his mother as an ideal woman, a woman "with the soul of the saints of old" (p. 412). Although Connor used an ideal as the basis for his development of female characters, he genuinely believed in the existence of such ideals:

And even those who deny everything that Ralph Connor preached, who detest his crudities and flinch from his breaches of good taste, who deride the simplicity of his character and the genial optimism of his faith, must recognize that intense spiritual awareness, which, however distorted in the presentation, gives his novels a passionate sincerity rare in Canadian literature.¹⁰

Connor obviously believed that his ideal woman existed. Thus, his heroine was, in his eyes, a real person, an ideal of femininity which could be realized in a living woman.

Fictional recreations of Mary Robertson Gordon, the original Lady of the Manse, reappear throughout Connor's work. Whether she appears as Mrs. Mavor, Mrs. Murray, or any

of a dozen others, she is generally a saintly pioneer woman, and is always the heart and soul of the narrative. A practical, capable, active pioneer woman, often a wife and mother, responsible for the care of a large family, she is also linked with ideals of truth and beauty, to things of the spirit, and to a feminine religious principle.¹¹ The use of a dual focus in the description of the Canadian pioneer woman was not new in Canadian literary history at the time that Connor was writing his novels. As has been seen, Catharine Parr Traill, in her handbooks of advice to emigrant women, The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, had defined the role of the female pioneer in much the same fashion. She described the many diverse household tasks which a pioneer woman must perform. But she also insisted that a primary function of the woman in the backwoods home was to add beauty and elegance, whenever and wherever possible, to even the rudest backwoods dwelling.¹² But, while Traill and Connor both idealize the pioneer woman and her role, they do so to achieve quite different ends. Traill created and published a picture of the woman who was most suited to backwoods life, and advised those who were not perfect how to cope. For the benefit of her fellow emigrants, Traill developed a theory of pioneering, a method of coping with the strange new world and the many hitherto distasteful household tasks which were the lot of pioneer women in Canada. Connor was writing his fiction near the end of the pioneer era in Canada: while Traill had to prove that the pioneer woman

could be a heroine, Connor was able simply to accept the theory that the ordinary pioneer woman was, in fact, a heroine. In Postscript to Adventure, he refers to the women of Glengarry as "the heroines of the race" (p. 14):

It is one of the tragedies of literature that historians fill their pages with the doings of men and leave unsung the lives of the heroines of the race. Less colorful doubtless are the lives of mothers, wives, sisters, but more truly heroic and more fruitful in the upbuilding of human character and in the shaping of a nation's history. At the very foundation of a people's greatness is the home. Splendid and hazardous as are the deeds of men in the battle of life, nothing they endure in the way of suffering can compare with what the mothers of a pioneer colony, remote from civilization, are called upon to suffer in the bearing and rearing of children. The loneliness, the dangers, the hardships of fathers and sons in the remote lumber camps or in the rafts down the river are as nothing to the appalling loneliness, the dangers, the hardships that mothers and daughters have to meet and endure in the little log houses in the clearing with children to clothe and care for in health and in sickness, and to keep regularly at school, to train and discipline, with beasts to water and feed, with fires to keep alight when snowdrifts pile round the little house to the eaves, shutting them off for days and nights from their neighbors, with no one but God available for their help. All this is a part of my experience, and at times when I begin to lose my faith in the nobler qualities of the race I let my mind wander back to the wives, mothers and sisters of the pioneer-settlers of Glengarry and find my faith revive. (p. 14)

Even as Connor was writing about it, the pioneer era was ending. Thus, Connor's work, as illustrated by the above passage, often assumes an elegiac, as well as an historical role. As F. W. Watt says:

The world of Ralph Connor, in so far as it existed at all, lasted for only a short period. It

was already passing as he wrote about it. And indeed, he was well aware of this, for he set himself in part the task of recording it before it was entirely lost.¹²

In Connor's fiction, pioneers and their exploits are romanticized since the pioneer, like the frontier, exists in an historical rather than a real, physical context.

The central female figure in Connor's fiction, the Lady of the Manse, becomes a highly idealized figure. She is a mentor and a guide for the men and women around her: she serves as a role model for other women and as a ministering angel to all who need her. Even among a race of "heroines" (in Connor's view, as has been noted, all pioneer women were heroines), she becomes a leader in both a practical and a religious sense. In such Connor novels as The Man From Glengarry and Glengarry School Days, the faith and personal nobility of the female protagonist seems to thrive in a frontier atmosphere of hard work, and the occasional digressions of the frontier men from the straight and narrow, as for example the blasphemy and drunkenness of the shantymen, only serve to strengthen the resolve of heroines like Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry Books and Mrs. Mavor of Black Rock. The Connor heroine is both an exemplary figure and a catalyst to good deeds. Consequently, other female characters, such as Kate Raymond of The Man From Glengarry, either mirror the central character's goodness or try to emulate her. She acts as a catalyst in the actions of others, causing changes in the men and the women around her without changing her own essential goodness. Moreover, as has been noted, she is a

frontier woman who tackles bravely the adverse circumstances of frontier living and who lives up to Traill's high standards of excellence. She is, therefore, an active agent on both a physical and a spiritual frontier--a force for order and good in a lawless and sometimes amoral society. Connor says of Mrs. Murray: "She lived to serve, and the where and how were not hers to determine. So, with bright face and brave heart, she met her days and faced the battle."¹⁴ This statement describes the life of the Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry novels; it serves equally well as a definition of the driving force behind the lives of any of Connor's female protagonists.

One primary function of the central female character in Connor's fiction is that she serves as a role model for other women. She is an excellent homemaker and teaches her skills to others. Mrs. Murray is equally at home in a kitchen and a sick room, as she proves during her first visit to Macdonald Dubh's home in The Man From Glengarry. Macdonald's sister Kirsty is kind hearted but she is neither a good housekeeper nor a good nurse and Mrs. Murray tries to help her cope with Macdonald Dubh. Among other things, Mrs. Murray convinces Kirsty that gruel will be good food for Macdonald Dubh during his illness:

Kirsty took the pot from the bench, with the remains of the porridge that had been made for supper still in it, set it on the fire, and pouring some water in it, began to stir it vigorously. It was thick and slimy, and altogether a most repulsive looking mixture, and Mrs. Murray no longer wondered at Macdonald

Dubh's distaste for gruel. (p. 34)

Mrs. Murray is as tactful as she is capable. Before she leaves, she has washed and fed Macdonald Dubh without hurting Kirsty's feelings and has taught Kirsty some basic nursing and housekeeping skills.

In his Postscript to Adventure Connor refers to a woman's role in the home as "the greatest in the world" (p. 16), indicating his belief that a good homemaker is a woman who is living up to her fullest potential as a woman. Mrs. Murray's home reflects the personality of the homemaker and proves that Mrs. Murray is a good housekeeper as well as a good woman. As has been seen, in The Imperialist, Durcan also uses the motif of the house as a mirror of the housekeeper's personality. Connor moves into religious metaphor with his use of the house and the garden as evidence of the state of the woman's soul and of her proximity to salvation. Mrs. Murray's home, therefore, is described as a place of refuge where people find comfort. The central rooms are those in which the family congregates: the kitchen and the living room. In Glengarry School Days, when Hughie is troubled by events at school, he finds his mother at work in her living room:

He found his mother, not at the door, but in the large, pleasant living-room, which did for all kinds of rooms in the manse. It was dining-room and sewing-room, nursery and play-room, but it was always a good room to enter, and in spite of playthings strewn about, or snippings of cloth, or other stour, it was always a place of brightness and of peace, for it was there the mother was most frequently to be found. This evening she was at the sewing-

machine busy with Hughie's Sunday clothes, with the baby asleep in the cradle beside her in spite of the din of the flying wheels, and little Robbie helping to pull through the long seam.¹²

Since Hughie has a guilty conscience about his behaviour, he feels like an intruder in his mother's domain, and he is "glad of the chance to get away" (p. 171) as quickly as possible:

Hughie ran away, glad to get out of her presence, and seizing the pie, carried it out to the barn and hurled it far into the snow. He felt sure that a single bite of it would choke him. (p. 172)

Hughie has sinned; until he repents, he cannot feel at ease in his mother's presence and cannot benefit from the aura of peace which surrounds Mrs. Murray when she is working in her home.

In Connor's novels, the appearance of the good woman's home mirrors the beauty of her soul. This theme is reiterated in the description of the Finch home in Glengarry School Days. In spite of the potentially disruptive male forces in the family (Mr. Finch is a zealous, old-world Presbyterian who clashes with the independent, new-world sons), the saintly presence of the mother prevails and makes her home a peaceful, happy, and beautiful refuge:

The usual beautiful order pervaded the house and its surroundings. The back yard, through which the boys came from the barn, was free of litter; the chips were raked into neat little piles close to the woodpile, for summer use. On a bench beside the "stoop" door was a row of milk-pans, lapping each other like scales on a fish, glittering in the sun. The large summer kitchen, with its spotless floor and white-washed walls, stood with both its doors open to the sweet air that came in from the fields above, and was as pleasant a room to look in upon as

one could desire. On the sill of the open window stood a sweet-scented geranium and a tall fuschia with white and crimson blossoms hanging in clusters. Bunches of wild flowers stood on the table, on the dresser, and up beside the clock, and the whole room breathed of sweet scents of fields and flowers, and "the name of the chamber was peace."

Beside the open window sat the little mother in an arm-chair, the embodiment of all the peaceful beauty and sweet fragrance of the room.
(pp. 203-204)

Mrs. Finch is enough like Mrs. Murray to be her sister. Her role, like Mrs. Murray's, is that of the pioneer homemaker heroine. And through the suffering and eventual death of Mrs. Finch, Connor allows his reader to enjoy the pathos of a good woman's death without having his major female character, Mrs. Murray, suffer any major hurt.

While Connor's female protagonist is always concerned with the important task of homemaking, and her home reflects this aspect of her personality, Mrs. Murray also influences and instructs those outside her immediate family circle. Kirsty Macdonald is given a helping hand when she proves to be inadequate as a nurse and as a housekeeper. Among a race of backwoods heroines, there are apparently some women who need assistance. Even the task of teaching other women basic household skills becomes, in The Man From Glengarry, "saintly and Christian:

Eight years ago the minister had brought his wife from a home of gentle culture, from a life of intellectual and artistic pursuits, and from a circle of loving friends of which she was the pride and joy, to this home in the forest. There, isolated from all congenial companionship with her own kind, deprived of all the luxuries and of many of the comforts of her young days, and of the mental stimulus of that

conflict of minds without which few can maintain intellectual life, she gave herself without stint to her husband's people, with never a thought of self-pity or self-praise. By day and by night she laboured for her husband and family and for her people, for she thought them hers. She taught the women how to adorn their rude homes, gathered them into Bible classes and sewing circles, where she read and talked and wrought and prayed with them till they grew to adore her as a saint, and to trust her as a leader and friend, and to be a little like her. (p. 23)

Mrs. Murray assumes a leadership role, and instructs the other Glengarry women in the noble art of homemaking. More important, and as illustrated by the concluding sentence of the passage just quoted, Mrs. Murray assumes the role of a moral leader, specifically in her relationship with other women. In The Man From Glengarry, Mrs. Murray influences two younger women--Maimie St. Clair and Kate Raymond. These two women are not identical, however, either in their character or their development. Maimie, who figures much more prominently in the narrative, is one of Connor's few female characters to fall short of ideal femininity. Despite the example set by her aunt Mrs. Murray, Maimie is neither a good Christian nor a suitable candidate for frontier living. As a result, she loses Ranald, the muscular Christian frontiersman, to Kate, the woman who emulates Mrs. Murray, who has the qualities of the good Christian, and who has the potential to be a successful pioneer.

Maimie St. Clair has been more strongly influenced by the opinions of her aunt St. Clair than by those of her aunt Murray. The St. Clair home life, like the Murray home life,

reflects, for good or ill, the attitudes and the standards of the feminine leader and ~~maker~~ maker. The St. Clair home is "a place of cultured elegance and a centre of fashionable pleasure" (p. 51). Unfortunately, the standards set by Miss St. Clair are false and shallow, and, as a result, Maimie's education has been sadly lacking, suited more to the role of an English lady than to the life of a young Canadian woman:

She was a gentle girl, with an affectionate, yielding disposition, tending towards indolence and self-indulgence. Her aunt's chief concern about her was that she should be frocked and mannered as became her position. Her education was committed to a very select young ladies' school, where only the daughters of the first families ever entered....Hence Maimie came to have a smattering of the English poets, could talk in conversation-book French, and could dash off most of the notes of a few waltzes and marches from the best composers, her pièce de résistance, however, being "La Prière d'une Vierge." She carried with her from school a portfolio of crayons of apparently very ancient and very battered castles; and water-colours of landscapes, where the water was quite as solid as the land. True, she was quite unable to keep her own small accounts....
(p. 52)

Maimie has acquired a smattering of French, a basic knowledge of water-colours, and the ability to play (almost) a few pieces on the piano. These are decorative skills, more suited to the drawing room than to the kitchen. Maimie's acquisition of the accomplishments of the English lady in a select school for young women resembles the acquisition of similar skills by Margaret Laurence's Hagar Shipley of The Stone Angel (1964), but this is to anticipate a later discussion.

When Maimie visits her aunt Murray, she finds the

Glengarry people and their customs strange. She makes fun of Ranald when she meets him, basing her mockery on his odd clothing and on his manners. In other words, she judges the man by his appearance and does not perceive his real worth. Later, at the sugaring-off party, Maimie further sets herself apart from the Glengarry young people by refusing to play forfeits with them. To her surprise Mrs. Murray defends the game. In the opinion of Mrs. Murray, it is a simple and honest pastime, and, as Mrs. Cameron says, "They that kiss in the light will not kiss in the dark" (p. 62). Maimie's refusal to play forfeits is ironic because she is, in fact, playing a much more harmful and deceitful game with Ranald. Ranald is straightforward and honest in his emotions; it never occurs to him that Maimie is a flirt, and is therefore dishonest. Maimie's refusal to enter the social world of Glengarry indicates her general inability to fit into a pioneer world. She lacks the emotional strength and the moral fortitude of the backwoods settlers of Glengarry. The final damning evidence of Maimie's failure to cope with the backwoods happens as she gets too close to the fire (in spite of Ranald's warning) and sets herself alight. She resorts to a fit of hysterics; Ranald acts quickly and competently to extinguish the blaze. There can be little doubt that, at this point in her life, Maimie is not cut out to be a pioneer. In Connor's terms, this also means that she is far from being an ideal, or even a good, woman.

Maimie's aunt Murray, unlike her aunt St. Clair, is a

strong positive force in Maimie's life. Maimie herself notices the difference when she is near Mrs. Murray and says to her aunt:

Oh, I will never forget you! You have taught me so much that I never knew before. I see everything so differently. It seems easy to be good here, and, oh! I wish you were not so far away from me, Auntie. I am afraid--afraid--
(p. 144)

Yet even Mrs. Murray cannot change Maimie. Maimie continues to follow the patters of behaviour set by her aunt St. Clair. When she meets Ranald again several years later, she is embarrassed by Ranald's colourful shantyman attire. Kate Raymond is proud to be seen with Ranald since, unlike her friend Maimie, she can discern and value the quality of the man rather than the quality of his clothes. Although Ranald is perceptive enough to notice the difference in the greetings of the two girls, he is as yet unable to believe that Maimie might be an insincere and shallow flirt:

Something was wrong. Was it this fop of a soldier, or had Maimie changed? Ranald glanced at her face. No, she was the same, only more beautiful than he had dreamed.

But while she was shaking hands with him, there flashed across his mind the memory of the first time he had seen her, and the look of amusement upon her face then, that had given him such deadly offence. There was no amusement now, but there was embarrassment and something else. Ranald could not define it, but it chilled his heart, and at once he began to feel how badly dressed he was. (pp. 173-174)

Ranald knows that something is wrong but he blames himself rather than Maimie. For her part, Maimie has decided that "Ranald was not of her world" (p. 184). The wealthy

upper-class society in which she is "the toast of all the clubs and the belle of all the balls" (p. 168) has no use for a poorly dressed shantyman. Maimie much prefers to be seen with Lieutenant De Lacy, a son of "one of the oldest English families of Quebec" (p. 168). She values his name, his wealth, his education, his appearance, and his ancestry (this is what her brother scornfully refers to as her "ancestor worship" (p. 187)). De Lacy is neither as honest nor as moral as Ranaid, but he is not a bad man. He joins in a fight in Quebec to defend Le Noir and his friends, and, in Connor's world of muscular Christian heroes, bravery and loyalty to one's friends are qualities to be valued. Yet De Lacy has certain weaknesses. Like Maimie, for example, he values appearances and is anxious to maintain his status as a De Lacy and as a member of the upper class. The qualities that De Lacy cherishes would be quite foreign to Ranaid. De Lacy is:

...handsome, tall, well made, with a high-bred if somewhat dissipated face, an air of placé indifference a little overdone, and an accent which he had brought back with him from Oxford, and which he was anxious not to lose. Indeed, the bare thought of the possibility of his dropping into the flat, semi-nasal tones of his native land filled the lieutenant with unspeakable horror. (p. 169)

De Lacy is a Canadian but he turns to the old world for his standards of speech, dress, and status. Even Maimie admits that Ranaid is the better man, and indicates to Mrs. Murray that she could marry Ranaid if his name was De Lacy. Maimie's choice of a husband is reminiscent of a similar de-

cision made by Dora Milburn of Duncan's The Imperialist, and, in many ways the two girls, Maimie and Dora, are quite similar. Both come from wealthy, pretentious homes; both have been taught decorative skills; both are coquettes who refuse the love of a good man, choosing instead a man with more money and a more prestigious family background. In any event, in her selection of a mate, as in her earlier actions in The Man From Glengarry, Maimie falls short of the exacting standards set by the ideal woman, Mrs. Murray. She chooses De Lacy as her husband for reasons of wealth and prestige, and ignores the Christian and pioneer values of hard work, activity, and honesty.

When Ranald visits Maimie after her marriage to De Lacy, he finally sees her flirtatious manner and notices the shallow tone of her conversation:

How brilliantly she talked, finding it quite within her powers to keep several men busy at the same time; and as Ranald listened to her gay frivolous talk, more and more he became conscious of an unpleasantness in her tone. It was thin, shallow, and heartless. (p. 278)

Once again, the woman's home and the way in which she entertains her friends, indicate her inner qualities. Maimie's party reflects the type of person she is. Whereas Mrs. Murray's gatherings feature uplifting conversation and the singing of hymns, Maimie's party is fashionable and frivolous. The implication is, of course, that Maimie does not possess the spiritual strength of the Lady of the Manse.

Kate Raymond is Maimie's friend and serves a narrative function as Maimie's opposite or her foil. Unlike Maimie,

who aspires to the life of an idle English lady, Kate is completely of the new world. She looks for the real worth of the men she meets, disregarding appearance. Kate is much closer in spirit to Mrs. Murray than is Maimie. She is a true Christian, and is a candidate suitable for frontier life. It is appropriate that she and Ranald will move to western Canada (this echoes back to a similar situation in Duncan's The Imperialist as Hugh Finlay and Avena Murchison also plan to move to the West after their marriage) where she will have an opportunity to prove her worth on a real, physical frontier. One of Kate's most valuable moral virtues is her honesty. She likes Ranald immediately and shows her feelings openly by welcoming him with a "frank smile" (p. 173). Ranald has been vaguely troubled by Maimie but is reassured by Kate. Later, when Kate admits to herself that she is in love with Ranald, she acts with the courage of Mrs. Murray and "the saints of old."¹⁶ After an honest assessment of her love for Ranald, Kate faces an intolerable situation with patience, humility, and self-denying courage:

Then, from her room, Kate came down with face serene, and, but for the eyes that somehow made one think of tears, without a sign of the storm that had swept her soul. She did not go home. She was too brave for that. She would stay and fight her battle to the end. (p. 208)

Kate is ennobled by the suffering that she feels as a result of her unrequited love for Ranald. She learns to be patient, and to endure difficulties with a brave smile. Like the Lady of the Manse, she begins to help others less fortunate than

herself, and when Ranald leaves for the West, she takes over many of his duties at the boys' club he has founded. Thus, Kate faces her own personal frontier, a frontier which is largely spiritual in nature, and begins to acquire the traits of the pioneer woman.

As Kate becomes more like her model and mentor, Mrs. Murray, Ranald becomes increasingly aware of her inner worth. He begins to love Kate and to value her good judgment. While Maimie chooses a lesser man and turns Ranald down, Kate earns the love of Ranald and is suitably rewarded. The moral strength which has allowed Kate to conquer her personal frontier of suffering will undoubtedly stand her in good stead when she moves to the physical frontier lands of western Canada with Ranald. At the close of The Man From Glengarry Kate is a close approximation of Mrs. Murray in all but one respect: she is a good Christian, a leader of both men and women, capable, active, decisive, self-sacrificing, and honest, but she does not inhabit a manse.

While Mrs. Murray serves simply as a guide and a mentor for the other female protagonists in the two Glengarry books (she represents the ideal which all others must attempt to reach), her relationship with the male protagonists is more complex. To begin with, she has a mothering, nurturing function which extends beyond the boundaries of her own immediate family circle. In addition, she personifies the qualities of beauty, goodness, truth, virtue, and Christian love. She has a great deal of influence on the men around her, and in The

Man From Glengarry, her nephew Harry St. Clair refers to her as a "rare woman" (p. 189) who has "a hundred men...ready to die for her" (p. 189). Ranald agrees with Harry: "They would just die for her, and why not? She is a great woman and a good" (p. 189). Others of Mrs. Murray's admirers include the schoolmaster Craven and his uncle, Professor Gray, of Glengarry School Days, who believe that "for love of her men would attempt great things" (p. 334). The source of Mrs. Murray's power over men seems to be her Christianity. Her brand of gentle, trusting, all-encompassing Christian love differs markedly from the sectarian, Presbyterian creed espoused by her husband and the elders of his church and is specifically mentioned in The Man From Glengarry: "...with the minister's wife religion was a part of her every-day living, and seemed to be as easily associated with her pleasure as with anything else about her" (p. 64). Mrs. Murray's power can be defined as a feminine religious influence. She represents a sweet, gentle, persuasive force who sets an example of Christian excellence and who wins souls by trust and love. The male religious figure in Connor's novels, as for example, Mr. Murray, the Presbyterian minister of the Glengarry books, tends to be a crusader, an active man who is hasty to make decisions. He is a fiery leader of men who by his words can incite men to great things, and who by his superb physique can dominate all physical opposition.²⁷ The Lady of the Manse, who is more subtle in her methods, reaches out to and helps the more hopeless cases, those persons who

cannot be helped by the minister. For example, in Black Rock, Mrs. Mavor profoundly affects the degenerate Billy Breen, and, as a result, Billy attempts to reform his life of alcoholism. In the Glengarry books, Mrs. Murray's influence changes a number of men, some of who have turned away from her husband and his church.

The stolid Thomas Finch of Glengarry School Days seems an unlikely candidate for falling victim to Mrs. Murray's charms; however, at the school examinations in the novel, the usually unmovable Thomas goes to great lengths to please Mrs. Murray when she begs him to add feeling to his reading of a poem. Thomas' odd delivery of the passage reduces the majority of his audience to helpless laughter, but he is aware that he has done his best and that Mrs. Murray is pleased:

...Thomas was surprised to find himself trying to swallow a lump in his throat, and to keep his eyes from blinking; and in his face, stolid and heavy, a new expression was struggling for utterance. "Here, take me," it said; "all that I have is thine," and later days brought the opportunity to prove it. (p. 61)

Mrs. Murray's ability to evoke this type of response in her male acquaintances, to appeal to their best qualities, is one of her most salient traits. On at least one occasion she serves as her son Hughie's conscience. Hughie's sense of wrong-doing in Glengarry School Days when he steals from his family in order to buy a gun and ammunition from his friend Foxy is heightened by his anticipation of his mother's disappointment and disillusionment. This fear of her reaction to his misbehaviour is a greater deterrent to Hughie than is his

own conscience. Like Thomas Finch, he wishes to do his best at all times to please Mrs. Murray. Mrs. Murray's greatest triumph in Glengarry School Days, however, is her reformation of the schoolmaster John Craven. She makes it clear to Craven that she trusts him, even though she knows about his faults--he apparently drinks too much on occasion. Like Hughie and Thomas, Craven is reluctant, or even unable, to disappoint her trust. He leaves Glengarry a better man for having met Mrs. Murray. He has renounced the evils of drinking and is ready to enter the ministry. Furthermore, he attributes his reformation to the power of Mrs. Murray.

In The Man From Glengarry, several similar projects are tackled by Mrs. Murray. All meet with similar success. It is her power over Ranald and his father Macdonald Dubh that transforms the two men from troubled, revenge-seeking shantymen into peaceful, forgiving Christians. Under her instruction, the men learn to forgive their sworn enemy, Le Noir. This in itself is no small task since it is Le Noir's savage beating of Macdonald Dubh that eventually causes the Highlander's death. But Macdonald Dubh forgives his enemy, and, for the first time in his life, begins to attend church regularly. This is a great surprise to Mr. Murray because he had given up on Macdonald Dubh. On his death bed, Macdonald Dubh thanks Mrs. Murray for her help and inspiration:

Then he turned to Mrs. Murray, and said, with a great light of joy in his eyes: "It is you that came to me as the angel of God with a word of salvation, and forever more I will be blessing you." (p. 161)

Mr. Murray had been unable to help Macdonald Dubh; Mrs. Murray reaches out to the sinner, understands the nature of his dilemma, and brings him back into the church.

Ranald finds it more difficult to forgive Le Noir than does his father. But, like a knight in a medieval romance, in The Man From Glengarry, he pledges himself to Mrs. Murray's service: "Ranald could not speak, but he looked steadily into Mrs. Murray's eyes as he took the hand she offered, and she knew he was pledging himself to her" (p. 48). The task she asks him to perform is a difficult one. She demands nothing less than his absolute forgiveness of his father's murderer. Eventually Ranald succeeds in his quest and even defends Le Noir in a fight in Quebec. Mrs. Murray becomes an ideal of femininity to Ranald, and she represents a standard by which he will measure all other women. He idolizes and idealizes her. In The Man From Glengarry she proves to be a source of inspiration to him:

Mrs. Murray's high courage in the bush, her skill in the sick-room, and that fine spiritual air she carried with her made for her a place in his imagination where men set their divinities. The hero and the saint in her stirred his poetic and fervent soul and set it aglow with a feeling near to adoration. (p. 40)

Mrs. Murray possesses all the traits of the ideal pioneer. She is brave, skilful, and active, and she is a heroine in Ranald's eyes because of these qualities that he perceives in her. But she is not an ordinary pioneer. Her "fine spiritual air" (p. 40), mentioned in The Man From Glengarry, her Christianity, her ability to influence the men who meet

her, her high ideals, raise her to the level of a saint to be worshipped and obeyed.

Connor's heroine, the Lady of the Manse, the pioneer saint, obviously sets a high standard for other women to follow. She is an ideal figure, Connor's interpretation in fiction of the Christian Canadian pioneer woman at her best. Often in Connor's work the figure comes closer to metaphor and even to myth than to reality. The inclusion of motifs of Christian endeavour on a spiritual frontier transforms Connor's fiction from romantic social history into works of myth-making proportions. As Watt notes, for Connor, and for his readers, the real, physical frontier becomes a place which is ideal for self-examination, revelation, and reformation:

The West had become a mythical land, a place where such revelations were forced upon one. Men went there to escape the old life and in search of a new life, and there the faith in conversion and re-birth took on a new meaning. It was a place where biblical parables easily merged with actuality.²⁸

Connor's belief that home-making is a woman's greatest task lends itself to metaphoric transformation as well. The woman's frontier home is a mirror held up to her soul; the gardens, whether neat and tidy, or wild and unkempt, are emblematic of the female presence in the home. The beauty and the aura of peace created by the woman demonstrate the beauty of her soul. The woman's presence affects the moral condition of her home and its inhabitants.²⁹

The appreciation and idealization of a woman's role in

the home, and the related theory that a woman, because of her primary function as a mother, is ideally suited to perform a leadership role outside the home, were both central aspects of the woman's movement in Canada during the early twentieth century.²⁰ The National Council of Women of Canada claimed to represent the majority of Canadian women,²¹ and the speeches made by the delegates to the first annual meeting of the Council in 1894 indicate that Connor's sentiments were very much a part of the spirit of the times, and that Canadian women generally accepted Connor's definitions of the ideal woman. To cite one example, the President of the Council, Lady Aberdeen, refers to "our grand women's mission"²² as a mission which is related to "mothering,"²³ not only within the family unit, but in a global context as well:

Can we not best describe it as "mothering" in one sense or [sic] another? We are not all called upon to be mothers of little children, but every woman is called upon to "mother" in some way or another; and it is impossible to be in this country, even for a little while, and not be impressed with a sense of what a great work of "mothering" is in a special sense committed to the women of Canada.²⁴

Canadian reformers were ever traditional, ever cautious, always concluding that:

...home will ever be our chosen kingdom, but we shall order our homes with greater wisdom and truer love and more steadfast principle by far, from taking a woman's part in helping the great world out of the sins and distresses which make the day of its redemption seem to us still a vision that tarries and a day afar off.²⁵

This statement of a global view of the maternal duties of the Canadian feminist indicates that the definitions of the

frontier, and, therefore, of the frontier woman as well, shifted and changed to suit the changing social conditions in Canada. While suffragette theories and concerns are not a major part of Connor's fiction, his female protagonists adhere to the Canadian feminist perception of the ideal woman. He portrayed women as in his day they evidently preferred to see themselves: maternal, independent, vigorous, courageous, intelligent, and visionary pioneer women. Connor's heroines inhabit wild frontier lands--the Glengarry backwoods and the Canadian North-West--but they are also pioneer women on a new frontier as they help to change the hearts and the souls of the men and the women around them. They are strongly family-oriented, the centre of their own family unit, and, in addition, they perform a larger mothering function as they influence an extended group of people outside the family. Finally, and most important, Connor's heroines serve as models of perfection for Connor's female readers. Connor defined Canadian women as they wished to be perceived; he presented ideals that both men and women were apparently willing to accept. This vision of women and women's role may not have lasted for any great length of time²⁶ but it was an essential part of Canadian social life, and an important ingredient in fiction during the early years of the twentieth century.

Notes

¹
J. Lee Thompson and John H. Thompson, "Ralph Connor and the Canadian Identity," Queen's Quarterly, 79, No. 2 (Summer 1972), p. 159.

²
Charles W. Gordon, Postscript to Adventure, The Autobiography of Ralph Connor (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1938), p. 16. All future references to this work appear in the text.

³
Gordon, Postscript, p. 150; see also Gordon Roper, "New Forces: New Fiction, 1880-1920," in Literary History of Canada, Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (1976; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), I, 286.

⁴
Gordon, Postscript, p. 150; Gordon Roper, S. Ross Beharriell and Rupert Schieder, "Writers of Fiction, 1880-1920," in Literary History of Canada, Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (1976; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), I, 336.

⁵
Gordon, Postscript, p. 150.

⁶
See Gordon Roper, Rupert Schieder and S. Ross Beharriell, "The Kinds of Fiction, 1880-1920," in Literary History of Canada, Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (1976; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), I, 298-326.

⁷
Edward McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 41.

⁸
In Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), the frontier becomes redefined to include contemporary social issues. Both Connor and Duncan accept and extend the use in fiction of the frontier and the frontier woman. Yet each writer pursues a different direction.

⁹
Mccourt, Canadian West, pp. 28-29..

¹⁰
Mccourt, Canadian West, p. 41.

¹¹
Connor's novels generally have two complementary religious spokesmen, one male, one female. They work differently

to achieve the same end--salvation of souls. The exception to the general rule is The Sky Pilot, A Tale of the Foothills (1899), where the minister (the "sky pilot" of the title) is an oddly androgynous figure in the midst of Connor's generally clearly defined male and female characters. The sky pilot is a gentle, feminine, yet crusading and passionate missionary; he is a character who combines both masculine and feminine traits. Except for this one character, Connor's male and female protagonists act differently to help the people around them.

12

Traill in The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855) stressed the importance of adding beauty to the backwoods dwelling, saying, "It is a great mistake to neglect those little household adornments which will give a look of cheerfulness to the very humblest home." See Catharine Parr Traill, The Canadian Settler's Guide, introd. Clara Thomas, NCL, No. 64, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 13.

13

F. W. Watt, "Western Myth, The World of Ralph Connor," Canadian Literature, No. 1 (Summer 1959), p. 29.

14

Ralph Connor, The Man From Glengarry, introd. S. Ross Beharriell, NCL, No. 14, ed. Malcolm Ross (1901; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 24. All future references to this work appear in the text.

15

Ralph Connor, Glengarry School Days, A Story of Early Days in Glengarry, introd. S. Ross Beharriell, NCL, No. 118, ed. Malcolm Ross (1902; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 170-171. All future references to this work appear in the text.

16

Gordon, Postscript, p. 412.

17

Charles Gordon's sympathies and personal religious beliefs appear to have been more closely allied to those of his female characters. For example, he was an advocate of church union and a leading figure in the discussions which led to the 1929 formation of the United Church of Canada.

18

Watt, "Western Myth," p. 34.

19

Connor's use of the house as mirror to the woman's soul extends to his non-fiction as well. In Postscript to Adventure, for example, he describes his visits to two homes in the foothills. The garden of the good woman is characterized by its beauty and its neatness. It has been carefully tended. The house and its mistress are welcoming, and the woman is evidently a good Christian. Set in contrast to this is Gordon's visit to a neighbouring house. At the second home, the character of the homemaker is established by the state of the neglected, weed-filled garden. The house is

wretched and crude; the homemaker is not as friendly as the first woman; she is evidently not a good Christian. See Gordon, Postscript, pp. 118-122.

20

Gordon supported the women's rights movement. At a suffragette rally in London, England, he spoke of the heroic work of Canadian women:

I took as my theme "Canadian Women in Public Affairs in Canada." I told of their work in social service, of their remarkable work in the church, and so on and so on. I told them yarns of my mother in the old Glengarry days, of the heroic women of the foothill country. I had plenty of stuff and I served it up hot, and right from my heart.

See Gordon, Postscript, p. 190.

21

See Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Roots of Modern Canadian Feminism. The National Council of Women, 1893-1929," Canada, An Historical Magazine, 3, No. 2 (Dec. 1975), 22-33.

22

National Council of Women of Canada, Women Workers of Canada, Being a Report of the Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada (Ottawa: National Council of Women of Canada, - 1894), p. 11.

23

National Council of Women, Women Workers, p. 11.

24

National Council of Women, Women Workers, p. 11.

25

National Council of Women, Women Workers, p. 219.

26

See Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945). McClung discusses her sense of disillusionment with the women's movement when it failed to achieve its high goals.

The Appearance of the Pioneer Woman as-Character Type
in The Fiction of Margaret Laurence

In "My Final Hour," an address given to the Trent University Philosophy Society in 1983, Margaret Laurence repeated one of Catharine Parr Traill's maxims:

So the basic message of My Final Hour would have to be--do not despair. Act. Speak out. In the words of one of my heroines, Catharine Parr Traill, "In cases of emergency, it is folly to fold one's hands and sit down to bewail in abject terror. It is better to be up and doing."²

Not only does Laurence define Traill as one of her personal "heroines" in this speech, but she also quotes a passage from Traill's The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855), obviously feeling that Traill's advice to emigrant women of the nineteenth century has continued relevance today. By quoting Traill, Laurence makes evident a link between herself and the problems of twentieth-century society, and Traill and the nineteenth-century pioneer society of Upper Canada. Laurence's portrayal of women in her Canadian novels, specifically Hagar Shipley in The Stone Angel (1964), Rachel Cameron in A Jest of God (1966), and Morag Gunn in The Diviners (1974) provides further evidence of a similarity of outlook between these two writers--Traill and Laurence. And, in fact, Laurence's protagonists become contemporary versions of the pioneer woman, the character type created by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide, and transposed by her into fiction such as Canadian Crusoes (1852). As has been demonstrated by her appearance in

the fiction of later writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) and Ralph Connor's The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902), this character type--the pioneer woman--can be adapted to various definitions of the frontier, specifically to recreations of the frontier as a state of mind rather than as a place. The traits which identify the pioneer woman remain unchanged despite the shifting nature of her frontier environment, and can be summarized relatively quickly: courage, resourcefulness, pragmatism, an ability to accept adverse circumstances with equanimity, and the strength to act decisively in the face of discomfort or danger. These are the salient, lasting traits of the pioneer woman as character type in fiction and as an ideal of femininity, and they are evident once again in the female protagonists of Margaret Laurence.

Laurence's Hagar, Rachel, and Morag draw upon this tradition of characterization; they confront a frontier landscape which is often hostile, disorienting, and confusing. In Laurence's work the frontier is chiefly an internal one. Consequently, the difficulties faced by the pioneer woman are not external objects and physical hazards but internal, personal problems, often created by the pioneer herself, as they are for example, in the case of Rachel Cameron who creates her own dilemmas and imaginary obstacles in A Jest of God. Occasionally, however, the problems encountered by the protagonist can be traced to social conditions and attitudes which have influenced the character's thoughts and actions.

An example of this is the way in which the adverse opinions expressed by Manawaka residents towards Moraq Gunn and her guardians in The Diviners shape Moraq's decisions. Unlike examples of the pioneer woman as character type discussed previously (notably Mrs. Murray, the pioneer woman in the Glenquarry fiction of Ralph Connor), Moraq cannot change or influence the attitudes of those about her except through her fiction; she must make her own decisions, the onus is on her life and on her changes, rather than on the society around her. In effect, the social and the personal frontiers become inextricably linked in Laurence's fiction: the personal crisis may have its origin in a social situation, and the protagonist's actions may affect the people around her, but the changes only occur when the protagonist acts for herself.

While the frontier environment of Laurence's protagonists would be unfamiliar territory to Traill, the actual process of pioneering would be clearly recognizable, as would be the pioneer woman's discovery of her own intrinsic worth during the course of her pioneering efforts. In "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-political Being," Laurence has indicated her awareness of certain interconnected themes which appear throughout her fiction:

The quest for physical and spiritual freedom, the quest for relationships of equality and communication--these themes run through my fiction and are connected with the theme of survival, not mere physical survival, but a survival of the spirit, with human dignity and the ability to give and receive love....The themes of freedom and survival relate both to the social/ex-

ternal world and to the spiritual/inner one, and they are themes which I see as both political and religious. If freedom is, in part, the ability to act out of one's own self-definition, with some confidence and with compassion, un-compelled by fear or by the authority of others, it is also a celebration of life and of the mystery at life's core. In their varying ways, all these characters experience a form of grace.²

It would not be far-fetched to see this as essentially a restatement of Traill's views of the dichotomy of pioneering, as these views are expressed in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide. More specifically, Laurence's statements echo back to Traill's concept of the dual nature of the interaction between the frontier and the frontier woman: although, for Traill, the pioneer woman must accept adversity with equanimity, humility, and pragmatism, she must also begin immediately to improve her situation.³ The positive results of the successful tackling of the frontier (whether that frontier is expressed in the physical context of Traill's nineteenth-century Ontario backwoods or in the metaphoric context of Laurence's twentieth-century existential angst) are numerous. The pioneer woman may discover a previously hidden or unexpressed sense of independence, a feeling of freedom from fear, restraint, and social criticism (Catharine Traill's "Mrs. Grundy"⁴), a sense of pride in her accomplishment of distasteful or difficult new tasks. While none of Laurence's protagonists is an ideal character, there is an awareness of some elusive ideal towards which each is working. The recognition of the frontier (be it external or internal) and the successful tackling of the process of

pioneering on that frontier, lead to the protagonist's discovery of her own strengths, and help her to more closely approximate that ideal of femininity defined as the pioneer woman.

The protagonist of the first of Laurence's Manawaka novels, Haqar Shibley of The Stone Angel, is the daughter of Manitoba pioneers. She grows up during the last years of the Canadian pioneer era in western Canada--the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Consequently, the pioneer era, as it had been encountered by Haqar's parents, no longer exists in her adult lifetime. At a time when many women began to define themselves as pioneers in a new sense,³ Haqar appears to be lost, unable to develop her own, personal, and unique role. This is a problem that lasts through most of her life, being resolved only in the weeks preceding her death when Haqar finally understands and accepts her own self, a self that inevitably includes a pioneer legacy.

Initially, Haqar is torn between two opposing views of her self and her social role, and she is unable to reconcile the two. On the one hand, Jason Currie wishes to recreate in his daughter the image of the English lady, a model of femininity which is inappropriate to a Canadian frontier context, whether that frontier territory is the physical wasteland encountered by Haqar's mother or the emotional wasteland that Haqar creates for herself.⁴ On the other hand, following the example set by her pioneer father, Haqar epitomizes

of Traill's theories about pioneering in Canada. In it Traill continues to employ various disparate points of view, and to vacillate between her accurate portrayal of the real world of the Canadian backwoods and her idealized interpretation of pioneering. Her ideas may, however, be better integrated in The Canadian Settler's Guide for here Traill tends to point out the ideal aspects of every situation and a certain balance is achieved. There is, for example, the story of the pioneer woman who harvests the corn. Traill comments that incidents such as this one are common in pioneer life. Women are called upon to perform work which is generally not within their sphere of duty, discover that they can carry out their repugnant tasks, and that, surprisingly enough, they enjoy certain aspects of their work. As in The Backwoods of Canada, Traill insists on the propriety of conforming to necessity. But she insists equally that virtue is always rewarded; that there are intangible benefits which result from dutiful obedience. The woman who harvests the corn is merely bowing to the inevitable, and the reward she reaps is intangible as well as tangible. Traill is continually, as already suggested, on the defensive in both books. She is aware that her readers may find her stories about Canada strange and even repulsive. She attempts to soften her tough stance by adopting a moral attitude which gives the reassurance that a cheerful acceptance of unpleasant tasks is both necessary and virtuous. According to Traill, virtue is often rewarded in Canada by a sense of pride in accomplishment and

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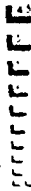
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the new world freedom and strength of mind which is common to Canadian pioneers. Unfortunately, Hagar is unable to identify or to understand the nature of her dilemma until the end of her life. During the period in which she cannot see her frontier, Hagar behaves inappropriately, and cannot begin the pioneering process. When she is dying, Hagar finally identifies her frontier: "Pride was my wilderness." Although Hagar has spent most of her life lost in a frontier wilderness, unable to respond as a capable pioneer woman, from this moment of recognition, she begins to demonstrate the qualities of a pioneer as defined by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide. In the final analysis, Hagar's achievements as a pioneer during the last days of her life are few in number but are monumental in scope.

One source of Hagar's initial problem is her lack of a proper role model. Hagar's mother was evidently, if Hagar's assumptions about her mother are to be trusted, the type of the old world lady who came to grief on the frontier. Although Hagar does not remember her mother, she despises her weaknesses. For example, her mother's death in childbirth is regarded by Hagar, not as an unfortunate and inevitable consequence of the difficulties faced by women on the frontier, but rather as a proof of her mother's inherent weakness. Accordingly, Hagar perceives her mother as weak and inadequate, an undesirable role model. She sees:

...a spindly and anxious girl, rather plain,

ringletted stiffly. She looks so worried that she will not know what to do, although she came of good family and ought not to have had a moment's hesitation about the propriety of her ways. But still she peers perplexed out of her little frame, wondering how on earth to please I used to wonder what she'd been like, that docile woman, and wonder at her weakness and my awful strength. (p. 59)

As Traill had pointed out in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, coming from a "good" family was irrelevant if the emigrant lady could not adapt to frontier conditions. From Hagar's analysis, it appears that Mrs. Currie did not cope competently with the Canadian frontier and would, therefore, have been an unsuitable model for her daughter even if she had lived. Throughout her life Hagar continues to think of her mother with some contempt. She is disdainful of her mother's image as a fragile, "graceful unspirited" (p. 7) woman; she despises her mother's evident physical weakness, equating it with an inability to cope with the stresses of frontier living. When her brother Matt asks her to wear her mother's shawl to comfort their sick brother Dan, she retreats from the situation in confusion:

But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize. To play at being her--it was beyond me. (p. 25)

It is ironic--but also revealing of the affinity between physical and mental frontiers--that while Hagar disavows any similarity between herself and her mother, she, like Mrs. Currie, has difficulty understanding and coming to terms with her frontier.

It is also ironic that Hagar rejects her mother's image and accepts her father's version of ideal femininity by allowing herself to be shipped off to Toronto to learn "how to dress and behave like a lady" (p. 42). Hagar refers to herself as "the dark-maned colt, off to the training ring, the young ladies' academy in Toronto" (p. 42). Despite her contempt for her mother, she accepts her father's decision; she learns decorative, ladylike skills, accomplishments which are reminiscent of an earlier, old-world way of life that is irrelevant on the Canadian prairie farm lands:

When I returned after two years, I knew embroidery, and French, and menu-planning for a five-course meal, and poetry, and how to take a firm hand with servants, and the most becoming way of dressing my hair. Hardly ideal accomplishments for the kind of life I'd ultimately find myself leading, but I had no notion of that then. I was Pharaoh's daughter reluctantly returning to his roof, the square brick palace so oddly antimacassared in the wilderness....(pp. 42-43) -

Hagar's continued resentment of her mother is at odds with the role that she is assuming here; she is to be the lady of the house, and she is to assume a primarily decorative and passive role.

In spite of her apparent acceptance of her father's wishes, however, it is always clear that Hagar cannot be dominated or disciplined. She has inherited a fiercely independent spirit, a legacy which comes partially from her father and partially, surely, from the pioneer environment from which she has sprung. Hagar's marriage to Bram Shipley is an early, misguided, and ultimately doomed attempt to escape the

confines of Grundyism and the restraints imposed on her by Jason Currie's social values. The attempt to escape is misguided because Haqar initially does not understand her own motives and is doomed because she later fails to clarify or to express her feelings. She acts decisively but does not understand her action. Haqar is attracted sexually to Bram but cannot admit this attraction--a saddening indication of the extent to which she is a victim of what can broadly be called Victorian attitudes. Furthermore, she remains chained by the laws of polite Victorian society which dictate that a lady must suffer and be silent in sexual relations. Despite her enjoyment of sex, she follows the dictates of propriety and ladylike behaviour:

It was not so very long after we wed, when first I felt my blood and vitals rise to meet his. He never knew. I never let him know. I never spoke aloud, and I made certain that the trembling was all inner....I prided myself upon keeping my pride intact, like some maidenhead. (p. 81)

In addition, although she is drawn by Bram's evident disregard of Grundyism, she seeks to change him to fit into her father's world:

I fancied I heard in his laughter the bravery of battalions. I thought he looked a bearded Indian, so brown and beaked a face. The black hair thrusting from his chin was rough as thistles. The next instant, though, I imagined him rigged out in a suit of gray soft as a dove's breast-teathers. (p. 45)

Haqar defies her father by marrying Bram; then, ironically, she tries to reshape Bram in her father's image, an attempt which will never succeed. From the perspective of old age,

Hagar can admit her love for Bram but she remains confused about her reactions to him: "His banner over me was only his own skin, and now I no longer know why it should have shamed me" (p. 81).

Even before her growth towards understanding, Hagar possesses many of the traits of Traill's pioneer woman. For example, Hagar is always able to make decisions and to act on her decisions; she is a capable woman who refuses to sit still in an emergency. While many of her actions are inappropriate to her particular frontier and although she has been trained to assume a decorative rather than a functional role in a home, she begins to take care of Bram's house as soon as she moves in:

The next day I got to work and scrubbed the house out. I planned to get a hired girl in the fall, when we had the cash. But in the meantime I had no intention of living in squalor. I had never scrubbed a floor in my life, but I worked that day as though I'd been driven by a whip. (p. 52)

Hagar never does obtain hired help. She does the work by herself and, like the original pioneers, even begins to take an unhappy pride in her domestic accomplishments:

Work filled the time. I worked like a dray horse, thinking: "At least nobody will ever be able to say I didn't keep a clean house." I used to black the stove until it glowed like new-polished boots, and wipe the kitchen floor clean no matter how many times a day the mud or slush or dust, according to season, was tracked in upon it. (p. 112)

When faced with adversity, then, Hagar is capable of taking immediate and decisive action. Unfortunately, because of her lack of understanding, Hagar's attempts at action fail to

satisfy her. Her flight from her father and from the Grundyism which he represents fails when Hagar takes her father's values with her. Her assumption of the role of the housewife is equally unsatisfactory because Hagar continues to resent the role: "...I felt something else must happen-- this couldn't be all" (p. 112). Hagar's later flight from an intolerable marriage is further proof of her ability to take action in an emergency. Yet this action, like the other mentioned, is also doomed. Hagar takes with her a memory of Bram's physical presence which haunts her at night. Hagar's departure is precipitated by her desire to recreate the image of her father in her son John: "...Jason Currie never saw my second son or knew at all that the sort of boy he'd wanted had waited a generation to appear" (p. 64). This effort also fails since Hagar has not understood her son; he returns to Manawaka and to his father.

As has been shown, although Hagar has the pioneer woman's ability to act, she lacks the judgment and self-knowledge necessary to act correctly, and her process of coping with stresses and emergencies, therefore, is misguided. She can neither change the frontier nor be changed by it until she correctly identifies the nature of her problem. The changes which occur during the last weeks of Hagar's life represent the process of a pioneer woman squarely facing her frontier, and choosing the activities appropriate to that frontier. At the last, Hagar's innate strengths combine with her recognition of her frontier to produce changes in her-

self.

The first genuinely positive action taken by Hagar--her flight to Shadow Point--succeeds where other attempted escapes have failed simply because it corresponds with (or, more accurately, leads to) a change in her perspective: an increased awareness of herself and her needs, and of others and their needs. This is the beginning of an improvement in Hagar's personal wilderness, sparked here by a movement into a physical wilderness of sorts. At the beach Hagar meets Murray F. Lees, another fugitive, and when Murray tells her his life story, she is moved by compassion, illness, and by her need for companionship to reach out to him emotionally and to say: "No one's to blame" (p. 234). For the first time Hagar has compromised her own beliefs to help another person. The result is that Lees helps her in return, although she is too ill to recognize his gesture. She tells him the story of John's death. Then, in a delirium, she mistakes Lees for John and asks for John's forgiveness. Lees, like Hagar, is able to give absolution to a fellow fugitive. Later, when Hagar considers that Lees has betrayed her by bringing Marvin and Doris to get her, she is able to forgive him: "I didn't mean to speak crossly. I-I'm sorry about your boy" (p. 253). And, once again, she finds that by speaking this way, she is rewarded: "Having spoken so, I feel lightened and eased. He looks surprised and shaken, yet somehow restored" (p. 253). A feeling of freedom from constraint--she is "lightened" and "eased"--accompanies Hagar's first true confrontation with

her as yet unidentified wilderness of pride.

Hagar identifies her frontier when she forces the minister, Mr. Troy, to sing the hymn, "All people that on earth do dwell." At this point, she suddenly recognizes the name and the nature of her personal frontier:

Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances--oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth? Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear." I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. (p. 292)

Significantly, Hagar has used the past tense to identify her frontier, indicating that her recognition and acceptance of the frontier--pride--and the conditions inherent to that frontier--she has been ruled by fear--have facilitated the conquering of that frontier. Even though Hagar's pioneering efforts last for only a few days, through the naming of her frontier she is able to choose the activities which are both suitable and appropriate to the frontier environment. For example, Hagar tries to combat her false pride and begins to reach out to others, seeking to end her solitude. She reassures Mr. Troy and thanks him for singing to her: "Thank you. That wasn't easy--to sing aloud alone" (p. 292). In a manner typical of her past actions, Hagar tells Doris that "Troy has done no good, then, ashamed, she admits the "heart's truth": "Doris--I didn't speak the truth. He sang for me, and it did me good" (p. 293). But her most important gesture occurs later when she gets out of bed, ignoring her own dis-

comfort and pain, to help Sandra Wong with a bedpan. The nurse catches Hagar in the act of carrying the bedpan to Sandra, and Hagar and Sandra laugh together at the look on the nurse's face. This is Hagar's reward for selfless action--the first moment of shared laughter for Hagar in the narrative: By helping Sandra, Hagar has denied her own needs and has been rewarded for her positive confrontation of her wilderness of pride.

It is during her final interaction with her son Marvin that Hagar makes the greatest step in improving conditions in her personal wilderness. Uncharacteristically, she tells Marvin that she is frightened, surprising both herself and her son: "What possessed me? I think it's the first time in my life I've ever said such a thing. Shameful. Yet somehow it is a relief to speak it" (pp. 303-304). Hagar is shaking off the chains of Grundyism; she begins to speak the "heart's truth" rather than the expected platitudes. As in her encounter with Lees, she feels a welcome sense of relief at her admission of weakness. It is at this point that Hagar suddenly perceives Marvin as a Jacob figure, grappling with her, seeking her blessing:

Now it seems to me he is truly Jacob, gripping with all his strength, and bargaining. I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And I see I am thus strangely cast, and perhaps have been so from the beginning, and can only release myself by releasing him. (p. 304)

The Jacob role was the one into which Hagar had tried unsuccessfully to place John (p. 179). Her changing perspective

leads her to tell Marvin what he has always wanted to hear: "You've been good to me, always. A better son than John" (p. 304). The fact that Hagar does not fully mean this is irrelevant; she has learned to reach out of her isolation in order to help someone else. Again, Hagar is rewarded for this type of action. She hears Marvin tell the nurse that his mother is a "holy terror" (p. 304) and realizes that she has been given a priceless gift as a result of her unselfish action: "Listening, I feel like it is more than I could now reasonably have expected out of life, for he has spoken with such anger and such tenderness" (p. 305). Hagar's reward may seem momentary and fleeting, but to her it is a priceless, albeit unexpected, gift.

Hagar has achieved much in the last weeks of her life. Like Traill's pioneer woman in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, she has encountered a frontier environment. Hagar's frontier is a personal one, created from her pride and her fear. When she recognizes her frontier--"Pride was my wilderness" (p. 292)--and accepts the limitations inherent to that frontier, she seeks to change and to improve conditions. Hagar spends the last days of her life immobilized in a hospital bed. Nevertheless, she follows the tradition of the active pioneer woman by struggling actively to leave her false pride and to ignore her fears. Moreover, this process of pioneering, of confronting and attempting to change the frontier, is successful to a certain extent, and Hagar recognizes the rewards which result from a

pioneering venture: freedom from Grundyism, and pride in the accomplishment of difficult or distasteful tasks:

I lie here and try to recall something truly free that I've done in ninety years. I can think of only two acts that might be so, both recent. One was a joke--yet a joke only as all victories are, the paraphernalia being unequal to the event's reach. The other was a lie--yet not a lie, for it was spoken at least and at last with what may perhaps be a kind of love. (p. 307)

Hagar retains her stubborn independence to the last. Her final action is to wrestle the water glass from the nurse so that she can drink unaided. Despite the short-lived nature of her pioneering efforts, and despite the fact that Hagar's victory may be only a partial one, the conclusion is nonetheless triumphant. Hagar discovers the "inner freedom" which defines the pioneer woman in fiction.

Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God would appear to be the antithesis of Hagar Shipley. As Laurence points out in "Gagetry and Growing: Form and Voice in the Novel":

...Rachel was self-perceptive, indeed a compulsive pulse-taker. She saw things about herself which Hagar did not see about herself, although Rachel tended to exaggerate vastly her own inadequacies and shortcomings.¹⁰

Rachel has the introspective power that Hagar must learn but she lacks Hagar's ability to act, to speak out, and to make decisions. Furthermore, Rachel's introspection, as Laurence has noted, does not always help her to reach accurate conclusions. In one sense, Hagar's wilderness is her false pride; she must learn humility, and with humility comes freedom and, paradoxically, a true sense of pride in her

actions. In another, Rachel's wilderness is her uncertainty, her lack of pride and self-confidence; she must learn to act decisively, and with the ability to act comes a sense of true humility:

I was always afraid that I might become a fool. Yet I could almost smile with some grotesque lightheadedness at that fool of a fear, that poor fear of fools, now that I really am one.¹¹

Like Hagar, Rachel must identify and name her wilderness-- "that fool of a fear"; she must face her inner conflict and begin to resolve it. Again, the recognition of the frontier leads to the protagonist's ability to act correctly on the frontier; she learns to act decisively and competently in order to effect change and improvement. The benefits which result are familiar ones in a pioneer context: freedom from Grundyism (in Rachel's case Grundyism is represented both by Rachel's own fears and by the social values espoused by her mother and her mother's friends), pride in the accomplishment of hitherto unthinkable or distasteful tasks. An important related theme, one which appears throughout Laurence's fiction, is the protagonist's fulfilment of a maternal role. Finally, like Hagar, Rachel achieves a measure of success, which, although it is not, and perhaps never will be, a total one, allows Rachel to more closely approximate the ideal of the pioneer woman as proposed by Traill in her backwoods writing.

Initially, Rachel is a passive, lonely woman. A spinster and a virgin, she lives with and obeys her mother, having denied herself the one role that all Laurence's pro-

tagonists have in common--a maternal role.¹² Rachel is, in fact, still acting as a child, resenting the demands and the interference of others, perhaps, but unable to assert her own independence. Rachel neither acts nor admits her resentment of her mother's domination, as is shown by her somewhat ambivalent response to her mother's bridge party:

It's her only outlet, her only entertainment. I can't begrudge her. Anyone decent would be only too glad.

As I am, really, at heart. I'll feel better, more fortified, when I've had dinner. I don't begrudge it to her, this one evening of bridge with the only three long long friends. How could I? No one decent would. (p. 15)

This evasion is followed by Rachel's sigh of relief when the evening is over: "Thank God, thank God. They are finally gone" (p. 15). Introspective but dishonest, Rachel refuses to identify correctly her frontier of suffering. Calla calls her "child" (p. 9), and Willard makes her feel like "a naughty child" (p. 43). In neither instance is Rachel able to vocalize her resentment.

Although Rachel is a public school teacher, a role which is related in a peripheral way to a maternal role, her maternal needs are not being met. Her relationship with her students is hampered by the short time that she spends with them, and also by her emotional distance from them. Rachel is unable to show her feelings; nor can she admit these feelings, even to herself: "Quickly, I have to gather my children in. I must stop referring to them as my children, even to myself. It won't do" (p. 2). Rachel cannot, for example,

demonstrate her feelings for her student, James; not only is she passive in this instance, but she actively retreats from the admission or the demonstration of her maternal feelings towards her favourite student. Rachel's denial of partiality leads ultimately to her betrayal of James to Willard; after his punishment, James returns to the classroom and Rachel sees "...his face like bone, his eyes staring my betrayal at me..." (p. 25). Then, when Rachel does finally act decisively in the classroom, she acts inappropriately, and strikes James so hard that his nose bleeds: "From his nose, the thin blood river traces its course down to his mouth. I can't have. I can't have done it" (pp. 52-53). Until Rachel can admit her frustration and anger, she will be unable to act to effect change.

Related to Rachel's thwarted maternal needs are her unfulfilled sexual needs. Again, Rachel is initially unable to act because she cannot identify or admit the nature of her problem. When she realizes that she feels an urge to touch Willard Siddley's "spotted furry hands" (p. 9), she reacts in panic: "I didn't. I won't. I didn't feel that way. I'm only imagining things again" (p. 9). In the same fashion, she attempts to deny her need for the sexual gratification afforded to her by her sexual fantasy at night:

I didn't. I didn't. It was only to be able to sleep. The shadow prince. Am I unbalanced? Or only laughable. That's worse, much worse."
(p. 19)

Rachel's release from captivity is occasioned by her recognition of the true nature of her personal frontier, by her

open admission of her sexuality, and by her affair with Nick Kazlik. The decision to have an affair with Nick is an important one for Rachel, since she learns to act courageously in the face of her fears, ignoring her mother's (and her own) emotional sabotage. After Rachel makes love with Nick, the voices within her begin to panic. She berates herself for her timidity, for her lack of experience, and for admitting her inexperience to Nick:

He believes I was lying to him, out of some false concern for--what?...I want to laugh, to rage at him for thinking me a liar, to--Hush. Hush, Rachel. This won't do. Not now. Not here. (p. 92)

The initial love-making episode with Nick has enormous significance in Rachel's life; she has acted instinctively, decisively, and appropriately in the face of her fear, and, furthermore, she begins to identify her fear as inappropriate and irrelevant: "This won't do. Not now. Not here." For the first time in the narrative Rachel refuses to allow her uncertainty and timidity to dominate her, and her previously ignored maternal voice speaks, soothing her anger and confusion. From this point on, Rachel begins to act, and her actions demonstrate her growing awareness of her own needs. She starts to move towards people, to verbalize her resentments, and to express her needs. The initial actions are small and tentative; nevertheless, they are crucial to her development and growth. On the way home with Nick, for example, she frets in a manner consistent with her usual avoidance of confrontation:

But I must not move closer to him. He's driving. It would be dangerous. What if we were in an accident, and I were found with my hair all disarranged and my lipstick gone and my dress creased and crumpled? (p. 93)

But Rachel, as has been noted, has begun to change. When Nick stops the car, she moves toward him: "Without thinking, I've put my arms around him, held my face to his, asking to be kissed" (p. 93).

Rachel's liberation from Grundyism and fear has started, and she continues to move toward other people. She visits Hector Jonas at night when she needs someone to talk to, saying, simply, "Let me come in" (p. 119), and surprising herself by her lack of pride in making this plea. She realizes, however, that "It doesn't matter. Suddenly it doesn't matter at all to me" (p. 119). For the first time in the narrative, Rachel has an honest emotional exchange with another person, admitting her need for human contact. Hector assumes the role of "comic prophet, dwarf seer" (p. 124), sharing his own problems with Rachel, comforting her, and teaching her the truth about her father. Rachel realizes that her father (like herself) had other options and could have chosen differently: "If my father had wanted otherwise, it would have been otherwise. Not necessarily better, but at least different" (pp. 124-125). As she is leaving, Rachel apologizes to Hector for disturbing him. Then she stops herself and thanks him instead: "No--listen, Hector--what I mean is, thanks" (p. 128). This is symptomatic of Rachel's continuing metamorphosis: she realizes that an honest ex-

change has taken place and that an apology is inappropriate.

From a passive role as a virgin, spinster, and child, Rachel moves into an active adult role and towards maternity (of a sort). This transformation is seen most clearly in her changing attitude towards teaching and in the reversal of her role with her mother. Initially, Rachel is a teacher of small children, unable to admit that they are a temporary, unsatisfactory substitute for her own children. In the course of her brief relationship with Nick she begins to recognize and to verbalize her need for children, in effect to face another aspect of her personal frontier. When Rachel gets her period, she starts, in the old way, to ignore and to deny her real feelings. This time, however, her newly discovered, assertive and truthful self dominates the conversation:

I was terribly relieved. It was a release, a reprieve.

That is a lie, Rachel. That is really a lie, in the deepest way possible for anyone to lie.

No. Yes. Both are true. Does one have to choose between two realities? (p. 133)

And Rachel concludes, "If I had to choose between feelings, I know which it would be" (p. 133). In addition, because Rachel identifies her thwarted maternal instincts, she recognizes that teaching is an unsatisfactory substitute. She faces her new class in September, looking for another student like James, the next surrogate son, only to discover that this evasion no longer works for her:

I wonder who will be the one or ones, as it was James last year? All at once I know there will

be no one like that, not now, not any more.
This unwanted revelation fills me with the
sense of an ending, as though there were nothing
to look forward to. (p. 155)

Rachel has begun to face the problems which constitute her
frontier; here she is being honest about her needs.

Because she has correctly identified her desire to have
children, Rachel is able to move one step closer to the
achievement of personal freedom. When she thinks she is
pregnant, she decides to keep the baby: "Look--it's my
child, mine. And so I will have it. I will have it because
I want it and because I cannot do anything else" (p. 171).
Ironically, Rachel finds that she is not pregnant, and that
her admission of personal need has been in vain. Neverthe-
less, she has made a positive step in the amelioration of her
frontier condition. Consequently, she receives one of the
rewards for active participation in the pioneering process.
She experiences a sense of freedom--freedom from the con-
straint of social opinion and from her own brand of
Grundylism:

All that. And this at the end of it. I was al-
ways afraid that I might become a fool. Yet
I could almost smile with some grotesque light-
headedness at that fool of a fear, that poor
fear of fools, now that I really am one. (p. 181)

Rachel has identified her frontier--her frontier is her fear,
specifically, her fear of appearing foolish. By confronting
and admitting this fear, and by refusing to be dominated by
it, she has begun to liberate herself.

Despite the fact that she has identified her problems,
Rachel cannot easily conquer her frontier. She has admitted

her need to bear children, but she does not have the baby she wants; she has become more self-confident, but she will continue to make mistakes:

I will be different. I will remain the same. I will still go parchment-faced with embarrassment, and clench my pencil between fingers like pencils. I will quite frequently push the doors marked Pull and pull the ones marked Push. (pp. 201-202)

The identification of the frontier and the problems inherent in that frontier is an important first step in pioneering, a necessary first step in the pioneer woman's quest to improve conditions on the frontier. Although Rachel has admitted her weaknesses, she has also discovered her personal strength. She has, for example, learned to act decisively, to move towards people rather than away from them. In addition, she achieves a version of maternity in her evolving relationship with her mother. She realizes that her mother is weak rather than tyrannical, and that her mother too has fears:

So that's it. I ought to have seen. She's wondering--what will become of me? That's what everyone goes through life wondering, probably, the one absorbing anguish. What will become of me? Me. (p. 114)

As a result of this discovery of her mother's fear and weakness, Rachel discards the role of the daughter and assumes the role of the mother. Under anaesthetic she says, "I am the mother now" (p. 184). When the nurse repeats these words to her, Rachel accepts her new maternal role, and she begins to make decisions which affect her mother. As she and Mrs. Cameron move west, that is, move in the direction

traditionally associated with the frontier, Rachel watches over the "elderly child" (p. 201) sleeping beside her.

Rachel has learned to act; she has also assumed a leadership role within her small family unit.

Rachel's liberation from fear has begun, but, as Laurence points out in "Ten Years' Sentences," a total victory has not been and may never be achieved:

She tries to break the handcuffs of her own past, but she is self-perceptive enough to recognize that for her no freedom from the shackledom of the ancestors can be total. Her emergence from the tomb-like atmosphere of her extended childhood is a partial defeat--or, looked at in another way, a partial victory. She is no longer so much afraid of herself as she was. She is beginning to learn the rules of survival.¹³

The rules for survival on the physical frontier of nineteenth-century Ontario had been clearly delineated by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide. There are no such guide books for pioneers like Rachel; she faces her own, unique circumstances. Like Hagar of Laurence's The Stone Angel, Rachel of A Jest of God, learns to cope with the problems of her frontier. Rachel's pride in her accomplishments and her sense of relief at her freedom from social constraint bode well for her continued success in combatting the frontier. When she discovers the rumours of her pregnancy, for example, Rachel refuses to acknowledge or to deny the report:

For an instant I'm tempted to deny the rumours, to explain, to say to Hector, so he can pass on the message, let them ask Doctor Raven if they don't believe me. But no. I like it better this way. It's more fitting. (p. 200)

No longer dominated by her fears, with her last words, Rachel demonstrates an acceptance of an uncertain fate combined with a newly acquired strength of mind: "God's mercy on reluctant jesters. God's grace on fools. God's pity on God" (p. 202). Significantly, these words are spoken as Rachel moves west. Pioneer days have ended, but Rachel's re-enactment of the original pioneer movement towards the west is symbolic of her personal movement towards freedom.

Like Hagar Stibley of The Stone Angel and Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God, Morag Gunn of The Diviners is a twentieth-century version of the pioneer woman in fiction. Morag, Hagar, and Rachel face a personal, unique frontier, a frontier created partially by the protagonist herself, and partially by the protagonist's social environment. Morag Gunn is typical of Laurence's pioneer women in her internalization of the process of pioneering. Like Hagar and Rachel, Morag learns to recognize and to accept her limitations in order to begin to effect change and improvement on the frontier. In Laurence's terms, as she defines them in "A Place to Stand On," Morag learns the rules of survival:

The theme of survival--not just physical survival, but the preservation of some human dignity and in the end some human warmth and ability to reach out and touch others--this is, I have come to think, an almost-inevitable theme for a writer such as I, who came from a Scots-Irish background of stern values and hard work and puritanism, and who grew up during the drought and depression of the thirties and then the war.

Laurence's definition of survival is, in effect, a reworking of the definition of successful pioneering as proposed by

Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, and, not fortuitously, Laurence notes her sense of a legacy inherited from her own pioneer ancestors which influenced her ideas. Morag is undoubtedly a more successful pioneer than is either Haqar or Rachel, or, at any rate, closer to achieving the ideal of survival as used here by Laurence. Haqar's ability to "reach out and touch others" is achieved but is cut short by her death at the end of The Stone Angel; Rachel, too, has merely begun to reach out of her self-imposed isolation at the end of A Jest of God. In both of these works, the narrative ends with the triumphant beginning of the pioneering process.

In contrast, as Morag reviews her life in The Diviners, it becomes apparent that this protagonist has achieved a level of self-awareness and self-determining activity that is denied to Haqar and Rachel. On the one hand, Morag faces a personal crisis which causes confusion; the departure of her daughter Pique is the event which forces Morag to re-examine her past decisions and actions in an attempt to understand her present confusion. On the other hand, Morag is evidently capable of defining her frontier and of choosing the activities which are appropriate to that frontier. Her current problem does not occasion anything more than a temporary stasis in Morag's life:

Morag comes to us then as perforce a watcher, first by the terms of her life, in the present stage of her relationship with Pique, and also by the terms of her profession. She is far from calm, but she is becalmed. She is not powerless

to act, but at this point in her life the opportunities for dynamic action do not exist in her relationships with others. They only exist when her work is going well, in the act of writing her fiction.²⁶

Nor does any major change, any change comparable to the changes that take place in the lives and attitudes of Hagar and Rachel, occur in Morag's life through the present time sequence of The Diviners. Major changes have taken place in the past and are reviewed by Morag in her "Memorybank Movies." Rather, in the present time of the novel, Morag learns to perceive herself differently; she learns to define herself as a pioneer--the descendent of pioneers like the Cooper and the Traill families. She also gains added insight into her role as a mother, and as a writer of fiction (a creator of myth):

In the first section of The Diviners, "The River of Now and Then," Morag's crisis is introduced; Pique's abrupt departure for the west has caused a mixed reaction in Morag:

Something about Pique's going, apart from the actual departure itself, was unresolved in Morag's mind. The fact that Pique was going west? Yes. Morag was both glad and uncertain Would Pique go to Manawaka? If she did, would she find anything there which would have meaning for her?²⁶

Reduced to a basic level, that unresolved "something" in Morag's mind is composed of three related concerns: Morag's ambivalent feelings about her past, specifically her Manawaka past; her as-yet unresolved definition of her role as a writer; and her anxiety about her changing relationship with her daughter.²⁷ In "The River of Now and Then" Morag begins

to review her past in an effort to identify and to resolve her present confusion, indicating by this immediate response that she is neither unaware nor inactive. Although she does not yet understand her confusion, she begins, in the manner of the competent pioneer woman, to deal actively with an emergency. The second section of The Diviners, "The Nuisance Grounds," continues to juxtapose past and present events. In "The Nuisance Grounds," the flashback sequences deal with Morag's childhood in Manawaka, and culminate in her decision to leave. The present events develop more fully the extent of Morag's anxiety and confusion. Both narrative sequences--past and present--contain a protagonist who is, to some extent, unable to define her frontier and unable, therefore, to improve conditions on that frontier.

The "Memorybank Movies" of "The Nuisance Grounds" show the social rejection endured by Morag as a ward of Prin and Christie Logan. The section ends with Morag's determination to escape from Manawaka: "And I'm never coming back" (p. 165). At this point in her life, Morag lacks the self-knowledge to understand that such an escape will fail--that, as Christie later predicts, "It'll all go along with you, too. That goes without saying" (p. 207). This section of the novel also contains many of Christie's stories, his "myths"; at this time Morag cannot appreciate the validity of the stories and she questions their truth. (Much later in her life Morag discovers that Christie's stories are valuable and "true" and, at this point, she begins to recognize that his

interweaving of fact and fiction is a process which is analogous to her own production of fiction.) Because Morag does not initially understand her own limitations, and because she tries to deny her past, her flight (which is as misguided as is Haqar's marriage to Bram in The Stone Angel) cannot succeed. In the following sections of The Diviners, the extent of her failure becomes more apparent.

In the present time sequence of "The Nuisance Grounds," Morag is also avoiding the truth about herself and her relationship to the people around her. More specifically, perhaps, the truth is not immediately apparent to her. Morag's confrontation of the A-Okay Smith family demonstrates her uncertainty about her role in society--just as, to a greater extent, she could not understand her relationship to others in Manawaka. In the past, she tried to run away; in the present, she faces her confusion. The Smith family is a group of "back-to-the-land" former city dwellers. Morag perceives the Smiths as "new pioneers" (p. 170), comparing herself to them in a unfavourable light, envying the fact that they have so clearly defined their role and are dedicated to the pursuit of their dream. Morag is not certain of her role, and, as a result, she feels a sense of inadequacy when she is with them. Yet, even as Morag envies A-Okay and Maudie Smith, she mocks them, evidently aware (even if only on a subconscious level) that the pioneer way of life which they are emulating--a way of life known to such pioneer families as the Coopers and the Brantons is no longer appli-

cable or appropriate in a post-pioneer, twentieth century environment. Consequently, when Morag enumerates Maudie's many virtues, she also points out the underlying absurdity of Maudie's determined efforts to go back in time:

Maudie herself was slender and small and would probably look young at fifty, a plain scrubbed face, blonde hair worn long or in a plait, her dress nearly always ankle-length, granny-type, in gingham she sewed determinedly herself on a hand-cranker sewing machine. A wonder she didn't sew by hand with needle, thread and tiny silver thimble. At night. By coal-oil lamp.
(p. 55)

The major argument between Morag and the Smiths in "The Nuisance Grounds" concerns the fate of Morag's garden. Maudie Smith, true to her attempts to recreate the experiences of an earlier era, has cultivated a large garden. She tells Morag, "I put in six packets of seeds yesterday" (p. 56). Morag comments, defensively and not very convincingly, that she has other work to do, work which precludes gardening:

If I spent all my time gardening, how in hell could I get any writing done? No great loss, you may say, but it'd be a loss to me, and also I need a minimal income, even here. Whatever Susanna Moodie may have said in Roughing It in the Bush, I am not about to make coffee out of roasted dandelion roots. (p. 57)

Morag lacks the strength of conviction to believe that her own efforts are of equal validity and, when the Smiths also remain unconvinced, she changes from a defense of herself to a direct attack on them:

I approve of your efforts, God only knows....I applaud. I think it is great. I cannot help feeling, however, that like it or not the concrete jungle will not be halted by a couple of farms and a vegetable garden. (p. 57)

Morad is ashamed of her outburst, but she has, in fact, spoken the truth and has exposed the flaw in the pioneering efforts of the Smiths. A-Okay is generous enough to recognize this and he identifies Morad's "real work" as her writing: "Your writing is your real work," A-Okay said, with embarrassing loyalty and evident belief. "It's there you have to make your statement" (p. 58). Just as the Smiths are making a statement of belief, a belief that the rural way of life experienced by past generations was inherently better than contemporary urban life, through their farming attempts, Morad makes a personal statement in her writing, and engages in a parallel, albeit different type of pioneering. Morad greets A-Okay's defense with scepticism and a noted lack of conviction and thinks, "Or not make it. You can't write a novel in that way, in any event" (p. 58). Again Morad confronts one aspect of her central dilemma: "she cannot recognize the intrinsic validity of her writing. -She has defined her writing as "work," as a means to earn money; A Okay has defined it as a statement of belief. Morad retreats from this latter definition in confusion. Like the mental and physical retreat from Manawaka which is juxtaposed to this section in the narrative, Morad's evasion of her worth as a writer cannot help her.

In "The Nuisance Grounds," Morad also compares herself unfavourably to Royland, the water diviner. She perceives that there is a similarity between them, but she questions the value of her gift:

Morag had once tried divining with the willow wand. Nothing at all had happened. Royland had said she didn't have the gift. She wasn't surprised. Her area was elsewhere. He was divining for water. What in hell was she divining for? You couldn't doubt the value of water. (p. 102)

Morag's continued doubt of the validity of her work is juxtaposed with Christie's stories (which Morag initially dismissed as untrue), and Morag's adolescent scepticism is contrasted with her adult scepticism in the juxtaposition of present and past sequences of "The Nuisance Grounds."

The first appearance of Catharine Parr Traill in "The Nuisance Grounds" provides further evidence of Morag's initial confusion and temporary stasis. In her imaginary conversation with Traill, Morag compares her life unfavourably with the early Ontario pioneers--the Coopers and the Traills. As in her comparison of herself to the "new pioneers," Morag's comparison of herself to the "old pioneers" demonstrates her uncertainty about the value of her own role, positioned as she is, between them:

Was it better or worse now? Both, both. At least their children did not wander to God knows where. Unknown destinies, far and probably lethal places. If any dig, though, there were no telephones and the mail services could hardly have been very snappy. Well, then, they did not have to wrench up their guts and hearts etcetera and set these carefully down on paper, in order to live. Clever of them, one might say. Anyway, some of them did. Including women. Catharine Parr Traill, mid-1800s, botanist, drawing and naming wildflowers, writing a guide for settlers with one hand, whilst rearing a brace of young and working like a galley slave with the other. (p. 95)

Morag, like Traill, has faced hardship and has managed to

her ability to act decisively in times of crisis (her assumption of the role of the pioneer). Morag is not meant to be an idle, decorative lady; she is, by virtue of her heritage, meant to be an active, capable pioneer woman.

Thus, Morag eschews the forces of Brooke's Grundyism: she leaves Brooke; she begins to write; she moves west--once again in the direction of the frontier--and she has a child. These positive actions balance the earlier negative and escapist actions taken by Morag in the "Memorybank Movies" of "Halls of Sion." Morag's inactivity, or incorrect activity, and her lack of understanding, are balanced with activity and her growing understanding. Both sections of "Halls of Sion," the "Memorybank Movies," and the present time conversation with Traill represent the beginning of the pioneer process within the protagonist, and depict the start of positive, affirmative action taken by the protagonist. Although Morag cannot clearly articulate her motives in either section (as she moves westward in the "Memorybank Movie," for example, she is determined, but is also confused and frightened), her movements demonstrate her instinct for survival, as well as her ability to work within her own limitations, bringing her a measure of freedom and personal integrity.

The present time sequence of "Halls of Sion" concludes with the return of Pique and with a partial resolution of the mother-daughter conflict which has existed between Morag and Pique. Morag recognizes that Pique, like her mother before her, is examining her role, specifically her role within the

and, of course, children. Your situation, if I may say so, can scarcely be termed comparable.

(p. 97)

Once again Morag counters criticism with a tentative defense:

"Hold on, though. You try having your only child disappear you know where, Mrs. Traill" (p. 97). This dilemma--the relative importance of her life and her problems--remains unresolved in Morag's mind for the present. She is confronting her problem, to be sure, but she cannot yet see that she has a place in the continuum of history; nor can she define the nature of her relationship with Traill.

The second appearance of Traill in The Diviners occurs in the third section of the book, "Halls of Sion." The interaction between Morag and Traill in this section indicates Morag's attainment of a more positive, or at least a more balanced, state of mind. Morag is looking at her unworked, unplanted, weedy garden--the despair of the Smiths--and articulates her personal appreciation of it as "a garden of amazing splendours, in which God did all the work" (p. 170). But Morag's uncertainty continues to mitigate her development of a more positive attitude, and she balances her initial approval with a disparaging comment: "Catharine Parr Traill would have profoundly disagreed, likely" (p. 170). Significantly, however, Morag has begun to defend herself, her attitudes, her feelings, and her work. Generally speaking, the present time sequence of "Halls of Sion," balances Morag's remaining doubts with a newly-awakened sense of self-worth and self-awareness. Morag thinks that Traill

would disapprove of her wild flower garden; this is "likely" but not definitely true. As in her first imaginary encounter with Traill in "The Nuisance Grounds," Morag points out the differences that she perceives between the pioneer Traill and herself:

Now listen here, Catharine, don't bug me today, eh? All right, I know. You knew more about wild flowers than I'll ever know. But you would have said that there were plenty of wildflowers in the woods etcetera, without taking up half the yard with them. You would diligently have grown turnips, carrots, peas, scarlet runner beans and other nourishing plants, as Maudie Smith does. I am caught between the old pioneers and the new pioneers. At least Maudie can't give names to the wildflowers, as you did. Imagine naming flowers which have never been named before. Like the Garden of Eden. Pover! Ecstasy! I christen thee Butter-and-Eggs! (p. 170)

Despite her defensive stance, Morag is clearly fascinated by Traill's creative role in the backwoods, and has identified one source of kinship between herself and Traill. Morag, too, has assumed a creative role, even though she is at present unsure of that role's validity. Conversely, Morag has identified a source for the disharmony which she senses between herself and Maudie Smith: Maudie is not creative, she is, rather, imitative in her efforts to reproduce an earlier way of life. Furthermore, although Morag sees herself as "caught between" two generations of pioneers, she has at least placed herself within the continuum.

Morag's conclusions at the end of her conversation with Traill are at once more positive (in defending herself and the relative importance of her emergencies) and more negative (in her anticipation of a desolate wasteland which is her

passes anything encountered by Traill in Upper Canada):

In the Book of Job it says One generation passeth and another generation cometh, but the earth endureth forever. That does not any longer strike me as self-evident. I am deficient in faith, although let's face it, Catharine, if I didn't have some I would not write at all or even speak to any other person; I would be silent forevermore....The evidence of my eyes, however, does little to reassure me. I suspect you didn't have that problem, just as I suspect you had problems you never let on about. The evidence of your eyes showed you Jerusalem the Golden with Milk and Honey Blest, at least if a person was willing to expend enough elbow grease. No plastic milk jugs bobbing in the river. No excessive algae, fish-strangling. The silver shiver of the carp crescenting. My grandchildren will say What means Fish? Peering through the goggle-eyes of their gasmasks. Who will tell old tales to children then? Pique used to say What is a Buffalo? How many words and lives will be gone when they say What means Leaf? Saint Catharine! Where are you now that we need you? (pp. 170-171)

The wasteland described here by Morag surely equals the wasteland faced by Traill in the backwoods of Ontario. Yet, even though Morag identifies more similarities between herself and the pioneer saint (her faith in humanity, her creativity), she remains uncertain of her role as a possible successor to Traill.

The overall sense of balance which is achieved in Morag's encounter with Traill in the opening section of "Halls of Sion"--an encounter in which uncertainty is juxtaposed with positive action--is also apparent in the "Memorybank Movie" part of the narrative. In this particular segment of her life, Morag learns to identify a frontier, to accept and to work within certain limitations. Knowledge of personal limitation, as Laurence notes in "My Final Hour,"

does not mean personal defeat:

...an acceptance of limitations does not mean that one is not constantly trying to extend the boundaries of knowledge and accomplishment. And it certainly does not mean an acceptance of defeat, in whatever fields our endeavours take place.¹⁹

Like Hagar Shipley in The Stone Angel, Morag initially tries to deny her past in order to escape from a situation she feels is intolerable. When she meets Brooke Skelton, she says to him, "I just feel as though I don't have a past. As though it was more or less blank" (p. 194). This, of course, is a lie (or at best, an evasion of the truth), and, as has been noted, Christie points out the flaw in her reasoning: "It'll all go along with you, too. That goes without saying" (p. 207). But Morag tries to leave her past behind her: she marries Brooke; she moves east; and she remakes herself in the image deemed appropriate for social acceptance in Brooke's world:

She watches her diet carefully and is slender. She wears lightly tailored suits in the daytime, with pastel blouses, sometimes frilled.... In the evenings, meeting academic friends, she goes in heavily for the little black cocktail dress, not necessarily black, of course. She looks smart.

She is a competent cook....

She reads a great deal....

She grows African violets, which are pretty, and potted parsley, which can be used as a garnish on such dishes as tomato jelly.

She writes short stories and tears them up..

One day she throws a Benares brass ashtray through the kitchen window. (pp. 220-221)

That this arrangement is not ideal becomes apparent even to the meanest intelligence at the end of the recitation of Morag's accomplishments. She is inactive, and is, therefore,

frustrated; the result is that she is incapable of writing (she tears up her work), and, eventually her desperation leads her to throw an ashtray through the window. By moving east to marry Brooke, and by developing a number of ladylike accomplishments, Morag has reversed the Canadian trend to move towards the West and towards personal freedom. It comes as no surprise that her attempt to remake herself in the image of a lady cannot last.

Consequently, from a determined embrace of Brooke's world, Morag turns to an equally determined rejection of the social rules--Grundyisms--which govern behaviour in this world and which stifle her creativity. Her change of attitude and her acknowledgment of her needs lead to freedom. Morag's flight from Brooke, and her pursuit of maternity flout convention but bring a welcome sense of release and relief. Both actions are positive ones for Morag because they fulfill previously unacknowledged needs as well as re-affirming her Manawaka past--Jules, her "shaman" (p. 273) is also a Manawaka refugee. He is in and of Canada, and, as her shaman, he possesses knowledge which he will pass on to her--he has already broken the chains of Grundyism. Similarly, after she faces her rage at her inactivity and admits her desire to do something, to act rather than to exist as a decorative ornament (a Benares brass ashtray) in Brooke's home, Morag begins to write. The success of Morag's literary career is linked to her growing recognition of her need to accept her past--that is, her Canadian past, her frontier past--and to

her ability to act decisively in times of crisis (her assumption of the role of the pioneer). Morag is not meant to be an idle, decorative lady; she is, by virtue of her heritage, meant to be an active, capable pioneer woman.

Thus, Morag eschews the forces of Brooke's Grundyism: she leaves Brooke; she begins to write; she moves west--once again in the direction of the frontier--and she has a child. These positive actions balance the earlier negative and escapist actions taken by Morag in the "Memorybank Movies" of "Halls of Sion." Morag's inactivity, or incorrect activity, and her lack of understanding, are balanced with activity and her growing understanding. Both sections of "Halls of Sion," the "Memorybank Movies," and the present time conversation with Traill represent the beginning of the pioneer process within the protagonist, and depict the start of positive, affirmative action taken by the protagonist. Although Morag cannot clearly articulate her motives in either section (as she moves westward in the "Memorybank Movie," for example, she is determined, but is also confused and frightened), her movements demonstrate her instinct for survival, as well as her ability to work within her own limitations, bringing her a measure of freedom and personal integrity.

The present time sequence of "Halls of Sion" concludes with the return of Pique and with a partial resolution of the mother-daughter conflict which has existed between Morag and Pique. Morag recognizes that Pique, like her mother before her, is examining her role, specifically her role within the

family unit, as part of an historical process, and as an artist. To facilitate her search Pique has gone west to her parents' home in Manawaka. She has evidently found part of what she has been searching for; she sings a song given to her by her father, affirming by this action her inherited creativity. In addition, in her relationship with Morag, she has, on occasion, begun to assume a maternal, comforting role, a role reminiscent of Rachel's role with her mother in A Jest of God. She asks Morag, "Why did you have me" (p. 235). This question, or accusation, strikes a nerve since Morag is unsure of the answer and is also unclear about her current role in Pique's life. The next minute, however, Pique becomes the comforter, saying, "Never mind. It's okay" (p. 235). The accusation is balanced with the affirmation, and Morag's guilt is relieved. Paradoxically, Pique's actions, while stating her need for freedom, also establish a link between mother and daughter. Pique becomes the inheritor of Morag's Manawaka past, of her creativity, and of her maternal role. By assuming a version of her mother's role, she both affirms and recreates Morag's role.

In the fourth section of The Diviners, "Rites of Passage," there is a tipping of the scales towards affirmative action and understanding, and towards the successful culmination of Morag's pioneering process. The ending of the pioneer venture in the past is juxtaposed to the achievement of an increased understanding in the present, and in the "Memorybank Movies," Morag begins to examine the issues that

she will resolve during the present time sequence of the narrative. Within the "Memorybank Movies," the birth of Pique is balanced by the death of Christie, and Morag's move to Britain is balanced by her move back to Canada and her subsequent settlement at McConnell's Landing. In the present time Morag gains increased understanding of Pique's place in her life, and of Christie's contribution to her creativity; she also analyzes the reasons for her move to McConnell's Landing, specifically her relationship to the pioneers of McConnell's Landing.

Of central importance in the "Memorybank Movies" is Morag's discovery that Canada, rather than Scotland, is the home of her ancestors. She has gone on a "pilgrimage" (p. 369) to Britain almost instinctively. As she tells Fan, she does not, at first, understand her need for this pilgrimage: "I've known for a long time I had to go there, Fan. I can't explain it; exactly. I guess I've been waiting for the right moment" (p. 347). Morag does indeed learn something in the course of her pilgrimage, but it is not what she had expected to discover. When she is in Scotland, she realizes that she does not need or even want to visit Sutherland, the birth place of the Gunn family. She is only partially able to explain her decision to her friend Dan McRaith:

I don't know that I can explain. It has to do with Christie. The myths are my reality. Something like that. And also, I don't need to go there because I know now what it was I had to learn here. (p. 390)

Morag has learned that Scotland is not the land of her ances-

tors. Her "real country" (p. 391), her ancestral home, is, she tells Dan, "Christie's real country. Where I was born" (p. 391).

This discovery facilitates Morag's later move to McConnell's Landing. After Christie's death, Morag is temporarily immobilized, unable to take action, unable to make decisions, until she sees the advertisement of a farm for sale. The relocation of Morag and Pique in McConnell's Landing represents the culmination of a learning process that has been taking place in Morag for a number of years. Her response to the advertisement is immediate: "Land. A river. Log house nearly a century old, built by great pioneering couple, Simon and Sarah Cooper. History. Ancestors" (p. 414). Morag has grandiose plans of recreating the pioneer life of the Coopers; she sentimentalizes her prospective country seclusion:

Morag is filled with a sense of well-being. The shed contains enough split wood for the winter. The basement contains shelves and shelves of bottled preserved plums, applesauce, pears, blueberries, chili sauce, crabapple jelly, and so on, the work of Morag's hands, the produce of her garden. All is well. (p. 415)

These schemes are, of course, doomed to fail. Morag discovers that there is a considerable discrepancy between her dreams and the reality of McConnell's Landing: the "nearly new" (p. 415) furnace does not work properly, there is no water heater, the house is dirty. Like Catharine Traill viewing the emigrants on Grosse Isle in The Backwoods of Canada, Morag learns that picturesque beauty may be deceptive, and

that a close-range examination of a picturesque scene will often reveal unexpected, unattractive elements: "The old grey pine barn, so beautiful from a distance, is now seen to be falling down. It also contains bats" (p. 415). But, in the style of the pioneers, Morag perseveres and survives, learning to cope with disappointment and disaster. She writes a book at McConnell's Landing, Shadow of Eden. Significantly, she uses the tales she has been told by Christie as the basis for the book. She has begun to accept the truth of Christie's stories: "...Piper Gunn, who probably never lived in so-called real life but who lives forever" (p. 418). As she tells her friend Ella, "Christie knew things about inner truths that I am only just beginning to understand" (p. 418).

At the point of her departure for McConnell's Landing, Morag's actions are instinctive. It is only later, after reflection, after she has written her book, that she understands her actions and can recognize her need for a place like McConnell's Landing, and her need for ancestors. At McConnell's Landing she experiences this growth to a greater understanding, a growth which concludes in the present time. All Morag's moves in the "Memorybank Movies," up to the time of her arrival in McConnell's Landing, have been based on need and instinct, combined with a certain limited amount of understanding. From this point on, however, she begins to look deeper into herself in order to understand and to articulate her needs. For example, in a letter written to Ella

in which she talks about her novel, Shadow of Eden, she says, "I like the thought of history and fiction interweaving" (p. 418). This is both a statement of her creative process and an affirmation of Christie's legacy.

In addition to this initial attempt to define the creative process in the "Memorybank Movies" of "Halls of Sion," Morag notes the beginning of a change in her relationship with her daughter. At the age of fifteen, Pique calls Morag "Ma" instead of "Mum":

The word in some way is a proclamation of independence, a statement of the fact that the distance between them, in terms of equality, is diminishing, and the relationship must soon become that of two adults. On balance, Morag is glad. But it will take some inner adjustment. (p. 419)

The mother-daughter relationship, like the creative process, is still being reviewed by Morag in the present time of the novel.

In the present time narrative of "Rites of Passage," Morag continues to adjust to the shifting terms of her relationship with Pique, and she manages, here, to resolve the dilemma first mentioned in "The River of Now and Then." She perceives the continuity which exists in the relationship; she recognizes their mutual need of support as well as their ability to provide that support. When she wonders, for a moment, if Pique will have a better life, she stops herself, realizing that such a question is unimportant and irrelevant:

Mine hasn't been so bad. Been? Time running out. Is that what is really going on, with me, now, with her? Pique, harbinger of my death, continuer

of life. (p. 290).

This statement is, in effect, Morag's confrontation of her immediate crisis. It is, moreover, a statement of what she has learned, her affirmation of a life cycle, a cycle without a clear beginning or end. Morag faces the fact that Pique's approach to adulthood heralds her own approach to death. Yet, by defining Pique as the "continuer of life," Morag indicates her belief that she will continue to live through Pique and Pique's children. In "Rites of Passage" Morag also articulates the implications of her move to McConnell's Landing, and places the move within an historical, cyclical process: "Morag Gunn, fleeing Manawaka, finally settling near McConnell's Landing, an equally small town with many of the same characteristics" (p. 354).

Morag's life has come full circle; she has returned to a familiar environment, the environment of her ancestors and, as it happens, the birthplace of the Canadian pioneer heroine. She acknowledges this need for familiar surroundings, and admits that she cannot escape or deny her Manawaka heritage. Indeed, she no longer wants to leave her past behind her.

Furthermore, in "Rites of Passage," Morag recognizes that the Cooper family and Catharine Traill are her ancestors, not in a familial sense, but in a more general, social context. They are ancestors by virtue of having inhabited the same space. Morag, like the Coopers and the Traills, has been a pioneer, albeit a pioneer on a new frontier. And Morag, like her ancestors, has survived with dignity; she has

come to enjoy the benefits of freedom and has learned to express her feeling of pride in accomplishment:

Morag, terrified of cities, coming out here, making this her place, her island, and still not going swimming because of the monsterweed. But at least she could somehow cope. City friends often asked if she was not afraid to stay in the house alone, away out here. No, she wasn't. She was not lonely and not afraid, when alone here. She did not think that the house was about to be descended upon by deranged marauders. In New York, Morag's agent and his wife had three locks upon their door. (p. 356)

Echoing Traill's comments in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Morag remarks upon her feeling of confidence, the result of successfully coping with frontier life. Morag knows that she belongs in this place.

An additional link with Traill occurs in "rites of passage" through a gesture towards the Crusoe theme. Morag examines her original impulse to move to McConnell's Landing and discovers that her "island" and her isolation are both illusory. Traill's isolation as a pioneer in Upper Canada was real, tangible, and physical; her use of the Crusoe theme in Canadian Crusoes in which she described the adventures of three Canadian Crusoes, lost in the bush, capitalized on the sense of isolation experienced by early settlers. Morag's island, however, is not a physical place, but a state of mind:

I've made an island. Are islands real? A-Okay and Maudie, and now Dan, are doing the same
...Islands are unreal. No place is far enough
away. Islands exist only in the head. And yet
I stay. (p. 356)

The actual place becomes irrelevant to a contemporary

pioneering endeavour; the state of mind is the "island," the frontier.

Morad is still working out these various interwoven strands of thought--her role as a writer, her need of McConner's Landing, and her relationship with Rique in "Rites of Passage" when she and Roviand see a rare bird, the blue heron. The flight of the heron becomes a symbol for Morad of the resolution of her conflict. She and Roviand watch the bird's movement in awe:

Like a pterodactyl, like an angel, like something out of the world's dawn...The sweeping serene wings of the thing, unknowing that it was speeding not only toward individual death but probably towards the death of its kind. (p. 357)

The bird is a "pterodactyl" and an "angel," a symbolic spanning of the time sequence which separates pre-history (the "world's dawn") from the world's demise (the "death of its kind," or as Morad anticipates, the death of all kind). In the flight of the heron, Morad sees the visual representation of her personal awareness of the continuity of history, and a confirmation of her conviction that she is part of this sequence, that she is connected to other people and other places--both past and present:

That evening, Morad began to see that here and now was not, after all, an island. Her quest for islands had ended some time ago, and her need to make bird-images had led her back here. (p. 357)

Like the heron, Morad is part of an historical process; she is not isolated. She cannot remove herself from other people nor can she deny her past.

In "Rites of Passage" Morag has her fifth and final encounter with Traill. Morag, like her pioneer ancestor Traill, is fascinated by the world around her, and her final summoning of the pioneer saint occurs as she is examining books of weeds and wild flowers, worrying about poison plants. Morag imagines that Traill would accuse her of seeing "imaginary dangers" (p. 406) rather than real dangers. On this occasion, strengthened by the discoveries she has made, Morag defends herself confidently and competently:

You're darned right I see imaginary dangers, but do you know why? To focus the mind away from the real ones, is why. Leave me to worry peacefully over the Deadly Water Hemlock, sweet Catharine, because it probably doesn't even grow around here. Let me fret over ravaging wolves and poison-fanged vipers, as there is a marked scarcity of these, hereabouts. They're my inner demons, that's what they are. One thing I'm going to stop doing, though, Catharine. I'm going to stop feeling guilty that I'll never be as hardworking or knowledgeable or all-round terrific as you were. And I'll never be as willing to let the sweat of hard labour gather on my brow as A-Okay and Maudie, either....I'm not built like you, Saint C., or these kids either. I stand somewhere in between. And yet in my way I've worked damn hard, and I haven't done all I would've liked to do, but I haven't folded up like a paper fan, either. (p. 406)

Morag knows that she has worked hard, in her own fashion. She realizes that, although she will never work the land, her wild garden is ultimately as important as Maudie's vegetable garden in the face of a future that includes pollution and the threat of nuclear war:

I'll never till those blasted fields, but this place is some kind of a garden, nonetheless, even though it may be only a wildflower garden. It's needed, and not only by me. (p. 406)

Morag says, "...farewell, sweet saint" (p. 406) to Traill, in acknowledgment of the fact that Traill is related to her; Traill is her ancestor, not her superior. Morag knows that her frontier is her own, and that her emergencies are her own. Finally, in the concluding chapter, "The Diviners," Morag even redefines the nature of an active response to the frontier:

...Morag sat in her armchair looking out the wide window. Contemplating. Could this be termed an activity? It was to be hoped so. She certainly spent enough time doing it. (p. 452)

Morag's immediate need of ritual disappears; she has defined herself and her role as a modern pioneer.

By recognizing their inexperience as farmers in "Rites of Passage," and by abandoning their imitative, back-to-the-land attempts at farming (A. Okay decides to take practical farming lessons after Royland points out that "any fool" (p. 410) can grow vegetables), the Smiths have acknowledged their limitations. They, like Morag, have faced a real frontier, and have abandoned a former, inappropriate choice of action. They have admitted the validity of their errors to recreate the pioneer process experienced by the original pioneers. Morag perceives a link which connects the old pioneers—the Coopers and the Traills—with the new pioneers—the Smiths:

They came to the land in ignorance, perhaps expecting miracles which would not occur, but at least with caring, seeing it as a gift and not an attraction. (pp. 410-411)

The ability to be pragmatic, to accept circumstances, and

yet to persevere in the pursuit of a dream--these are the secrets, of the successful pioneer, secrets that were discovered by Traill and defined by her in her The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, secrets that have been rediscovered and redefined by Morag and the A-Okay Smith family. Unfortunately for the symmetry of the narrative, this growth towards understanding in the Smith family is related more to A-Okay than to Maudie; it is A-Okay who will take farming lessons and who will write articles to supplement the family income while it is assumed that Maudie will continue to emulate the daily life of the earlier pioneers.

Unlike the other sections of The Diviners, the final chapter, "The Diviners," does not contain flashbacks. In "The Diviners," Morag displays a new confidence, demonstrating that she has changed as a result of an introspective analysis of her previous pioneering efforts. For example, although, as in the first chapter, "River of Now and Then," Pique again leaves home, Morag can now let her go without confusion. She has identified her concern: Pique is the harbinger of her death. She has, moreover, recognized the corresponding positive aspect of the growth to maturity of her daughter; Pique is the continuer of her life. At this point the women have become equals and Pique has learned to assume the maternal role on occasion. After the death of Jules, the two women comfort each other in an equal sharing of the maternal role.

In "The Diviners" Royland tells Morag that he has lost his power to divine water. In spite of Royland's sense of loss, Morag understands that there is an equally strong sense of affirmation involved in the loss of power since the divining skill does not disappear. It is, rather, passed on to someone else. Royland tells Morag that divining is not a skill that is unique to him:

...quite a few people can learn to do it. You don't have to have the mark of God between your eyebrows. Or if you do, quite a few people have it. You didn't know that, did you? (p. 452).

A-Okay Smith is the person mentioned by Royland as the possible inheritor of his skill. This triggers a response in Morag. Just as A-Okay will inherit Royland's knowledge, Morag has inherited Christie's stories; A-Okay will find water, and Morag has used Christie's myths in her fiction. Similarly, Pique will inherit the myths of both Jules and Morag. By creating and singing her own song in "The Diviners," Pique demonstrates that she, like her parents, is an inheritor, a creator, who will pass on a gift to others. More generally speaking, there is an historical continuum operating outside the immediate family circle as well. Morag has already noted the legacy of the original pioneers which has been passed on to her and to the Smiths. Each inheritor develops his legacy according to present circumstance--a crisis may be purely personal and subjective in nature but is, nonetheless, equal in scope to the forest fires faced by the pioneer women in the backwoods--and there is a direct line of

descent established between Catharine Traill and Morag, a line of descent which will extend into the next generation.

One generation passes its knowledge on to the next:

The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along, but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else. (p. 452)

Traill and Morag are survivors. They are also creators of myth. They face a hostile environment and survive with dignity, discovering in the process a real sense of self worth. They create myth through the mingling of fact with fiction, leaving a legacy for following generations (the inheritors) to use and to adapt to their own particular frontiers. Although Morag anticipates the advent of a wasteland, a country destroyed by pollution and possibly by war, a place inhabited by humans who peer through masks, she completes the book she is writing, and, in "The Diviners," she gives a name to this book.

Morag Gunn of The Diviners is the protagonist in Laurence's fiction who, because of her creative gift, and the correspondingly larger sphere of her personal influence, has the greatest affinity with Catharine Parr Traill. Yet all three of Laurence's protagonists examined--Hagar Shipley of The Stone Angel, Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God, and Morag Gunn of The Diviners--take their place in a tradition of the characterization of women in Canadian literature begun by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide and used by her in such fiction as Canadian Crusoes.

Looking back on the previous discussion of The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, and The Diviners, it can be seen that there are several links between Laurence's protagonists and Traill's portrait of the ideal backwoodswoman. Given Laurence's own sense of sympathy with Traill--specifically her application of a quotation taken from Traill's The Canadian Settler's Guide to the handling of contemporary stresses and emergencies--it is hardly surprising that her most autobiographical novel, The Diviners, includes discussions between Traill and the protagonist, Morag Gunn. Moreover, in The Diviners, Traill is perceived by this protagonist as possessing desirable character traits. Other links with Traill, while less obvious, are, nonetheless, extremely important. For example, each of Laurence's protagonists participates in a contemporary, and internalized, version of the pioneering process during which she comes closer to the approximation of some preconceived notion of ideal femininity--an ideal which is probably derived, at least in part, from the descriptions of the ideal pioneer woman which are found in Traill's The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide.

The recognition and acceptance of the frontier, in Laurence's work, as in Traill's, results in the woman's successful handling of the pioneer situation; in her ensuing attempts to deal with the frontier, the woman rejoices in her escape from the confines of Grundyism into freedom and self-sufficiency, as happens for example, in A Jest of God, when Rachel begins to take charge of her own life, and to

disregard the opinions of others. In Laurence's work, this escape from Grundyism is often linked to physical movement westward, whether into an open space, often beside water, as demonstrated by Hagar's flight to the beach in The Stone Angel, or to a location which is farther west, thereby recreating the original pattern of settlement in Canada, as in The Diviners when Morag moves to the West Coast to continue her writing career and to have her baby. A major difference between the two writers--Traill and Laurence--is the extent to which each is convinced of the possible existence of the ideal in every-day life. Traill was positive that an ideal backwoodswoman could exist, and in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, she created a model for other pioneer women to emulate, drawing upon her life in Britain and upon her experiences in Canada to create the pattern for this feminine ideal. Laurence is less direct in her methods, and is certainly less didactic in her approach. Consequently, her narratives, unlike Traill's writing, describe a process (a working toward an ideal) rather than a finished product. Laurence's female protagonists are cognizant of the fact that there is an ideal, and that they lack some important bit of knowledge or experience to achieve this ideal. Hagar, Rachel, and Morag begin their attempts to effect an improvement. While they never reach perfection, their efforts to gain a better life represent an internalized, metaphoric rendering of the pioneering process. Finally, as a result of their pioneering efforts, all three

protagonists achieve what has been called by Laurence in The Diviners, a "gift, or portion of grace" (p. 452). Much has changed in the years which separate Laurence and Traill but there remains a direct link through the way in which their fictional characters--Traill's Catharine Maxwell, and Laurence's Hagar Shipley, Rachel Cameron, and Morag Gunn--perceive the world around them, and the way in which they define their roles as pioneer women on a harsh frontier.

Notes

1 Margaret Laurence, "My Final Hour," Canadian Literature, No. 100 (Spring 1984), p. 188.

2 Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," in Essays and Images in Honour of George Woodcock, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), pp. 24-25.

3 See Catharine Parr Traill, "Introductory Remarks," in The Canadian Settler's Guide, introd. Clara Thomas, NCL, No. 64, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), pp. 1-47.

4 Traill refers to "Grundyism" in The Backwoods of Canada (London, 1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles Canadiana Collection, 1971), p. 270.

5 See Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945); National Council of Women of Canada, Women Workers of Canada. Being a Report of the Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada (Ottawa: National Council of Women of Canada, 1894); Letitia Youmans, Campaign Echoes, introd. Miss Frances E. Willard, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1893).

6 For an overview of the typical traits of a nineteenth-century English lady, see notes 2 and 3 in chapter 1 of this work.

7 Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel, introd. William H. New, NCL, No. 59, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 292.

8 For an analysis of the difficulties encountered by the English lady on the Canadian frontier see Traill's The Canadian Settler's Guide.

9 For an analysis of the Crusoe element in Canadian fiction see T. D. MacLulich, "Crusoe in the Backwoods: A Canadian Fable?" Mosaic, 9, No. 2 (Winter 1976), 115-126; Clara Thomas, "Crusoe and the Precious Kingdom: Fables of our Literature," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1, No. 2 (Spring 1972), 58-64; Catharine Parr Traill, Canadiana Crusoes. A

Tale of the Rice Lake Plains, ed. Rupert Schieder (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986).

10

Margaret Laurence, "Gadgetry and Growing: Form and Voice in the Novel," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 27 (Fall 1980), p. 58.

11

Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God, introd. G. D. Killam, NCL, No. 111, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 181.

12

For some discussions of the mother-daughter relationships in Laurence's fiction see Nancy Bailey, "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung and the Manawaka Women," Studies in Canadian Literature, 2, No. 2 (Summer 1977), 306-321; Helen M. Buss, Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence (Victoria: University of Victoria, English Literary Studies, 1985); Angelika Maeser, "Finding the Mother: The Individuation of Laurence's Heroines," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 27 (Fall 1980), pp. 151-166.

13

Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," Canadian Literature, No. 41 (Summer 1969), p. 14.

14

Margaret Laurence, "A Place to Stand On," in Heart of a Stranger (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam, Seal Books, 1980), p. 6.

15

Clara Thomas, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, NCL, No. 131, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 135.

16

Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 5.

17

Frederick Sweet discusses these three major focuses in "Margaret Laurence," in Profiles in Canadian Literature, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1980), II, 53.

18

Laurence, Diviners, p. 97; Traill, Settler's Guide, p. 204.

19

Laurence, "Final Hour," p. 188.

Conclusion

The ideal female pioneer, as this figure was visualized by Catharine Parr Traill and described in her non-fiction, The Backwoods of Canada (1836) and The Canadian Settler's Guide (1855), has become an important figure in Canadian fiction. The pioneer woman as a character type appears in English Canadian fiction from the time of Traill's own Canadian Crusoes (1852) up to and after the time of Margaret Laurence's The Diviners (1974). The preceding analysis of the pioneer woman in selected works of fiction and non-fiction has necessarily been restricted to an examination of a few works by a small number of writers. With the exception of Traill's fiction, the novels studied--Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), Ralph Connor's The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry School Days (1902), and Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel (1964), A Jest of God (1966), and The Diviners (1974)--are representative rather than unique in their treatment in fiction of the pioneer woman. Whereas Traill effectively created and defined a new role for women, later Canadian writers accepted the pioneer woman as a feminine ideal. In the case of Laurence, there is a probable influence from Traill. In the other cases examined, the appearance of the pioneer woman as heroine appears to be part of a Canadian continuity that stretches from Traill to Laurence and beyond. As Northrop Frye points out:

...there does seem to be such a thing as an imaginative continuum, and...writers are conditioned in their attitudes by their predecessors, whether

there is a conscious influence or not.¹

Although, like Traill, other nineteenth-century emigrant women approached pioneering with determined optimism and, although, in the course of pioneering, these same women developed theories about a woman's role on the frontier² which resemble the views expressed by Traill in The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, Traill was, arguably, unique among her contemporaries for her inclusion of the new world, and of the new world woman, in her fiction. Indeed, a comparison of Traill's fiction with some other Canadian fiction of the same period--the mid-nineteenth century--indicates the full extent of Traill's contribution to fiction of a new character type--the pioneer woman. For instance, Traill's sister, Susanna Moodie, was also a Canadian pioneer. Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush (1852) and Life in the Clearings (1853), are, like Traill's The Backwoods of Canada and The Canadian Settler's Guide, first-hand accounts of pioneer life in Upper Canada. In addition to Roughing It in the Bush and Life in the Clearings Moodie wrote fiction while she was living in the backwoods, as for example, Mark Hurdlestone, The Gold Worshipper (1853). Unlike her sister, Moodie ignored Canada and Canadian life in her fiction, evidently preferring to employ English settings and to depict standard, sentimental versions of the English lady of the nineteenth century.³ Moodie's fiction seems, curiously enough, to have been unaffected by her Canadian life, and her experiences as a pioneer which are documented in

gious presence which is balanced by a masculine religious force. In Duncan Polite, Keith presents this religious dichotomy in the figures of two elderly men, Duncan Polite and his best friend Splinterin' Andra Johnstone. The men are equally devout, but, like Connor's Mrs. Murray and her husband, they are poles apart in their method of helping others. Duncan is the more "feminine" of the two; he is soft-spoken and gentle; he looks for the good in everyone; he leads by example; he converts others through his loving words. Splinterin' Andra is the harsher Calvinist who antagonizes those he most wishes to help. Jessie Hamilton, the "good" woman of Duncan Polite is helped by Duncan in a manner which resembles the relationship between Mrs. Murray and Kate Raymond of Connor's The Man From Glengarry, and Jessie comes to epitomize Keith's version of the Lady of the Manse (she will eventually marry a minister).

Less sermon-oriented than Keith or Connor, but equally sentimental in her evocation of a rural way of life is L. M. Montgomery. Despite its sentimentality, Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables is much like Duncan's The Imperialist in its examination of the concerns of Canadian feminists of the early twentieth century, specifically in its treatment of a "generation gap" between two women. In both The Imperialist and Anne of Green Gables, a woman from an earlier era Mrs. Murchison and Marilla--and the "new woman" who seeks to carve out a new way of life for herself Advena and Anne meet and interact. Marilla of Anne of Green Gables possesses

of backwoods life is, for the most part, not confronted directly. Like the Clarence family of Traill's The Young Emigrants (1826), the Harford family of "Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes" considers itself to be impoverished; consequently, several family members emigrate to Canada in order to escape the embarrassment of genteel poverty. Moodie does not follow their exploits, choosing rather to focus on the romantic adventures of Rosamond, the sister who remains in England: "My present purpose is to stay at home, and see what befel Rosamond, and how her old uncle left his property." Flora Lyndsay is ostensibly a novel about emigration. Yet Moodie follows the fortunes of the Lyndsay family only as far as their arrival in Canada; she leaves them on board ship, and summarizes their pioneering experiences as briefly as possible:

The Lyndsay's (sic) settled upon wild land, and suffered, for some years, great hardships in the backwoods. Ultimately, Mr. Lyndsay obtained an official appointment which enabled him to remove his wife and family to one of the fast-rising and flourishing towns of the Upper Providence (sic), where they have since resided in great happiness and comfort, and no longer regret the voyage to Canada, but bless the kind Providence that led them hither.¹⁰

Given the fact that her non-fiction, set as it is in Canada, has had a much greater impact than her fiction, it seems a pity that Moodie chose in Flora Lyndsay to ignore once again her knowledge of Canadian life.

In the orientation towards the old world which is demonstrated in her fiction Moodie is more representative of her era than is Traill. The majority of the fictional prose

published in the Literary Garland, for example, echoes Moodie's preoccupation with sentimental English fiction.¹¹ Even a writer like John Richardson who used a Canadian setting in his Wacousta or The Prophecy (1832) and The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War (1840) reverts to standard English characterizations of women despite the fact that the English lady (for instance, Clara de Maldimar of Wacousta) is clearly an incongruous figure in the midst of the bloody Indian wars described by Richardson. Richardson was aware, evidently, that a Canadian "type" existed, a type which differed from the commonly-held perception of the English lady. Witness his description in The Canadian Brothers of the intrepid Canadian women who risked life and limb in crossing a dangerous ice-filled river merely to attend a dance. Lieutenant Villiers comments to his brother officers that the women sit calmly in their sleighs:

...as quietly and as unconcernedly, wrapped in their furs, as if they were merely taking their customary drive on terra firma... nay, I am persuaded that if they ever entertain an anxiety on those occasions, it is either least the absence of one of these formidable masses should compel them to abandon an enterprize, the bare idea of entering upon which would give an European woman an attack of nerves, or that the delayed aid should be a means of depriving them of one half minute of their anticipated pleasure.¹²

Richardson's female protagonists in Wacousta, the De Maldimar cousins, Madeline and Clara, tend to ignore the possibilities inherent in the model of the courageous Canadian women described in the above passage. Clara is beautiful and

frail; she faints at every danger--real and imagined. Appropriately, she does not survive; the stresses of Canadian life prove to be too much for her. Madeline is more hardy; she can rouse herself to action in some cases, but, by and large, she falls short of the ideal of the capable and active pioneer woman. While Richardson chose to write about Canadian events and to use Canadian characters, he failed to exploit the dramatic potential inherent in the type of woman who would risk to death to attend a dance. The Indian woman, Oucanasta or Wacousta, is the closest approximation to the active Canadian pioneer woman in Richardson's work: she twice saves Madeline De Haldimar from death because of her ability to act correctly in times of emergency. More generally, however, Richardson prefers to exploit the sentimental than to develop the possibilities of real pioneer life.

Set against a background of these and other writers, Traill's efforts to Canadianize her fiction appear both innovative and courageous. As has been noted before, Traill's Canadian pioneer heroine, Catherine Maxwell, is far removed from the standard sentimental view of the English lady of the nineteenth century, reflecting, rather, the life of the pioneer women of that particular period in Canada. Yet, despite a slow beginning, by the end of the nineteenth century the pioneer woman was a standard character type in English Canadian fiction. Works such as Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904) and Edith Conroy's The Red Fox (1901) make full use of a Canadian setting and of Canadian

character types. Moreover, the ending of the frontier era in eastern Canada and the rapid development of the West resulted in the sentimentalization of an earlier, rural period of Canadian history; pioneer days were often portrayed in fiction as a simpler, better, and, occasionally, a more exciting, time. In such novels as The Man From Glengarry (1901) and Glengarry-School Days (1902) Connor describes the eastern Ontario frontier of his youth; in Black Rock (1898) and The Sky Pilot (1899), he describes the western frontier he knew as a young man. Among the many other writers who exploited the nostalgia for the past were Marian Keith in her Duncan Polite (1905) and The Silver Maple (1906) and Lucy Maud Montgomery in her Anne of Green Gables (1908).²⁴

Marian Keith's fiction is representative of a certain type of literature; it is religious and sentimental fiction which evokes a nostalgia for a past way of life. Keith's work bears a close resemblance to the fiction of Ralph Connor, and in Duncan Polite and The Silver Maple Keith writes about the early pioneer days in eastern Ontario, focussing specifically on the exploits of Scottish settlers. Her female characters, notably the Jessie Hamilton of Duncan Polite, are women in the tradition of Traill's (and Connor's) ideal pioneer woman--strong, capable, self-reliant, linked to principles of beauty and to things of the spirit. Like Connor's Lady of the Manse, the Mrs. Murray of the Glengarry books, Keith's female protagonists are agents for good in a potentially evil environment; they provide a feminine reli-

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gious presence which is balanced by a masculine religious force. In Duncan Polite, Keith presents this religious dichotomy in the figures of two elderly men, Duncan Polite and his best friend Splinterin' Andra Johnstone. The men are equally devout, but, like Connor's Mrs. Murray and her husband, they are poles apart in their method of helping others. Duncan is the more "feminine" of the two; he is soft-spoken and gentle; he looks for the good in everyone; he leads by example; he converts others through his loving words.

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the skills of the pioneer (as does The Imperialist's Mrs. Murchison), and she continues to demonstrate these skills long after the time of actual pioneering. Like Advena Murchison, Anne Shirley is virtually useless in the house; she is creative, intelligent, eccentric, bookish. But Anne is also maternal, and, in the tradition of Canadian maternal feminists, when she seeks employment outside the home, she turns to teaching. Although, like Traill's pioneer, Anne appreciates things of beauty, she is lacking in practical ability, and Marilla teaches her basic housekeeping skills. As a result of their interaction, both Anne and Marilla change to become more perfect representations of the pioneer. Anne learns practical skills; Marilla learns to appreciate the spiritual side of Anne. Thus, while Montgomery, like Duncan, moves forward in her presentation of the pioneer woman to indicate that pioneering includes more than settlement on a physical frontier, she continues to reinforce the traditional role of the pioneer. Her protagonists-- figures like Anne Shirley--do not inhabit a traditional frontier landscape: they are writers, poets, and teachers; they pursue an education; they can and do earn a living for themselves. Yet they remain within the tradition of the capable Canadian pioneer woman, never denying the old values. Her frontier environment is social rather than physical in nature but, like Traill's pioneer woman, the typical Montgomery protagonist works to effect change.

Nellie McClung must be included in any list of feminist

writers in Canada. McClung was more strident in voicing her feminist views in fiction than were either Montgomery or Duncan. Consequently, her fiction, as for example Purple Springs (1921), presents her personal concerns and theories. McClung takes only a cautious step forward in the depiction of women in fiction, however, and her Pearl Watson of Sowing Seeds in Danny (1908), The Second Chance (1910), and Purple Springs, owes a debt to the tradition of the pioneer woman. Pearl is a capable housekeeper and takes care of her younger siblings while her mother works outside the home; she is pragmatic and determined, intelligent and spiritual. As a spokeswoman for McClung, Pearl is necessarily concerned with women's rights. Indeed, in Purple Springs McClung includes an account of a political play performed by a group of Winnipeg women (starring Pearl) which is based on a similar event described in her autobiography, The Stream Runs Fast (1945). Although the setting of McClung's fiction is predominantly rural, McClung is concerned with the lives of women in a post-pioneer period. In McClung's opinion, women should be looking elsewhere for fulfilment, seeking new frontiers to conquer, and she includes the pathetic story of an over-worked farm woman, Mrs. Paine, in Purple Springs. In order to protest a woman's lack of legal right to her fair share of a farm on which she has performed an equal (not to say superior) role in homesteading. Romantic, idealistic, and sentimental, Purple Springs is, nevertheless, a strong feminist treatise. Even as McClung reaffirms traditional

values--Pearl marries Dr. Clay--she explores other avenues open to women--Pearl campaigns for women's rights.

Whereas Duncan, Montgomery, and McClung describe post-pioneer days in their fiction, Robert Stead's The Homesteaders (1916) is a work which bridges the gap between frontier and civilization--or rather, the gap between an earlier, physical frontier, and a later, social and spiritual frontier. Furthermore, in The Homesteaders, Stead demonstrates the importance of the pioneer woman on both frontier settings. At the beginning of The Homesteaders, John and Mary Harris leave Ontario to become prairie homesteaders. Mary, a "heroine,"²⁵ is the daughter of Ontario pioneers, and has inherited the pioneer spirit from her mother. Mary's mother shows her pioneer courage when she says goodbye to her daughter:

The breed that had not feared, a generation back, to cross the seas and carve a province and a future from the forest, was not a breed to withhold its most beautiful and noble from the ventures of the greater West.²⁶

Mary's contribution to the pioneering process in the West echoes back to Traill's analysis of the pioneer woman's role in Upper Canada when she had insisted that an emigrant must be pragmatic and accept her fate:

She was going to be brave. She had talked with the other women on the train and in the town. They were women from Ontario farms, some of them well into middle life; women who had known the drudgery of unremitting toil since childhood. Their speech was faulty; their manners would not have passed muster amid her old associations; but their quiet optimism was unbounded; their courage was an inspiration. She too would be brave!²⁷

Up to the time of her departure for western Canada, Mary has obviously been sheltered from hard work but, as the daughter of pioneers, she has inherited the requisite courage to face her new life bravely. When she reaches the West, Mary immediately begins to work. In the tradition of the pioneer woman, her most important contribution to pioneering is her management of household concerns. Her home is her true domain, and, like Traill's pioneer, Mary Harris is concerned with the inclusion of beauty in her home:

In the interior of the little house an extraordinary change was wrought; simple draperies and pictures relieved the bareness of the walls; shelves were built for the accommodation of many trinkets dear to the feminine heart; a rag carpet covered the centre of the floor; plain but appetizing dishes peeked enticingly from behind the paper curtain that now clothed the bare ribs of the cupboard; and a sense of homeliness pervaded the atmosphere.²⁸

Mary appears to be the ideal pioneer--pragmatic, idealistic, capable, active, courageous, equally concerned with things of the spirit and with practical matters. The first section of The Homesteaders closes with the birth of her son, Allan.

Stead does not leave the story at this point; he resumes the narrative at a time twenty five years after the birth of Allan. The original pioneering period has ended. The Harris family has prospered but appears to have lost something of value:

The pioneer boys had passed away, and civilization and prosperity were rampant in the land. There were those, too, who thought that perhaps the country had lost something in all its gaining; that perhaps there was less idealism and less unreckoning hospitality in the brick house on the

hill than there once had been in the sod shack in the hollow.¹⁹

"Mammonism"²⁰ has replaced the ideals of the pioneer:

...the old sense of oneness, the old community interest which had held the little band of pioneers together amid their privations and their poverty, began to weaken and dissolve, and in its place came an individualism and a materialism that measure progress only in dollars and cents.²¹

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In spite of the increased prosperity of the Harris family, Mrs. Harris is overworked and careworn. Brow-beaten by her husband, she continues to perform a never-ending series of tasks. In effect, a new frontier has emerged to take the place of the old frontier. Ironically, it is the very success of the early pioneers which has sparked the beginning of a frontier which is largely spiritual in nature. The skills of Mary Harris do not serve on this frontier and she is struggling to survive. Like Mrs. Murchison of Duncan's The Imperialist, Mary Harris is locked into a role which is no longer appropriate given the improved fortunes of the family. Yet salvation is at hand. Beulah, Mary's daughter, is a pioneer woman who can cope with the new frontier and who can effect change and improvement on that frontier. Beulah has inherited the pioneer skills and the feminine spirit of her mother along with what Stead defines as a freer, more masculine attitude:

...with her mother's beauty and fine sensibility she had inherited the indomitable spirit which had made John Harris one of the most prosperous farmers in the district. She moved in an easy, unconscious grace of self-reliance--a reliance that must be just a little irritating to men of old-fashioned notions concerning woman's dependence on the sterner sex--²²

This sense of feminine independence and a freer spirit is, in fact, typical of Canadian feminist theory of the period, and Beulah resembles McClung's Pearl Watson, Duncan's Advena Murchison, and Montgomery's Anne Shirley in her recognition of new possibilities for women. Beulah leaves home, significantly moving farther west in a recreation of the original pioneer movement towards the West. Through the efforts of Beulah, the Harris family's conflicts are resolved, an emotional balance is restored, and the perils of Mammonism are averted.

Finally, then, just as Connor and Duncan were not alone in their use in fiction of a pioneer woman who faces a social frontier, so too Margaret Laurence is not alone in her use in fiction of a pioneer woman who confronts an internal, personal frontier. Hagar Shipley of The Stone Angel (1964), Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God (1966), and Morag Gunn of The Diviners (1974) are by no means the only representatives of the Canadian pioneer woman in later twentieth-century fiction. Works such as L. M. Montgomery's The Blue Castle (1926), Ethel Wilson's Swamp Angel (1954), Constance Beresford-Howe's The Book of Eve (1973), Joan Barfoot's Abra (1978), and Aretha van Herk's Judith (1978) include contemporary versions of the pioneer woman. Although the frontier domain of the contemporary pioneer woman is largely an internal one, quite different from the physical frontier of Upper Canada which was the setting for Traill's Canadian Crusoes, these modern women are clearly the literary descen-

dents of Traill's Catharine Maxwell, clearly part of the continuum of which Frye speaks.

Montgomery, Wilson, Beresford-Howe, Barfoot, and van Herk recreate the pattern used by Stead in The Homesteaders in which the youthful female protagonist, stifled by her family, leaves the original family unit in order to create a new one. Indeed, a similar pattern was used by Traill in Canadian Crusoes, as Catharine Maxwell, her brother, her cousin, and an Indian girl form a family group while they are lost in the bush. The Blue Castle's Valancy, Swamp Angel's Maggie, The Book of Eve's Eva, Abra's Abra, and Judith's Judith are initially trapped in an unrewarding domestic life. Drudgery, confinement, and petty rules (Grundysms) govern their days. Valancy Stirling of The Blue Castle awakens on the morning of her twenty-ninth birthday to a sense of hopelessness and futility:

Reality pressed on her too hardly, barking at her heels like a maddening little dog. She was twenty-nine, lonely, undesired, ill-favoured --the only homely girl in a handsome clan, with no past and no future. As far as she could look back, life was ~~drab~~ and colourless, with not one single crimson or purple spot anywhere. As far as she could look forward it seemed certain to be just the same until she was nothing but a solitary, little withered leaf clinging to a wintry bough. The moment when a woman realises that she has nothing to live for--neither love, duty, purpose nor hope--holds for her the bitterness of death.²³

A similar moment of truth occurs to the other female protagonists. Like so many discontented Abby Murchisons (that is to say, if Abby Murchison of Duncan's The Imperialist were to awaken to the knowledge that she lacks a frontier upon which

to demonstrate her talents as a pioneer), these women realize that something is lacking. Either they lack a frontier, or they are acting incorrectly upon an individual, personal frontier. Each woman escapes to find independence, and self-sufficiency, and survives with courage and dignity. Through a recognition of the frontier and of the conditions inherent to that frontier, each begins to act appropriately upon the frontier to effect change, moving from what is, in effect, an emotional wasteland to achieve a measure of self-understanding. In the course of the pioneering process, Valancy, Maggie, Eva, Judith, and Abra leave behind the forces of Grundyism and re-learn a more vital, valid role, a role which is linked to their common pioneer origins. This echoes back to Laurence's fiction, as for example Hagar of The Stone Angel, who shortly before her death, re-examines her life, defines her frontier (pride), and begins to act correctly and decisively on that frontier.

Typically, the protagonist's flight involves a physical movement from a city towards an open space. Rachel of A Jest of God makes love to Nick outside of the town; later she moves farther west with her mother. Maggie of Swamp Angel goes north in British Columbia into the mountains to work at a fishing camp. Valancy of The Blue Castle leaves a small town to keep house for Roaring Abel (a general drunkard) and his daughter Cissy. Eva of The Book of Eve does not leave the city but she discovers a whole new aspect of urban life; she frequents the parks, and she becomes a scavenger, surviving

by selling what she finds in the street. Abra of Abra buys a farm and becomes self-sufficient as does Judith in van Herk's novel. As she pursues her new activities, each of these women, like Traill's original model of the pioneer, discovers hitherto unguessed reserves of strength and courage. Each learns to take pride in her new accomplishments. Morag of The Diviners discovers the validity of her role as a writer of fiction; Maggie of Swamp Angel ties fishing flies and sells them to earn money; Valancy of The Blue Castle enjoys the discomfort of her relatives when she flouts their wishes; Abra of Abra learns to grow her own vegetables in order to survive; Judith of Judith manages her own pig farm.

Yet, despite a rejection of her original living arrangement, each protagonist moves to form new domestic attachments, to create a new family structure, and to endorse new rules. The strain of maternal feminism which links Traill's work with Duncan's, Connor's, and Laurence's work is strongly in evidence in the works of Montgomery, Wilson, Beresford-Howe, and Barfoot. Their protagonists have a spiritual function; personal survival is always a primary concern but they have also a duty to perform in their relationships with others, and this duty is most clearly expressed in the formation of new family attachments or in the clarification of existing relationships. Rachel Cameron of A Jest of God redefines her role with respect to her mother; Maggie assumes a maternal role with the Gunnarson family of Swamp Angel; Abra rediscovers her daughter in Abra; Judith reaffirms her

ties with her father by choosing in Judith to become a pig farmer; Eva has a love affair with Johnny Horvath and strengthens her relationship with her son in The Book of Eve; Valancy finds love and happiness with Barney Snaith in The Blue Castle. These motifs, as has been noted, also appear in Laurence's fiction, and are part of a continuity that stretches back to Traill's views of a woman's role in the pioneering process. The contemporary pioneer, like Traill's pioneer, interacts with the frontier to effect change, and discovers a measure of happiness in the process. As Traill had pointed out in The Backwoods of Canada: "...I find, by impartial survey of my present life, that I am to the full as happy, if not really happier, than I was in the old country...."²⁴ Indeed, these contemporary pioneers, like Traill herself, are "happier," stronger, better women as a result of their active participation in the pioneering process. The longevity of the pioneer woman as a character type in English-Canadian fiction, and her recurrent use as a metaphor for Canadian femininity, seems to indicate that the character appeals to some common perception of a woman's role at home and in Canadian society, and that the role for women proposed by the early-emigrants was indeed an appropriate choice for the Canadian frontier, regardless of the location and nature of that frontier.

Notes

1 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada," in The Bush Garden. Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 250

2 See Virginia Watson Rouslin, "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Pioneering in Canada," Dalhousie Review, 56, No. 2 (Summer 1976), 319-335; see also Anne Langton, A Gentlewoman in Upper Canada. The Journals of Anne Langton, ed. H. H. Langton (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1950), Mary O'Brien, The Journals of Mary O'Brien, 1828-1838, ed. Audrey Saunders Miller (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), Frances Stewart, Our Forest Home, being Extracts from the Correspondence of the Late Frances Stewart, ed. E. S. Dunlop, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Gazette Printing and Publishing, 1902).

3 See notes 2 and 3 from chapter 1.

4 Susanna Moodie, Geoffrey Moncton: or, The Faithless Guardian (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, n.d.), p. 232.

5 Moodie, Moncton, p. 231.

6 Moodie, Moncton, p. 232.

7 Moodie, Moncton, p. 232.

8 Moodie, Moncton, p. 354.

9 Susanna Moodie, "Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes," in Matrimonial Speculations (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), p. 70.

10 Susanna Moodie, Flora Lyndsay: or, Passages in an Eventful Life (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, n.d.), p. 342.

11 See Mary Markham Brown, An Index to the "Literary Garland" (Montreal 1838-1851) (Toronto: Bibliographical Society of Canada, 1962); see also Carl F. Klinck, "Literary Activity in Canada East and West (1841-1880)," in Literary History of Canada. Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (1976; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 1, 159-176.

12 John Richardson, The Canadian Brothers: or, The Proph-

ecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War (1840; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 47.

13

See Carl F. Klinck, "Literary Activity in the Canadas (1812-1841)," in Literary History of Canada, I, 139-158; see also Klinck, "Literary Activity (1841-1880)."

14

See Gordon Roper, "New Forces: New Fiction (1880-1920)," in Literary History of Canada, I, 274-297; see also Gordon Roper, Rupert Schieder, and S. Ross Beharriell, "The Kinds of Fiction (1880-1920)," in Literary History of Canada, I, 159-176.

15

Robert J. C. Stead, The Homesteaders, introd. Susan Wood Glicksohn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 7.

16

Stead, Homesteaders, p. 9.

17

Stead, Homesteaders, pp. 33-34.

18

Stead, Homesteaders, p. 46.

19

Stead, Homesteaders, p. 86.

20

Stead, Homesteaders, p. 97.

21

Stead, Homesteaders, p. 96.

22

Stead, Homesteaders, pp. 87-88.

23

L. M. Montgomery, The Blue Castle (1972; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 5-6.

24

Catharine Parr Traill, The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters From the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America (London, 1836; rpt. Toronto: Coles Canadiana Collection, 1971), p. 268.

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satisfy her. Her flight from her father and from the Grundyism which he represents fails when Hagar takes her father's values with her. Her assumption of the role of the housewife is equally unsatisfactory because Hagar continues to resent the role: "...I felt something else must happen-- this couldn't be all" (p. 112). Hagar's later flight from an intolerable marriage is further proof of her ability to take action in an emergency. Yet this action, like the other mentioned, is also doomed. Hagar takes with her a memory of Bram's physical presence which haunts her at night. Hagar's departure is precipitated by her desire to recreate the image of her father in her son John: "...Jason Currie never saw my second son or knew at all that the sort of boy he'd wanted had waited a generation to appear" (p. 64). This effort also fails since Hagar has not understood her son; he returns to Manawaka and to his father.

As has been shown, although Hagar has the pioneer woman's ability to act, she lacks the judgment and self-knowledge necessary to act correctly, and her process of coping with stresses and emergencies, therefore, is misguided. She can neither change the frontier nor be changed by it until she correctly identifies the nature of her problem. The changes which occur during the last weeks of Hagar's life represent the process of a pioneer woman squarely facing her frontier, and choosing the activities appropriate to that frontier. At the last, Hagar's innate strengths combine with her recognition of her frontier to produce changes in her-

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