Intergenerational discourse: Collaboration and time-travel in Canadian fiction

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Résumé: *À la lumière de la théorie de Northrop Frye sur l'origine du mythe, Elisabeth Thompson démontre que dans la littérature pour enfants au Canada, la permanence du recours au voyage dans le temps s'explique par un besoin profond de comprendre notre situation dans le monde et dans l'histoire: pour le héros romanesque, le périple spatio-temporel devient ainsi une métaphore de la découverte de soi.*

Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. If you can bend space you can bend time also, and if you knew enough and could move faster than light you could travel backward in time and exist in two places at once. (Atwood, *Eye* 3)

A great many Canadian writers appear to be fascinated with the notion of ancestry. Accordingly, ancestors are often relevant to contemporary protagonists; for example, members of an earlier generation may be perceived as possessing valuable knowledge which should be given to their descendants. Moreover, many contemporary female protagonists use their knowledge of their ancestors to help define themselves. Several writers combine the theme of ancestry with a sort of "time-travel" motif in which characters move forward or backward in time. This creates the sense that the past (and one's ancestors) can catch up to and become part of the present, thereby indicating that time exists as a continuum, so that women in one generation can communicate with, even befriend, someone from another era. At various points L.M. Montgomery's Emily of *Emily of New Moon* (1923), Margaret Laurence's Morag of *The Diviners* (1974) and Sal of *The olden days coat* (1979), Katherine Govier's Suzanne of *Between men* (1987), Elizabeth Brewster's Ariana of *Junction* (1982), and Janet Lunn's Rose of *The root cellar* (1983), Jane and Elizabeth of *Double spell* (1968), and Mairi of *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay* (1986) all experience a diminishing, or a total disappearance of, the boundaries which separate past from present. All confront the past (or, occasionally, the future) and a specific figure – usually female – from the past. As a result of the "time-travel," something of value is learned by the protagonist. In return, they often help the person from the past as well. Ultimately, the appearance of this pattern in several works of fiction is more than just an interesting coincidence. It indicates that women in contemporary Canadian fiction frequently are defined in terms of their pioneer ancestors. The time travel removes barriers, permitting the protagonists to glimpse and to understand their close relationship with the

pioneer past, and with a specific figure from that past.

L.M. Montgomery's protagonists tend to have a strong sense of "family." On the one hand, the family and its traditions may be restrictive and limiting for the heroine. On the other hand, she may also derive strength from her family. Emily Starr of *Emily of New Moon* is at first reluctant to acknowledge her (maternal) Murray ancestry. Moreover, at New Moon, Emily's freedom is severely limited by her Aunt Elizabeth's unyielding adherence to Murray rules and traditions – even when these traditions seem to be illogical. Emily is punished, for example, for walking barefoot in a public place (119). Yet, Emily learns to accept and to be proud of her Murray background: she becomes Emily "of New Moon."

Emily's Murray ancestry is nowhere more apparent than in her demonstration of the "Murray look" when she is angry. Up to the time of the first appearance of the "Murray look," Emily has been forced to obey her Aunt Elizabeth's orders. But Emily becomes defiant when Elizabeth threatens to cut the girl's hair; she determines that her aunt will not do this:

> Aunt Elizabeth returned with the scissors; they clicked suggestively as she opened them; that click, as if by magic, seemed to loosen something – some strange formidable power in Emily's soul. She turned deliberately around and faced her aunt. She felt her brows drawing together in an unaccustomed way – she felt an uprush as from unknown depths of some irresistible surge of energy. (117)

And, albeit unwittingly, Emily looks and speaks exactly as her autocratic grandfather was accustomed to look and speak when he was issuing orders; she says to Aunt Elizabeth, "Let me hear no more of this" (117). Elizabeth turns pale; she looks "aghast for one moment at the transformed or possessed child before her" (117) and flees to the kitchen. Emily, who has had an "uncanny feeling of wearing someone else's face instead of her own" (118), hears Elizabeth tell Laura, "I saw – Father – looking from her face" (117). Despite her anger at her own weakness, Elizabeth continues to give way before the ghostly reappearance of her father in Emily's face whenever Emily is "stirred by some peculiarly poignant emotion" (158).

The "Murray look" acts almost as a type of magic power for Emily: she can, in times of extreme need, summon this power in order to dominate her usually domineering aunt. Also, through this definite proof of her ancestry, Emily learns to accept that she is a Murray, that the Murrays live on in her, and that she belongs at New Moon. She possesses her mother's distinctive slow, sweet smile as well; this trait, however, which inspires others to love her, lacks the impact of the "Murray look," which causes fear and uneasiness in Emily and any onlookers. Both facial expressions (the female smile, the male scowl) are proof of intergenerational communication, however, and Emily becomes a stronger person by virtue of her legacy.

Just as her ancestors look forward to Emily (and appear in her face), so too

Emily, gifted – or cursed – with the "second sight," is able to look backward in time. When she is ill, Emily sees Ilse Burnett's mother fall into a well, thereby solving the long-standing mystery of the woman's disappearance and healing a rift which has existed between Ilse Burnett (Emily's "best" friend) and Dr. Burnett. Thus, past and present meet and mingle; boundaries of time become irrelevant as something of value is passed on from the past into the present.

In Margaret Laurence's *The diviners*, the protagonist, Morag Gunn, speaks with the spirit of Catharine Parr Traill, the well-known pioneer woman who wrote such classics of pioneer literature as *The backwoods of Canada* (1836) and *The Canadian settler's guide* (1855). Traill is an important, albeit a minor element, in Laurence's work, just as the few appearances of Grandfather Murray are essential to Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*. Despite the fact that the Gunns and the Traills are not related, Catherine Traill becomes, in a sense, Morag's ancestor.

Initially, Morag compares herself unfavourably with Traill whom she perceives as an ideal of femininity:

> Catharine Parr Traill, one could be quite certain, would not have been fond of an early morning sitting over a fourth cup of coffee, mulling, approaching the day in gingerly fashion, trying to size it up. No. No such sloth for Catherine P.T. (*Diviners* 96)

As this point, Morag is chiefly aware of the vast distance between herself and Traill. Yet, inspired by the words of Traill, Morag learns to redefine herself in Traill's terms, lessening (or even eliminating) the distance between the women, and making the century which separates them irrelevant. She realizes, for example, that she is not guilty of "sloth;" indeed, Morag recognizes that she too is an active woman, even though her activity is of a different order, being contemplative activity rather than physical activity. In this manner, Morag acknowledges her affinity with Traill; she, like Traill, is a pioneer who inhabits a personal and internal frontier landscape rather than the physical frontier of nineteenth-century Upper Canada described by Traill in her writing. During her last encounter with Traill, Morag says:

> One thing I'm going to stop doing, though, Catharine. I'm going to stop feeling guilty that I'll never be as hard working or knowledgeable or all-round terrific as you were....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. (406)

Morag has stopped worrying "about not being either an old or new pioneer" (406) because, as she says, "I stand somewhere in between" (406). Morag, therefore, has taken her place in the continuum of history, an inheritor of Traill's wisdom.

One example of Morag's application of Traill's definitions to contemporary life is her use of the term "activity." Twice Morag refers to Traill's maxim from

The Canadian settler's guide:

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. (97, 406)

This central quotation accompanies both Traill's initial appearance and her final departure. With her new awareness of her place in history, Morag seeks to apply the concept to her own life:

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. (452)

In this way, Morag has carried forward the formula for the ideal pioneer and has applied it to her personal, contemporary circumstances.

Running parallel to these encounters with Traill (who, as a time-traveller, moves forward in time to meet Morag) are Morag's excursions into her personal past through her "memorybank movies." These "memorybank movies" should also be mentioned in a discussion of time travel since these memories appear to be relived rather than merely reviewed by the protagonist. They are neither reflective nor fragmentary; indeed, they occupy a large portion of the novel's narrative. The boundaries between past and present are further diminished through the use of the present tense in the "memorybank movies." With the help of her re-entry into and reliving of her personal past, Morag seeks to understand a present problem in her life – a crisis triggered by the departure of her daughter Pique, but a crisis which has deeper implications (Morag's role as a writer, for example).

With the help of Traill and her own memories, Morag comes to understand the importance of the past – a personal past and a collective social past – to the present, that the two cannot be separated. As Christie Logan has pointed out, "It'll all go along with you, too. That goes without saying" (207). And Morag's personal past (starting in Manawaka) as well as her pioneer ancestry (represented by Traill) surrounds her in the present time. Both are useful to her. To cite one example, Morag's fiction comes from her fictional recreation of the past; she says, "I like the thought of history and fiction interweaving" (418).

Lest we miss the significance of the time travellers (Morag and Traill), Laurence includes various symbols to facilitate the linking of the past with the present and the future. The heron sighted by Morag and Royland is one such symbol of continuous time:

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 towards individual death but possibly towards the death of its kind. (357)

Morag sees that she, like the heron, combines the past with the present (arguably, the future as well, since Morag's vision includes a glimpse into a grim,

polluted, heron-less world). Through her personal life and through her art of fiction, Morag links past with present: "That evening, Morag began to see that here and now was not, after all, an island" (357).

The river on which the heron lives is also a symbol of continuous time. A description of the river – which flows two ways – begins and ends the book. The repetition provides a frame, or rather, a mirror in which the past (the beginning of the narrative) and present (the end of the narrative) reflect each other. A river which flows two ways is a paradox: "This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible..." (3). Like the river, however, human life flows both ways, and as Laurence says, "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence" (453). This adjuration is particularly apt since one of Morag's functions as a writer is to look both ways, to link past, present, and future. As a "diviner," Morag possesses a "gift, or portion of grace" (452) which at some point she will pass on to someone else, making the ability to divine an expression of continuous time as well. Morag is an "inheritor" (452) of Christie's stories; similarly, Pique has inherited stories from both Morag and her father, Jules. Morag comes to realize finally that one aspect of her initial dilemma – which has caused her to summon up Traill – has been the passing on of the gift of "grace" to her daughter which heralds both the loss of creative power in herself (as it is "withdrawn") and also the approach of her own death.

Laurence's book for children, *The olden days coat*, features a much simpler version of the time-travelling heroine. The protagonist, Sal, celebrating Christmas at her grandmother's house in a small village, is bored, lonely, and somewhat resentful. Sal finds happiness and friendship when she dons an "olden days coat" she discovers in a shed and is transported into the past. Here she meets a little girl "who could tame birds and drive a team of horses." A bond is immediately established when the girls discover a shared ritual – the opening of an "Early Present" at Christmas. Of her "Early Present," a carved wooden box with a painted butterfly on the top, Sarah says, "I shall treasure it always," and she announces her intention of passing it on to her descendants. When Sal returns to her own time and place (simply by removing the coat), she has forgotten the encounter with Sarah. Nor has she recognized that Sarah is her grandmother. Something valuable has been learned and retained, however. Sal's "Early Present" proves to be the wooden box, and like her grandmother before her she says, "I'll cherish it always." As in Laurence's *Diviners* the ancestral voices echo into the present; while the words of her ancestor are at best dimly recognized by Sal, they are nevertheless important:

> Where did those words come from? Sal knew they didn't sound exactly like her, and yet she knew she meant them. She'd heard somebody say them, and now she couldn't quite remember who or when. (*Olden days coat* N.pag.)

Sal's immediate acceptance and appreciation of the gift demonstrates the linking of past with present.

Gran has forgotten that long-ago encounter with a time-travelling little girl, but she is aware that the past continues to live in her mind: "*the past is in my mind – I've got no great need for photographs*," she says to her son. Of course, Gran is also intensely alive in the present; her eyes are both "friendly" and "*interested*." And Gran looks to the future as well when she passes the carved box (the tangible object which demonstrates the continued relevance of the past in the present) on to her granddaughter. To Laurence, links between past, present, and future seem essential. Characters like Morag Gunn of *The diviners* who lack such links must both create and validate them. *The olden days coat* reminds us to cherish the bonds which link past with present and future.

Although Laurence's treatment of the theme of ancestry is by far the more comprehensive, Katherine Govier's *Between men* echoes many of the concerns voiced in Laurence's *The diviners*. Like Laurence's Morag Gunn, Govier's Suzanne Vail confronts a person from the past who has something of value to teach her. In this case, the protagonist meets the spirit of Rosalie New Grass, an Indian woman who was murdered in nineteenth-century Calgary. Before she meets the spirit, Suzanne has been researching Rosalie's death, partly because Suzanne is an historian, and partly because something about Rosalie's fate has a bearing on Suzanne's life. The connection is not readily apparent. Like Laurence's Morag, Govier's Suzanne must search for this connection between herself and a woman from the past.

In her study of Rosalie, Suzanne is "breaking the rules of her kind of scholarship" (Govier 41). Suzanne feels that, in order to ferret out the essential "truth" of Rosalie's fate, she must, "make assumptions" and "invent" (41). ("Reinventing the West" is the title of Suzanne's history course.) With this in mind, Suzanne creates a narrator for her tale, a man whom she decides to call "Murphy":

> ...this man would be her vehicle to carry her through the interweaving rings of darkness and light, the banal seasons of freeze and thaw, as if it were not time but mere geography. But if he were to be the means for this ungeographical journey, and she to follow him, she would have to make him her own. (41)

Through her narrator, Suzanne imaginatively enters nineteenth-century Calgary. As she confesses to her lover Simon, "Maybe I want to be a time traveller. It's probably just a very advanced tourist bug" (84).

Suzanne's time travel has a more important aspect than mere voyeurism which Suzanne (when she is drunk) admits to her student, Roberta Asp: "You see it's really something about me I'm looking for" (108). She instinctively knows that she must examine and understand Rosalie's story because it will shed light on her own present situation. Accordingly, she begins to "re-invent" Rosalie's stories. Other characters comment on Suzanne's intrusion into the past and her inclusion of herself in the so-called "historical" account. Simon

says, "It's not an academic paper....It's a fabrication; it's part true and part you" (166). While her work is not academic, Simon says, "It's something better" (166). That "something better" refers to a creative process which is analogous to Morag Gunn's writing of fiction in which she interweaves fact and fancy to get at some essential truth.

As the barriers of time become increasingly frail in *Between men*, Suzanne searches for an understanding of Rosalie's fate and of the way in which this fate connects with her own life. Finally, the barriers break down entirely, and Rosalie appears to Suzanne in the present time. Rosalie tells the story of her death, and Suzanne begins to understand their relationship. According to the ghost, Rosalie died because she mistook her murderer, Fist, for the town's abortionist, Lovingheart. Since her death, she has been living in a limbo, neither dead nor alive, refused admission to the spirit world. At this point, a connection between Rosalie and Suzanne is made explicit: "She was in limbo, like Suzanne" (282). A further connection is established as Suzanne remembers her own abortion; she too had been near death and had wanted to die. Although talking to Rosalie forces Suzanne to examine directly her own guilt in a similar situation, Suzanne is comforted:

> And just for a moment Suzanne had a hint, a glimmer that the mourning would lessen; that it would, finally, many months from now, cease. A lightness spread on her, as if from a kindly, restful spirit. (283)

What Simon has referred to as Suzanne's "fatal identification with an Indian martyr" (278) has, in fact, helped her to deal with a personal crisis. Through her interaction with Rosalie's ghost, Suzanne realizes that she wants to have a baby, and with that thought in mind, she sets out on a single-minded quest for pregnancy.

Interwoven with the examination of Rosalie's past has been Suzanne's reexamination of her own personal past. She does not relive memories as does Laurence's Morag. Rather, she returns from Toronto to Calgary, her childhood home. There, among other people from her past, she must meet and deal with her ex-husband, Ace. Suzanne is a time-traveller in two ways, therefore: first by virtue of her imaginative entry into turn-of-the-century Calgary; second, through her return to her personal past in late twentieth-century Calgary. The two major voyages (like those in Laurence's *The diviners*) connect; in both, Suzanne is learning about herself. In this quest for self-knowledge, Suzanne is assisted by the forward movement in time of the spirit of Rosalie New Grass.

Elizabeth Brewster's *Junction* is a rather odd, quirky work which features physical rather than the chiefly imaginary or cerebral time travel found in Montgomery, Laurence, and Govier. When travelling by train, the protagonist of *Junction*, Ariana Vail, suddenly finds herself transported into the past – her own past, at first. The middle-aged woman arrives at her parents' home in the body of a woman in her twenties – she has assumed the appearance of her

younger self. Later, also when she is travelling by train, Ariana is taken into a more distant past, and she becomes her great-aunt, Ariana Crandall. Finally, she goes back in time (again on a train) to become her French-speaking ancestor, Ariane. Brewster's train has been described as "a kind of CN branch-line version of a time machine, which, at the very least, gives new meaning to the phrase, 'the national dream'" (Maclaine 127).

Ariana arrives in the past; she interacts with other characters; she is able actually to change history, not merely to review or to relive it. Ariana thinks that her time travel will provide the opportunity to examine the alternatives she has had in her life and possibly to make changes:

> She had often wondered how different her life might have been if she had made other choices than the ones she had made; if she had married someone else instead of James Vail or not married at all; if she had stayed in Georgetown instead of moving to Montreal and then going West with James. Would she be able to find out now? (Brewster 19)

The initial movement into the past – a visit to her parents' home – is a visit that never happened to the Ariana we meet at the beginning of the narrative. This is, rather, a new event, and the course of history appears to have been changed.

Throughout the narrative, Ariana seems to be both herself and whatever other character she has become, combining in her persona aspects of past and present. Theoretically, this knowledge enables her to shape past events for the better, to improve on history and to make life better for both men and women. As the youthful Ariana Oliver (Vail), she retains the memories and the emotional maturity of the middle-aged Ariana (Oliver) Vail. Therefore, even as she helps her mother at church tea, she reflects that such understanding and support of another woman was never a trait of the younger Ariana – it is part of the middle-aged Ariana. Later, when the protagonist becomes her great-aunt Ariana Crandall, she continues to remember her life as Ariana Oliver Vail; despite this memory, however, she moves directly and completely into the past in a physical sense. As Ariana Crandall, for example, she is a virgin. But she brings her greater wisdom to bear on events in Ariana Crandall's life. To cite one such instance, she ignores the amorous overtures of Ariana Crandall's brother-in-law, recognizing as she does so that the real Ariana Crandall would have welcomed (and probably did welcome) his attentions, without regard for her sister's feelings. She has, therefore, altered and strengthened the bond between two women at the expense of self-interest. The purpose of this time travel, then, may be different from the purpose of time travel in the works of other writers. Ariana may be dispensing rather than garnering wisdom, using her understanding to alter and to improve the past, significantly with respect to the women whose identity she assumes.

There is an exchange of knowledge as well, however, and the narrative is not entirely one-sided. As she helps others, Ariana learns about the past (the

past of her ancestors and her own past). To some extent, "there's a sense of pilgrimage" about their journey, a sense "of the journey as a metaphor for the discovery of the self" (Denham 156). In addition, through the time travel, Brewster creates the sense of a living past, felt in the present, and never completely cut off from the present. Accordingly, Ariana, as her younger self, looks at pictures of Ariana Crandall and Grace (Grandma) Parlee (whom she will soon meet) and thinks:

> Ghosts. A company of ghosts. Ariana felt them stirring in the room. Ghosts of the living and the dead. A day out of the past that had been important here and had left its imprint. (43)

Although they are dead, the women have not departed the room. The matrilineal line of descent overpowers even death. Yet, even though she meets the past, and learns from it, there is no indication that Ariana will be allowed to return to the present in order to pass on her newly-acquired knowledge. She is, in one sense, helpless to change her fate; she seems to be caught in the movement back in time.

A suitable image for the seemingly random nature of Ariana's travel is the kaleidoscope; time in *Junction* is referred to as a "kaleidoscope" (50). There is, moreover, a "jamming together of time" (84) as Ariana changes history. In her own persona, Ariana combines (or rather accumulates) various characters from different times. It seems that, as she moves backward, retreating in time, she acquires her personal version of a collective memory, remembering all previous characters, recalling their feelings, reliving their experiences, and assimilating their knowledge. Thus, time is "jammed" together within this one character, showing, perhaps, in the kaleidoscopic movement the lack of boundaries between women in an ideal sisterhood. The boundaries between past and present are insubstantial, or irrelevant, or even entirely absent. Perhaps at some point Ariana will be able to "understand where the world had gone wrong" (19). Perhaps with her collective (collected) wisdom, she will be able to prevent that great wrong.

Of the works cited here, Brewster's is the more problematic in that the author seems reluctant to press her theories towards a conclusion, or indeed, to indicate any possible conclusion. Although *Junction* is interesting and merits inclusion in this discussion, it remains unsatisfactory because of the many loose ends left by the author. It is conceivable, though, that this ambiguity mirrors the state in which the protagonist is left: travelling ever father back in time with no end in sight. It can also represent, to some extent, the ambiguity of an essential female experience which rejects boundaries and stasis (a patriarchal structure) in favour of chaos and movement (a matriarchal or anti-patriarchal structure).

Janet Lunn's books for young adults rely heavily on time-travel. In *The root cellar, Double spell*, and *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*, past and present are often

linked, most frequently by characters from a Canadian pioneer past who meet and befriend contemporary protagonists. Again, we see an intergenerational discourse which serves to strengthen the contemporary protagonist who learns how she fits within the continuum of history.

Rose Larkin of *The root cellar* is one of Lunn's contemporary protagonists. When her grandmother dies, Rose is sent to live with her aunt in rural Ontario. The lonely and hostile little girl feels that she is not wanted by, and does not belong with, her Ontario relatives. She escapes her unhappy situation by going down into her aunt's root cellar and by coming up into the Ontario of the 1860s. Rose enters this world several times throughout the course of the narrative, befriending the characters she meets there – Will and Susan – and helping them. In one instance, she and Susan go to the United States to find Will and to bring him home after the end of the American civil war. (Will, like many young Canadians of the period, had enlisted.) Not only does Rose enter the past, but also one of her new-found friends is able to enter the present. It is as though the two times operate simultaneously (but at different speeds – the past moving more quickly than the present). Susan, the pioneer woman, says to Rose: "I ain't no ghost. I ain't dead. I'm just shifted, and I don't know how no more than you do. It just happens, like I said" (Lunn, *Root* 37). Although the two eras operate simultaneously, time plays tricks on Rose. The friendship cannot last. Time moves forward much more quickly in the pioneer past; in addition, when Susan "shifts" into the present, she is a very old woman. Finally, Rose barely escapes from the past at the end of her last visit, and is prevented from ever returning to it. The root cellar is filled with water from a storm; also, a tree she uses in her entry ritual is destroyed by the same storm, effectively prohibiting her re-entry into the past.

Yet, having learned a valuable lesson from her experiences in the 1860s, Rose is now happy to stay where she is. She now knows that she is not alone: she has a family (her aunt's family, who has also inherited the pioneer legacy) and she belongs with them. Moreover, she had learned to reach out to others, both to give help and to receive help. Just as she helps Will and Susan, so too they help her. For example, Susan shifts into the present for the last time to help Rose with the Christmas dinner. Rose applies these lessons about love and trust to her life with her hitherto despised cousins and her aunt. Instead of criticizing her aunt, Rose begins to help her.

In Lunn's *Root cellar*, then, the past is both physically alive and emotionally alive. Rose physically enters the past; Susan shifts into the present. In addition, Rose has become a better and stronger person through her direct contact with her pioneer past, and by having made friends with a specific pioneer ancestor.

In *Double spell*, time-travel appears to be more of a mystical inner journey than a physical one, as twin sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, encounter three girls from a previous century: they meet a set of twins and another, more malevolent

spirit. As has been the case in the majority of these time-travel stories, inheritance plays a major role. When Jane and Elizabeth do some research, they discover that they are related to the twins from the past. Initially, however, they are uncertain of the identity of the girls they encounter. The confusion is heightened by the method of time-travel. Rather than travelling directly into the past as does Rose of *The root cellar*, Jane and Elizabeth identify with, or even become, the earlier twins, slipping at times into the past – brief incidents, confusing and frightening to the girls who retain their personal memories even as other memories and sensations are superimposed on their own. Finally, the third girl exists as an outsider; she, unlike the nineteenth-century twins, can appear in the present time. She is a malevolent spirit, causing accidents to happen: "There seemed to be eyes, unhappy eyes, unfriendly eyes, unkind eyes, waiting for something" (Lunn *Double* 33). The third girl is the major link between past and present as Jane and Elizabeth try to solve the mystery of the three girls (who were they?), and to pacify the restless, unhappy spirit, thereby coming to an understanding of their ancestors and themselves.

Whether the journey is an inner personal one, or a physical one – and it is difficult to define the journey here – the results are similar to those achieved by the other protagonists. The boundaries imposed by time (and by death) are revealed to be flimsy and false. The past cannot be forgotten; nor can it be ignored. As Laurence's Christie Logan has pointed out, "It'll all go along with you" (*Div* 207); it will appear in your face, as Emily Starr has discovered; it will govern your actions. The past, either a personal past or pioneer past, or both, continues to live in the present time; characters must face this past, whether they return to it, or it comes to them; and they must define themselves by it. Of her experience Lunn's Jane says, "It's sort of like having my memory and someone else's too" (Lunn, *Double* 86). The girls in *Double spell* pacify the malevolent spirit (she has caused the death of one of the nineteenth-century twins), and more importantly, they recognize that there is a link between past and present, even though, like Rose Larkin of *The root cellar*, they realize that they do not belong in the past. Jane and Elizabeth forgive and lay to rest the unpleasant ghost, recognizing as they do so that she is part of their ancestral legacy. Perhaps in facing this spirit and in acknowledging her as an ancestor, the contemporary twins have recognized an aspect of their own inner selves, a potential for evil.

Lunn's use of ancestors in her fiction is most clearly defined in *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*, and this definition sheds light on the combination of ancestry with time-travel in the various other works cited here. The protagonist, Mairi Urquhart, a nineteenth-century Scottish emigrant to Canada, has "the two sights" (Lunn, *Shadow* 58). Mairi says, "Sometimes I see the past, sometimes the future. Sometimes I see the distance – it is the unseen world" (*Shadow* 58). Mairi is aware of disasters before they happen; at one point, she anticipates the death of a child when she sees "the grey mist of death around him" (Lunn,

Bay 76). For a time, the girl is shunned by her fellow pioneers who distrust and fear her power.

Yet Mairi's insights are valuable ones. At the conclusion of the narrative, she looks into the future and defines the role she and the other pioneers will play in the lives of future generations when she says, "We are the old ones here" (Lunn, *Bay* 216). This established a link between Mairi's ancestral past (her own mythic "old ones" are the fairies and the spirits which inhabit the Scottish Highlands), her pioneer present in Upper Canada, and her future (when she and her fellow pioneers will become uniquely Canadian "old ones" for succeeding generations). Mairi quite rightly perceives her pioneer generation as the creator of myth in a country that is, at the time of her arrival, sadly devoid of a spirit world, in other words, lacking a mythology. Both Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, pioneer immigrants to Canada, comment on this problem. In *The backwoods of Canada*, for example, Traill says:

> As to ghosts or spirits they appear totally banished from Canada. This is too matter-of-fact country for such supernaturals to visit. Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that come before us. Fancy would starve for lack of marvellous food to keep her alive in the backwoods. We have neither fay nor fairy, ghost nor bogie, satyr nor wood-nymph; our very forests disdain to shelter dryad or hermadryad. (128)

In his "Haunted by lack of ghosts," Northrop Frye develops this particular line of thought, mentioning also Douglas LaPan's poem, "A country without a mythology" and Earle Birney's poem, "Can. Lit." from which Frye has taken his title. ("It's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted.") Yet there is most definitely a Canadian mythology – unknown to Traill, perhaps, because she was helping to create it. Our pioneer ancestors are our ghosts, as Lunn's Mairi quite rightly points out.

In her interpretation of the creation myth, however, Lunn agrees with Frye's theories of the development of literary myth and legend. In his "Conclusion to a *Literary history of Canada*," Frye says:[1]

> 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. He often has the feeling, and says so, that he is not actively shaping his material at all, but is rather a place where a verbal structure is taking its own shape. (348)

The pioneers, then, are the creators of myth, the "old ones" for contemporary protagonists. This explains the need by women to examine the past, to understand its relationship with the present. Thus, the appearance of the time-travel in some works of Canadian fiction is neither accidental nor coincidental. Through their contact with the past, the protagonists of these works are able to examine both their own personal past and a more general social mythology.

By extension, it follows that the "old ones" of Canadian mythology are alive in all of us and that the persistently recurring theme of time-travel speaks to some deep-seated need to understand our place in history. I began this paper by citing Margaret Atwood; the last word goes to her as well:

> The digging up of ancestors, calling up of ghosts, exposure of skeletons in the closet which are so evident in many cultural areas – the novel, of course, but also history and even economics – have numerous motivations, but one of them surely is a search for reassurance. We want to be sure that the ancestors, ghosts, and skeletons really are there, that as a culture we are not as flat and lacking in resonance as we were once led to believe. ("Canadian monsters" 100)

NOTES

1 In his conclusion to a *Literary history of Canada*, Frye says, "The Burke sense of society as a continuum – consistent with the pragmatic and conservative outlook of Canadians – is strong and begins early" (341).

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