SCOTTISH INFLUENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CANADIAN IDENTITY IN WORKS BY SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN, ALICE MUNRO, AND MARGARET LAURENCE

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family and to Charlie for their support and encouragement throughout my studies.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of Scottish influence and the construction of Canadian identity in works by three Scottish-Canadian woman writers: Sara Jeannette Duncan, Alice Munro, and Margaret Laurence. The Introduction places the authors within their cultural contexts, and examines past theories and discussions about popular Canadian myths and their fundamental connection to Canadian identity. Chapter One explores the historical and cultural context out of which Sara Jeannette Duncan wrote, her treatment in *The Imperialist* of the Scots Nation-Builder and female pioneer myths, and their contribution to a Canadian identity. Chapter Two examines the ways in which Alice Munro revises and subverts traditional pioneer myths in her fiction, and offers a pluralistic vision of the Canadian story and the Scottish-Canadian female experience. Chapter Three looks at the construction and representation of the Scottish-Canadian female experience in Margaret Laurence’s Manawaka cycle. Laurence explores in her Canadian fiction both the strengths and failings of Canada’s popular myths, and she further advocates the inclusion of Canada’s marginalized peoples in the representation of the nation’s history. Finally, the Conclusion suggests that the continuing presence of Scottish influence in Canadian culture has had an enormous impact on the evolution of Canada’s national identity and its social and cultural structure.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Patricia Monk, for her guidance and support throughout the writing of this thesis.
INTRODUCTION

In an interview entitled "The Scottish Ancestor: A Conversation with Alice Munro," the author suggests to Christopher Gittings that Canada "never really repudiated what we call the 'old country' the way the Americans did, and the way Australians to a later extent have. This may be a difficulty about forming a country, about our nationalism" (96). Among the many factors that have contributed to the formation of a Canadian national identity is what may be described as the shadow of the Scots. Only one of the many cultural pasts linked to Canada's through immigration, it is nevertheless enduring in the historical myths out of which Canada's ambiguous and controversial identity is formed. Yet as Gittings has argued, the "Scottishness" that endures in Canadian culture is not the result of a simple transfer of Scottish traditions onto Canadian soil. Indeed the tradition of Scottishness is enduring because it underwent a necessary process of translation into a new cultural hybrid in Canada, and has continued to influence heavily the construction of the country's cultural boundaries and historical myths. The treatment of this process by such Scottish-Canadian women writers as Sara Jeannette Duncan, Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence has privileged women's, as well as the Scottish, contribution to the emergence of a Canadian identity.

The struggle to define a Canadian identity is persistent in Canadian literature and criticism. As Robin Mathews states in Canadian Identity: Major Forces Shaping
conflict of opposites which often stalemate, often are forced to submit to compromise, but which - so far in our history - have not ended in final resolution” (1). Mathews outlines the roots of this struggle whose dialectic is “an insistent force of interrelation among political decision-making, social policy, religious faith, the erection of public institutions, philosophical ideas of human meaning, and...the individual’s relation to the community” (17); in this way, the Canadian identity is in a constant state of flux, ever-evolving to accommodate changing social structures. At different historical periods, therefore, being Canadian has had different meanings; yet a continual political and cultural influence has been present in the form of imperialism. Significantly, Mathews concludes that

[b]eing a country that has been part of imperial systems from the first moment when white people set foot on the land, Canadians have had to make terms with powers that have always pressed upon our sense of community. The influence of imperialism upon the dialectic has been formative. (18)

The paternal cultural influence of the Old World, as well as the historical political debates over its level of authority in Canadian concerns, has therefore had a fundamental impact upon the formation of a Canadian national identity.

Sara Jeannette Duncan’s fictional treatment of imperialism is thus critical to the study of an elusive Canadian identity. Duncan employs certain Canadian mythologies in her exploration, calling on shared stories to investigate a critical historical moment in Canada’s development. One of these mythologies is what Clara Thomas, in “Canadian Social Mythologies in Sara Jeannette Duncan’s The Imperialist,” calls the
“Nation-Builder (Scotch)” (38). The basis of this mythology is central to Canadian identification, for, as J.M.S. Careless explains in “‘Limited Identities’ in Canada,” although Canadian historiographers “may be somewhat past the colony-to-nation epitome of the Canadian story...[they] are still considerably hung up on the plot of nation-building.” It is this critical plot, and its historical association with the Scots in Canada, which is employed and manipulated in *The Imperialist*, and later debunked and revised in certain ways by Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence. Careless sees this enduring preoccupation with nation-building as somewhat destructive, for it “looks for the end to be achieved; one measures developments, pro or con, in terms of the goal - a strong united nation” (5); the concept of a “united nation” is in fact unrealistic in a country which is more distinctly marked by “regional identification” (10), epitomized in the concept of the mosaic, than by a forced and unnatural totality. Canadian regionalism is, according to Careless, due to certain obvious factors, such as “geographical segmentation...Anglo-French duality; and the lack of positive popular commitment to a strong federal union” (7), as well as to other less evident conditions including the historical economic focus on community interests, post World War I urbanization (8), and the ethnic mosaic (10). In a country which, as Robert Kroetsch has argued, evinces “disunity as unity,” it is then important to consider what narratives and myths are shared by Canadian writers, and why they endure in this country’s history. Those who struggle to define a unified Canadian identity are clearly in search of something other than a sterile political unity with which various Canadians might
identify, and, as Royce MacGillivray states in "The Pioneer Myth in Ontario: A
Unifying Factor," "[o]ne of the roles of myths is to unite" (35). In the absence of a
revolutionary origin myth, as is prominent in the United States, some Canadians have
formulated myths of heroic pioneers and Nation-Builders to substantiate a shared
story.

Sara Duncan's treatment of such myths in The Imperialist is directly informed
by the question of heritage; the protagonists of her narrative are Scots-Canadian, and
are often juxtaposed, in terms of morality and industry, against the ostensibly more
dominant presence of the English-Canadians. This contrast is, almost inevitably, to the
detriment of the English. Much literary and critical work has previously been done on
the subject of the social and cultural impact made by the immigration of the Scots to
Canada, for, in a country whose cultural identity is consistently indeterminate, the
mythology surrounding the Scots-Canadian is extraordinarily persistent. Its historical
presence in Canadian literature is endemic and as such has received much critical
attention. Because Canada's present dominant cultural foundations were determined
by the experiences of numerous groups of pioneering peoples, the formation of such
mythologies has provided a possible, though ideologically charged, basis upon which
to formulate cultural unity. The mythology of the Scots has been employed and
revised by numerous Canadian authors and has thus become an enduring element in
the country's social fabric.

I am interested in the confluence of two myths in particular, the Scots Nation-
Builder myth, and the female pioneer myth, both of which remain present within
Canada's literature. The historical importance of these myths to the creation of new social systems and stratification in a new world is unmistakable, as Duncan illustrates in *The Imperialist*. The author's focus, influenced as it was by the pivotal historical era in which she wrote, articulates the influence of the Scots and the mythologies which surround them, on the country's critical cultural shift from frontier to dominion, from Old World to New, and from a traditional to a contemporary social stratification. Duncan's treatment aids in creating these mythologies and to a large extent endorses them in order to formulate her own theories on cultural evolution in Canada. The more current perspectives of Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence, however, have revised traditionally recognized and accepted myths, privileging instead the historically silenced voices of certain women and ethnic minorities, and their formative roles in the making of this nation. In spite of MacGillivray's conviction that the pioneer myth (in Ontario) is "a safe myth [because] the people it celebrates can never confront us, can never fail or betray us" (39), the excavations of Munro and Laurence reanimate those voices thought to be forever silent.

Both Munro and Laurence pose questions about the exclusionary nature of the pioneer and Nation-Builder myths, and explore the more realistic social effects, both historical and contemporary, of accepted blanket assumptions; they therefore signal the destructive side of mythologizing. In "Modernity Without Tears: The Mythic World of Ralph Connor," D. Barry Mack describes the negative function of myth, stating that it "serves to promote certain role models and to perpetuate certain beliefs and practices....Myth smudges the inexplicable by associating it with the explicable, the
unfamiliar with the familiar, the tabooed with the permissible” (148). Margaret Laurence in her Manawaka Series, and Alice Munro in certain short stories such as “The Stone in the Field,” “Friend of My Youth,” “A Wilderness Station,” and her novel, *Lives of Girls and Women*, explore these mythological foundations upon which Canada’s modern social, political, and cultural ideologies have been built; in doing so, they uncover certain “smudges” effected by the mythologizing process in Canadian history.

The cultural and historical holding power of the Scots mythos in Canada is rooted in several facts. Thomas explains it thus:

> The Canadian mythology of the Scotch was based, of course, on a solid ground of fact - on the numbers of Scotch who were prominent in the exploring and settling of the country, in its fur trade and later, on every level of government and financial enterprise; on the Presbyterian church, the Established Church of Scotland and so a prime and powerful institution to its people; and above all, on the pride of race and clan among the Scotch, a pride that distance from the homeland enhanced and fostered. (47)

Interestingly, according to *Historical Statistics of Canada*, in 1901 the number of those of English descent in Canada more than doubled the number of Scots (18), yet the Scots are credited in much Canadian literature with braving and settling Canada’s frontier. As such, the pioneer and Nation-Builder myths form, in works such as those by Duncan and Connor, and later Munro and Laurence, a type of metanarrative that underlies many theories of Canadian identity, or “Canadianism.”

Although I recognize that the term “metanarrative” is potentially problematic, I believe it is an important one to my discussion of Canada’s emerging cultural identity.
In “Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy,” Robert Kroetsch defines metanarrative as the shared story - what I prefer to call the assumed story - [which] has traditionally been basic to nationhood.... An obvious example is the persistence of The American Dream, with its assumptions about individual freedom, the importance of the frontier, the immigrant experience, as it functions in the literature of the United States. (355)

While Kroetsch contends that Canada does not have a unifying story, I disagree. Rather, I believe Royce MacGillivray is correct when he asserts that in spite of its ostensibly exclusionary “ethnic narrowness,” (43) the pioneer myth unites persons of varying ethnicities and mores with “a moral connection through the puritanism we associate with the pioneer religions of whatever persuasion, and the puritanism that forms a powerful strand in most religions, including the oriental ones” (44); it is important to note, however, that while MacGillivray sees this religious affiliation as one of the most significant connections between various ethnic groups in Canada, he does not imply that the stories of such groups as the Chinese-Canadian labourers who built Canada’s national railroad would be included or voiced in Canadian pioneer myths. This metanarrative relies on its own assumptions about cultural dislocation, religious puritanism, strife and triumph over an unforgiving landscape, as well as the possibilities afforded by a New World whose land, once conquered, would prove fruitful. Significantly, Thomas concludes her examination of the Scots Nation-Builders mythos with the declaration that it is “based on privations and hardships overcome or, at the very least, endured with pride in the endurance. It is a Canadian mythic and
secular doctrine of the elect and it retains its strength” (368). Likewise, MacGillivray describes this myth as “socially and geographically, a rather generous myth: welcoming rather than exclusive” (45), provincially, and I believe, nationally.

The Nation-Builder myth stresses the particular aptness displayed by the Scots immigrants in laying the foundation of a country. As mentioned earlier, Thomas credits this mythology to the combined influences of the Presbyterian Church, the financial and political success of many early Scots settlers, and the staunch and enduring racial pride among those same settlers. The Scots “Nation-Builder,” as he or she is characterized by early Canadian writers,¹ is an individual whose moral strength, vision, and industry have assured his or her success on the frontier, out of which emerges the heroic builder of a nation.

The mythology of the Scots “Nation-Builder” is no doubt an offshoot of the pioneer myth, or the frontier myth, a common story throughout Canadian literature. E.R. Forbes, in “In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967,” asserts that the ideals of the western frontier myth -

democracy, cultural fusion, agrarianism, and progress - had become so firmly rooted in British, American, and Canadian traditions that most English-Canadians delighted in ascribing them to their country. The popular literature of the day, including the work of Canadians Ralph Connor and R.J.C. Stead...trumpeted the virtues of the frontier ad nauseam. (15)

¹ See also Ralph Connor’s The Man from Glengarry, and Glengarry School Days. Elizabeth Thompson, in The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Character Type, argues that “Duncan and Connor tend to be representative of Canadian writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (6). Both writers privilege characterization of the Scots-Canadian.
The frontier myth is, furthermore, fundamental to what Elizabeth Thompson, in *The Pioneer Woman*, describes as the “pioneer woman,” a “female character type...which is arguably unique to Canada.” Thompson stresses the recurrence of this character type in Canadian literature and its “use as a metaphor for Canadian femininity” (3). In *The Imperialist*, Duncan employs a specific mythology of the Scots Nation-Builder and pioneer which underscores the feminine participation in and contribution to the creation of this country, and thus renders visible the Scottish-Canadian female experience as it evolves during the period of transition between physical and social frontiers, a critical juncture in the nation’s growth. From different historical perspectives, Munro and Laurence later create female Scots pioneer figures who struggle against a strictly defined “Canadian femininity,” and whose roles in Canada were and continue to be extremely restrictive. Both authors subvert traditional beliefs in the possibilities afforded women in the New World and illustrate their shared contention that the pioneering experience in fact contributed in certain ways to the preservation of patriarchal authority in this country.

The characteristics attributed to these Scots pioneers are clearly rooted in the religious and social ideals that came to Canada with the Scottish immigrants. Religion has historically been a powerful and formative institution for Scots-Canadians such as Duncan, Laurence, and Munro, and, in particular, Presbyterianism has had an enormous impact on Canadian life and culture. According to William Klempa, in his introduction to *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow*, when the Presbyterian Church in Canada was formed in 1875, “the new church became the largest Protestant
denomination in Canada...[and] during the next fifty years the newly formed church experienced remarkable growth (8). Klempa goes on to illustrate the active historical role of the Canadian Presbyterian:

Presbyterians...represent an important historical presence within Canadian society. Both in the colonial period and in the age of Confederation, Presbyterians were a vital, energetic, and influential force. They were quintessentially “mainstream” and they exerted their influence by virtue of the social, economic, political, educational, and cultural advantages they enjoyed. (9).

The advantages signaled by Klempa are fundamental to the authority of the Scots presence in Canadian literature and mythology, an authority which is deconstructed and destabilized in different ways by Munro and Laurence. Laurence, in particular, explores at length in her Manawaka cycle the social privilege exercised by Scots settlers in an early Canadian community, as well as the counterfeit foundation upon which that privilege was based. She thus subverts the traditionally recognized “doctrine of the elect” by revealing the hypocrisies underlying the authority of the Scots in Canada.

Calvinist-Presbyterianism was brought to the Maritimes and Central Canada by Scottish settlers.² Klempa explains the fundamental connection between the Scots’ religious ethic, and their purported suitability as Canadian pioneers, and perceives the Calvinist-Presbyterian outlook as the root of such virtues as “industriousness, integrity,

---

and thriftiness.” Summarizing the ubiquitous influence of Presbyterianism on Scottish settlers in Canada, Klempa states that:

[for many it was central and dominating, and through them it exercised its influence in both the private and public spheres. In others, it was more peripheral. Yet even where this was the case, the ethical and moral principles which had become part of the Scottish character continued to operate with strength and vitality. (2)]

Likewise, Pierre Berton helps mythologize the strength and industry of the Scots settlers, commenting in *The National Dream* that it was “this hard ethic...that explains the dominance of the Scot in pioneer Canada....For the Scots it was work, save and study; study, save and work...the Scots ran the country” (qtd. in Klempa 2). The Calvinist-Presbyterian outlook so often revered in these mythologies is in fact deconstructed in certain ways by Duncan, Laurence and Munro; Duncan’s examination is playful, however, whereas Munro and Laurence uncover the disturbing repressiveness fundamental to Calvinist-Presbyterian doctrine. Munro, specifically, illustrates through the physical and emotional scars that mark her female characters the continuing effects of a fundamentalist religion that developed on Canadian soil and thus subverts traditional idealized representations of the sustaining religious power of the pioneer religions.

The influence of religious ethic on the Canadian pioneer was enormous, as MacGillivray points out in his discussion of the pioneer myth quoted earlier. The formation of systems of stratification, including gender roles, was then heavily
informed by the tenets of Calvinism. In *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, John Lee Thompson describes Calvin’s authority in modern Western culture:

> [H]e stands at or near the head of a tradition which is still very much a *living* tradition, whether one categorizes that tradition as Western thought in general or as Reformed theology in particular. Calvin lives also in more oblique ways in Western thought, politics, and society, as a sure part of...the “effective history” which constitutes and shapes us long before we are aware of it. (2)

Thompson finds that with the exception of certain innovations, such as Calvin’s desire to “eliminate the double standard in divorce and morals legislation” (15), the theologian’s “traditional hierarchicalism is not seriously weakened even by his most sensitive or compassionate utterances” (16), and fundamental to his doctrine was indeed the subjection of women in marriage. Certainly aware of religious influence in Canada, Duncan, Munro and Laurence each investigate the effects of Calvinist-Presbyterian religion on the Scottish-Canadian woman, and its tremendous influence on the shaping of gender roles in Canada.

The experience of the immigrant is often further marked by the reality of cultural dislocation, caused by the ideological and cultural gap between the Old World and the New, and by the choice between achieving cultural translation or attempting a type of translocation which endeavors to impose Old World values on a new social context. I was first introduced to the term “cultural translation” by Christopher E. Gittings in his article “Constructing a Scots-Canadian Ground: Family History and Cultural Translation in Alice Munro.” Gittings admits that the term “translation” is a “slippery” one, but attempts to define it nonetheless:
Scottish immigrants did not simply transpose their culture from one surface to another; they had to reshape or translate the New World into systems of meaning by bridging the gap between the Old World and the one in which they found themselves. Through this process they could begin to recognize the familiar in an alien space. The Old World signifying systems used to enact this transformation, however, are transformed themselves in a marrying of their cultural referents to new signifieds.

Thus the act of "bridging a gap" between the two systems creates a "new entity" (27), and cultural translation has transpired.

In *The Imperialist*, Duncan illustrates the difference between an Anglophilic family, who continue to grasp at English customs while in Canada, and the Scottish Murchisons who have achieved a form of translation. The cultural difference was possibly due to the Scots’ historical struggle for identity, for there was no official Scottish citizenship at this time, whereas Canadian citizenship was possible; thus the New World offered a concrete identity in the face of both the pervasive authority of British power, and the dislocation produced by the Highland Clearances, which caused mass emigration to Canada. In his article, "'Sounds in the Empty Spaces of History': The Highland Clearances in Neil Gunn’s *Highland River* and Alistair Macleod’s ‘The Road to Rankin’s Point’,” Christopher Gittings discusses the modern literary presence in certain Scottish and Canadian fiction of the "dislocation and cultural erasure of the nineteenth-century Highland Clearances" (104). According to Gittings, the work of these writers often attempts to "construct identifying relationships" out of the dislocation upon which the Scottish-Canadian cultural identity is formed:
Scottish and Canadian writers such as Gunn, MacLeod, Chrichton Smith, and Laurence textualize the historically dynamic, culturally disruptive, and in this disruption which is cultural transfer, highly syncretic moments of the Clearances when our two cultures intersect, to establish personal identity in the present, and make visible, through the subjectivity of personal narrative, what received history has rendered invisible. (104)

Likewise, through processes of deconstruction, destabilization and re-interpretation, Duncan, Munro, and Laurence render visible the Scottish-Canadian female experience, and equate, or utilize, the immigrant pioneer experience and the associated processes of dislocation and translation, to discuss the new status of women in the New World of Canada, to discuss their share in building this New World, and to call attention to both historical and present-day experiences of marginalization based on class, race and gender.

The distinct fictional explorations of Duncan, Munro, and Laurence each evince the conflicts between a profound pride in the Scots-Canadian heritage and the knowledge of the destructive influence exerted by the strength of that heritage. In very different ways, and from very different historical viewpoints, each of these writers challenge received Canadian history and extol the need for varied voices within the Canadian cultural mosaic in order to redefine the bases of the nation’s defining myths as they have been shaped by the Scots-Canadian authority. The contribution of women in the creation of Canada’s cultural fabric is a central concern for Duncan, Munro, and Laurence, and is, significantly, treated in vastly different ways by each author in spite of the shared considerations of small-town parochialism, a rigid religious ethic, and a
strictly defined social stratification. While Duncan creates a mildly subversive fictional challenge to the oppressive influences of each of these factors, Munro and Laurence strategically deconstruct the very foundations of one of Canada’s most prominent mythologies and its contribution to the continuing existence of gendered, economic, and, in Laurence’s case, racial marginalization.
CHAPTER ONE

Only one of numerous Scottish-Canadian woman writers, Sara Jeannette Duncan nonetheless deserves close critical attention for her astute portrayal in *The Imperialist* of a Scots-Canadian community at the turn of the century. Because she directly addresses the nation’s critical shift from frontier territory to dominion, her narrative is important to the study of Canadian literature and the enduring debate concerning Canadian identity; her treatment of Canadian social mythology, metanarrative, and religion, as well as her challenge to conventional genres and gender politics make her work critical to the study of Canadian culture, as well as to any exploration of the Scottish-Canadian female experience. According to Duncan’s narrative construction, a mixture of inflexible religious ideology, repressive patriarchal authority, and the exertion of diligence, strength, and pride are inherent in this experience. Duncan also creates within *The Imperialist*’s fictional setting a moderately subversive female perspective through which she delineates her vision of the role of women within the larger patriarchal framework of the Scots Nation-Builder mythology, thus acknowledging the physical and intellectual contribution of the female “Nation-Builder.” Furthermore, her examination of the problems and possibilities posed by the realities of cultural dislocation, translation, and translocation in an emerging nation offer a representation of “Canadian Scottishness” that elucidates the bases of an enduring mythos, the shadow of the Scots in Canada.
As a colonial and a woman writing out of an established patriarchal culture, and toward a new order in a “New World,” Duncan was aware of the possibilities afforded by her creative and cultural role as a writer; she thus recognized the importance of her own self-definition and its potential to modify or reconstruct existing gender roles. In his critical biography, Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire, Thomas E. Tausky describes Duncan’s creative perspective thus: “[d]espite a variety of subjects, a consistent habit of mind manifests itself in Sara Jeannette Duncan’s work....She was always conscious of being a modern woman, of being a pioneer in the struggle to evolve a new type of self-definition.”¹ Duncan’s self-definition was directly informed by both her gender and her heritage, as well as by how these factors contributed to her role as a pioneer feminist in an emerging nation. Examining her self-definition is thus a means of establishing an informed understanding of the strategies and conditions involved in the making of The Imperialist, a text which contains many autobiographical elements. Always consciously aware of her marginalized position as a woman, Duncan often reflects in her work the challenges inherent in the female experience within a patriarchal society; as Misao Dean asserts in A Different Point of View, Duncan’s belief in the feminist cause placed her “on the margins of centrist ideology”² (5). Duncan herself faced

¹ Thomas E. Tausky, Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire (Port Credit: P. D. Meaney, 1980) 21. Subsequent references to Tausky’s biography will be cited in-text and initialized as NOE.

² It is clear in the context of this argument that by the term “centrist ideology” Dean is referring simply to the dominant ideology of Duncan’s time.
many social and political challenges throughout her lifetime, although it must be acknowledged that she remained rooted in the ideological centre by virtue of her class, race, and education. Her early experiences in the parochial, class-conscious town of Brantford established Duncan’s awareness of her own comparatively privileged position; as the daughter of a successful Scots merchant, she was granted immunity to the narrow biases of the town. In *Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan*, Marion Fowler explains Brantford’s social order: “Already in Brantford, as there would be later in Sarah [sic] Duncan’s life, there were the Rulers, the sub-Rulers, and the Ruled: the British, the colonials, and the Indian natives” (30). While self-consciously aware of her own complex position within the broad social and political framework out of which she wrote, Duncan thus attempted to establish a unique voice for the pioneering “modern woman” and in this way to participate in the creation of new gender roles. While it cannot be denied that her comparatively privileged social position was what entitled her to participate in this social evolution, her viewpoint is nonetheless a critical one to examine in the context of changing stratification. Her own cultural biases clearly influenced her voice, and later writers, such as Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence, illustrate the enormous cultural effects of these biases.

Duncan was aware of the catalysts of social evolution in Canada at the turn of the century, and contributed greatly, through her writing, to the forum of political discussion in which she matured. The conflict between old and new was a critical one during Duncan’s time, as Canada debated the question of imperialism and the
conformation the country’s emerging identity would assume. The question of imperialism was a crucial source of political and cultural contention in turn-of-the-century Canada; at an important moment in Canadian history, the nation was poised between retaining its ties with Britain, and espousing a developing identity as an independent nation. As Carl Berger describes it in *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914*, one characterization of Canadian imperialism was that it conflicted directly with the interests of Canadian nationalism, and furthermore, the conflict between imperialism and nationalism added up to a struggle between the past and the future, the desire to remain a colony and the wish to be a free nation. Once this framework was accepted, it was easy to account for the failure of imperialism: it succumbed to Canadian nationalism. (9)

The importance of an independent Canadian identity and ideology ultimately prevailed over an historically significant connection with the mother country. Berger further states that critics of imperialism saw it as “a reactionary remnant of the past vainly struggling to prevent the triumph of ‘Canadian nationalism.’” According to this critique, imperialism did not grow out of the Canadian soil, but was imposed from outside by an overly zealous British Colonial office” (8). The threat of what many saw as a repressive colonial rule troubled those colonials who longed for a “less subordinate place within the Empire” (Berger 5) and the consequent possibilities of an independent Canadian culture.
Not only were political and economic issues being hotly debated at this time in Canada's development, but so was the ideologically charged question of accepted gender roles. Tausky explains that in spite of Duncan's variety of written media "[o]ne subject is pursued with unflagging energy...the consciousness of the modern woman" (31). This new identity was emerging out of the "unavoidable confusion as the edifice went up"; the concept of the "modern woman" was one that greatly interested a young idealistic Duncan, and one she often addressed in her journalism. She understood the necessity for change and for the emergence of a modern woman whose aspirations would take her outside the domestic sphere. In an article entitled "Grandmotherly Repose," Duncan asserts that "[c]areers, if possible, and independence anyway, [women] must all have, as musicians, artists, writers, teachers, lawyers, doctors...Politics are beginning to fascinate us and we have concluded that we want to vote." Similarly, in "How an American Girl Became a Journalist," a thinly veiled account of her own endeavors toward journalistic success, Duncan describes at length her conviction that a social transition is necessary in order to allow the voice of women to be heard:

In this golden age for girls, full of new interests and new opportunities, we all - you, the musical girl; you, the literary girl; you, the artistic girl; you, the practical girl; and I, whose appropriate adjective is of no consequence - want to do something; something more difficult than embroidered sachets, and more important than hand-painted

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3 Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Imperialist 1904 (Tecumseh Press Ltd., 1996) 37. Subsequent references to The Imperialist will be cited in-text and initialized as IMP.
4 Sara Jeannette Duncan, Selected Journalism, ed. T. E. Tausky (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press Ltd., 1978) 34. Subsequent references to Duncan's Selected Journalism will be cited in-text and initialized as SJ.
tambourines. The sachets and the tambourines are very charming in their way, but as the chief industrial end of life we have begun to find them unsatisfying. (SJ 6)

While Duncan never fails to acknowledge the passing importance of traditional roles and spheres occupied by women, she nonetheless recognizes the fissure between old and new that has occurred in Canada by the end of the nineteenth century. Thompson explains the evolution of gender roles addressed by Duncan in her writing, and the ideological gap out of which Duncan wrote; Thompson credits the shift from physical to social frontier for increased feminine participation in the public arena: “[t]he major emphasis was shifted from [woman’s] contribution towards changing a hostile physical frontier to her participation in the process of improving an unfriendly or even unjust social ore” (62). This displacement inspired many thematic constructs in Duncan’s writing, for in the ideological space created by the fissure between old and new social systems and gender roles, Duncan perceived a creative space in which to express her unique voice.

Duncan’s fiction thus frequently explores the social position of women and their corresponding social and cultural possibilities and limitations. Herself a pioneer in journalism and professional writing as a woman in Canada, Duncan understood the need to challenge normative gender roles. As a result of her ambition and determination, Duncan became the first woman to hold a full-time position writing editorials for the Toronto Globe (NOE 19), and in her writing she consistently took what Tausky characterizes as “a consciously modern approach” (NOE 20). The
fundamental conflict between tradition and modernity was then the construct upon which Duncan voiced her conviction. In *A History of Canadian Literature*, W.H. New asserts that in “her novels and sketches, the author repeatedly plants a woman in foreign territory and watches her contend, or contrasts an independent-minded woman with a more conventional one” (107-8). *The Imperialist*‘s structure relies on the juxtaposition of the heroine, Advena Murchison, against her brother Lorne, against several conventionally-minded women, and against her romantic prospect, Hugh Finlay. The character of Advena is in many ways like Duncan was herself, an independent, ambitious, non-conformist woman whose learned moral probity is in constant conflict with her passionate personal ideals. Advena’s “foreign territory” is, ironically, the very familiar world of Elgin, and of the Murchison home, for she differs from the “typical” Elgin woman: “Advena, bookish and unconventional, was regarded with dubiety. She was out of the type; she had queer satisfactions and enthusiasms” (*IMP* 34-5). Similarly, Duncan often felt alienated from the Brantford community in which she was raised, in spite of her early desire to conform to the town’s rigid social structure. Yet eventually, through the vehicle of her ambition, Duncan came “to terms with her uniqueness, and the town’s disapprobation” (Fowler 27).

The question of what constituted Duncan’s “uniqueness” is a critical one, for in many ways it was her compellingly ambitious desire to participate culturally in the building of her country that distinguished her from her peers. In “This Little Outpost of Empire”: Sara Jeannette Duncan and the Decolonization of Canada,” Ajay Heble
ascribes to Duncan a fundamentally conceptive role: "These two acts of creation, the creation of a novel and the creation of a nation, are linked in such a manner that Duncan’s very method of writing becomes a reflection of the way she would like to see her country governed" (225). Her own specifically creative role, then, doubtless illustrates her further belief in and vision of female participation in the construction of Canada. Adopting the role of pioneer on Canada’s new social frontier, Duncan, through her writing, actively develops a gendered interpretation of what Clara Thomas defines as one of Canada’s most “powerful and pervasive mythologies... ‘The Hero and Nation-Builder (Scotch)’” (“Social Mythologies” 38). Her exploration in The Imperialist of the specifically Scottish-Canadian female experience offers an illustration of Duncan’s specific world-view influenced as it is by her heritage and her gender.

Duncan’s development of the Scottish-Canadian female experience within the narrative frame of The Imperialist is both comical and complex. Juxtaposing a stereotypical characterization of Mrs. Murchison as the practical and conventional Scottish pioneer woman against a comical portrayal of her daughter Stella - whose frequently caricatural assertive sarcasm hyperbolizes the incipient concept of the “modern woman” - Duncan forms a comical background for the development of the central female character, Advena Murchison. Advena is further positioned against her brother, Lorne, whose political aspirations and professional ambition in many ways reveal her gender-specific social limitations, and against Dora Milburn whose
antiquated ideals mark her as unsuited to the demands of the New World. Advena is a strong female character; her notable dissimilarity from her mother, from Dora, and, initially, from Finlay’s Scottish fiancé Christie Cameron, indicates Duncan’s own recognition of the gap between Old World and New, between Scottish and Canadian cultures, and between traditional and developing gender roles in Canada near the turn of the century.

Christie Cameron’s pragmatic attitude toward marriage reflects a distinctly traditional attitude; her arranged marriage to Finlay satisfies her material requirements, and Duncan herself understood that “in the olden time the girl who refused a man who was willing and able to support her in comfort assumed a responsibility for her future that is rather alarming to think of” (“Modern Woman” 40). Oddly, Christie Cameron and Finlay’s aunt, Mrs. Kilbannon, in spite of their obvious function in illustrating the division between Old and New Worlds and the reality of cultural dislocation, initially appear to negate Duncan’s theories regarding the aptness and adaptability of the female Scots Nation-Builders immigrant. This is, in my opinion, a necessary narrative construction on Duncan’s part in order to endear the reader to Advena and Finlay’s cause. Christie ultimately proves herself adaptable to the demands of the New World by accepting Dr. Drummond’s utilitarian marriage proposal, and thus conforms to the parameters of the Nation-Builders mythology as it is revised by Duncan; this marriage of convenience is also, however, an echo of those Old World values against which Duncan was writing.
For female character construction in *The Imperialist* Duncan relies heavily on a popular Canadian character type: the Pioneer woman. Elizabeth Thompson describes this character type as "being an accepted and essential aspect of female characterization in Canadian fiction" (3). Interestingly, Thompson notes Duncan’s more modern understanding and employment of this character type, having adapted the characterization of Advena Murchison to suit the nation’s "new set of social circumstances" (61), and Thompson further notes the author’s awareness of shifting ideological boundaries in a new nation. Thompson asserts that "Advena’s frontier in *The Imperialist* is one which is composed of social attitudes and issues....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." (61-62). The "pioneer feminist" in an emerging nation occupies a crucial position, as Duncan understood; in fact the very use of the term "pioneer" involves an understanding of a conflation between the literal and ideological "ground-breaking" potential sought after and achieved by certain immigrants who were involved in the settling of Canada.

For women, especially, the potential offered by the New World originally offered a degree of novelty and empowerment. D.M.R. Bentley, in "Breaking the 'Cake of Custom,'" characterizes the role embodied by many female emigrants as "the
gender-blurring *topos* of the female Crusoe*” (96); the appeal of this empowered position did not, as Duncan emphasizes, cease once the physical frontier was conquered, but was instead redirected toward ideological conquest. The author was clearly very much aware of the pivotal historical moment at which women found themselves near the turn of the century. The narrator’s equivocal assertion that Advena’s university education and teaching experience “placed her arbitrarily outside the sphere of domestic criticism” (23) illustrates the fundamental conflict that characterized the transition from old to new. The role of women was initiatory in an evolving culture, and thus Duncan’s writing, fictional and non-fictional, was creative in the sense that the foundations for gender roles in this New World were being laid.

It cannot be denied that Duncan’s construction in *The Imperialist* of woman’s roles in an emerging Canada is remarkably idealistic in many ways, yet as a political writer aware of her potential influence, Duncan’s choice to glorify social and cultural stratification in a modern Canada is reasonable, although it appears somewhat myopic to the modern reader; at a pivotal moment in Canada’s cultural maturation, Duncan chooses to privilege the potential for gender equality over the reality of inequality which she experienced. Thus the author neglects to inject any potentially subversive ambivalence about the transition she is describing in her novel; this omission also reflects her own moderate liberalism which was likely a product of her privileged

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5 Bentley’s use of the term “Crusoe” does not comprehend the racial implications generally associated with this narrative; he has applied the term solely as it relates to the empowered roles of women in frontier and post-frontier Canada.
racial and class status. Later writers, such as Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence, however, cast a more critical eye over the cultural transition from frontier to dominion, exploring the enduring presence of Old World repressiveness, and gender inequality that exists in post-frontier Canada, and the persistent political, economic, and cultural domination of the Scots in certain communities in spite of increased ethnic diversity.

Duncan’s use of the prototype of the “pioneer woman” is astute, for the connection between the country’s developing identity, and the pioneer woman’s physical and intellectual role in constructing that identity, is unmistakable. This connection offered an empowering function to women of the New World; as Thompson states, the “portrayal of feminists as pioneers was...a logical step in the evolution of the perception of the pioneer woman as a feminine ideal” (62). This portrayal was clearly also a reasonable step in the construction of a unique female perspective, and a creative process by which women’s roles within the Nation-Builder mythology might be disclosed and defined. The contrast between Advena, the novel’s central “pioneer woman,” and the women who surround her is pivotal to the representation of the female and colonial experience, and the Scottish-Canadian female experience; the story of her difference indicates both the struggle of the disempowered to be heard above the dominant voice of the norm, and the importance of recognition for the contributions of the marginalized. Duncan does so by employing the treasured Canadian mythology of the Scots, revising it from a distinctly feminine point of view.
The Scottish-Canadian female experience is, according to Duncan, one which involves strength, pride, and the move towards self-empowerment within a larger disempowering cultural or political framework. Her construction of a female perspective within a patriarchal colonial setting emphasizes the contribution of the feminine in Canada’s development. Although Duncan’s female characters in The Imperialist frequently perform ostensibly stereotypical or caricatural functions, Dean nevertheless suggests that the “male characters in Duncan’s books attempt to unite the Empire using the tools of trade and diplomacy, but the female characters actually unite the Empire with the tangible ties of marriage and children” (13). In spite of her comparatively limited cultural and political resources, Mrs. Murchison’s pivotal role in the Murchison home is carefully recorded by the narrator, who notes that within the household “Mrs. Murchison remains the central figure...with her family radiating from her” (5). Furthermore, while Duncan does not minimize the importance of the male contribution to Canada’s emerging culture, she nonetheless carefully underscores the unique contribution of the feminine to the creation of this culture, and simultaneously stresses the experience of working from within a disempowering framework.

As mentioned earlier, Advena’s union with Finlay holds an ideological and cultural significance for the nation’s development, but the union is also significant with respect to the role of women. In spite of Mrs. Murchison’s proclamation that Advena “will never be fit for the management of a house” because she has seen her “daughter reach and pass the age of twenty-five without having learned properly to
make her own bed” (IMP 22), Advena, it may be assumed, is successful as Finlay’s wife. The brief glimpses afforded the reader of shared domesticity between Finlay and Advena confirm her ability to successfully direct her academic intelligence toward the pragmatic; to Finlay she offers practical advice and comically rebukes him for his antiquated notions: “I wouldn’t advise you to have [your coat] lined with fur....And the buffaloes are all gone, you know - thirty years ago....You really are not modern in practical matters” (177). Most importantly, however, her unusual level of education and her teaching career, described by the narrator as the “definite line” (35) she had taken and pursued in spite of its irregularity, offer her different strengths and qualifications which are valued by Finlay. The relationship between the two is based on equality and intellectual exchange; the narrator describes “the philosophy of life, as they were intensely creating it,” (IMP 175) and thus implies their capacity to work together as partners in the creation of the New World. Duncan therefore acknowledges the changing criterion for wifehood, and advocates the intellectual participation of women within both public and private spheres. Indeed, while Duncan directed her own intellectual interest toward the nation’s political scene, she discovered a fundamental connection between her gender and her nationality, and further found in writing an appropriately influential outlet for her beliefs.

The debates concerning imperialism and gender politics were thus intimately connected for Duncan. As Misao Dean recognizes, the author perceived a significant
link between her Canadian identity and her feminism: “Duncan’s view of her position as a Canadian was intimately related to her view of her role as a woman” for,

[a]s a woman, created and defined as “other” by malestream ideology, Duncan was aware that social, political, and literary conventions imposed artificial limitations on women, just as British colonial stereotypes placed artificial limits on Canadians. Moreover, her comments on the role of the heroine in the modern novel clarify her view that to write as a colonial in an international context is to write in a feminine voice. (5)

The importation and, perhaps, attempted translocation of prevailing ideologies from the “mother country” collided with evolving ideologies in a New World; the marginalized entity, therefore, had to fight hard to be heard. Constance Rooke’s analysis of a similar cultural juxtaposition in Margaret Laurence’s *The Stone Angel*, describes this disunity between cultures as “the colonial sensibility which looks to the old world for its values and for a continuation of class privilege” (‘Feminist Reading’ 27). In *The Imperialist* Duncan negotiates between old and new, illustrating, through Finlay’s unimpassioned choice of duty over truth and self, and Lorne’s political failure, that exclusionary allegiance to Old World ideology is potentially a very destructive sentiment. The novel’s ultimately ambivalent attitude toward the project of imperialism indicates perhaps an awareness of the potential for Canada’s cultural subsumption within the imperial connection, and, likewise, the threat of silencing the feminine voice within a dominant patriarchal narrative. A desire for Canadian independence then reflects Duncan’s aspiration for a distinctive female standpoint
within this new culture, as well as the prospect of a Canadian culture which would
develop in spite of the realities of cultural dislocation, translocation and translation.

Furthermore, the conflict between old and new within the narrative relates
directly to my discussion of the artistic importance of Duncan’s Scottish heritage. The
connections between writing as a Scot, as a Canadian, and as a woman are
tremendously important to Duncan’s own voice as it comes through in *The Imperialist.*
As mentioned earlier, Duncan equated writing with a colonial voice in an international
context, to writing as a woman in a patriarchal society. I believe it is also important to
consider the literary voice of the Scot as historically aware of the powerful presence of
England, a presence out of which the Scot has emphatically made him or herself heard.
The empowering female perspective constructed by Duncan in *The Imperialist* is
undoubtedly a product of her Scottish heritage and her Canadian experience, as well as
her gender. Tausky, however, also points out the negative aspect of Scotland’s
cultural shadow in *The Imperialist:* “Though not as harshly criticized in the novel as
England, Scotland also plays a part in balancing the image of Elgin. Scottish customs,
measured against Elgin’s, produce a more dignified, but less flexible cast of mind”
(167). As a first-generation Canadian, Duncan was powerfully influenced by her
father’s Scottish culture, and Old World ideology was strongly felt in the Duncan
household.

Likewise, two Old World patriarchs in *The Imperialist,* the Reverend Dr.
Drummond and John Murchison, are fundamentally linked to Scotland: "The new country filled their eyes; the new town was their opportunity, its destiny their fate...yet obscure in the heart of each of them ran the undercurrent of the old allegiance. They had gone the length of their tether, but the tether was always there" (IMP 12). Sara Duncan wrote out of the hold of that tether, revering and repudiating it at alternate moments within *The Imperialist*, the ideological, religious and cultural influences of the "old allegiance" doubtless held her, as a woman, in an exceptionally firm grasp, the oppressive strength of which could not be fully realized by her male counterparts. Indeed, it was while writing this, her only Canadian novel, Fowler suggests, that Duncan realized "Brantford had formed her, moulded her...its narrow parochialism and prejudices had formed the wall over which she had leapt to freedom" (253). The combined influences of her gender, her ambition, her heritage and her love of and interest in her own maturing nation generated her creative participation in the mythologies of the Pioneer and the Scots Nation-Builder.

At a formative time in any nation's cultural history, the creation of mythology and metanarrative is a crucial artistic and literary process. Duncan's creative project begins with the conception of a representative Scots-Canadian community in transition between frontier and nation. Using the fictional backdrop of "Elgin," Duncan introduces and explores prevailing Canadian mythology and metanarrative. Significantly, Sara Duncan drew from her own experience to create the fictional setting of *The Imperialist*, a commercially dynamic and socially rigid town peopled
with a mixture of industrious Scots, reactionary Brits and marginalized 'Indians'. The daughter of a successful Scottish immigrant, Duncan was herself raised in the Scots Calvinist tradition in Brantford, Ontario, the community that inspired the novel’s fictional setting of Elgin. She therefore had a personal investment in the creation of Elgin, and of the Murchison family, around which the narrative is framed. Subject to her father’s powerful influence during her formative years in Brantford, Duncan experienced and absorbed the concrete economic and cultural bases of the Scots Nation-Builder mythology. Indeed, Duncan’s only Canadian narrative relies heavily on this myth. Thomas characterizes Duncan’s fictional treatment of ethnicity thus:

There is nothing subtle about the racial aspects of 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. (“Social Mythologies” 42) 6

It is assuredly not coincidental that in a novel so conscious of differing nationalities, the Murchisons, who are, according to the narrator, “too good for their environment,”(34) are a Scots-Canadian family. Although the Murchisons are, in critical work, frequently grouped with other families that hail from the Mother country of Great Britain, Thomas underscores the subtle ethnic distinction overlooked by many

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6 Significantly, Thomas does not distinguish between race and ethnicity in her discussion of The Imperialist, yet it would appear that the distinction Duncan underscores, between the Scots and the British, is based on cultural and ideological difference.
critics. It is this distinction which underlies Duncan's treatment of the Nation-Builder mythos.

The Murchisons are quite transparently juxtaposed against a rigidly class-conscious English-Canadian family, thus proving the preeminence of these Scots settlers. Tausky sees Duncan's distinction between the Scottish-Canadian Murchisons and the English-Canadian Milburns as "two alternative directions for the evolution of a more advanced culture" (163). It is this distinction which underlies many subtly satiric or ironic moments in the text; in one such moment, Dora Milburn condescends to compliment the Murchisons in this way: "They're a very clever family. Quite self-made, you know, but highly respected" (169). Her subtle disdain of this "self-made" family whose ancestry is unknown and unacknowledged, and the skillful way in which the narrator derides the narrow-mindedness that supports such a belief, functions to reveal Duncan's racial sympathies and her advocacy of the mythos surrounding the Scots in Canada. The apathetic Dora Milburn chooses to embrace the social status and position conferred upon her in the New World by her British-Canadian ethnicity, yet while the same position is granted to Advena Murchison, she in fact rejects it in favour of the potential for progress; Advena prefers instead to espouse modernist ideals of education and public participation for women. Duncan thus distinguishes between the idealistic Murchisons and the Milburns whose "complacent and Conservative political views" (IMP 42) and "unbending ideas" (IMP 44) idealize obsolescent social hierarchies. In an exquisitely ironic comment, the narrator reveals Canadian-born
Octavius Milburn’s pseudo-translocation of British customs to be completely counterfeit; his daughter Dora “had been taught to speak...with what was known as an ‘English accent.’ The accent in general use in Elgin was borrowed....It suffered local modifications and exaggerations, but it was clearly an American product” (IMP 39). Positioned against the upright Murchisons, the Milburns prove to be affected and antiquated; their preoccupation with the superficial Old World signifiers of class indicates a destructive obeisance to the confines of traditional social customs. Conversely, it is certainly significant that the rambling Murchison home is marked by “the attractiveness of the large ideas upon which it had been built and designed,” (IMP 19) and the awkward way in which the architecture exceeded the builder’s resources. Duncan thus uses the expansive character of the Murchison home to reflect the Scots family’s imaginative and constructive participation in the making of this nation, for they refuse to impose stultifying Old World architectural parameters upon it and accept instead this uniquely Canadian product.

The social and moral superiority of the Scots in The Imperialist is indisputable, yet it does not go unexamined by Duncan. It is the exertion of what Thomas calls “the Scotchman’s sense of opportunity and vigour,” (“Social Mythologies” 41) combined with what the narrator refers to as an “excellent fund of common sense,” (258) that lays the foundation for “the making of a nation” (IMP 37) in the novel. As Lorne states, “this country’s for immigrants. We’re manufacturing our own gentlemen quite fast enough for the demand” (90). As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that
the accepted brand of gentleman being manufactured is the Scots Nation-Builder.

Thomas also stresses the Scots sense of pride as fundamental to the Builder’s disposition, and yet, while this pride is deemed heroic in the face of “privations and hardships overcome” (“Social Mythologies” 48), it is also manifested in rigid and repressive codes of behaviour such as those adopted by Finlay, Advena, and Lorne.

Lorne’s hubris, which spurs his immoderate and persistent passion for the cause of imperialism, is contrasted with Advena’s internal struggles. She is further contrasted with Finlay, for although their ideals are similar, Finlay is ultimately unable to shed the Calvinist imprint of his heritage, while Advena does. Although her strong sense of pride sustains her throughout her repressive, moral-driven relationship with Finlay, she ultimately realizes that she must shed her pride in order to connect with him; when she does so, however, her purpose is defeated by the fierce Calvinist rigidity that is “intrinsic in him.” The narrator confesses that “there was no pride in [Advena],” (247) after her confession to Finlay; conversely, he draws strength from “the beautiful archaic inheritance of his Church,” and takes “the road to his duty” (IMP 248).

Advena evades complete subsumption by the ideological tethers that fetter Finlay and Lorne, and thus proves her aptness for a pioneering and creative role.

Duncan’s manipulation of the Scots Nation-Builder mythology thus extends beyond conventional gender discourse, focusing quite distinctly on the role of women in the building of this nation. Clara Thomas underscores John Murchison’s role in the novel as the prototype of the “Nation-Builder”; as she describes it, “[p]rudence and
thrift, added to natural ability and taste, have assured John Murchison's steady progress in business prosperity. His children are first generation Scotch-Canadian - they are to become the agents for Canada's future growth" ("Social Mythologies" 42). According to Thomas, however, it is only Lorne whose influence will be felt in this emerging nation, for although Advena's "idealism equals [Lorne's], her intelligence equals his...her opportunities and her future, by comparison, are circumscribed" ("Social Mythologies" 45). Yet while Thomas is undoubtedly correct that Advena's immediate social and political opportunities are comparatively restricted, it is also significant that, like Lorne, her passion is limitless, as is her idealism, her ambition, and her strength. Advena is, in fact, characterized as more adaptable to the demands of an emerging nation than is her brother for, while the narrator clearly sympathizes with Lorne's vision, he is ultimately condemned for his blinding and potentially destructive fixation with the project of imperialism. He loses his political battle because, in the words of his party members, he "would not hesitate to put Canada to some material loss, or at least to postpone her development in various important directions, for the sake of the imperial connection" (IMP 259). His preoccupation with Old World connections is thus potentially harmful, for the focus of his vision for Canada's future is too deeply rooted in a colonial past. Joseph M. Zezulka, in "The Imperialist: Imperialism, Provincialism, and Point of View," concludes that "[i]n his idealization of British civilization, Lorne comes dangerously close to being a thoroughgoing colonial in his outlook; that is, he adopts a point of view which posits
the existence of an absolute standard of judgment, unaffected by local circumstances” (154-5). His inability to perceive the problems and limits imposed by his idealization is also mirrored in his blind attachment to the superficial Dora Milburn. Conversely, Advena’s ability to shed certain confines of Old World ideology illustrate her suitability for nation building.

Advena’s precipitous transition from moralistic martyr to passionate heroine wins sympathetic narrative consideration. The narrator stresses Advena’s moral probity, her passion, and her ensuing internal conflict: “In their struggle to establish the impossible she had been so far ahead, so greatly the more confident and daring....Before she had preferred an ideal to the desire of her heart; now it lay about her; her strenuous heart had pulled it down to foolish ruin” (IMP 247). Advena’s passion proves to be the more profitable of the two, for although Finlay is described as having “horizons...beyond the common vision” (IMP 59), it is Advena’s idealism that is visionary; early in her relationship with Finlay she “had a passionate prevision that the steps they took together would lead somehow to freedom” (60). Indeed, their union leads to freedom from social and religious repression, and toward the possibilities inherent in the New World. Interestingly, both Finlay and Lorne prove to be too rigid and inflexible to survive in the New World without the tempering interference of Providence, which takes the form of such unlikely characters as Dr. Drummond and Mr. Farquharson, the former Liberal representative whom Lorne is unsuccessful in replacing.
It is in fact Advena who redirects her moral dedication, idealism and ambition into constructing a nation through the tangible connections between family and community. Unlike Lorne, she perceives the importance of what Zezulka characterizes as “local circumstances”; while expressing her opinion as to Hesketh’s large-scale political ambitions, Advena demonstrates her understanding of the more immediate significance of provincial concerns, stating that “[t]here’s a representative committee being formed to give the inhabitants of the poor-house a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Day....He might begin with that” (IMP 172). As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Advena’s capacity to merge the concerns of the public and the domestic will provide a basis for future generations. Her influence will be felt through her children; Advena’s opportunities extend into the future as she looks forward through the next generation. Thus while Sara Duncan’s treatment of the Scots Nation-Builder mythology begins by focusing on Lorne’s potential, it ends in a celebration of Advena’s success. In this way, the Nation-Builder mythology is refocused toward the feminine.

Duncan further succeeds in moderately subverting traditional conceptions of the Nation-Builder mythology by underscoring the realities of cultural dislocation. The author was clearly aware of the reality of cultural dislocation in a nation peopled almost primarily with, and certainly defined and governed by, immigrants. Finlay’s specific experience of displacement illustrates the conflict between Old and New World ideologies, a conflict that divides the lovers throughout the majority of the
narrative, whereas the generalized experience of dislocation in the novel underlies Duncan’s treatment of gender roles, heritage, metanarrative, and mythology. To Advena, Finlay claims that his life in Scotland “has always seemed to me so remote and - disconnected with everything here” (132). His experience precedes the arrival of his aunt, Mrs. Kilbannon, and his fiancé, Christie Cameron, whose bewilderment at and hostility toward Advena on her initial visit betrays a seemingly irreconcilable division between Old World culture and New. To these women, Advena’s actions consist of “a new human demonstration, something to inspect very carefully and cautiously - the product, like themselves, yet so suspiciously different, of these free airs and these astonishingly large ideas” (214). Duncan further parodies the idea of dislocation through the Canadian-born Milburns, for whom, Mr. Milburn himself emphatically states “Canada is good enough” (42). The Milburns are entirely displaced in the town of Elgin, for they elect to cling to constructed Old World customs out of an obsolescent consciousness of appearances; the codes of the Old World have thus been inscribed upon them within a new context. In The Imperialist, therefore, the effects of cultural dislocation spur a choice between the “two alternative directions” contrived by Duncan in her narrative: a positive nation-building cultural translation or a regressive cultural translocation.

Duncan appears unsure of the mixture of Old World blood, New World landscape, Old World translated culture, and New World idealism in the making of this nation. The narrator’s equivocal assertion that “the cautious blood and far sight of
the early settlers [of Elgin]...were still preponderant social characteristics of the town they cleared the site for” (24, emphasis mine), betrays an uncertainty, or perhaps an ambiguity, about the crucial factors at work in the construction of cultural, social and economic identities in Canada. The narrator states, in her or his elucidation of the manner in which the nation was born, that the original dignified group [of settlers] broke, dissolved, scattered...the spirit of the times defeated them, young Liberals defeated them in office [and 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. (37)

The experience of “rebuilding,” then, creates a “new entity,” in a more evolved culture (Gittings, “Cultural Translation” 27). Defining this entity is difficult, although it is clearly based on a sense of distinction; Alfred G. Bailey, in “The Historical Setting of Sara Duncan’s The Imperialist,” underscores the difference insisted upon by Canadians at the turn of the century: “If Canadians did not know quite what they were, they at least knew they were neither Americans nor old-country British, even when they persisted in referring to England or Scotland as ‘home’” (133). Mr. Murchison himself illustrates his successful translation onto Canadian soil when, asked if he has returned to Scotland, he states “It was good to see the heather again, but a man lives best where he’s taken root” (148). He thus signals his acceptance of an identity wholly separate from the Old World.
Moments of definitive cultural translation in a text are difficult to identify unequivocally, yet in texts like Duncan's, which are concerned with the gap between Old and New Worlds, evidence of cultural translation is important. In her exploration of "The Fictionalization of the Vertical Mosaic," Tamara Palmer attempts to characterize the Canadian literary imagination, which, she suggests, is inextricably linked to the "immigrant sensibility." Palmer sees this literary imagination as formed in part by a "chasm between old and new, there and here, past and present self, perception and language, and by an awareness of having, by virtue of migrating, suddenly become 'other'" (624). It is then perhaps the moment at which the immigrant ceases to be 'other' and begins to identify him or herself as belonging in a new way to the place in which he or she has "taken root," that translation has occurred. It is also critical, however, that the immigrant has not discarded his or her culture; instead, the cultural signifiers that inform her or him take on new meaning in a new context. The moment at which Lorne comes "into possession" of his country is, I believe, a nodal point in The Imperialist:

A tenderness seized him for the farmers of Fox County, a throb of enthusiasm for the idea they represented, which had become for him suddenly moving and pictorial. At that moment his country came subjectively into his possession; great and helpless it came into his inheritance as it comes into the inheritance of every man who can take it, by deed of imagination and energy and love. (65)

Like his father, Lorne has entered into the cultural and historical fabric of the country. The narrator describes the experiences of John Murchison and Dr. Drummond thus:
“So the two came, contemporaries, to add their labour and their lives to the building of this little outpost of Empire....In the course of nature, even their bones and their memories would enter into the fabric” (11). Although faithful in many ways to Old World ideology, the two are ultimately bound to the country of their adoption. Here Duncan appears to advocate a type of cultural erasure wherein one’s heritage can be re-invented within a new context, rather than simply translocated.

Finlay’s moment of translation is not so clearly determined, yet the narrator implies that the device by which he might enter into the national fabric is his connection with Advena. He or she states that “the first notable interest of [Finlay’s] life in the calling and the country to which...he had given his future would lie in his relations with [Advena] (97). Furthermore, Finlay recognizes the influence of Canadian culture upon him, as well as the impossibility of simply hybridizing the cultures of Scotland and Canada. The equally powerful influences of Canada’s originality and freedom, and Scotland’s prescribed history cannot marry. To Advena, he says “I have come here into a new world, of interests unknown and scope unguessed before. I know what you would say, but you have no way of learning the beauty and charm of mere vitality....One finds a physical freedom in which one’s very soul seems to expand” (133). The very symbolic physical union of Advena and Finlay suggests the possibility of, as the narrator states, a “rebuilding” (37) in the form of cultural translation. This possibility contrasts directly with Lorne’s vision of imperialism, in which he advocates in many ways a translocation of existing
obsolescent Old World culture to Canadian soil; significantly, his relationship with Dora Milburn fails. As Claude Bissell asserts, the "final triumph of Advena's love for Finlay...represents Duncan's view that Old World honour must bow to Canadian judgments in Canada; the demise of Lorne's attachment for the anglophilic Dora Milburn parallels his disillusionment with imperialism" (qtd. in Dean 48). Thus Advena's "passionate prevision" (60) of freedom is a correct one; together she and Finlay find freedom from stultifying Old World ideologies in the translation and evolution of a new culture.

While it is clearly impossible to determine unequivocally literary or linguistic sites of cultural translation between Scotland and Canada, echoes of Scottish literary concerns and motifs are present in Duncan's text. Furthermore, the ways in which these themes are employed within a different, yet affiliated, cultural and literary frame of reference suggests the creation of a "new entity" within Duncan's text. Duncan explores certain ideas historically popular in Scottish fiction; according to Douglas Dunn in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Scottish Short Stories*, Scottish fiction focuses recurrently on issues of class and language, identity and national affiliations (xxvii). Within the narrative frame of *The Imperialist*, significantly, Duncan constructs a pointed analysis of class with a peripheral consideration of language, and the novel as a whole is concerned with Canada's developing identity and those of varying nationalities whose influence will be felt in the Canada of the future. Although these themes are clearly not unique to Scotland, Duncan's awareness of
them in her writing illustrates her cognizance, whether conscious or not, of comparable concerns in the political and social structure of her father's homeland and her own. Furthermore, Duncan's depiction in *The Imperialist* of the authoritative influence of her father's Old World religion further illustrates the combined effects of the realities of cultural dislocation and the desire for translation into the unfamiliar context of Canada.

Not surprisingly, Sara Duncan's upbringing and her early education in Brantford were profoundly influenced by the tenets of the Presbyterian Church, as well as the residual influence of the Scots Calvinist history. Bailey describes Duncan's personal investment in her fictional treatment of religion: "It would be difficult to find in any Canadian novel a more effective treatment of religion, which is here seen as one of the primary formative influences of the community in which [Duncan] was reared and, one would guess, of herself" (135). Likewise, Fowler writes that "[i]n religious affiliation, the Duncans were Presbyterians, with that sober, earnest self-discipline which Scots Calvinism implies" (34-35). Fowler further states that in Brantford, Duncan "had felt the harsh, Calvinist winds blowing on her from great-grandfather Bailie Duncan, from her own father, from Dr Cochrane...all those hard-working, self-denying, sober Scots" (68). The partnership of Old World religion and prevailing patriarchal culture is unmistakable; Duncan had to contend with both as a function of her heritage.
Although the authority of those “self-denying, sober Scots” was at times stultifying for Duncan, it provided her with both the impetus to achieve, through her writing, her mercenary and visionary ambitions, and the literary fodder with which to do so. Indeed, the character of Dr. Drummond is modeled directly on the Rev. William Cochrane, who came to Brantford when Duncan was a child. Fowler’s description of Cochrane reveals him to be an extremely influential individual in Duncan’s life: “If his zeal had a more saintly cast, he was quite as ambitious and hard-working a Scot as Charles Duncan, and an important enough influence on [Duncan] for her to draw his full-length portrait... in The Imperialist in the person of Dr. Drummond” (36). The presence of religious influence is as inescapable in Duncan’s fiction as it was in her own life; her father’s religious ideology shadowed her throughout her life to the extent that years after her departure from Brantford, having metamorphosed in many ways into a “modern woman,” Duncan would still feel “the cold grip of her Brantford Presbyterian upbringing” (Fowler 79), and find that she carried its authority within her. Certainly religious influence plays a central role in The Imperialist’s narrative.

The potentially disempowering and undisputed authority of Presbyterianism, and even Calvinism, is strongly felt in the structure of The Imperialist, as it was in Canadian culture near the turn of the century. The narrator frames his or her description of Elgin with the assertion that the “habit of church attendance was not only a basis of respectability, but practically the only one” (50); furthermore, the “town
of Elgin knew two controlling interests - the interest of politics and the interest of religion” (48). Indeed, while the hero, Lorne, becomes controlled by the question of imperialism, the heroine, Advena, ultimately strives to temper her own and her lover’s moral and religious zeal. Though often sardonic or seriocomic on the surface, the novel is in fact shadowed by the grim presence of inflexible religious and cultural ideologies that all but sabotage the happiness of Advena and Finlay. The relationship between these characters is at times disturbingly repressive and self-denying, although the solemnity with which Advena and Finlay treat their dilemma is consistently mitigated by the narrator’s playful manipulation of the lovers’ moral and religious fervor. According to Frank Davey, in “The Narrative Politics of The Imperialist,” Dr. Drummond serves as a narrative foil for Finlay’s rigid Calvinist ideology (433), for, as the narrator recognizes, “Dr. Drummond had his own method of reconciling foreordination and free will” (IMP 201) and, by his own means, succeeds in uniting the lovers. Yet though the treatment of foreordination is somewhat ironic within the narrative, the underlying rigidity of Calvinist ideology is unmistakable.

Hugh Finlay is a zealously religious Presbyterian minister newly arrived from Scotland, a man who is governed by his strict ethical and religious position; significantly, “[t]he militant history of his Church was a passion with him” (IMP 58). The narrator’s physical description of Finlay is striking: “His face bore the confusion of ideals; he had the brow of a Covenanter and the mouth of Adonais, the flame of religious ardour in his eyes and the composure of perceived philosophy on his lips”
Throughout *The Imperialist*, Finlay and Advena develop an attachment that is seemingly unrealizable, for they are each fettered by a rigid belief in obeisance to the demands of their perceived obligations. Through the fictional struggle of the two lovers, Duncan reveals an ambivalence rooted in her own endeavor to balance the indelible imprint of “her father’s Calvinist pattern,” (Fowler 15) and her own necessary “struggle to evolve a new type of self-definition” in the New World. Finlay harks back to his heritage, justifying his obduracy and dedication to duty as “somehow in the past and the blood. [To deny it] would mean the sacrifice of all that I hold most valuable in myself” (156). At this moment, Finlay’s experience suggests a confusing cultural dislocation which threatens to obfuscate the Calvinist pattern by which he has lived. His attempt to apply Old World religious codes to a Canadian context is unsuccessful. Duncan manipulates the narrative in order to unite Advena and Finlay, and thus provides the means by which he will achieve translation.

Duncan’s treatment of the Scottish-Canadian experience is complex. From her own complicated position as both a marginalized colonial woman and a member of the privileged middle class and British race, she endeavored to participate, through her writing, in Canada’s creation. In *The Imperialist* she employs and manipulates, through complex characterization, the mythology of the Scots Nation-Builder. While she exalts the Scots in Canada as an upstanding and industrious people, and clearly advocates the positive mythos of the Scots Nation-Builder, she also explores certain limitations imposed upon them by stultifying Old World values and repressive
religious ideologies in conflict with the possibilities of the New World. This conflict between Old World and New, as well as the shift from pioneering frontier to dominion, as they are treated in *The Imperialist*, offer insight into the difficulties and possibilities that arise out of the experiences of cultural dislocation, translocation, and translation, and how these experiences inform a Canadian identity. Duncan’s special consideration of the Scottish-Canadian female experience as it is affected by patriarchal political and cultural authority reveals her conviction that the identifying voice of Canada is in many ways a feminine voice. Finally, her acknowledgment of the female contribution to Canadian life and culture redirects the prevailing and enduring mythology of the Scots in order to acknowledge and privilege a typically neglected feminine perspective.
CHAPTER TWO

The pivotal statement made by Del Jordan, the narrator of Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* that “[i]t was not the individual names that were important, but the whole solid, intricate structure of lives supporting us from the past,”¹ has echoed recurrently in critical analysis of the author’s work. In recent years the statement has become even more significant with respect to Munro’s work, as she has begun to take an interest in her own cultural and ethnic heritage. Having always relied heavily on notions of place and time in her work, Munro is beginning to consider related ideas of personal history and cultural foundations, and has therefore, in several more recent stories, explored elements of her own Scottish background. Working against received notions of historicity, such as that portrayed by her father in his novel, *The McGregors: A Novel of an Ontario Pioneer Family*, Munro uncovers and acknowledges the history of the disposessed, the marginalized, and the silenced. In doing so, Munro subverts the fundamental Canadian myths of the Scots Nation-Builder, the pioneer, and, specifically, the female pioneer. In “A Wilderness Station,” “Friend of My Youth,” and “The Stone in the Field,” Munro deconstructs certain beliefs surrounding the pioneering experience and reverses the mythology constructed

¹ Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women* 1971 (Penguin Books, 1997) 34. Subsequent references to *Lives of Girls and Women* will be cited in-text and initialized as LGW. Other abbreviations of Munro’s texts will be as follows: *Friend of My Youth* (FMY); *The Moons of Jupiter* (MOJ); *Open Secrets* (OS).
around it, exploring instead an unforgiving and unconquerable landscape and an uncompromising religious ethic that oppresses rather than redeems. Using elements of the past in order to explore the present in “Meneseteung,” “Friend of My Youth,” and *Lives of Girls and Women*, Munro defies, to some extent, notions of progress, and illustrates the foundations of certain problematic modern social constructs.

Alice Munro was raised, as Catherine Sheldrick Ross describes it in *Alice Munro: A Double Life*, in the “reticent, self-effacing Scots-Irish community of Wingham, Ontario” (15). Descended, on her father’s side, from Scottish “shepherds and farm workers” who came to Canada in 1818 (27), Munro felt the oppressiveness of the Scots Presbyterian influence even during her own upbringing in twentieth century Southern Ontario. Significantly, the author describes the culture of Huron County as a “rural culture with a strong Scots-Irish background...that has become fairly stagnant. With a big sense of righteousness” (qtd. in Ross 26). According to Ross, Munro disguised her literary ambition because “[f]or Scots Presbyterians, wanting to be remarkable would certainly seem to be an imprudent challenge to fate” (17). Munro often addresses in her fiction the impact of those remaining repressive ideologies that marked her own upbringing in small-town Ontario; in “The Art of Alice Munro: Memory, Identity, and the Aesthetics of Connection,” Georgeann Murphy describes many of Munro’s protagonists as “intelligent women with lives animated by conflicts arising from a repressive Scotch-Irish Protestant upbringing.”
Certainly the evidence of religious and cultural repression is present in Munro’s fiction, and most especially in fictional explorations of her Scots heritage.

Munro’s knowledge of and interest in her heritage was influenced, in large part, by her father’s research into their family’s oral and written history. Robert Laidlaw’s own fictional rendering of the pioneer existence in Ontario is a conventional one pervaded by images of hardy pioneers and a rugged landscape conquered. The *McGregors* follows the life of Jim McGregor, the novel’s protagonist, who is a child at the outset of the novel; significantly, as the story begins, the child observes the landscape, not knowing “that he was to spend the next seventy years of his life in this country and see it turn into a land of plenty, tamed and obedient” (5). Laidlaw’s descriptions are punctuated with images of growth and progress, what the narrator describes as “the pioneers’ reward, the almost magical creation of something useful where there was only bush and swamp. The miracle of each farm, repeated many times over, creates the miracle of a new country where none had been before” (116). Laidlaw’s story is one of creation, of the building of a nation where none has been; certainly, *The McGregor* is one of those Canadian stories “hung up on the plot of nation-building” (Careless 5).

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2 For a detailed critical treatment of Munro’s family history and its relationship to those stories in which she explores the cultural connections between Scotland and Canada, see Chris Gittings’ “Constructing a Scots-Canadian Ground: Family History and Cultural Translation in Alice Munro.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 34.1 (1997): 27-37.
In his development of this plot Laidlaw employs heavily and perpetuates consistently the mythos of the Scots, a race of builders whose influence is pivotal to the transformation of this new world in Ontario’s Bruce County. The novel’s protagonist is a man marked by respectability and honest ambition, whose contribution to the community is significant; he is first generation Scots-Canadian and, as such, is the representative of Canada’s future. Similarly, a second leading businessman in the community, Mr. Murdoch, is described as “[l]ike many Scots,...shrewd, very close in money matters, and strictly honest” (21). Murdoch is the most overtly political voice in the novel, and states at one point that “[m]ost are Scots here...and they are the best - or so some think. We just accept this as a base from which to view all others. It is, we think, a self-evident truth” (103). Seemingly, Murdoch speaks as the voice of this community, overtly glorifying the qualities of the Scots pioneer and establishing a perspective on the Scots that supports the long-standing mythos of the Nation-Builder with which Laidlaw would have been raised.

Laidlaw’s treatment of the female experience is further indicative of the ideological framework in which he matured, for, although female characters are certainly important in his novel, they are nonetheless rendered through and with respect to the stories of Jim and his son John. Nonetheless, Laidlaw pays homage to both the physical and emotional hardships inherent in the pioneer experience, and in the stultifying cultural framework of the female Scots pioneer in particular. Jim’s home is unmistakably characterized by a Presbyterian oppressiveness:
There was an uncompromising harshness that accepted no ornament, no bit of bright colour, no relief from things strictly utilitarian. Everything was clean, but it was an oppressive cleanliness....Jim's younger sister, Elspeth, sat on the couch now, her feet close together in rough men's boots. Her hands, red and rough from all the scrubbing, were folded in her lap....Her features were pleasant enough but held tightly, as was her whole body, in the tenseness, almost fear of a wild animal....Margaret, [her] mother, sat erect on her chair with an air of weary resignation. She was tired, bone tired, her frail body barely able to cope with the relentless round of pioneer tasks. (48-9)

The physical descriptions of Jim's sister and mother are later clearly echoed in Alice Munro's account in "The Stone in the Field," "Friend of My Youth," and Lives of Girls and Women of the "wrecked survivors of the female life, with stories to tell"(LGW 44). The physical manifestations of both the severe female pioneer experience and the religious discipline of Scots-Presbyterianism recur in her stories as symbols of repression and subjugation. Laidlaw's, and others' conventional accounts of the settler experience, with all its assumptions about hardship, triumph, moral integrity and religious strength are thus questioned in many ways by Munro. She presents instead a pluralized vision in which many voices are heard, and many aspects of Canada's pioneering metanarrative are considered. Her revisioning of the settler experience, and the subsequent effects in modern small-town Ontario thus both destabilizes and complicates existing Canadian mythologies.

Munro subverts accepted discourses most often with respect to women's stories, for, as Bronwen Wallace observes in "Women's Lives: Alice Munro," the author's writing "is powerfully centred in her understanding of her own experience as
a woman” (53). In Munro’s stories, a sense of empowerment often arises from the construction of alternatives to the “singular interpretations” of gender and status that underlie patriarchal discourse. Munro’s work then illustrates Aretha Van Herk’s suggestion that “[m]en map the territory of place, history and event [while] the female fiction writers of Canada map the country of the interior, the world maze of the human being” (qtd in Howells 40). Significantly, in Lives of Girls and Women, the protagonist, Del Jordan, rejects and eventually destroys her Uncle’s manuscript which is written from a specifically male perspective and which tells an exclusively male story. Del’s personal search for identity, and her rejection of received history, then become symbolic of the larger project of many Canadian women writers.

Working out of the framework of her father’s sanctioned portrayal of the Scots pioneer mythology, Munro attempts instead to uncover the stories of those “survivors of the female life” who have traditionally been silenced by conventional or patriarchal renderings of history. Munro’s interest in her family history is, in part, hinged on those stories that are historically unknown and thought to be unknowable. In her interview with Christopher Gittings, Munro describes the difficulty of writing about one’s personal history in an inclusive way: “You know your male ancestors, at least I do, better than the females, and of course I’ve been following my father’s family and what mainly happens is that...the letter-writers and the people about whom I know anything are men” (88). Munro thus realizes the importance of recognizing the enduring
influence of what Lorraine McMullan calls our “Foremothers.”

Significantly, the narrator of “The Stone in the Field” recognizes the connection, tenuous though it appears, that she shares with those women in her family who have come before her. She realizes that she “carries something of them around in [her]” (MOI 35) in spite of her persistent efforts to discard the influence of her past. Through the act of fictionalizing, therefore, Munro attempts an excavation of those women’s stories that provides a balance of knowledge about the history of Canada’s settlers, and about a modern society, for, as Munro understands, modern day Canada carries something of its pioneers with it. Raspovich explains that

[w]hile the Victorian sensibility may be passing, the absolute moral code and civilizing manners of the Fathers of Confederation and their wives are well rooted in Ontario ground, with vestiges of their attitudes filtering through Munro’s heroines, including a Calvinist apprehension about the primitive and barbaric potential of man and, more importantly, woman. (136)

Munro explores this “moral code,” its effects on gender roles in modern day Ontario, its often destructive religious manifestations, and its effects on those mythologies widely accepted in contemporary society.

In my introductory discussion regarding Canadian identity, I have pointed out the spectre of imperialism and colonization and its impact on the formation of gender roles in the New World. In “A Wilderness Station,” Munro investigates this spectre, as well as the Old World shadow of patriarchy and its assumptions about the

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colonization of the female body. In “Canada and Scotland: Conceptualizing ‘Postcolonial’ Spaces,” Gittings sees Munro as having “textualized the oppressive colonizing narrative of the nineteenth-century Glasgow Mission” (140) in her story. Annie is juxtaposed against McBain throughout the text, and the resistance she demonstrates to her husband’s violence is mirrored by McBain’s failure to impose order on the wilderness to which his spiritual duty has relegated him.4 Gittings equates Annie’s position with the territory of the New World, and concludes that the “codes of the Old World cannot be written on Annie any more than McBain can write them on the New World wilderness of his parish” (“Cultural Translation” 34-5). Significantly, McBain also observes that without any male influence “there was no order imposed on [Annie’s] days” (232); although McBain’s paternal meaning is clear here, to the reader his comment indicates the degree to which Annie’s existence was circumscribed and defined by her domestic role. Her refusal to join her brother-in-law at the Herrons’, and her decision to reject the safety of the shack in favour of the peril of the wilderness finally consolidates her desire to escape the boundaries imposed upon her in this New World.

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4 Gittings cites several significant examples of McBain’s futile attempt to impose order on the equally unyielding forces of Canada’s wilderness and Annie’s resistance. For example, McBain complains that his lodging is poisoned by the “swilling of spirits and foulest insolence” (238) of its patrons, “[a]nd outside nothing but trees to choke off every exit and icy bog to swallow man and horse. There was a promise to build a church and lodging but those who made such promise have grown busy with their own affairs and it seems to have been put off” (238). Similarly, upon meeting with Annie, he asserts that she “would not give any answer or sign that her soul was coming into submission” (232).
World setting. Therefore, Annie’s resistance signifies the possibility of a new gender order in the New World.

When describing the apparent descent into insanity exhibited by this female member of his congregation, McBain explains that “she is subject to a sort of delusion peculiar to females, for which the motive is a desire for self-importance, also a wish to escape the monotony of life or the drudgery they may have been born to” (239). While McBain sees Annie’s madness as a result of hysteria, to the modern reader her “delusions” signal perhaps an attempt at empowerment or, equally, a potential escape from the hardships of an isolated life led at the mercy of an abusive husband. She is subject to patriarchal authority in her daily existence, and further subordinate to the Calvinist doctrine of the Glasgow Mission by whose spiritual influence she is guided. The guilt she suffers from having hidden the truth about the circumstances of her husband’s murder, a death for which her brother-in-law is in fact responsible, is indicative of the influence of the fear and guilt instilled by the Calvinist doctrine she has been taught; she thus imagines herself “possessed by the forces of evil, to have committed various and hideous crimes” (240). Annie is silenced by the combined forces of McBain’s patriarchal and religious beliefs, and by the gendered power differential between herself and her brother-in-law. Her confession is discredited by one letter written by the perpetrator of the murder to the Reverend McBain who characterizes it as “a very decent letter affirming that there is no truth to her story, so I am satisfied on that” (239). A significant moment of empowerment for Annie,
however, comes at the close of the story when, years after the murder, she returns to visit her brother-in-law, and finds him ill and unable to speak. Her satisfaction at having been able to talk to this silenced man evinces her continued frustration at being voiceless.

Similarly, in “Meneseteung,” Munro gives voice to a forgotten female pioneer, as a curious, seemingly amateur historian attempts to reconstruct the story of a fictional Canadian woman writer, Almeda Joynt Roth. The narrator fuses images evoked by Roth’s work, newspaper articles written about the poetess in the local newspaper, and her own imagination in order to “re(dis)cover” the work of a forgotten woman writer. What she creates, is a fascinating narrative wherein the heroine, whose life, from the outside, appears decorous and conventional, in fact challenges many nineteenth century cultural discourses. The narrator begins her exploration by observing that in the local paper’s review of Roth’s work, “[t]here seems to be a mixture of respect and contempt, both for her calling and for her sex - or for their predictable conjuncture” (EMY 50). The narrator looks beyond this dismissive resonance, however, and discovers instead what Coral Ann Howells, in *Alice Munro* calls “Almeda’s ambiguous challenge to gender construction” (106). Howells suggests that Roth “escapes colonial social expectations by retreating into eccentricity” (102), as well as through her writing.5 By choosing her poetic imagination over the possibility of a

5 For a detailed treatment of what Howells terms “Munro’s contribution to the feminist re-visionary project of reconstructing a female literary tradition” (105), please see pp. 105-113 in *Alice Munro*. 


conventional romance with her neighbour, Jarvis Poulter, Roth rejects her seemingly inevitable stultifying gender role and moves "a long way...from human sympathies or fears or cozy household considerations" (70). The freedom she discovers through her decision is mirrored, interestingly, in the changes taking place within her body, and Howells suggests that Munro makes the connection "between women’s bodies and writing within the subjective space of wilderness" (112-13). While she struggles to resolve the conflict between cultural expectations and her own ‘eccentric’ desires, her body suffers from "an accumulation of menstrual blood that has not yet started to flow" (68). Her ensuing embracement of freedom in choosing to write poetry, is thus symbolized by the beginning of her menstrual flow.

Reading the body is critical to Munro’s creative project, as well as to analysis of the author’s work. In “‘Heirs of the Living Body’: Alice Munro and the Question of a Female Aesthetic,” Barbara Godard observes that “Munro is in quest of a body experienced by women as subject of their desires not as object of men’s desires and of the words and literary forms appropriate to this body.” Godard makes the critical link between the “sexual body and the body of literature” (43), and thus gestures toward the greater ideological significance of the centrality of the female body in Munro’s writing. Howells likewise observes Munro’s contention in much of her fiction that “[w]hat anyone sees is not all there, for there are hidden secret places and buried stories within the most familiar bodily and geographical territories” (147). The author often employs visceral signifiers as evidence of cultural disempowerment, and thus
subverts the traditional objectifying focus on the female body by using it instead to signal existing disempowering social and religious discourses. The body then becomes the medium through which silenced stories may be expressed.

Focusing on these symbols, Munro lays the groundwork for her exploration of the ideological and cultural implications of these physical signifiers. Munro’s own research into the religion brought to the New World with Scots pioneers revealed that an especially “narrow and tough” kind of “fundamentalist Presbyterianism” was brought to Canada in the nineteenth century by members of the Glasgow Mission (“Scottish Ancestor” 85). Thus the Presbyterianism practiced by Canada’s pioneers was characterized by an austerity much more severe than that endorsed by the established Presbyterian church of Scotland. Munro speculates that the repressiveness of the Church increased once transplanted to Canadian soil and that “early settlers...often went crazy in one way and another...maybe with philosophies like this because there was nothing for them to rub up against” (86). Therefore, Old World Scottish elements that were translocated and later translated in a more rigid and fundamentalist form onto Canadian soil comprised, according to Munro, an uncompromising moral code, a rigid social structure, and predictably unequal gender roles. Therefore, whereas the New World represents the antidote to Scotland’s prescribed history in *The Imperialist*, it denotes in fact the reverse in Munro’s vision; the “new entity” produced in the New World is in fact, especially for women, a sphere marked by rigidity and disempowerment. The combination of these factors practiced
within the existing framework of patriarchy in a pioneering context led inevitably to a
difficult existence for many women, and it is these women whose stories Munro
attempts to recover in her fiction.

The combined forces of religious Puritanism and cultural disempowerment are
made manifest in the physical afflictions suffered by certain of Munro’s characters.
Munro employs an obvious echo of Robert Laidlaw’s words in “The Stone in the
Field,” wherein the narrator attempts to unearth the stories of her repressed
Presbyterian aunts:

[one of the aunts had hands red as a skinned rabbit...I remembered that
I had seen such hands before, on one of the early visits, long ago, and
my mother had told me that it was because this aunt - was it always the
same one? - had been scrubbing the floor and the table and chairs with
lye, to keep them white. (MOJ 26)

Significantly, the narrator cannot differentiate between the aunts and, in this way, the
raw scoured hands become a generalized symbol of the condition of a life led firm in
this puritanical Presbyterian faith. These women are further described by the narrator
as “stooped...with hard work and deference” (MOJ 25). In “Friend of My Youth,” a
story constructed around two sisters who are members of an extreme Calvinist sect,
Flora’s hands are likewise described as “raw” from the obsessive round of physical
labour delimited by her faith.

The most disturbing physical manifestation of this religion, however, is
constructed around these same sisters in “Friend of My Youth.” The narrator tells the
story of her mother’s time spent in the Ottawa Valley as a boarder on the Grieves farm
with sisters Ellie and Flora; the Grieves are Cameronians, a religion described by the narrator as “an uncompromising remnant of the Covenanters,” a militant Scottish group who “bound themselves, with God, to resist prayer books, bishops, any taint of popery or interference by the King” (FMY 26). The youngest sister, Ellie, is psychologically defeated by the endless pregnancies demanded by her role as wife; her physical weakness then becomes a symbol of her religious and cultural disempowerment. As a child she is wild and “impudent,” and allowed a certain amount of freedom, yet once she sins, by sleeping with her sister’s fiancé Robert Deal, she becomes physically broken. Sentenced to a lifetime of miscarriages and stillbirths, Ellie becomes “stretched and ruined” (6) and physically evinces the consequence of betrayal and lust.

Indeed, when Ellie’s first child is stillborn, the narrator summarizes the rigid ethical codes still advocated by those of her mother’s generation: “God dealt out punishments for hurry-up marriages - not just Presbyterians but almost everybody else believed that. God rewarded lust with dead babies, idiots, harelips and withered limbs and clubfeet” (11). This kind of Old Testament reasoning, which embraces a vengeful God, is clearly linked to the author’s concluding anecdote in which she describes the unrelenting and brutal position sanctioned by the original Cameronians who “hacked

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6 Significantly, Ellie is juxtaposed against her sister, whose notable physical strength, cheerful work ethic, and moral rectitude is reminiscent of those archetypal pioneer women constructed by early Canadian writers. Munro thus acknowledges a traditional character type and then destabilizes it by positioning the sisters against one another as evidence of two possible models of the mythopoeic Scots settler experience.
the haughty Bishop of St. Andrews to death on the highway and rode their horses over
his body” (26). Past and present ethical codes thus prove to be analogous, in many
ways, in Munro’s examination of the puritanical burdens which remain from the
country’s origins as frontier. Munro makes a clear connection, for example, between
the physical paralysis experienced by Ellie and the narrator’s mother, the religious
repression to which Flora and Ellie are victim, and the moralistic burden espoused by
the narrator’s mother, and felt by the narrator herself. The gothic story of the Grieves
sisters is framed by conflicts between the narrator and her mother in life, and, most
disturbingly, between the narrator and her mother’s shadowy presence in death. The
story stretches backwards as far as the seventeenth century, with an anecdote about the
Scottish Cameronians, and forward to the present day through the literary endeavors of
the narrator, yet the associations are unmistakable. The narrator and her mother are as
much a product of the puritanical pioneer experience as are Flora, Ellie, and Ellie’s
husband, Robert.

The connections explored by Munro often shed light on continuing problematic
cultural issues in a modern society, and challenge, in certain ways, the accepted
concept of social progress. Howells suggests that the author’s forays into Canada’s
cultural past “are not exercises in sentimental nostalgia but attempts to discover new
significance in the present by making connections with the past” (101). Munro’s
insistence on the importance of the past in a present day urban Ontario signals the
legacy of those cultural and religious codes that formed so strong a part of the early
Canadian identity, and continue to surface most noticeably in the oppressive cultural stratification of the small town setting consistently employed by Munro. In his article, “Connection: Alice Munro and Ontario,” Robert Thacker observes that the small town ethos is an “inherited presence” in “contemporary writing in Canada.” Thacker further sees this ethos as “an inheritance which helps to explain the present by assessing and redefining the past” (213); hence Munro’s fictional small towns are in many ways symbolic settings where past ideologies and discourses continue to function in the present.

Significantly, Del’s sexual awakening in *Lives of Girls and Women* is heavily influenced by those Calvinist discourses which have informed Jubilee, a town settled and “built up [by]... Scotch Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists from the north of England” (*LGW* 104). The young Del learns early that in Jubilee, “social and religious life were apt to be one and the same” (191), and that stern Presbyterian and Calvinist doctrine still resonates in many modern discourses. In spite of her mother’s attempt to espouse a modern feminist perspective, she nonetheless instills in Del a very conventional, very repressed sexual attitude: “I thought of my mother, who would publicly campaign for birth control but would never even think she needed to talk to me, so firmly was she convinced that sex was something no woman - no *intelligent* woman - would ever submit to unless she had to (221). Furthermore, her advice to Del is “not so different from all the other advice handed out to women, to girls, advice that assumed being female made you damageable.” Sexuality and power are then
juxtaposed in Addie’s world view, and a woman’s damaged body is symbolic of lost independence, future prospects and, as Addie defines it, “self-respect.” Rejection of sex is then analogous to the appropriation of power: “Once you make that mistake, of being - distracted, over a man, your life will never be your own. You will get the burden, a woman always does” (193). Del manages to shed what Beverly Rasporich, in Dance of the Sexes, calls her “Calvinist skin” (49), however, through her passionate physical affair with Garnet French, an uneducated lumber worker and fervent Baptist. Their eventual breakup is precipitated by Del’s refusal to surrender her ambition in exchange for a future as Garnet’s wife; his insistence on her capitulation evokes, significantly, the small-town narrow-minded attitude she has, ironically, attempted to reject through her affair.

In her fiction, therefore, Munro often explores those inescapable historical religious and cultural connections that have formed many contemporary Canadian communities. In “Short Fictions and Whole-Books,” Andrew Gurr describes Munro’s short story writing as “a kind of anthropological exercise” (17). Significantly, in “The Stone in the Field,” the stultifying Scots- Presbyterian past is embodied in the narrator’s six sisters who “were leftovers, really...they belonged in another generation” (MOJ 22). Like Flora and Ellie, these sisters are surviving vestiges of the country’s frontier history, living an arduous life defined by the work that “gave their days shape” (26), work that “could, that must, go on forever” (27). Their lives are circumscribed and their prospects limited by the strict religious ethic with which they were raised; the
only one of the family who escapes is the narrator's father who has the means to earn his own living. As a grown man, he reflects on the puritanical perspective which, in part, laid the foundation of the New World, and which later fettered his sisters to a dislocated existence led on the margins of centrist ideology and mainstream society. He describes his understanding, determined by his own childhood experiences, of the severity of the pioneer experience: "I think the courage got burnt out of them. Their religion did them in, and their upbringing. How they had to toe the line. Also their pride. Pride was what they had when they had no more gumption" (31). Notably, years after her departure from Ontario, the narrator continues to feel the moralistic burden of her Calvinist heritage each time she receives a letter from her aunts:

It was an act of faith for them to write and send those sentences to any place as unimaginable as Vancouver, to someone of their own blood leading a life so strange to them, someone who would read the card with such a feeling of bewilderment and unexplainable guilt. It did make me guilty and bewildered to think that they were still there, still attached to me. But any message from home, in those days, could let me know I was a traitor" (31).

The combined voices of the narrator and her father produce a revision of the pioneer myth in which the religion that is often supposed to have provided the inspiration of strength exerted by the Scots Nation-Builders proves instead to be in certain ways an instrument of destruction and a motivation for espousing martyrdom.

Munro often succeeds, within the confines of the short story form, to present one or more revisions of the principal narrative, and to blur the distinction between
illusion and reality, and thus questions the authority of a single recognized interpretation of any narrative. "Friend of My Youth" is obsessed with the act of revisioning and the attempt, in doing so, to form meaningful connections between past and present. Although disguised as curiosity about the gothic tale of the Grieves sisters and their seemingly barbaric religion, the story is in fact the narrator’s attempt to uncover her mother, the excavation of whose story is the narrator’s ultimate goal. The Grieves sisters’ story is an appropriate vehicle with which to do so, for it points directly to the historical cultural elements that have shaped her mother’s existence; furthermore, her mother’s interpretation of Flora and Ellie’s story is clearly influenced by her own religious beliefs. The narrator attempts to subvert her mother’s martyrization of Flora, a portrayal that depicts the woman “as a noble figure, one who accepts defection, treachery, who forgives and stands aside, not once but twice” (19). The narrator’s creation of Flora instead endows her with a sense of perverse power, the same vengeful power accorded to God in her mother’s vision, and to man in the narrator’s final anecdote of the Camerons; the narrator’s Flora rejoices “in the bad turns done to her and in her own forgiveness, spying on the shambles of her sister’s life” (20). As Flora is finally defeated in the narrator’s rendering, her religious tomes are burned, “[t]he elect, the damned, the slim hopes, the mighty torments - up in smoke” (21). In this way, the narrator grants Flora the possibility of empowerment by reversing her position from victim to victor, while simultaneously denouncing the religious construct upon which the story is based.
The narrator also introduces the concept of silenced stories, realizing herself that in spite of her effort to reconstruct Flora’s story, the narrator’s “notion that I can know anything about her” (FMY 26) is false and presumptuous. Munro thus alludes to a fundamental problem with reconstructed stories and acknowledges the potential weaknesses of her own project, for as the narrator states, “my mother’s ideas were in line with some progressive notions of her times, and mine echoed the notions that were favored in my time” (23). As mentioned earlier, the mother’s attempt to mythologize, or glorify, Flora’s actions as an admirable religious martyr in her sanctimonious vision of the Grieves sisters’ story entitled “The Maiden Lady” (19), is undercut by the narrator, whose own version of Flora’s story constructs her as a “Presbyterian witch, reading out of her poisonous book” (21). Therefore the narrator signals the danger of mythologizing, which perpetuates absolute and often erroneous assumptions about truth; as Gittings states, Munro reveals “how a fallacious belief in an all-pervasive truth...becomes translated or secularized into a wider Canadian consciousness where a quest for a singular interpretation of individuals becomes just as tyrannical and unsatisfactory as the Calvinist interpretation of the world” (“Translation” 36). Likewise, received notions of history and accepted national mythologies, or metanarratives, must be questioned and challenged. Thacker sees Munro’s story-telling technique as transcending “the local and provincial to reach the universal” (214). Munro targets the very process by which myth is created, and offers a hope of
redemption through certain of her characters who attempt to subvert, revision and, finally, rewrite historically pervasive cultural and religious discourses.

In *Lives of Girls and Women*, Del’s flight from Jubilee and her decision to become a writer are symbolic choices both for Del and for Munro as Del’s creator. It is critical that Munro’s heroine escape the confines of Jubilee; significantly, she is able to do so because she evades the prosaic fate of her best friend, who becomes pregnant and is compelled by convention to marry her lover. Del’s body is not “damaged” or “burdened” in this way, and thus she is free to seek a career. She resists those regressive patriarchal discourses that the combined forces of family and society attempt to imprint upon her, and instead chooses a career in which she can make her voice heard. As a writer she will possess the power to disrupt and rewrite, through her fiction, Jubilee’s stifling social order, and thus to mirror Munro’s own creative project. Rasporich sees Del as an appropriate vehicle for Munro’s voice: “By giving us Del in *Lives* as the beginning artist developing...self-awareness, Munro is both the self-parodying artist and witty feminist evaluator” (67). Del’s voice therefore offers the possibility of future changes in the existing script of the Ontario small-town.

Those stories in which Munro explores the experience of the Scots-Canadian pioneer are clearly marked by a process of destabilization in which the author reverses the traditional beliefs that underlie much early Canadian literature. Munro’s settlers are often conquered by the land, defeated by their religious beliefs, or betrayed by those to whom they have given their trust. As in “Friend of My Youth” and “The
Stone in the Field,” therefore, the moral integrity at the heart of the Nation-Builder mythos is questioned, as are the mythologies surrounding the pioneer’s connection with the land. Indeed, Annie’s descent into insanity, as it is chronicled by the Reverend McBain in “A Wilderness Station,” is manifested in the retrogression of the Herron farm: “She would not plant peas and potatoes though they were given to her to grow among the stumps. She did not chop down the wild vines around her door” (QS 232). The pioneer existence in Munro’s vision, rather than being rewarding, is unrelenting; in “A Wilderness Station,” McBain, the preacher from the Glasgow Mission, whose communications with the clerk of the Peace in a nearby town in mid-nineteenth century Ontario is one of the forms of narration employed by the author, acknowledges “that this is truly a hard country for women” (240). McBain’s comment is charged with significance, as Annie, a Scots settler from Fife, struggles against the forces of both patriarchy and religious oppression that mark her settler experience. Significantly, Annie ultimately flees the land which, rather than being a symbol of growth and prosperity as it was for Simon, signifies for her only decay and despair; for her the reward is illusory. She becomes alienated from the very land that should, ideally, represent freedom and possibility for her as a Nation-Builder and is, instead, silenced and disempowered by the ubiquitous patriarchal authority which, according to Munro’s vision, underlies the female pioneer mythos.

As representatives in this story of Scots “Nation-Builders,” the story of the Herron brothers is also significant. The two boys are orphaned within months of
arriving in the New World, and are raised by separate families in Halton County. When the youngest brother turns fourteen, the two set out to “take up Crown Land north of the Huron Tract” (224). The story chronicles the physical hardships inherent in the settler experience, but, more importantly, as the story unfolds, the moral integrity of the two is deconstructed. The youngest ostensibly becomes, after many years, the epitome of the Nation-Builder; he clears his land and he and his wife contribute to populating the New World. As an old man, he describes his life in Halton county with the voice of the prosperous patriarch:

Our life together was a long one with many hardships but we were fortunate in the end and raised eight children. I have seen my sons take over my wife’s father’s land as well as my own....Now there are gravel roads running north, south, east, and west and a railway not a half mile from my farm. Except for woodlots, the bush is a thing of the past.

(230)

This ostensibly archetypal settler narrative, or Canadian metanarrative, is countered, however, by Annie’s story of abuse and betrayal at the hands of George’s brother Simon. Juxtaposing the disparate stories of the brothers, therefore, Munro illustrates two alternative directions for the pioneer experience, and thus reveals the reality of corruption traditionally disregarded by Canada’s historians.

The Herron brothers are thus positioned against one another, and Simon is gradually revealed as essentially a spectre in George’s narrative; he represents those settler narratives that contradict the celebrated pioneer myths upon which certain aspects of the Canadian identity are formed. George describes his brother’s willful
pride, a pride destructive rather than disciplined and determined as is that of the legendary Nation-Builder. Simon refuses help even for the sake of his brother’s comfort, and, once forced into accepting aid, promises that “that is the last we will need to ask of any person’s help” (226). His fixation on “establishing [their] holding” (227) leads him to mistreat his wife and brother and to precipitate his own death at their hands. They bury him, appropriately, in his own land, and the idyllic establishment later described by George Herron is thus built on a foundation of lies, betrayal, and corruption.

Adhering to an intractable pride and a repressive sense of morality, the narrator’s grandfather in “The Stone in the Field” also subverts conventional portrayals of the intrepid Scots Nation-Builder. Munro illustrates both aspects of the Scots ethic, stating that the narrator’s grandfather “was known for temper, and hard work” (MOJ 29). Furthermore, the narrator’s father recalls the severe ethic with which his own father was raised:

> It was this way. They always carried the feed to the horses, pail by pail...So my father took the notion to carry it to them in the wheelbarrow. Naturally it was a lot quicker. But he got beat. For laziness...Efficiency was just laziness, to them. (30)

This unwillingness to submit to change has a lasting impression on his daughters, who remain in an arrested state of girlhood, troubled only by “the pain of human contact” (27). Their father’s severe ethic and hubristic perspective thus prove to be, in many ways, profitless and regressive. His farm remains at a subsistence level and his home becomes frozen in time. Those progressive, visionary characteristics ascribed to the
heroic Scots settlers are thus distorted in this narrative, and Munro questions the very foundations of the pioneer metanarrative by revealing those elements of the story that have been “smudged” by the mythologizing process.\(^7\)

From her historical standpoint, shaped by those cultural and religious experiences and discourses that have marked her upbringing, Munro’s pioneer narratives can clearly not espouse the redemptive resonance which characterizes Duncan’s *The Imperialist*. Munro’s knowledge, born of her early cultural and religious experiences in small-town Ontario, of the certain consequences of those myths that have anchored a shifting Canadian identity, contributes to her revisionary project. The author’s destabilizing enterprise is accomplished through the act of pluralizing, by uncovering stories thought to be forgotten, and by adding varied voices, experiences and truths to Canada’s cultural past, and is clearly in keeping with a perpetually mutable Canadian identity. Working against conventional historical patriarchal narratives, Munro subverts, through her investigation of the physical and ideological effects of the Scots pioneer experience, certain fundamental aspects of a shared Canadian story.

\(^7\) Robert Deal’s betrayal of Flora in “Friend of My Youth,” though not treated at length, is likewise central to the story and to Munro’s subversive project, for it is a challenge to the “religious strictness” (FMY 7) and moral integrity which lies at the heart of the frontier and Scots Nation-Builder myths.
CHAPTER THREE

In an essay entitled "A Place to Stand On," Margaret Laurence declares that the character of Hagar in her novel _The Stone Angel_ "is very much a person who belongs in the same kind of prairie Scots-Presbyterian background as I do, and it was, of course, people like Hagar who created that background, with all its flaws and its strengths" (7). Laurence was acutely aware of the national myth of the Scots in Canada; indeed, the elements of Scottish heritage in her writing have been the subject of much critical analysis. Her exploration, and, ultimately, her deconstruction of those myths reveals, in more depth than Alice Munro’s treatment, the fundamental cultural, ideological, and psychological effects of the settler experience, and the essential truths that lie beneath Canada’s Nation-Builder mythos. In contrast with the brief glimpses Munro offers her readers in those of her short stories that explore her Scots heritage, Laurence constructs a complex fictional community whose pioneer roots remain evident in and central to the repressive experiences of her characters, and most especially her female characters. The individuals in Laurence’s fictional town struggle for independence from such defining and delimiting institutions as the Presbyterian church and the Scots-run educational system. Manawaka is a community further characterized by destructively rigid social codes whose bases are repeatedly ascribed to the Scots-Presbyterian element of the town’s population. In “Road from the Isles,” however, Laurence describes the existence of those Scots elements in her own
experience as “Mock Scots” (160), and thus asserts her contention that the reality of what ‘Scottishness’ became once translated to Canadian soil was fundamentally separate from Scotland’s own culture. Throughout the Manawaka cycle, Laurence demonstrates conclusively that Old World Scottish signifiers have in fact developed from a source of pride in the New World to a spurious signifier used in defense against the manifestation of that pride in small-town Canadian culture, and a device to uphold a repressive hegemony. Finally, Laurence’s Canadian fiction is occupied, at times almost obsessed, with questions of identity, both personal and national, and in The Stone Angel, The Diviners, and A Bird in the House, Laurence explores at length the ways in which the Canadian small town emerged from its pioneer history, and the myths surrounding its evolution.

Margaret Wemyss Laurence was descended on her paternal side, according to Clara Thomas in The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, from a “Lowland Scotch [sic] family” from Fifeshire. The author was born in Neepawa, Manitoba, a community settled, “by a group of Scottish pioneers, trekking from Ontario like the Wemyss’ great-grandparents, to take up land in the challenging, promising West” (10). In many ways, the history of Laurence’s family and community reads like an

1 Although Laurence’s Manawaka cycle includes her novel The Fire-Dwellers, it is not relevant for my purposes. My use of the term “Manawaka cycle” will therefore encompass the novels The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Diviners, and her collection of related short stories, A Bird in the House, each one set at least partially in the fictional town of Manawaka.

2 Thomas, Clara. The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence. (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1975) 6. Subsequent references to Thomas’ book-length treatment will be cited in-text and initialized as MW.
archetypal settler narrative, yet she was always very much aware of the painful realities that lay behind the town’s mythic pioneer story. Significantly, in “Where the World Began,” Laurence describes her childhood town as “bizarre, [and] agonizingly repressive or cruel at times” (238). Likewise, in Dance on the Earth, Laurence recalls that “two of [her] mothers were daughters of a stern, authoritarian pioneer father” (10). Her grandfather unwittingly played a pivotal role in the development of Laurence’s writing career, for, like Duncan, the limitations of whose hometown inspired her ambition for freedom and independence, Laurence concludes that in spite of Neepawa’s stultifying social order, embodied as it was in the despotic presence of her grandfather, “it was here that [she] learned the sight of [her] own particular eyes” (“Where the World” 244). This sight was largely determined by her Scots-Presbyterian upbringing in a rigidly stratified community, her early awareness of the strictly preserved margins of that community, and the reasons for the town’s cultural exclusivity; the combination of these factors clearly informed her unique Scots-Canadian female perspective as it is expressed in her Canadian fiction.

As I discussed in Chapters One and Two, the evolution of the small town was and is firmly connected to Canada’s historical ideological evolution. Clara Thomas suggests that the “towns of Canadian literature provide us with illuminations of a major strand of our tradition” (MW 175). The cultural construction of the small town is a convincing testament to the perspectives of Canada’s early colonists, perspectives consolidated in the following generation; the small town has, furthermore, become a
significant component of Canada’s popular mythologies. Laurence’s construction of Manawaka is therefore crucial to her exploration of Canada’s myth-making process.

As Thomas asserts,

Grounded in a small western town, [Laurence’s] people move out into the wider world, but they carry Manawaka with them, its constraints and inhibitions, but also its sense of roots, of ancestors, and of a past that is living still, both its achievements and its tragic errors. A past so rooted, geographically and socially, is within the memory of many Canadians, and it is within the imaginative range of all. (MW 177)

To Laurence’s characters, the “constraints and inhibitions” and the “tragic errors” are inextricably linked to the Scots-Canadian colonist’s experiences, and are made manifest in their early struggles with a paralyzing social structure, a dogmatic religious framework, and an inherited and restrictive sense of pride.

In both her personal life and her fiction, Laurence embodied a critical Canadian conflict, both because she was so acutely and constantly aware of her Scots heritage, and because she felt no powerful connection to Scotland itself; her sense of identity was thus rooted in that formation of the ‘New World Scottishness’ that so heavily influenced her Neepawa upbringing. Laurence recalls her childhood fascination with her Scots heritage, realizing that it represented for her an escape from the rigid social reality of Neepawa: “The Scotland I had envisaged as a child had been a fantasy, appealing because it seemed so much more bold and high-hearted than the prairie

3 It is clear that Thomas’ view of Canadian history and culture is in many ways a privileged one. Thus her assumption about “the imaginative range of all” (emphasis mine) indicates, perhaps, the viewpoint of somewhat narrowly defined cultural centre.
town where I really lived” (“Road” 160). The mythical ingredient of her Scottish heritage thus represented for the young Laurence an idealistic model of pride, bravery and conquest. Yet, with a more mature understanding of her heritage, the author came to realize the fissure that existed between Old World illusions and New World realities. As Laurence illustrates in the Manawaka cycle, Canadian “Scottishness” was central to the construction of the nation’s complex and difficult cultural reality. The author is most immediately concerned in her fiction with the present day manifestations of Canada’s young history, what Arnold E. Davidson, in “Cages and Escapes in Margaret Laurence’s A Bird in the House,” considers “one of Laurence’s main themes...the continuing presentness of the past” (92). More relevant here, however, are Laurence’s comments on the continuing presentness of Canada’s unique Scottish heritage in the lives of Canadians of differing gender, class, and race. Having moved beyond the colony-to-nation transition, Canada’s social structure, as Laurence illustrates through her articulation of the differing perspectives of women, the Métis, and the lower economic classes, is yet very much occlusive. The continuing autocratic authority of both the Old World colonial outlook and the rigid Scots settlers’ influence upon an emerging nation composed of disparate racial and cultural histories, creates a tension in Laurence’s Canadian fiction that elucidates the separate struggles of her characters.

Critical work that centres on the treatment of Scotland in Laurence’s fiction frequently focuses on what is generally considered to be a nodal point in The
Diviners,\textsuperscript{4} as well as in Canadian fiction at large: Morag’s realization that she retains no substantive connection with Scotland, but that the “myths are [her] reality” (390). This recognition precipitates a distinct moment of separation between Old and New Worlds, and thus a crucial point of departure for Canadian identity. Colin Nicholson, in “‘There and not there’: Aspects of Scotland in Laurence’s writing,” sees Laurence as moving toward “a literary declaration of Canadian independence” (165) in her historical fiction. Similarly, Neil ten Kortenaar, in “The Trick of Divining a Postcolonial Identity,” asserts that in Morag’s search for identity, “Scottishness must be present (in order to be superseded) for Morag to become Canadian” (16). The “Scottishness” considered by many critics involves the character’s acute awareness of his or her Scottish ancestry, as well as a search for meaningful racial memory from which he or she may derive an identity in the present. More interesting and less obvious, however, is Laurence’s exploration of the transmogrification of Scottishness after its translation onto Canadian soil, and her construction of that “Mock Scots” that has pervaded the Canadian social structure throughout the twentieth century. Laurence connects the overarching theme of ‘survival’ in Canadian literature with the nation’s Scots pioneer roots, and thus explains the lasting influences of “hard work and puritanism,” of emotional economy, and of pride (“A Place” 6) that originated in the Scots-Canadian settler story and continued to define Canadian social codes subsequent to the conquest of the physical frontier. Like Munro and others, Laurence felt that

\textsuperscript{4} The titles of Laurence’s texts will be abbreviated as follows: The Stone Angel (SA); A Jest of God (JOG); A Bird in the House (BH); The Diviners (TD).
Canada’s unique sensibility was born of the pioneering experience, “the grappling with an unyielding environment” ("Road" 162) at the heart of the Canadian mythic. Indeed, in a letter to Ernest Buckler, Laurence maintains that “all of us Canadians somehow feel that deep within our souls is the pioneer”⁵. The ethos of survival became pertinent to social achievement as well as the physical triumphs of the pioneer, and the Scots’ strength then became instrumental in the construction of Canada’s social foundation. Laurence elucidates in the Manawaka series the continuing effects of the Scots heritage on the ideological structure of Canadian society.

The central and dominating influence of an oppressive patriarchal religion in the Canadian small-town is also the object of much critical treatment with respect to Laurence’s Manawaka series. Joseph C. McLelland, in “Ralph and Stephen and Hugh and Margaret: Canlit’s View of Presbyterians,” concludes that Laurence’s “most memorable characters are women...who are caught in social repression and inherited guilt...Laurence probes this wound of our [Presbyterians’] faith most deeply” (118). Likewise, in “Fleeing The Emptiness,” Jack Robinson explores the “terrible isolation” (130) and “self-destructive pride” (126), manifested as they are in Laurence’s Presbyterian characters, that continually function to nullify their emotional freedom. Robinson concludes that the Scots dealt with their dispossession in the homeland by increasing the severity of their ethic in the New World: “[T]he Scots Presbyterians

⁵ Wainwright, J. A., ed., A Very Large Soul: Selected Letters from Margaret Laurence to Canadian Writers. (Dunvegan: Cormorant Books, 1995) 42. Subsequent excerpts from Wainwright’s book will be cited in-text and initialized as LS.
have projected a God in their own image, terribly conscious of ‘proper appearances’
and intent upon keeping the conscience of humankind with an iron hand” (135).
Laurence’s own conception of the Puritanism inherent in the Presbyterian faith with
which she was raised, is that “[y]ou just absorb it through the pores” (119); it is an
inescapable element of those Canadian communities that evolved from Scots-
Presbyterian roots. As I discussed in Chapters One and Two, the Scots-Canadian
settler experience is fundamentally bound to and defined by Calvinist-Presbyterian
doctrine. The Calvinist pride of the elect, the puritanical sensibility, and the patriarchal
outlook are products, at least in part, of the Scots-Presbyterianism brought to Canada.
Thus the stultifying experiences of Laurence’s Scots characters always comprehend
that religious background. The continuation of the Presbyterian-Calvinist influence on
Laurence’s modern female characters, and their rejection of its authority, further
signals a movement away from that extreme form of Scots-Presbyterianism that
developed on Canadian soil and became so integral a part of Canada’s story.

The texts in the Manawaka cycle are preoccupied throughout with myths and
the process of myth-making. To Marian Engel, Laurence explained that the interest
she felt in her “ancestral families, especially the women” (LS 63), motivated her
attempt, through her fiction, to “invent” and thus to “rediscover” “[l]ost histories” (LS
64). Those histories have traditionally been transmitted through national legends and
myths, yet, like Munro, Laurence determines, through her fiction, to rediscover the
silenced voices specifically of women, and the Métis people. In The Diviners,
Morag’s belief in, and love of, the Scots myths Christie teaches her, mirrors a national need for mythology and shared memory to provide a sense of rootedness and identity. Morag clings to her illusory Scots heritage until she realizes her own Canadian identity; similarly, her daughter Pique has a need to “hear the stories of Christie and of Lazarus and all of them, back there” (367). While Laurence clearly understood this need for a shared history, she was also aware of the determined idealization and exclusivity that marked the mythologies with which she was raised. In her Canadian fiction she thus considers and questions specifically the treasured mythologies developed from the Scots-Canadian pioneering history.

The texts in Laurence’s Manawaka cycle comprise many examples of ‘upright’ Scots Nation-Builders, men whose physical and intellectual contributions have helped found a nation; in particular, the character of Jason Currie in The Stone Angel looms large as the consummate symbol of self-sufficient growth and prosperity in an emerging nation: “He never believed in wasting a word or a minute. He was a self-made man. He had started without a bean, he was fond of [saying]...and had pulled himself up by his bootstraps” (SA 7). He is the prosperous owner of the first store in Manawaka, and permanently inscribes his signature on the town in the form of a marble angel “bought in pride to mark [his wife’s] bones and proclaim his dynasty, as he fancied, forever and a day” (SA 3). While Jason exists in the cycle as the conventional symbol of the nation’s successful economic development from frontier to nation, he also embodies characteristics of severity and rigidity that introduce a spectre
in Canada’s pioneer mythology. In particular, Jason’s “pride of race and clan,” though it befits his position as a Scots Nation-Builder, is ultimately the source of his destructive influence over Canada’s future generation, embodied in his three children.

As Clara Thomas explains it,

> Jason Currie and his like were proud, strong, “God-fearing” men who performed feats of endurance in the service of their goals of personal success and social progress. Their pride sustained them, but it was a two-edged sword. Its cost was reckoned in terms of losses they did not see, failures in humanity whose effects were built into the generations after them. (MW 76)

Those “failures in humanity” are a recurrent focus in Laurence’s fiction, made manifest in all those marginalized or outcast individuals ideologically and socially crippled by the strength of the celebrated national mythology of the Scots.

In contrast with Duncan’s text, Laurence clearly explores, in her Manawaka series, the ideological stasis which has existed with respect to marginalized groups following Canada’s propitious transformation from colony to nation. The possibilities of economic and cultural growth symbolized by the New World ended, according to Laurence’s vision, in a regressive, or, perhaps, a predictable cultural translocation wherein those biases repudiated in the Old World became positive signifiers in the New. The tension between the two sides of Vanessa’s family in A Bird in the House, for example, proceeds from the MacLeod sense of superiority, a sentiment that has its roots in Old World rank. Vanessa recalls that Grandmother MacLeod “looked down on the Connors because they had come from famine Irish” (65). The Scots Old World
heritage then becomes a status symbol once translated to Canadian soil, and the
continued use of this symbol by Manawaka's Scots creates a rigidly stratified small-
town community that remains heavily defined by antiquated Old World symbols.

Laurence debunks and repudiates those signifiers through the marginalized
characters of Bram Shipley in The Stone Angel and Christie Logan in The Diviners,
characters who openly reject the town's ideology and who are clearly juxtaposed
against the community's archetypal Scots Nation-Builders figures. Bram Shipley
stands in contrast to Jason Currie, in spite of their shared pioneering family history,
and Bram's son John's contention that "[t]hey're only different sides of the same coin,
anyway, [Bram] and the Curries" (SA 184). The vital ideological differences between
the two men, however, exposes the corrupt elements of the moral code espoused by
the Manawaka community. Whereas Jason embodies Manawaka's social code, Bram
very obviously rejects the town's moralistic perspective and indulges in those vices
condemned by the ideological centre of Manawaka. Likewise, his uneducated
language sets him apart from Manawaka's elite, language he continually chooses to
employ with the intent of renouncing the town's pretentious social conventions. He
feels "trapped" (SA 70) by conventions that exclude him from his wife's economic
and social class, and thus tells her "I don't give a Christly curse how I talk....It don't
matter to me what your friends or your old man think" (71). Finally, in contrast to the
puritanical work ethic advocated by those Scots Nation-Builders who settled
Manawaka, Bram is indolent and short-sighted when it comes to business, and his
farm is therefore profitless; significantly, he places the well-being of his horses above his need for profit, preferring to “see the few he sold going to men he knew would look after them well” (85). Bram possesses his own vision, however, and Hagar is shocked to realize that Bram “wanted his dynasty no less than [her] father had (101), yet so thoroughly infused is Hagar with her father’s narrowly defined Scots-Canadian conceit, that she is unable to comprehend a sense of pride that is not based on either class or heritage, and thus derides Bram’s ambitions.

Bram espouses, in certain ways, the values of respect and loyalty disregarded by the ‘moral centre’ of Manawaka. He respects Hagar as an individual, unlike her father who saw her as “a thing and his” (SA 43), and she realizes too late that Bram “was the only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name, not daughter, nor sister, nor mother, nor even wife, but Hagar, always” (80). She is, however, unable to regard him as anything but hostile to her ‘respectable’ Scots-Canadian sense of self, and ultimately abandons him in search of social validation. Finally, Bram is able to inspire in his sons the love that Hagar cannot, so consumed is she by the need for respect and propriety. She is a victim of those “failures in humanity” that have resulted from the combined forces of Scots pride and ambition in the New World, failures that result in her continued isolation and unhappiness. Hagar and Bram are ultimately unable to resolve their conflict in life, but Constance Rooke suggests that by the time “Hagar is an old woman, Jason’s pretensions...have turned to dust: the Currie-Shipley stone will be recognized by a new generation as simply Canadian, marking the graves of two
pioneering families with little to choose between them” (28), and thus the definition of Canadian will evolve beyond the restrictive and isolating agenda sought by Hagar’s generation. Significantly, Bram and Hagar’s son John inherits his father’s antagonism toward fraudulent class signifiers, and later demonstrates his indifference to his Scots heritage by trading the Currie plaid pin for Lazarus Tonnerre’s knife. This exchange illustrates the decreased value of Old World signifiers on Canadian soil, and thus Laurence offers a redemptive resonance at the conclusion of the novel in the possibility that those counterfeit signifiers exposed by Bram will eventually become useless currency in Canada.

The character of Christie Logan in The Diviners, like Bram Shipley, functions to subvert and to deconstruct the fundamental Canadian mythos of the Scots Nation-Builder; he represents in many ways an anti-builder figure, although he shares many of the conventional traits of Canada’s legendary pioneers. Like Jason Currie did, Christie looks to the Old World for a sense of pride and honour, yet Christie is obliged to draw on the strength of his heritage in order to gain a sense of equality in the New World:

Let the Connors and the McVities and the Camerons and Simon Pearl and all them in their houses up there - let them look down on the likes of Christie Logan. Let them. I say unto you, Morag, girl, I open my shirt to the cold winds of their voices... They don’t touch me, Morag. For my kin and clan are as good as theirs any day of the week. (TD 47)

The conflicting forces of Christie’s Scots pride and his troubling knowledge of the daily realities of that pride in the New World, manifested as they are in the stultifying moral code of Manawaka, uncover the realities that underlie the myths. Known as the
town “Scavenger,” Christie makes his living as Manawaka’s garbage collector, and, in doing so, becomes the collector of the town’s secrets; as the town’s archaeologist, Christie is thus aware of the layers of contradiction and hypocrisy upon which the community is built, and rather than participating in the building of his nation, he works to dismantle its ideological construction. He reveals to Morag and Jules that he once found “a newborn baby...[d]ead of course” in the “Nuisance Grounds” (76); the child was clearly hidden to protect the veneer of respectability valued by the mother’s family and by the community. In contrast, Christie consistently values truth and sincerity over the image of righteousness adopted by Manawaka’s social centre. At a significant moment in the text, mixing a ‘respectable’ Old World Scots accent with the language that betrays his lower class status in the New World, Christie declares “by the ridge of tears and by the valour of my ancestors, I say unto you, Morag Gunn, lass, that by their bloody goddamn fucking garbage shall ye christly well know them” (TD 39). Christie thus uses his “gift of the garbage-telling” (TD 75) to expose the reality that exists behind the disingenuous appearance of propriety so valued by the Scots who settled the community, those members of the ‘elect’ who have prospered in the New World.

Aware of the false premises upon which Manawaka’s acknowledged doctrine of the elect is based, Christie repeatedly reveals his contempt for the hypocrisy that informs the town’s rigid social code by cynically acting the part expected of him. In a feigned deferential tone, Christie echoes Jason Currie’s doctrine of honest work when addressing members of Manawaka’s privileged class; speaking to Mr. McVitie, one of
the town’s lawyers, Christie parodies the words of the community’s leaders: “Och aye, an honest job is all I ask in this very world, Mr. McVitie, and I tell you, sir, that’s God’s truth. An honest wage for an honest day’s work, as you might phrase it” (118, emphasis mine). Christie thus mocks the naïve dignity in the words, understanding the hypocrisy inherent in the cultural stratification of Manawaka, and thus the complex realities underlying the moral doctrine of honest work, and the myth of equality in the New World.

Christie’s complex character is a crucial element in Laurence’s project, for he embodies the best and the worst of the Canadian mythopoeia. Kortenaar identifies the fundamentally contradictory elements of Christie’s character as they affect his adopted daughter: “Morag...feels the need for Scottish ancestry, partially because of her social status as the daughter of the Scavenger. Ironically, Christie’s stories inspire her with pride although he remains the source of deep shame” (19). Likewise, in “Contra/diction/s: Language in Laurence’s The Diviners,” Christl Verduyn asserts that “[c]ontradiction characterizes Christie’s language and life alike” (59). The conflict manifested in Christie’s character represents in certain ways the corruption of the archetypal pioneer narrative; his past is unimportant in this nation where “Scottishness” is respected only in those who comprise the uppermost social stratum. Thus he illustrates the reality that Canadian “Scottishness,” the new entity created in Laurence’s vision of the New World, is a fraudulent signifier inaccessible and useless to those on the margins of Manawaka’s narrowly defined social centre.
As Duncan did, Laurence also revisions the Canadian cultural mythos of the Scots from a distinctively feminine point of view. Female Nation-Builder characters in Laurence’s fiction are invariably fettered by the twin forces of Old World patriarchy and Old World religion. *The Stone Angel*’s Hagar, in particular, personifies the cultural conflicts inherent in the Scots-Canadian female experience. Hagar’s character reaches maturity near the turn of the century, and thus invites a comparison with *The Imperialist*’s heroine, Advena; the differing historical and cultural perspectives of the two writers points to crucial differences in characterization and representation of the shift from physical to ideological frontier. Indeed Advena’s very name signals her possibilities for the future and her ability to escape the cultural and religious fetters that restrain those around her, whereas Hagar’s Old Testament name invokes an antiquated religious doctrine, as well as an enduring ideological prison in which Canadian women continue to exist. Significantly, both writers link Canada’s colonial status with the New World status of women, yet whereas Duncan’s narrative anticipates a distinctly positive shift from colony to nation, and a permanent ideological separation from the fetters of the Old World, Laurence’s text is narrated with the understanding, as Wayne Fraser asserts in *The Dominion of Women*, that Canadians were still “colonized... in 1964” (91). Likewise, the status of women during Laurence’s own upbringing remained very limited; Laurence recalls that “you weren’t supposed to... question the assumption that the woman’s only role was that of housewife” (qtd in Kearns 104). Laurence’s words echo Duncan’s journalistic writing at the turn of the century, and the
restrictions of the domestic sphere challenged by Duncan in her writing remain relevant in Laurence's time. Laurence, however, reveals through the experiences of her Scots-Canadian female characters the ways in which New World Scottish signifiers functioned to perpetuate traditional gender roles.

The ideological and cultural conflicts experienced by women in a community so immediately linked with its pioneer origins as Manawaka is, are central to the Manawaka cycle of novels. The settler experience, as I discussed in Chapter One, was theoretically very important to the immediate development of greater independence for women in Canada. Yet while Sara Duncan clearly saw the experience as promising for the future progress of women in the New World, Laurence instead reveals her contention that, in fact, the ostensible empowerment of women in Canada was in many ways misleading, and ultimately short-lived. Her female protagonists are often caught between the physical and intellectual strength demanded of them in the New World setting, and the ideal of womanhood sanctioned by an ever present Old World ideology.

Like Advena did, Hagar feels burdened by those gendered expectations dictated by her community, and by the preconceived identity she is expected to assume. When Hagar is young, her father encourages her to develop the intelligence and ability she has inherited from him, praising her as "[s]mart as a whip," and musing about "If she'd only been [a boy]" (14); although she is both smarter and more daring than either of her brothers, her restrictive future is predetermined by her gender. As she matures
her father’s expectations shift, and he demands that she relinquish her independence and ambition in order to assume the role of “hostess” (45), a status symbol that epitomizes his success in the New World. Hagar’s identity is therefore dependent upon her father’s position, and she ultimately struggles with a low level of self-definition; her individuality is supplanted by the conflicting forces of her rejection of and need for conformity. Her eventual transformation into a being akin to the stone angel valued by her father, therefore, is a consolidation of her profitless strength and inflexible pride in a society that values feminine capitulation. Hagar is, finally, just as aberrant as is the stone angel among the “lesser breed” (4) of cherubim in the Manawaka cemetery.

Significantly, Jason Currie’s pride in the stone angel does not stem from the pride of his wife’s memory, but rather from the social standing it represents; Hagar realizes that her father despised his wife’s inability to endure the physical hardships of the pioneer experience although that strength was expected of her, yet he honours the angel he would have had her become had she lived: “his monument stood, more dear to him, I believe, than the brood mare who lay beneath because she’d proved no match for his stud” (43). Laurence clearly sees the shifting role of women in the New World as problematic, realizing that those myths in which the New World represented the prospect of opportunity and freedom for women were heavily restricted; indeed men’s economic achievement in Canada meant a reduction in the range of women’s opportunities to participate physically or ideologically in the building of the nation.
Laurence therefore contradicts Sara Duncan's contention in *The Imperialist* that the empowered position of women in the New World remained effective subsequent to the conquest of the physical frontier. From her historical viewpoint, Laurence testifies to the existing suppression of women's authority in Canada, two generations after the country was settled.

The process of the translation of Old World signifiers into Canadian culture was likely a result of the sense of dislocation and displacement experienced by Canadian immigrants. The country's 'newness' stood at odds with the long cultural memories brought over by European settlers, and thus the translation of Old World signifiers provided a sense of continuity. In *A Jest of God*, however, Rachel explains Manawaka's racial makeup, and reveals her understanding that those signifiers of position championed by the Scots in this community are indeed empty and fraudulent:

> Half the town is Scots descent and the other half is Ukrainian. Oil, as they say, and water. Both came for the same reasons, because they had nothing where they were before. That was a long way away and a long time ago. The Ukrainians knew how to be the better grain farmers, but the Scots knew how to be almightier than anyone but God. (*JOG* 71)

The sense of superiority adopted by the Scots becomes, especially for women, a defense against the lack of distinct identity in this new country. Unlike Duncan's portrayal in *The Imperialist* of female Nation-Builders whose physical and ideological participation in the nation's growth is unmistakable, Laurence constructs women whose sense of identity in Canada is wholly dependent on the social and economic position of either father or husband, as well as the rigidly defined cultural myths
surrounding respectable 'femininity.' The sense of paralysis experienced by Laurence's Scots-Canadian female characters is indicative of the patriarchal shackles that still restricted women in post-frontier Canada. The translocation of Old World Scots values onto Canadian soil, combined with the increased severity of that ethic created, at least for women, a period of stasis wherein the role of Nation-Builder returned to patriarchal hands, and the role of women to that of "angel in the home."

The paralyzing effects of this role are most evident in Manawaka's older generation of pioneering women. Vanessa's Grandmother Connor in *A Bird in the House* is the most obvious embodiment of this angel figure; her family observes her submissiveness and assumes "that she needed protection" (23), and her disempowered position within Grandfather Connor's home results in her characteristic voicelessness. Significantly, to Vanessa Grandmother explains that her caged pet canary "had been there always and wouldn't know what to do with itself outside" (14). Likewise, Vanessa's Grandmother MacLeod, recalls her husband's promise to build her "a proper house" in the frontier town of Manawaka, thus immediately limiting her participation in the development of the nation to the domestic sphere; she consequently defines herself by the prosperity of her husband, the "resident help" (49) they were able to hire, and thus her severely circumscribed, but respectable, position as wife. Her son explains that she "was interested in being a lady...and for a long time it seemed to her that she was one" (55); this is the only identity she is at liberty to assume in Manawaka. Her years in this position make her unable to adapt to the demands of
the New World, and thus her sense of dislocation is permanent. During the depression years, as Vanessa recalls, her Grandmother was unable to break out of her restricted role in order to help her pregnant daughter-in-law, and likewise continued to spend beyond her means in order to retain her antiquated identity. Rachel’s mother in *A Jest of God* suffers a similar fate, and ultimately, as Clara Thomas asserts, “[h]er pleasures in life are the small vanities of high heels, fussy blue-rinsed curls, and bridge parties” (*MW* 78). These women’s sphere of influence is thus limited exclusively to the domestic, yet, interestingly, both Grandmother MacLeod and Mrs. Cameron are widows and are therefore missing their sanctioned frame of reference within the domestic sphere. Without the social anchor provided by their spouses, their position in the Manawaka community becomes obsolete and devaluated; both are missing the centre of their identity.

Unlike Duncan’s vision, in which Advena, as a female Scots Nation-Builder, can participate in the positive development of gender roles in the New World through her influence over the next generation, Laurence’s female pioneer characters instill their own imprisoning beliefs in their daughters. The sense of pride that motivates obsolete behaviour in women like Grandmother MacLeod and Mrs. Cameron is then passed on to the second generation of Scots-Canadian women, and the evidence of the destructive pride and circumscribed gender roles is embodied in the characters of Rachel Cameron and Hagar Currie. Clara Thomas, who sees Rachel and Hagar as imprisoned by the same effects of the Scots ethos, suggests that Rachel is “locked
within her own fears and inhibitions, her strength constantly sapped by a self-debasing humility as destructive as Hagar's pride and, as one is finally led to perceive it, the mirror image of that pride” (MW 78). They share the same puritanical sexual shame, and are halted by the same "brake of proper appearances" (SA 292) dictated by their parents' generation. Indeed Rachel is shocked to realize that her mother’s intolerant attitude has the power to supplant her own: “It can’t be myself thinking like that. I don’t believe that way at all. It’s as though I’ve thought in Mother’s voice” (70).

Hagar is likewise wholly trapped by the social and religious doctrine of her father’s generation, and in a final moment of realization, a moment that has been the focus of much critical attention, Hagar comprehends the strength of her internalized convictions: “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” (292). Furthermore, as many critics have noted, Hagar’s final act of freedom, in praising her son Marvin, offers hope in the momentary escape from the shackles of her Scots-Presbyterian background.6 The sense of dislocation inherent in the experience of Scots-Canadian women is therefore equally problematic for the second generation, as they attempt to transgress racial and class-based boundaries.

Whereas Hagar’s realizations come too late, however, Rachel in fact experiences a rebirth and gains a sense of empowerment in spite of her rigid social

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6 See, for example, Constance Rooke’s “A Feminist Reading of The Stone Angel,” and Shirley Chew’s “‘Some truer image’: A Reading of The Stone Angel.”
conditioning. Her maternal desire awakens and using its strength, and the strength of her unhappiness, she physically flees the confines of Manawaka, and defies her mother's desire to sustain their futile existence within the community. As the two leave Manawaka, Rachel entreats "Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice" (JOG 208). The words are a clear counter to Hagar's painful realization in The Stone Angel: "This knowing comes upon me...with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always, have wanted that - simply to rejoice" (292). Rachel thus ultimately escapes Hagar's grim fate by seeking fulfillment outside of her mother's and Hagar's restrictive frame of reference.

The character of Morag in The Diviners stands in contrast with Laurence's earlier circumscribed female protagonists, with Christie's rebellious but ultimately impotent character, and finally with those stern patriarchal Nation-Builders whose authoritarian influence shaped the cultural dynamic of Manawaka. Morag's personal development throughout the novel is symbolic in many ways of the nation's growth; significantly, the novel was written at a time of high nationalism in Canada, a time in which Canada's identity was at issue. Morag, like Advena, is in many ways an ideological pioneer figure, whose rejection of rigid moral and social codes and of Old World affinities, and whose creative participation in the revisioning of a modern Canada symbolize the nation's ideological potential for progress. Morag's highly symbolic relationship with British professor Brooke Skelton, his colonial affinities and
paternal attitude towards her has been treated at length by Canadian critics.\(^7\), her struggle to define herself outside of Brooke's authority represents both a national and a gendered struggle for independence and, as Duncan did, Laurence clearly equates the female voice with Canada's national voice. Just Morag is expected to define herself relative to Brooke's identity, Canada has consistently searched for its identity through its associative relationships with both Old World countries and the United States. Furthermore, the oppressive authority of the Old World influence on Canadian culture mirrors Morag's silenced voice in her marriage to Brooke. In "Representations of Silence: The Diviners," Frank Davey sees Brooke as "someone who is particularly interested in the silence of women, in reducing the number of the words they utter and the interference of these words with his life" (Post-National 27). Morag's eventual success as a writer and her divorce from Brooke thus signal Canada's ongoing movement away from Old World ties and the search for an autonomous identity. Morag's defiant relationship with Jules, and the birth of Pique clearly further indicate the need and the inevitability of varied voices in the continuing Nation-Building process. The Diviners thus pursues many of the same political objectives as Duncan's The Imperialist, despite very different historical perspectives, and Morag's personal discovery of identity, her search for independence and her awareness of the need to redefine certain cultural myths embraced by mainstream Canadian society illustrates

\(^7\) See, for example, Ildikó de Papp Carrington's "'Tales in the Telling': The Diviners as Fiction about Fiction," and Laurie Lindberg's "Wordsmith and Woman: Morag Gunn's Triumph Through Language".
her contention that those myths are, in many ways, exclusionary, antiquated, and distortional.

In a talk entitled “Books That Mattered to Me,” Laurence revealed the ways in which she was influenced by certain of Canada’s national myths. She explains that as a young woman, she was greatly inspired by the heroines of Nellie McClung’s *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (241). She admired and identified with the spirit and intelligence of the characters, although she acknowledged the inevitability of conventionality in these early portrayals of Canadian female pioneers. The characters of Anne and Pearl are, significantly, representative constructions of the strong, capable and innovative female Scots pioneer as contrived by early Canadian writers such as Sara Duncan. Laurence incorporates this traditional character type in *The Diviners*, in the protagonist’s imagined discussions with Catherine Parr Traill, one of Canada’s most famous female pioneers. It is clearly not coincidental that Morag chooses to question and challenge the author of *The Canadian Settlers’ Guide*, one of Canada’s highly popular traditional pioneering narratives; the imagined interchange between the two adds a layer of irony that playfully questions Traill’s ostensibly impeccable pioneer experience, and thus undermines those idyllic myths associated with the Canadian settler story. Past and present female experiences are therefore directly juxtaposed, providing a vehicle in which Laurence may give voice to and question the experiences of the Canadian female pioneer from the vantage point of her own historical perspective. The ironic tone assumed by Morag in these
discussions illustrates her contention that Traill, as she portrays herself in her work, is and has been a Canadian icon unattainable and undesirable for the Canadian woman. To Morag, Traill’s experience discounts in many ways the brutal and painful realities of the pioneer experience; Morag pointedly comments to Traill that, in the New World, 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” (171). Traill’s account does not consider the complex social, cultural, and environmental realities faced by women pioneers throughout Canada’s history. Laurence, through Morag, is interested, therefore in forming new female role models in a new society.

Morag’s character also reflects Advena’s capacity to effect social change through her influence over the next generation of Canadians. While Advena’s future children in The Imperialist represent Canada’s social potentialities, Morag’s child symbolizes the reality of social evolution in Canada. Pique’s very existence is a challenge to the exclusivity sanctioned by Canada’s historical ideological structure, whose ethical and social codes have effectively smothered the unique stories of both women and the Métis. Pique is a pioneer figure whose struggles with identity solidify the reality of a continuing colonial sensibility in modern day Canada, and her need to revision myths and to forge her own sense of identity in Canada thus indicates her participation in the ongoing ideological frontier of Canadian society. Pique is the embodiment of a revised Scots-Canadian perspective which necessarily includes the voices of the marginalized.
Furthermore, whereas Duncan anticipated significantly positive cultural development in the lifetimes of her first generation Scots characters, Laurence investigates instead the enduring Old World biases throughout Canada’s ideological and cultural transformation from colony to commonwealth. Laurence explores this phenomenon through the cross-cultural relationships of Rachel and Nick in A Jest of God, and Morag and Jules in The Diviners, and through the inter-class relationship between John and Arlene in The Stone Angel. The alienation experienced by each of these characters results, in large part, from the ideological barriers constructed out of the Scots-Canadian experience. Both Nick Kazlik, son of a Ukrainian immigrant, and Jules Tonnerre, a Métis, exist on the margins of Manawaka’s social centre, and evince the painful realities of that ostracized existence. Class-based and racial differences, as they have been defined and constructed in Manawaka, interfere in the level of intimacy possible within each relationship. Rachel realizes that part of Nick’s personal history is impenetrable to her as a member of the town’s privileged class and race: “He has this streak of flippant bitterness that I can’t reply to. I don’t know how to interpret it” (95). Similarly, Jules is unable to wholly separate Morag from the white Scots-Presbyterians who have caused the “long silence” (BH 108) of the Métis people, and thus focuses his anger at her: “By Jesus, I hate you...I hate all of you. Every goddamn one” (275). Yet in spite of the barriers that exist between these couples, their relationships do offer the future possibility of banishing obsolescent social codes; the biases that have created such an inflexible social and economic stratification lose the
strength of authority with each generation. Rachel realizes that although her parents’ rigid conviction has had a tremendous affect on her, “by the time it reached [her] the backbone had been splintered considerably” (71). Her relationship with Nick is therefore symbolic of shifting ideological boundaries, both class-based and racial. Likewise, the birth of Morag and Jules’ daughter Pique, as mentioned earlier, suggests the possibility of reconciliation between the conflicting forces of her parents’ disparate backgrounds.

In The Stone Angel, Laurence deconstructs fraudulent class signifiers through the doomed relationship between Hagar’s son John, and Arlene, the daughter of “No-name Lottie Drieser” (204), a former classmate of Hagar’s whose illegitimate status keeps her, for many years, on the margins of Manawaka’s social centre. This relationship is a challenge to Hagar’s class-based sense of pride, rather than the racially motivated marginalization of Nick and Jules. As a child Lottie is an affront to the town’s puritanical doctrine of respectability, and her marriage to the town’s bank manager does little to change her status among the strict defenders of the old social code. The relationship between John and Arlene is upsetting for Hagar because it is evidence of her diminished social position and thus the loss of her identity, determined as it now is by Bram’s outcast status in the community. John clearly rejects Hagar’s antiquated conception of identity, and remarks sarcastically, “This may come as a shock to you....But it’s not her grandfather I’m going around with, nor she with mine” (204). Although this categorical dismissal signals an evolution in the town’s social
doctrine, John and Arlene’s death also indicates the enduring destructive nature of their parents’ society.

In spite of her own privileged social and racial status in the Canadian social stratification, Laurence further attempts, through her treatment of Métis mythology, to uncover voices long silenced by the imperious authority of the Scots-Canadian mythos. Throughout The Diviners, Laurence follows Jules Tonnerre’s struggle to be heard above the dominant narrative. The history of his people is a challenge to the nation’s upstanding pioneer metanarrative, and is thus disregarded in Canada’s recorded history. Jules learns, therefore that he “comes from nowhere” (70), and is essentially invisible in Canadian culture; his marginalized existence is testimony, however, to the Scots pioneers’ achievements in the New World. While the silence of the Métis people has traditionally been satisfactory to Canadian myth-makers, Laurence attempts to express the value of varied voices and myths within a national shared story.

Laurence repeatedly underscores the need for plurality, and therefore a sense of balance, in Canada’s national historical myths by underlining the absence of certain voices within the nation’s mosaic. Jules understands his status as nonentity within Canadian history and culture, and therefore makes a significant statement by refusing to sing “The Maple Leaf Forever” as a child in school; Margaret Osachoff, in “Colonialism in the Fiction of Margaret Laurence,” observes that this sanctioned song “celebrates the Scots, Irish and English as Canadians with Wolfe their ‘dauntless hero’” (234), and clearly disregards the place of the Métis in Canada’s history. Jules
continuously attempts, through his music, to add his voice and the Métis people’s story to Canada’s mainstream culture, yet he is forced to conform to the stereotype created by the dominant group in order to perform for its members. His daughter Pique realizes that “he’s only got one thing to cash in on,” the fact that to conventional society he remains “an oddity” (236), an individual so outcast as to peak interest in a mainstream audience. Through Pique, however, Laurence ultimately offers a sense of hope. Despite her own marginalized position, Pique embraces her Métis heritage and, at the conclusion of the novel withdraws from white society in order to participate in building a Métis community at Galloping Mountain. Combining her independence and assertiveness, and her need for expression through music, Pique attempts to integrate her parents’ disparate mythologies; in doing so, she creates a new perspective through which to rediscover Canada’s history, and a unique voice with which to express that narrative.

Laurence’s vision of Canada’s history is ultimately honest; she attempts to provide a sense of balance for the nation’s collective memory by promoting the voices of the marginalized while simultaneously acknowledging the strengths and the failings of Canada’s culturally recognized myths and its metanarrative. Morag’s, or Laurence’s, invocation to “Look ahead into the past, and back into the future” (TD 453) indicates the author’s recognition of the importance of a received history that substantiates the nation’s complex identity rather than upholds an idealized rendering of its past. Many of Laurence’s characters throughout the Manawaka cycle challenge
socially determined class, race and gender biases, and thus subvert certain of Canada’s treasured mythologies; in particular, outcast figures such as Bram Shipley, Christie Logan, Morag Gunn and Jules Tonnerre provide a counter discourse that deconstructs the authority of the nation’s dominant narrative. Laurence’s exploration of the Scots-Canadian experience, in particular, reveals the destructive austerity that evolved from the translation of ‘Scottishness’ onto Canadian soil, and by exploring the complex structure of the small-town through the fictional community of Manawaka, Laurence reveals the enduring impact of the Scots pioneers’ manipulation of Old World signifiers in developing communities, as well as the unique ‘Canadian Scottishness’ that evolved from the settler experience. Finally, within the frame of the Canadian small-town microcosm, Laurence rediscovers and attempts, despite her own privileged position within the nation’s stratification, to articulate those mythologies that have long been silenced by Canada’s sanctioned history.
CONCLUSION

The continuing evolution of Canada’s national identity is in no small way concerned with the development of our social and historical myths and our shared stories. The growth of these national narratives, as is clear in a large part of Canada’s mainstream literature, has traditionally been influenced by the strength of the sanctioned pioneer myth with its positive associations of industriousness and vision, as well as its narrowly defined assumptions about race, class, and gender. The enduring related mythos of the Scots settler has also greatly contributed to the social and cultural traditions out of which a Canadian metanarrative has evolved; in particular, the characterization of the Scots Nation-Builder in early Canadian literature such as Duncan’s *The Imperialist*, created a foundation upon which later national narratives continued to develop. The evolution of the Canadian identity has historically been influenced by the ubiquitous authority of imperial power, and yet the presence of an Old World framework in this country has created a dominant structure against which the proponents of both gender equality and ethnic pluralism have struggled to be heard. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have one shared and governing originary myth, and such writers as Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro have offered
pluralistic visions of Canada’s most prominent settler myths\(^1\), visions that both challenge dominant narratives and contribute varied perspectives to the continuing construction of a Canadian identity.

Scots-Canadians have, historically, been extremely influential in all facets of the nation’s physical and cultural development, and have therefore played a crucial role in the shaping of this country’s national identity. The positive characteristics of moral integrity, industriousness, and vision associated with the Scots settler have traditionally accounted for their notable success on the Canadian frontier, and later in the nation’s social and economic development; early writers such as Ralph Connor and Sara Jeannette Duncan contributed, through their characterization of intrepid Scots pioneers, to the validation and popularity of this myth. Duncan’s portrayal in *The Imperialist* of the upright and admirable Murchison family, from John Murchison’s quiet confidence and dignity to Advena’s ambition and vision, embodies significant aspects of Canada’s treasured myth. Yet Duncan’s treatment is moderately subversive, for while she clearly endorses the predominance and authority of the Scots in Canada, she also questions the patriarchal assumptions upon which that authority is based.

In 1903, when Sara Jeannette Duncan published *The Imperialist*, women’s desire for recognition and expression in this New World was being felt. In her journalism, Duncan voiced women’s ambition for fulfillment outside the

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\(^1\) As I stated in my introduction, I am referring specifically to the Scots Nation-Builder myth and the female pioneer myth, both of which recur in diverse incarnations in Canadian literature.
circumscribed boundaries of the domestic sphere and, in her fiction, she constructed courageous heroines in search of achievement in the public arena. Her efforts were not always well received and, as Laurence and Munro illustrate in their own fiction written at least two generations after Duncan’s time, the position of women continued to be subordinate throughout the social development of the nation. The differing historical perspectives of Duncan, Laurence, and Munro function to demonstrate the ongoing importance of gender issues as they coincide with the continuing development of the country. All three Scots-Canadian women writers focus on the voicing of women’s stories within a patriarchal society in order to provide a balance of knowledge about modern Canadian society and its history.

Interestingly, while Duncan and other early Canadian writers saw the pioneering ethos as positive for the advancement of women’s positions within a patriarchal society, later writers realized that, in fact, the Scots pioneer experience functioned in certain ways to perpetuate a patriarchal structure. Alice Munro’s exploration of the oppressive effects of Calvinist-Presbyterianism on the female Scots pioneer and her descendants in Canada illustrates the author’s contention that the celebrated female pioneer myth, which underscores the empowered position of women on the physical frontier and their critical role in the creation of this nation, is in many ways distortalional. Having discovered a crucial distinction between the Presbyterianism practiced in Scotland, and the more repressive strand of this religion that formed on Canadian soil, Munro began to explore the unique perspective born of
the combined social and physical conditions experienced by the Scots-Canadian female pioneer. Munro, by linking her family history, her personal perspective in modern-day urban Ontario, and her research into Canada’s Scottish history, reveals a vision of the female pioneer myth in which women physically evince the destructive consequences of a religious existence, both in the Canadian wilderness and later in small-town Ontario. The continuing psychological effects on her female characters of a rigid Calvinist-Presbyterianism, and their perpetual struggle with the related forces of patriarchy, combine to create Munro’s subversive vision of one of Canada’s most treasured myths.

By adding the voices of numerous and disparate women to her reconstruction of Canada’s history, Munro destabilizes recognized elements of Canada’s shared stories, and rediscovers voices long silenced. Her fictionalized construction of the female pioneer experience in “Friend of My Youth,” “A Wilderness Station,” and “Meneseteung,” questions accepted characterizations and portrayals of Canada’s Scots Nation-Builders and heroic pioneers, and the idealism that has sustained the popularity of these myths. Through the act of pluralizing, Munro challenges traditional patriarchal interpretations of Canada’s history and contributes her own voice to the increasingly diverse mosaic that continues to redefine the parameters of the nation’s permanently mutable identity.

Munro also recognizes the presentness of Canada’s Scots pioneering past in Canada’s small town, which exists, in many ways, as a symbolic setting wherein the
evidence of historical ethical codes and ideological discourses retain a strong influence. Juxtaposing past and present day characters, Munro emphasizes the powerful legacy of the puritanical ethos embraced by our pioneers. The structure of “Friend of My Youth” consciously compares the narrator with her mother and again with Flora and Ellie who are unquestionably symbolic of the nation’s settler origins; likewise, the narrator of “The Stone in the Field” measures herself against her father’s sisters who continue to live a pioneer existence in modern Ontario, and realizes that, in spite of superficial differences, she and her aunts are fundamentally alike. Thus the cultural and religious doctrine espoused by the renowned Scots settlers still resonates clearly in the rigidly stratified society in which Alice Munro matured and out of which she writes. The dominant elements of Canada’s current identity, as Munro illustrates continuously in her fiction, are therefore unquestionably evidential of those origins, both positive and negative, that we celebrate in our myths.

Significantly, as Laurence reveals in her Manawaka series, the contributions of the Scots to the development of a national identity were also bound up in the justification of their authority in the New World. Robin Mathews suggests that “the identity of a people has to be tied to its explanations of reality” (13), and thus the superior social and cultural positions of the Scots in early Canadian communities was attributed to the Calvinist doctrine of the elect assumed by Scots settlers, and thus their surpassing moral probity, rather than their perpetuation of Old World hierarchies in Canada. Laurence explores at length in her Canadian fiction this process of cultural
translation between Scotland and Canada, and the derivation of "Mock Scots" which greatly contributed to the social stratification in many Canadian communities.

Throughout the Manawaka series Laurence illustrates the link between the Scots pride of race and clan, and their economic and social positioning within the community; without the mainstay of the latter, as Laurence illustrates, the Scots pride holds little meaning in this New World. Furthermore, the destructive pride of the Scots pioneer, as it is embodied in the character of Jason Currie, perpetuates ethnic, social, and gendered biases, and works to build an oppressive community characterized by intolerance and rigidity. Although superficially Jason stands as the archetypal Scots Nation-Builder, Laurence reveals the destructive use he makes of those characteristics of pride and industriousness that underlie his success in Canada. Through her Scots-Canadian characters, therefore, Laurence frequently subverts certain persisting aspects of the Scots-Canadian mythos and of the construction of Canadian society.

The complexity and the longevity of the Scots' influence in Canada is unquestionable, yet the increasingly felt importance of varied voices within the national mosaic inevitably did, and continues to, pose a challenge to the resolute predominance of the Scots' patriarchal voice within the country's recorded history. In "Mosaics and Identity," Gad Horowitz proposes that the "ideology of the mosaic came into being not so much to justify cultural diversity as to justify the absence of a national community embracing that diversity" (470). As Laurence reveals, the strength of the Scots ethos in Canada has traditionally worked against the recognition and
celebration of diversity, and yet the tradition is an important one to understanding the originary fabric of this country. Laurence’s vision thus celebrates the strength and power of this mythology, while simultaneously revealing those truths long overlooked by received history. In this way, through her characters, Laurence continues to employ the ethos of the pioneer in order to create a new vision of Canadian society in the present. As Susan Warwick suggests in “Writ in Remembrance,” in some sense, all of... Laurence’s heroes and heroines are pioneers, for the pioneering spirit is not restricted to those who tame an actual wilderness. In their struggles to come to terms with a new landscape, with the legacy of the past, or with the world in the present, they are constantly involved in the origination and exploration of ways of seeing and understanding their place... in time and history. (35)

Laurence attempts to grant a place “in time and history” to those marginalized peoples who have historically been excluded from Canada’s dominant narrative. Her extensive exploration of the Métis position in Canadian society underscores the exclusionary nature of the shared story endorsed by the country’s ideological centre, and adds a different perspective from which to view that story.

Canada’s pioneering metanarrative, as I defined it in my introduction, comprises certain assumptions about the promise of the New World and the possibility of movement away from the circumscribed realities associated with the European ‘father.’ An inevitable tension arose, however, between the forces of translocation and translation, between the desire to perpetuate Old World ideological principles and social authority in Canada and the prospect of creating a new and better existence in a new land. Tamara Palmer contends that little
The shifting ideological structure of the country’s “cultural imagination” is therefore in keeping with a continuously changing national identity, and writers such as Munro and Laurence have prioritized a national vision inclusive of the realities both of Canada’s possibilities and limitations.

Duncan, Munro, and Laurence have included in their fictionalization of the pioneer myth a spectre figure who embodies the corrupt or regressive possibilities and realities of the settler experience and the frontier community. Duncan’s construction of the reactionary Milburns is a playful one, yet through this family the author illustrates the restrictive consequences of adhering to antiquated ideals and the inability to adapt to the demands of the New World. Although their inability to conceive of social change is often laughable, the Milburns ultimately endorse the perpetuation of destructive Old World hierarchies and biases in Canada. Written from a later historical perspective, the fiction of Munro and Laurence lacks the redemptive resonance of Duncan’s text. Characters like Jason Currie in *The Stone Angel* and Simon Herron in “A Wilderness Station,” darkly epitomize patriarchal oppression and advocate the colonization of women; likewise, the narrator’s grandfather in “The Stone in the Field” enforces a severe religious code and is governed by a destructive
and profitless pride. These spectre figures function, clearly, as subversive elements and alternative visions of a traditionally singular myth.

Through the processes of deconstruction, destabilization and revision, therefore, Duncan, Munro, and Laurence each uncover and express, in their differing fictional approaches, the history and continuing significance of the Scottish-Canadian female experience. From significantly different historical perspectives, each author questions and challenges the myths that anchor a shifting Canadian identity, and thus deconstructs certain tenets of received history. In doing so, these writers subvert the foundations of Canada's governing myths, the role of these myths in the evolution of the vertical mosaic in Canada, and, finally, the persisting reality of gendered, economic, and racial marginalization in this country. With a shared interest in the significance of Presbyterian religious doctrine, the small-town ethos, and the economic and social stratification of Canadian society, Duncan, Munro, and Laurence each attempt to uncover the varied and historically silenced voices of women and, in Laurence's case, racially marginalized peoples. Ultimately, in rediscovering diverse voices, these writers underscore the contribution of the marginalized to the creation of a Canadian national identity.
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