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DRAWING IN THE MARGINS: RHETORICAL ADAPTATIONS TO ENGLISHNESS IN
NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN'S DIARIES

by

JACQUELINE ANNE PARKER-SNEDKER

B.A. (Hons.), Simon Fraser University, 1992

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
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TO ENGLISHNESS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN'S DIARIES

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ABSTRACT

On February 2, 1937, the "Mother of the Similkimeen" died, leaving behind a stock of records on the Similkimeen band, a now extinct people. She also left, as a gift to the people of British Columbia, a collection of memoirs that reveals, contrary to traditional scholarship, close relationships between settler and native communities.

One hundred years earlier, Anne Lister left a time capsule in the form of her coded dairies that would, when they were finally decoded and published in 1987, have an enormous impact on theories on nineteenth-century lesbians.

Mrs. Allison's memoirs, written fifty years after the pioneering experience, are a scenic, contextual overview, in which she maintains a detached, feminine presence, suited to her English upper-middle-class origins. The structure of her narrative, however, offers a quiet resistance to the dominant male voice of nineteenth-century Englishness. Embedding her own perspectives in conventional forms, she created a forum for unconventionality.

Anne Lister's diary, being more immediate, directly involves the narrator as participant in the events she describes. Lister predicted significance and in so doing her work serves as a reliable indicator of the living, resilient patterns of Victorianisms. In her determination to gain social prominence and find a female life-partner, Lister's unique adaptations to

daily rituals are a blueprint of conventional resistance.

Anne Lister's careful attention to the rules of visiting, and Susan Allison's reliance on a calm dignity, were tools for survival on their particular frontiers. The two memoirs offer evidence of manipulations of rhetoric in the construction of an identity within an historical and geographic context.

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Introduction

I began this work with an interest in oral history and the place of orality in women's lives and diaries. This was a response to Joan Scott's call for case studies as "history". Such work, however, is not conventional history, for it creates a tension between the theoretical and the practical. Further, what can we do with information that cannot be generalized? Why, it might be asked, do we need to generalize? This thesis is my response to these questions.

It seems to me that we generalize in the interest of defining identity, and the foundations of identity lie upon generalizations constructed by individual responses to a 'common' experience. A 'common' experience, such as being English, informed daily exchanges which this thesis will in part explore. Nationality, like gender, class and sexuality, is most clearly seen on the frontiers or margins of the experience. For example, identity construction of English emigrants to British Columbia was constituted at kitchen tables in log houses, in trading situations or in banquets honouring pioneers, and against an oppositional 'Indian' or territorial 'other'. Recounting commonly held frontier stories created a behavioural foundation that informed the emigrant of the kind of response that was required in light of the 'other'.

This thesis is a study of the exchanges that construct identity on two different frontiers. The two sample constructions that I use are the memoirs and journals of Susan

Allison and Anne Lister. I am myself English and recognize some of the behavioural patterns in both Lister and Allison. It is, however, Susan Allison's Englishness, as mediated by a geographic frontier, with which I am most familiar. Even though we are separated by years, we share similar experiences as emigrants and immigrants. While Lister is separated from me by class, location and a century we share a common marginality in sexual preference, and there is much in her careful response to the world that I recognize. Likewise, I appreciate how she manipulated Englishness to make a place for herself in her community. In the final analysis this is my own subtext; how is it that we construct and maintain community?

Chapter 1. Scanning The Terrain

The discussion of two different diaries from two different countries at opposite ends of the nineteenth century presents a disruption to historical continuity while allowing us to identify locations of resistance to norms in 'historical' narrative. The interpretation of diaries requires a lyrical methodology that examines subjective manipulations of general meaning. The search for an approach that permits a personal voice to register on the soundscape of the larger context has led me to reject a conventional conflation of theory and evidence. Instead I have constructed a method that performs in concert with the evidence, pushing language to the foreground as an historical artifact.

I have chosen to interpret the rhetorical constructions of the diaries as carriers of Englishness on two different frontiers, one is geographic, the other sexual. In this thesis I have applied rhetoric, the art of persuasion, as it was defined by Kenneth Burke, who examined the construction of linguistic forms as inducements to the constitution of community.¹ There are many avenues to follow in the exploration of rhetorical devices but I have focused on the rhetoric of 'naming', or the construction of identity.²

The Anne Lister diaries, covering the years 1817 to 1826, and

¹From a conversation with Kenneth Burke in April, 1989.

²Kenneth Burke, Grammar of Motives And A Rhetoric of Motives, see "The Range of Rhetoric", 527-567 and "Traditional Principles of Rhetoric", particularly 'Persuasion' and 'Identification' 573-583, Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962.

the Susan Allison reminiscences, covering the period from 1860 to 1890, are both narrative reconstructions that tend toward a progressive unity that "creates a coherent and unified text of his/her past, from his/her position of fully realized, spiritual whole, self sufficient, and/or self-actualized humanity."³

The desire to present a unified self was in direct response to external and internal impositions that created a fluctuating and disembodied self.⁴ Although the fluctuations represent attempts to make the subject conform, they also represent resistance to norms. The notion of congruency depends on sets of norms positioned against an 'other'.

That women's historical voice has been silent until the twentieth century is indicative of the position of 'woman' as other, as set against male norms. Resistance to these norms can be seen in women's attempts at repositioning. Diaries offer glimpses of the reconstructed self as set against historical/contextual norms. The cultural behavioural formulae that instruct both diaries are those of Victorian Britain. The diaries reveal resistance to the imposition of norms as they are mediated by individual adaptations to frontier experience. In this study I have chosen to view identity fluctuations as transformations made possible by the proximity to a frontier,

³Janet MacArthur, "'The Wild Free Life': Contact Perspective in Susan Allison's Pioneer Recollections," , Paper presented at B.C. Studies Conference '94, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, B.C., October 7th-10th, 1994, 15.

⁴Denise Riley, "Am I That Name", Feminism and the Category of 'Women' , Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988, 29.

rather than by debilitating limitations on self. Change was enacted through, and because of, rhetorical accommodations.

When Susan Allison was encouraged, at age seventy-nine, to write the memoirs of her pioneer days in the Okanagan, there were political and rhetorical reasons for the request. The ethnic complexion of inter-war immigration created some concerns about reduced British dominance in the province, consequently various people of British origin were asked to recount their pioneer experiences. But if the British Columbia Historical Association had hoped Mrs. Allison's account would extol the virtues of British law and order it was mistaken.⁵ While her memoirs confirm some of the expectations of British pioneer narrative, she essentially undermines the imperialist-revisionist project. Instead she reveals the "transformational effect" of the frontier. As Janet MacArthur notes of Mrs. Allison's frontier experience: "her sexual difference [a woman pioneer] situated her in a borderland reality or liminal space which destabilized and transformed her European self."⁶

Anne Lister's diary was written on the frontier of sexual difference; she was a lesbian. Her writing illustrates the workings of gender whilst masculinity battles femininity on the ground on her body. The juxtaposition of gender and sexual preference facilitates an interpretation of the conflicts between

⁵Dr. J. D. McLean, in a speech to the British Columbia Pioneer Reunion, "Second Annual Report and Proceedings", British Columbia Historical Association, October, 1924, 10.

⁶Ibid, 7.

gender and sex that is essential if we are to understand Lister's attempts at creating an integrated self.

While there has been considerable scholarship on the structuring of gender in the nineteenth century, little work has been done on lesbians until recently, and I could find no examination of the intersection of lesbianism and gender in the nineteenth century. Lister's diary offers historians the unique opportunity to insert lesbians into historical texts as subjects and agents, even if current scholarship discounts the possibility of a lesbian identity before the twentieth century.⁷

The distance between claims of historical non-existence and the evidence provided by the Lister diary has created a credibility gap that is impossible to close. Twentieth-century lesbian scholarship has claimed that lesbians are the product of the categorizations of the sexologists.⁸ I have chosen to ignore the cul-de-sac that much of the current theoretical debate seems to lead to, and instead relied on a rhetorical analysis. The solution to the 'is she, isn't she' problem lies in the concept 'evidence'. Once evidence itself is problematized, it is possible to see that the actions of Anne Lister symbolically resemble the theoretical framework offered for lesbians of the post-sexologist

⁷Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 2.

⁸Ibid, 41

era.⁹

In examining the negations of identity on frontiers I have also examined the diaries as a Geertzian 'thick description' to illuminate individual responses/resistances to a specific internal environment: Victorian Englishness.¹⁰ As well as showing the pattern of resistances to the dominant discourse of white, English, middle-class and male, such a study also illustrates the workings of Gramscian hegemony in Victorian rhetoric.¹¹ That is, the frontier changes and is itself changed by the interaction of Allison and Lister with it. The consequence of this interaction is that in both cases 'frontier' works to create a new type of Englishness that allows for a flexible response to an unknown psychological and physical geography.

The responses of Allison and Lister to the frontier were specifically gendered by the requirements of the dominant discourse in each woman's location. In Lister's case her status had a great deal to do with the range of her relatively unimpeded manipulations of gender roles. Of course the operative word in

⁹Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1966, 359.

¹⁰Clifford Geertz. By 'thick description' Geertz means a rich, full account of the feeling, the atmosphere of an era.

¹¹Antonio Gramsci, An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935, David Foragcs, (ed.) New York: Schocken Books, 1988. Gramsci's writing illustrates the mechanics of power using a model that describes the relationship between oppressed and the oppressors as interactive, each instructing and influencing the other. He stated, "Every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship...", 348.

all of this is 'relative'.

Both Lister and Allison were forced to operate within particular rhetorical structures. Their ability to manipulate rhetoric largely depended on the position they occupied, or were assigned, in any discursive exchange. The patterns of response to the repositioning that these women experienced forms the framework of an individually constructed rhetoric that was both subsumed in, and which triumphed over, the dominant rhetoric.

Neither Lister nor Allison arrived on their individual frontiers as a matter of choice. Susan Allison's emigration to British Columbia was by the whim of her step-father, and Lister, consistent with the increasingly persuasive Victorianisms, which were centred on the biological or natural, felt that her 'oddity' was beyond her control, that she was no more than her nature dictated.¹²

Movement to a frontier means, of course, movement away from cultural and social norms. Naturally this causes ruptures in the fabric of self, but neither woman perceived a crisis upon being forced to the outer edges of a known identity. Instead they constructed identities on the frontier that reflected an active negotiation of rituals that maintained links to their national and class origins.

The very notion of 'frontier' depends on lines being drawn between the known and the unknown (or more precisely, the

¹²Lister used words such as "oddity" and "peculiarity" to identify her difference.

undesirable). As frontier delineates a constructed self against an 'other', Englishness likewise hinges on constituting behaviours in terms of 'us' and 'them'.

How constitution occurs is a question that inspired in Kenneth Burke a lifetime of work on the experience of rituals as the symbolic language of rhetoric.¹³ Feminist poststructuralists added a corollary by differentiating between rituals and their masking constitutions.¹⁴ In studying 'experience', feminist poststructuralists have successfully placed transparencies of discourse analysis over experience to illuminate the structures that maintain a dominant discourse.

Discourse and rhetoric are relationally constructed, but they are not interchangeable terms. While Victorianisms, such as 'polite conversation', were the discursive invention of the middle-class male they were maintained within the national rhetoric of Englishness.¹⁵ A discourse is not intended to be an instrument of persuasion; it is the linguistic glue that binds a rhetorically-convinced audience. A rhetoric persuades an audience, brings its members into a community, and instructs the

¹³Richard M. Coe, Toward A Grammar of Passages, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 188, 5.

¹⁴See Joan W. Scott's discussion of experience, "Experience", in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, Feminists Theorise The Political, Routledge, 1991, 22-40.

¹⁵Anthony Copley, Sexual Moralities in France, 1780-1980: New Ideas on the family, divorce and homosexuality, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, 4. Copley uses the term 'Victorianism' to describe "the dominant configuration of moral attitudes in the nineteenth century".

auditors in the communal language of identity.

Some of the most effective scholarship in rhetoric has been that of Kenneth Burke. His work on studies of individual response to particular environments predates the work of feminist poststructuralists by some fifty years but for much of that time his work was virtually ignored. His critique of both the American Right, who considered him Marxist, and the Left, who called him a traitor, has guaranteed Burke an intellectual marginality.¹⁶

Marginalization has been central to the explorations of both the feminist poststructuralists and Kenneth Burke. While there is a common concern with the construction of identity, they differ in some fundamental ways. As Claire Moses notes, the poststructuralists fail American scholars in their attachment to European responses to a specifically European mythos.¹⁷ The work of Kenneth Burke acts as a corrective to this difficulty with a grammar that is anchored in the soil of frontier. However, while his body of theory rests on the notion that there are individual responses to a general 'frontiered' environment, women are noticeable in their absence. Feminist theorists have drawn attention to the structural absence of women in the

¹⁶See the discussion of "Revolutionary Symbolism in America", Burke's speech to the American Writer's Congress, The Legacy of Kenneth Burke, Herbert W. Simons & Trevor Melia, (eds.), Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, 274.

¹⁷Claire Moses, "French Feminism in U.S. Academic Discourse", paper given at the Ninth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Vassar College, June 11-13, 1993.

dominant discourse.¹⁸ Both approaches, then, offer a complimentary focus on the mechanics of rhetoric.

Burke understood the fundamentals of the American frontier experience in terms that have become known as Western Marxist.¹⁹ His restating of a western rather than Eurocentric Marxism invokes the Turnerian emphasis on the impact of the material world on identity.²⁰ Without claiming a retroactive Marxism for Turner, Susan Allison or Anne Lister, there are ways that Burke's reconstructed 'American' is useful in understanding the material effects of 'frontier' on the construction of meaning. For example, in a paper given to the American Writers Congress in 1935, Burke argued for a circumstantial rhetoric -- one that recognized the peculiar effects of the frontier experience.²¹ His demand was simple. In a rhetorical shift from 'proletariat' to 'people', Burke recognized pioneer willingness to work to the limits of physical endurance to get the job done without implying a lifetime attachment to that work. The desire to step out of the cycle of labour while working toward a greater leisure was

¹⁸Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, 14-15

¹⁹Frank Lentricchia, "Analysis of Burke's Speech,"[To the American Writer's Congress, April 26, 1935], in The Legacy of Kenneth Burke, Herbert W. Simons & Trevor Melia, (eds.), Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, 281.

²⁰Robin W. Winks, The Myth of the American Frontier: Its relevance to America, Canada and Australia, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971, 10. In this work Winks claims that Turner's thesis is Marxist, and "Turnerians are Marxists in disguise".

²¹Ibid, 267-273.

fundamental to the frontier myth. "Such rigorous ways of life [on the land] enlist our sympathies , but not our ambitions".²²

Burke used the American constitutional rhetorical device, 'the people', to illustrate the shaping of identity by a frontier which depended on the notion of a movement away from the constructions of the European class systems.

The similar material conditions in British Columbia provoked corresponding discursive quandaries, but the rhetoric of identity has never been congruent with experienced identity.²³

Rhetorically, British Columbians are bound to an 'historical' Britishness. The symbolic language of the actions of the early colonists, however, reveals a frontier experience hypothesized by Burke. That is, the pioneers suffered through years of incredibly hard work believing their reward would be a life of leisure.

Susan Allison's family was prepared to live without the privileges of their class while colony building, all the while believing these conditions were temporary. The unexpected shedding of many English behaviours and expectations became permanent, something which demonstrates that the British Columbian frontier conforms to the Turner thesis.

Perhaps Burke's most useful contribution has been his creation of a set of analytical instruments with which to examine stories

²²Ibid, 269.

²³It is the purpose of this thesis to show that such a study is not useful. The greater the gap between claimed identity and lived experience, the more marked the contrast, the greater the opportunities for mapping the rhetorical constructions.

that are the consequence of the relationship between an individual and her environment. Of Burke's myriad of identifiers I have chosen those themes that specifically relate to identity and identification as they demonstrate an analysis of action as a symbolic language. Fundamental to such an examination is Burke's notion of 'consubstantiation' (shared properties) which illustrates commonalities developed in groups of people based on 'substance' or actions.²⁴ Two of the Burkian devices this thesis relies on to track linguistic 'action' (substance) are the Pentad and the notion of "arrows of expectation" (directing attention).²⁵ Both define and describe the set of symbolic actions that are the codified behaviours that can be called Englishness.

Linda Colley argues convincingly for a construction of a British identity shaped in response to a foreign and Catholic

²⁴Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1966, 21.

²⁵Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action, 84. In this discussion of Coriolanus, Burke follows the sequence of events in the play designed to direct audience desires in a particular direction. In this case, Coriolanus, larger than life, is destined to make the great mistake, for which he will pay the ultimate price of death, for the greater good of the community. From his first actions on stage the audience knows his 'fate' by the cast of his character. Not only are his actions symbolic of the role he must play, the play acts symbolically for the audience. The Pentad, Act, Agent, Agency, Scene and Purpose, is described by Kenneth Burke, in College Composition and Communication, December, 1978, Vol. XXIX, #4. The prime purpose of the Pentad is to act as a tool to break a piece of writing into its rhetorical motives, or its operative parts. I applied the Pentad several times to the meeting of Quinesco's niece and Mrs. Allison to determine a course of action at the beginning of this thesis project and continually arrived at the conclusion of a reflecting of Englishness on the part of both women.

'other'. In recognizing the importance of England in the formula, she notes, "In 1705, 1715 and again in 1745, expeditionary forces in support of the Stuart claimants to the throne landed in Scotland with the intention of taking the island."²⁶

Deliberately or not, Colley makes a case for Englishness as Britishness.

Edinburgh, Cardiff and Dublin were subsumed by acts of parliament in London. Britons 'wore' the imperial identity of the English, consequently English national as well as British imperial lived experience had greater compatibility than British and Welsh, Irish and Scots experience (who had a great deal in common with the French and Catholic 'other').²⁷

As the English presented a geographically expanded version of themselves in the form of Britishness, the English middle-class exerted dominance over lower and upper classes with instructions to Britons on the desired forms of the national modalities. The modes of Victorian, middle-class and English behaviours and expectations dominate the period beginning with the reign of George III and ending in the 1920s -- throughout the period Joan Perkin calls "one long century"²⁸ During this period there was a marked attendance on expressions of the ordinary, when flamboyance and dissolution was to give way to a contraction of

²⁶Linda Colley, Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837, London: Pimlico, 1992, 24.

²⁷Ibid, 12.

²⁸Joan Perkin, Women and Marriage In Nineteenth Century England, London: Routledge, 1989, 2.

behavioral borders. Even the King possessed qualities "that were imitable and attainable by all classes."²⁹

Perhaps most valuable to a burgeoning, middle-class sobriety was George III's apparent and probably innate domesticity which was to give shape to all that is considered Victorian.³⁰

Consequently, despite the gap in time between the Lister and Allison memoirs, historical disparities are mediated by the covering umbrella of "Victorianisms" which "were a dominant configuration of moral attitudes in the nineteenth century."³¹

Fundamental to Englishness (and Victorianisms) was the dependence on conversational parables. The English use of "stock phrases that can think your thoughts for you" accounts for the blurring of lines between, for example, Lister's actions and the interpretation of them by her audience.³² The rhetorical manipulation that is the consequence of the use of stock phrases created another English trait: self-deception.³³ Clearly, if phrases think, neither the speaker nor the auditor need examine specific, individual incidents. The universalizing of expressions creates blanket statements that forge an experiential unity, an

²⁹Ibid, 232.

³⁰Ibid, 233.

³¹Antony Copley, Sexual Moralities In France, 1780-1980, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, 4.

³²Anne Hales, "'The Real England': Englishness and Patriotism In The Writings of George Orwell", Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1991, 29.

³³J.B. Priestley, The English, London: Heinemann, 1973, 14.

unbroken national continuity that serve to cover and obscure individual and contradictory responses.³⁴

Throughout the 'long century' there was a reliance on the arts to convey both the character and the rites of Englishness. Indeed literature has in some ways catalogued such traits as English eccentricity -- something which brings us to the first of many anomalies in the construction of Englishness, namely, the famous English tolerance for oddity. But how can a cultivated difference be reconciled with rhetorical unity?

It is the English "species of instinct, [the] code of conduct which is understood by everyone" that accounts for the acceptance of eccentricity in a fairly regimented society.³⁵ The notion of a cultivated difference is important to the formula. The code of conduct, an instinctive community building apparatus (embedded 'in the thoughts that speak for you'), anticipates eccentricity as an upper-class phenomenon. Eccentric behaviours were a delineation of class.

Such apparently erratic constructions of behavioural expectations were addressed by J. B. Priestley, who was convinced that an essence of Englishness is an inherent suspicion of rational thought.³⁶ A mistrust of reason has, Priestley claimed, resulted in a reliance on instinct that makes the

³⁴Ibid., 22

³⁵Hales, 38.

³⁶Priestley, The English, 12.

English different from continental Europeans.³⁷ The English framed experience within blanketing phrases that are doubly binding. The rhetorical constructs that create uniformity similarly permit the inclusion of aberrant behaviours; consequently rhetorical self-deception has become basic to the survival of community on a crowded island.

Priestley and Colley make clear that Englishness depends on the construction of an 'other'. Judith Butler expands the argument with her hypothesis that the notion 'other' is psychologically and linguistically embedded in a pre-conditional structure of Aristotelian bipolar opposites.³⁸ According to the poststructuralists, bipolarity is damaging because only one term is represented, its opposite is unstated and assumed. Joan Scott describes the reasoning that produced the focus of bipolar in a textual examination:

The starting point is often a binary difference that is subsequently shown to be an illusion created by the working of differences much harder to pin down. The differences between entities...are shown to be based on a repression of the differences within entities.³⁹

Aristotelian opposites are the foundation of Victorian rhetoric, for example 'frontier' is defined in terms such as wilderness

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Judith Butler,, "Subjects of sex/gender/desire", in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Routledge, 1990, 13.

³⁹ Joan W. Scott, "Deconstructing Equality- Versus- Difference: Or, The Uses Of Poststructuralism in Feminist Theory", Feminist Studies, 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 39.

versus civilization, savage versus the tamed, man versus nature. This reproduction of nature as binary is, as Butler points out, a fundamental detachment and one that is crucial to Englishness.⁴⁰

Priestley's 'self-deception' requires a certain amount of detachment, a distancing from the physical or emotional experience of the evidence. Disengagement, as feminist theorists make clear, is linguistically structured. Priding themselves on their detachment, the English middle and upper class often manipulated their material world as indirect manifestations of indifference. For example, Susan Allison's recollections of the flooding of the Similkimeen River in 1894 show a composed disregard of danger that is common in pioneer narrative:

We woke the next morning with the daylight. My husband said, "It sounds funny, I will just get up and look." In a few moments he was back. He told me quietly that he thought I ought to get up and dress, adding calmly that half my bedroom was undermined and would soon have to be cut adrift from the house.⁴¹

Tracing the notion of detachment is problematic because, as the Allison passage illustrates, the behaviour becomes intentional, material and divorced from a linguistic root. The oxymoronic quality of 'detachment' does not allow for a simple reconstruction of the mechanics of language as describers of behaviour.

The feminist poststructuralist program of intellectual anti-bipolarism fails as a method of examining resistance because the

⁴⁰Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire, 25.

⁴¹Susan Allison, A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia, Margaret Ormsby, (ed.), Vancouver: British Columbia, 1976, 70.

arguments themselves depend on the bipolarity they oppose. If, however, we take a Burkean approach of permitting the elements within a linguistic and material environment to develop in relation to each other, a very different picture begins to emerge. Fundamentally, Burke embraced bipolarity rather than avoided it. He noted difference without creating hostile opposition and in so doing allowed a conversation to develop between terms. In this Burke recognized entities, or elements between terms, rather than, as Scott claims, differences between entities.

The inclusion of the 'entities between' means that oppositions are anchored to each other. For example, in juxtaposing English 'detachment' with its opposite, 'attachment', it becomes possible to see that the elements that anchor both qualities describe a motion away from one and towards its opposite. The entities between are the discursive mitochondria that form the building blocks of rhetoric.⁴² Detachment is manipulated, then, in the 'entities between' with shifts towards an unspoken attachment.

In the nineteenth century the English middle classes developed rigid social codes which promulgated a detached, distanced presentation. Physical displays of an emotional or sexual nature were considered unseemly and Lister expended considerable energy

⁴²Mitochondria are "the small rodlike structures found in any cytoplasm of most cells and serving as a center of intracellular enzyme activity", Webster's New World Dictionary of The American Language, David B. Guralnik, (Editor in Chief), New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1970, 911.

on developing strategies to safely reveal her intentions:

We [Lister and Miss Browne] walked by Blackwall...about 100 yds from here it began to rain...I said we should take shelter in the inn...the woman civilly shewed us a room by ourselves...I told her gown sleeves were rather too wide & that her frill was not put on straight. I took it off and put it on again, taking three trials to it before I would be satisfied.⁴³

As this passage illustrates, Lister was conscious of restrictions on touch, even in private, but her ritualized attention to clothing as well as to tidying and straightening, accommodated her desire for physical connection. Lister's unique adaptation was in fact a movement away from detachment with a formal adherence to the codes of behaviour. The mitochondria, in this case the clothing, introduced another set of prescriptions on correct style which accommodated Lister's movement towards attachment.

It is clear, then, that the entities between linguistic bipolarities operate as directors of intention. It is also clear that while detachment may be framed against its opposite, it also moves towards it. In many instances English detachment from fellow humans realigns itself in attachment to landscape and animals. Both obsessions were analogous to the European fascination with the natural world; however the treatment of landscape and animals revealed attitudes that were particular to Englishness.

Rhetorical constructs were maintained in the symbolic language enacted in daily ritualized behaviours. The rhetoric of

⁴³Anne Lister, I Know..., Tuesday 15 September, 1818, 63.

Englishness was also visible in national, cultural representations, chiefly in painting, literature, song and fashion. I have chosen to examine four themes common to both memoirs: love of landscape, the rituals of tea drinking (or visiting), reading as self-improvement, and attention to clothing in the rhetoric of both gender and authority. Of course there were many rituals dear to the nineteenth-century English that must be ignored. This thesis will focus primarily on the themes of land, tea, reading and clothing as representative of the behavioural mode of 'detachment' and indicators of both Englishness and adaptation or resistance to Englishness.

Chapter 2: The Tea Garden.

Unconscious of any sensation but the pleasure at the sight of M- who, with Lou had been dozing, one in each corner of the carriage, the astonished, staring eyes of the man & maid behind & the post-boys walking by the horses were lost to me &, in too hastily taking each step of the carriage & stretching over the pile of dressing-boxes, etc., that should have stopped eager ingress, I unluckily seemed to M- to have taken three steps at once.¹

The three steps incident, as she came to call it, epitomized both Anne Lister's presentation to the world and its response to her. This incident also marked the beginning of substantial change in Anne Lister's life. She was no longer able to maintain a position of cool disregard for public opinion about her behaviour, and her relationship with her erstwhile lover, M- (Marianna Lawton), finally shifted. For fifteen years Anne had nursed the hope that after M's much older husband died she and M- would live together in quiet respectability. M-s response left Anne with doubts that culminated in the realization that she would have to look elsewhere for a life-partner.

In the long-term and long-distance relationship between Lister and Lawton there were many emotional setbacks for Anne. M- frequently hurt her feelings or offended her upper-middle class sensibilities, but until the 'three steps' Anne had always managed to reconstruct the fantasy of M-'s undying love for her. "I do believe she loves me with all her heart & I really think

¹Anne Lister, I Know My Own Heart, Tuesday August 19, 1823, 278. Henceforth referred to by date and page number.

she will take some pains to manage me better in the future."²
 But by the fall of that year Lister began to see the situation in a less romantic light. "She would not be the one to help me forward. She is not exactly the woman of all hours for me. She suits me best at night. In bed she is excellent"³

M-'s horrified reaction to Lister's flinging her dishevelled person onto the coach clarified for Anne the precarious position she was in. If M- , her lover, was ashamed of her and feared "everyone's disparagement", Anne had no emotional buffer between her actions and negative public interpretation.⁴ Indeed, in the town of Halifax there was indeed considerable consternation about Anne Lister's behaviour. However, despite some fairly pointed questions put to Anne there seemed to be little public censure. Lister could express romantic interest in other women and wear masculine clothing as long as she remained within the bounds of acceptable behaviour. If the discursive boundaries occasionally blurred it was an active collusion between Lister and her audience. This presents some of the greatest difficulties regarding the examination of the diaries. Was erotic communication between women acceptable or not? Or were the lines between the acceptable romantic friendships and sexualized relationships deliberately ambiguous? In other words, was there such a thing as a lesbian in the nineteenth century?

²Wednesday 21 July, 1824, 351.

³Sunday 28 September, 1823, 304.

⁴Friday 22 August, 1823, 285.

The diaries contradict twentieth-century assumptions. Anne Lister's writing is a blatant rebuttal of much that has been written in the late twentieth century on nineteenth-century homoerotic relationships. The study of erotic relationships between women has maintained a lexicon (due to an apparent lack of evidence) that traps us into restating Victorian assumptions. Consequently, rather than ascribing agency, there has been an unfortunate removal of it from Victorian women. Woolf and Penelope do little to further the program of inclusion of women into historical texts when they claim, "How can they [women] long for, reject, or synthesize a new mode of being from a thesis which has never contained or expressed what they have felt their historical experience to be."⁵

Perkin begins to identify the problem by remarking that modern feminists are astonished that the records of women of the past demonstrate an enthusiastic embracing of their "inevitable role in life, [that they] actually welcomed it as an emotionally satisfying and, indeed, emancipating experience."⁶ However, neither approach adequately addresses the problem of agency.

The Lister diaries shed some light on why upper-middle-class women might embrace marriage. Throughout the first eight years of her marriage to Charles, M- continued her relationship with

⁵, Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope, "Sexual Identities/Textual Politics", in Sexual Practice, Textual Theory, Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope, (eds.), Cambridge, Ma. & Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1993, 2

⁶Joan Perkin, Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England, London: Routledge, 1989, 3.

Anne, and without much interference from her husband. Perkin asserts that this type of freedom is explained by the very nature of arranged marriages. In the nineteenth century, married women of the upper classes had a great deal of freedom. Emotional independence began with marriage rather than ended with it (as today).⁷ Whitbread's noting of Charles Lawton's neglect of his wife appears to be a romantic twentieth-century reading of Lister's diary and Perkin's thesis. Marianna Lawton travelled when and where she pleased, even to Anne, despite her husband's occasional attempts to restrict their contact.⁸

Anne Lister did not believe M- to be independent but saw marriage as confining. Woolf and Penelope attack the problem of agency by claiming that women could not be what they could not conceive of. Perkin argues that women colluded in an institutional conspiracy that created the effect of agency. Neither scholar, however, addresses the problem of source. The Lister diaries make clear that it is entirely possible that a contrary record is not easily discovered. Why should we be surprised that those who did not support the dominant view are not represented in the historical record? Lister's account, incidentally, did not surface until 1987.

The refusal to analyze evidence, and consequently experience, results in the avoidance of useful discussions on the workings of a dominant discourse on invisibility. Unfortunately, equating

⁷Ibid, 4.

⁸Monday 19 May, 1817, 7.

conceptual invisibility with an actual absence has only served to ignore the inferences of those who did leave a record. 'Absence' has been necessary for the structuring of arguments that depend on the notion of a silencing, dominant voice. How else can one explain, for example, the notable dearth of discussion on sexuality among women in the nineteenth century. Lillian Faderman, among others, has firmly rooted her discussion in the 'absence' thesis, and moved to its next logical step to explain why there are no lesbians to be found in the nineteenth century.

She not only regards compliance with marriage conventions as evidence of an internalized process; she claims it denies any possibility of alternative sexual practices:

It was undoubtedly taken for granted (probably rightly in many cases) that the women, being respectable middle-class females who understood and internalized their societies strictures about sexual expression outside of duties to husband and procreation, did not have sexual relations with each other. The inevitable individual differences with regard to sexual appetite were ignored.

As Scott and many others note, one cannot leap from the general to the individual.¹⁰ If the Lister diaries make anything clear it is the impossibility of universal claims. To claim that individual differences were ignored and then to ignore them again, is to maintain the silence. The absence of sexual confidences is not evidence of either a silence on the matter or an internalized process. If women's diaries were the

⁹"Nineteenth Century Boston Marriages", Lillian Faderman, Boston Marriages, 29.

¹⁰Joan W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 10.

receptacles for these thoughts, male refusal to publish them explains the silence, not compliance or unwillingness on women's part.

Faderman's thesis posits that the absence of sexual content in women's journals represents an experiential void. However, theorists still have to grapple with the highly-charged love letters that women sent to each other. Faderman, among others, falls back on the Victorian 'romantic friendship' hypothesis in which she asserts that women took the only avenue open to them -- that of emotional connection.

The work of the sexologists in the 1890s plays a vital role in the argument by closing the door on "Boston marriages"¹¹ with the claim that women's romantic friendship actually masked sexual desire. "The emergence of the category "lesbian" also separated women who loved other women from the rest of the female humanity, forcing them to accept the new classification of their affections- and hence themselves- as abnormal."¹²

The Faderman argument, however, creates an unfortunate impression. Embedded in the assumption of 'forcing' is the inference of a golden age of fricatricestic relationship. If there had been a shift it was away from the publication of romantic connections between women because they could no longer

¹¹Boston marriage was a term used to describe the relationship between two women who 'set up house' together. The relationship was thought to be platonic, loving, with a financial interdependency. However, a more 'robust' partner often supported the 'fragile' one.

¹²Faderman, "Boston Marriages", 30.

be accommodated by the rhetoric. The critics of poststructuralism likewise offer a bleak rendition of conceptual absence. According to Wolfe and Penelope, it can offer only a destabilized identity that contributes to, not only the erasure of, "a female self, [but also]..a lesbian one."¹³ Fear of decentralization appears in this instance to be wilfully paranoid and does not credit the feminist post-structuralist program with that which it does best: the (textual) reclamation of a submerged linguistic property. In the deconstruction of the notion 'identity', it is not a 'self' that is deconstructed but the 'grammar' on which self is built.

Textual reclamations, like polder building, can only work effectively if the groundwork has been thoroughly examined and its locational demands recognized. In the Lister diaries, the ground, con/text (literally, with text), was shaped by 'grammatic' structures specific to the nineteenth century. It is no surprise that Lister, in her daily writing of self, illustrates how a woman's cultural options were informed by her material conditions.

Anne Lister had a keen sense of material safety. Her deliberate attempts at upward mobility were acts of self-preservation in an environment that was economically precarious for women. There were many entries detailing her concern for her financial well-being and the consequences for independence. Financial security meant Lister could avoid marriage to a man,

¹³ Ibid, 2

and in broadening her income base, could afford to 'marry' and support a woman. Here then material and sexual considerations intersect.

Shulamith Firestone argues for a broader definition of the 'material' to include a psychosexual analysis.¹⁴ The paradigmatic shift from the concrete to contextual environmental considerations as 'material' has proven particularly useful in studying the Lister diaries. To make any sense of Lister's behaviour the psychology of her sexuality needs to be explained, for it informs her economic plans. She was inseparable from her sexuality; it shaped all her decisions. Likewise if any sense is to be made of Anne Lister's paradoxical behaviours her audience needs to resolve the dichotomy between her statements of self-knowledge and actions that appear to claim otherwise. In studying a society that limits the choices of women we can assume that Lister's actions were not always a reflection of her thoughts.¹⁵

The same considerations need to be extended to Lister's friends and family. The environmental constraints both shaped and restricted the community's range of responses to Anne's unusual behaviour. Their adaptations, the ability to rewrite or ignore, and their muffled rebukes, the cultural restraints placed

¹⁴Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution, (Toronto, New York, London: Bantam Books, 1971, 5.

¹⁵Anderson, Katherine et al., "Beginning Were We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History", Oral History Review, 15 (Spring 1987), 107.

on 'straight talk', were informed by the same sets of internalized prescriptions that shaped Susan Allison's experience on the frontier of British Columbia.

Lister and her circle were geographically located in the heartland of cultural construction but on her frontier of sexual difference she was not afforded the luxury of distance for the safe reshaping of self (as was Mrs. Allison). However, the behavioural prescriptions of Englishness and the reconstructive nature of the frontier do clash in some predictable ways.

Although there were some concessions Lister refused to make, she chose to ignore the ignominy attached to her flirtations with lower-class woman because she felt the lack of the company of women like herself. On the British Columbian frontier Susan Allison was very quickly integrated into Similkimeen society as nurse, trading partner and friend. Both Anne Lister and Susan Allison ignored or reduced the demands of class on their particular frontiers in ways that are recognizably Turnerian.

Identity shifts (class or gender) and the transmission of cultural identifiers are located in the rituals of the daily life of an English community. Anne Lister and her community developed a range of specific rituals to indicate precise levels of connection. These responses were the sets of behavioural prescriptions necessary for a recognizable Englishness which, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had become codified as class and gender instructions.

Lister, in common with all Britons, set great store by the

ritual of afternoon tea. But an upper-middle class woman could only be expected to visit those of her own class. Lister's flirtations with women of the lower middle class involved Lister in some difficult ethical situations regarding tea. The attention which Lister paid to Miss Browne, for example, caused no small stir in Halifax. While the Browne family fortunes were on the rise they were still a commercial family, and therefore beneath the social station of the landed Listers. The ritual of visiting provided a mechanism for cross class exchange and indicated some measure of acceptance or of levelling, at least between individuals. But this was one act of levelling that Lister was uncomfortable with. She refused to visit the 'vulgar' Brownes and balked at Miss Browne's suggestion that she visit Shebden. Anne Lister began to wonder if she had made an error in judgement.

But soon after I got home, beyond the pale of beauties fascination, the words, 'I won't trouble your uncle much,' and then the manner of them, occurred to me & gave rise to the question, 'Is she good tempered?' It is not to be expected she should know much of the world. If she had, she would have said less about my calling, assured that I should call if I chose. Besides, she would recollect it is my place to offer the thing, not hers to ask it.¹⁶

Likewise she ignored pressure from other women in the community to take tea with Miss Browne, giving the advanced age of her aunt and uncle as the reason for the impossibility of visits. Throughout their connection Lister remained consistent in her prevarication. Taking tea was a reciprocal ritual that involved

¹⁶Sunday 26 July, 1818, 51.

the whole family in the confirmation of a friendship. Once a visit had been made to the Brownes they could have reasonably expected an invitation to Shebden Hall and Anne Lister's socially prominent family.

The slight was not lost on Mrs. Browne either. She announced to her daughter, Elizabeth, "I will not have you talked about."

¹⁷ It was possible that Anne's romantic interest in women, generally, and her refusal to entertain the Brownes, made clear the overtly sexual nature of her intentions. But if that was the case, the available discourse on visiting etiquette and the taking of tea allowed the discussion of sexuality to be masked.

Etiquette proved a flexible matter as the conventions for calling on the general community membership did not apply to women of Lister's class.

I was thinking I should be obliged to tell Mrs. Rawson I was afraid of needing an introduction...[but] we talked away as if we had been visiting for years. The forms of etiquette need not involuntarily apply here...¹⁸

While some forms of etiquette could be ignored, there were strict rules directing the entertainments that accompanied tea.

There was no symbol more evocative of Englishness than the piano, and no instrument more suited for women's natural dexterity. A woman betrayed her country, class and sex if she could not play the piano and sing a few songs, and it was natural for women visiting each other to include some entertainments.

¹⁷Thursday 25 February, 1819, 81.

¹⁸Wednesday 31 March, 1819, 85.

Even Lister in her mannish attire and affected male gestures could not escape the demands of the feminine arts. "Miss S. Staveley made several bold pushes for me to sing with her sister & bring on a visiting...", she remarked.¹⁹ Visiting was a perilous business where much damage could be done to a reputation. Lister's diary shows quite clearly that she felt unsafe with women of lower classes, for one of the principal entertainments was conversation, and this meant Anne's spinsterhood often became the focus of discussion. However, Lister, seeing marriage as an unimaginable confinement, often remarked to friends that she would never marry a man but that she sought a female partner. "I love, & only love, the faire sex & thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs."²⁰ There was never any doubt that Anne always intended to follow her heart, though in the end her primary considerations were material.

While married women had freedoms in practice, single women had greater legal rights. Single women could act as agents for another; they could be invested as a trustee and could administer the estate of a deceased relative. Anne Lister served in all three capacities on behalf of her aunt and uncle, as well as for her financially inept father. Anne could not legally inherit Shibden Hall. Her father and uncle decided that Anne would hold it during her lifetime but that after her death

¹⁹Wednesday 7 May, 1817, 5.

²⁰Monday 29 January, 1821, 145.

it was to go to the nearest male relative and his heirs. Despite the legal restrictions on inheritance Anne leapt at the opportunity to remain single. As mistress of Shibden she would have the financial security to live the life that felt natural to her.

Lister's uncle was in fact reluctant to leave the estate to a woman; consequently many of her diary entries were self-affirmations.²¹ Throughout her years as an apprentice in estate management she persistently catalogued expenses incurred on behalf of Shibden. Anne Lister's accounting is indeed an opaque window, but in light of a contextual psychosexuality it does show a woman presenting herself as the best 'man' for the job under inheritance provisions of English Common Law.

Lister's continual repositioning of herself to suit the demands of both her social position and sexual preference resulted in some curious and particularly English machinations. The diaries represent an ongoing writing on and of her body, that is, she recreates herself in her entries. However, she does not write through her body.²² Lister avoided confrontation with her female form, and as a result her life and writing was an emigration from the requisite behaviours of gender.

Lister's clothing, manner and interests often led people to

²¹Anne Lister, No Priest But Love, Helena Whitbread(ed.), Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1992, Monday 20 September, 1824, 19.

²²Morag Shiach, Helene Cixous: A Politics of Writing, London, New York: Routledge, 1991, 9.

mistake her for a man but she never actually settles into maleness, and constructs her conversations and actions to avoid the consequences of deviating from acceptable norms.

Wishing I was a gent...She mentioned on the moor my taking off the leather strap put through my umbrella, which made it look like a gentleman's. I said I would do if she asked me but not otherwise... Surely she must like my society & would be more or less than woman were she unmoved & unpleased by my attentions.²³

In this case Miss Browne is made responsible for Lister's presentation of gender.

The negotiation of an individual identity in the larger environment demanded talent rather than good fortune. Lister's special skill lay in her ability to direct attention to her intention, without unnecessarily exposing herself by committing to an overt statement of purpose.²⁴ She became practised at gender manipulations with the participation of her audience, none of which was accomplished outside of the dominant rhetorical structure. Some of Lister's most inspired resistance to Victorianisms took the form of manipulations of rules of etiquette, which in so many cases reflected the phenomenon of detachment. In Lister's case the detachment/attachment phenomena peculiar to the English was complicated by the internal nature of her frontier. Although Lister was shaped by her life on the frontier of difference and candidly discussed her sexuality, her

²³Thursday 18 February, 1819, 80.

²⁴In Burkeian terms this is making use of terministic screens. For a full discussion of terministic screens see the chapter of the same title in Burke's Language as Symbolic Action, 44-62.

writing style is conventionally female in that she submerged the information in code. The cryptographic sections of her diary were the lexical representations of a detached subject. Textual separation became material disconnection in Lister's refusal to conform to gender roles. For Anne Lister, life was an out of body experience.

It is telling that all of the sections of the diary which treat of clothing are in code.²⁵ Lister's accounts of disguising herself as a man were attempts to emigrate from the female body. "Preferred going alone &, tho' at this early hour, (about 8), one could walk unobserved. Some men and women declared that I was a man."²⁶ Out on the frontier of ambiguous gender she could experience herself in ways that felt natural to her.

The necessity of passing as a woman felt contrived to Anne and she devised a style of female 'drag'. Lister's dark, shapeless and severe clothing might have been taken for a Quaker adaptation. However, this would have been a rhetorical inconsistency. Lister's status depended on high church membership. There was no question of referring to her clothing modifications as "dissenter" fashion. The only other option, and the one that was compatible with Lister's behaviour, was to call

²⁵Anne Lister, I know My Own Heart, editorial note of Helena Whitbread, 14.

²⁶Tuesday 17 September, 1818, 64.

her dress 'mannish'.²⁷

Lister's rebuttal to charges of imitative masculinity was that she had an awkwardly-shaped body, one that was difficult to clothe, hence her plain style.²⁸ This had the effect of deflecting her listeners who accepted the 'womanly' reference to her body and sympathized with the accommodations she was forced to make. Lister's was an acceptably gendered response, although one was fooled. In such rhetorical manipulations Lister and her audience were able to accommodate form so that community might be maintained.

Lister's coded fantasies likewise reveal a migration from female form:

Foolish fancying about Caroline Greenwood, meeting her on Skirtcoat Moor, taking her into a shed that is there & being connected with her. Supposing myself in men's clothes & having a penis, tho' nothing more. All this is very bad. Let me try to make a great exertion & get the better of this laziness [sic] in a morning...and waste no more time in bed...²⁹

She clearly felt no guilt about the fantasy and instead chastised herself (and this is a fairly recurrent theme) for wasting the day.

²⁷See Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action, 114-123, for his discussion on clothing, homosexuality and class. Lister's clothing 'directs attention' to an ongoing and intentional courtship often aimed at lower classes because, as Burke infers, such actions were consistent with upper-class notions of superiority. Lister's flirtations with women of lower classes may be signalled by clothing and represent power over another in the face of feelings of helplessness.

²⁸Tuesday 1 October, 1822, 223.

²⁹Monday 7 May, 1821, 151.

If her clothing drew comment Lister's manner rattled and confused some of her friends. Anne's awareness of the nuances of gesture as the definition of gender difference illustrates the remarkable, if arrogant, subtlety with which she operated in the world. Lister's acute sense of the constructed nature of gendered gesture and clothing can be seen in her manipulations of the rhetoric of behaviour:

I twirled my watch about, conscious of occasionally bordering on a rather gentlemanly sort of style. She seems to feel but not quite understand this. She would prefer my society to that of any other lady, perhaps scarce knowing why.³⁰

It is interesting to note that while Lister acknowledged that her "manners [were] certainly peculiar," she qualified it with, "not at all masculine but rather softly gentleman-like. I know how to please girls."³¹ Lister was not just any form of reconstructed male, for even in her behavioural experiments she remained of the upper classes.

Lister's playing with a softened masculinity was an implied challenge to her audience. 'Find me out if you can', she seems to say and for the greater part the women she flirts with appear to be unaware of the game being enacted. Lister infers that women responded to her because they were 'geared' to respond to certain masculine behaviours that she referenced euphemistically as her 'peculiar' and 'complimentary' manners:

³⁰ Thursday 11 March, 1824, 330.

³¹ Wednesday 4 October, 1820, 136

I know my manner might strike her as having all or much of its former peculiarity & I wondered what she thought and felt...My whole manner was a compliment. I think she felt it so & surely most women would.³²

As much as she loved to play with masculine mannerisms, Lister disliked masculinity in other women:

Paley seems a nice enough woman (girl) but lolls her arm over the back of the chair or sticks her elbow out with her hand akimbo in rather a too masculine manner.³³

Consistent with those of her culture and time, she likewise disliked educated women. "I am not an admirer of learned ladies. They are not sweet, interesting creatures I should love."³⁴

Although Lister's inconsistencies are congruent with English self-deception, her exchanges with Miss Pickford reveal more than hypocrisy. She prods Miss Pickford into confessing her variant sexuality, while protecting her 'secret', because, despite a desire for community, Anne Lister was afraid:

I walked with Miss Pickford...I had chiefly talked of the worst of what I had said on Saturday &, questioning her very closely whether she thought I ever had a friend on the same terms as Miss Threadfall [Pickford's lover], she said no, she did not think I ever had any criminal connection with any of them.³⁵

At no time in western history has a primary sexual relationship between women been acceptable. While Lister's diary reveals rhetorical accommodations, she notes, and with considerable

³²Wed. 3 July, 192

³³Wednesday 22 September, Diary, 100

³⁴Ibid. Friday 28 February, 1823, 237

³⁵Monday 1 September, 1823, 291.

unease, that she is considered abnormal. Genuine fear registers in some of Lister's meditations on her relationship with M- , "I shuddered at the thought & at the conviction that no amount of soffistry [sic] could gloss over the criminality of our connection."³⁶

* * *

"Historically, young women were often permitted relationships with other females in which they might kiss, fondle each other, sleep together..."³⁷ The lack of evidence surrounding 'sexual' contact does not mean, as Faderman claims, that "the individual's interaction with her society and individual environments more often than not determined the extent of its expression."³⁸ Instead it is more likely that the "relationship between an organism and its environment" will determine the mode of expression.³⁹ Physically affectionate and emotionally-intense relationships between women were masked by the term 'romantic friendship'. Lacking the conceptual structure, the dominant discourse was forced to exclude the possibility of an active sexuality for women.⁴⁰

³⁶Thursday 18 November, 1819, 104.

³⁷Faderman, "Boston Marriages", 31

³⁸Ibid, 31.

³⁹Kenneth Burke, Counter-Statement, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1968, 151.

⁴⁰Marilyn Frye, "To See and Be Seen: Politics of Reality", Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy, Ann Gary and Marilyn Pearsall, (eds.), Boston, London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1989, 77.

If women expressed themselves as participants in their national, cultural environment, thereby conforming to the rules of detachment, it is most likely they depended on euphemisms to express their experiences. One of a pair in a 'Boston marriage' wrote in the late nineteenth century, "I want now to paint things, and drive things, and kiss things...Good night, and God bless you dear love."⁴¹

Faderman notes the word 'kiss' was italicized by the author, but does not explore why kiss might have been italicized. There is no mistaking Lister's euphemism, 'kiss', and I suggest it is possible that it was in common usage.

Two last night. M- spoke in the very act. "Ah," she said, 'Can you ever love anyone else? She knows how to heighten the pleasure of our intercourse. She often murmurs, Oh, how delicious,' just at the very moment. All her kisses are good ones...⁴²

To claim, then, that the extent of expression was determined by the environment, is to misunderstand the nature of interaction. It was more likely that what was determined was the style of expression. Faderman's claims deny agency to the women of the nineteenth century, the Lister diaries reclaim it in showing the mechanics of Victorian euphemisms that appropriated the available rhetoric. Lister buried references to sexual activity in euphemistic reconstructions that avoided incriminating

⁴¹Lillian Faderman, "Nineteenth Century Boston marriage as a possible lesson for today", Boston Marriages: Romantic but asexual relationships among contemporary lesbians, Ester D. Rothblum and Kathleen A. Bretony, (eds.), Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, 34.

⁴²Thursday 22 July, 1824, 351.

criminality. Part of the current mythology is that romantic friendships, prior to 1896, were considered 'normal' but there were many examples of romantic liaisons being ridiculed throughout the period that Faderman claims was 'safe'. Perhaps one of the most famous 'Boston marriages' was the partnership of Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby; the 'Ladies of Llangollen'. Their "perfect retirement" and their "perfect friendship" drew artists, philosophers and European aristocracy for years.⁴³ But not all those who knew of them believed the myth. For instance, Lady Louisa Stuart called them "genus moutebankum".⁴⁴

Similarly, neither Lister nor M- were convinced that the 'Ladies' relationship was adequately described by the term 'romantic friendship':

Foolscap sheet from M-...She seems much interested about Lady Eleanor Butler & Miss Ponsonby and I am agreeably surprised (never dreaming such a thing) at her observation.' The account of your visit is the prettiest narrative I have read. You have at once excited me & gratified my curiosity. Tell me if you think their regard has always been platonic & if you ever believed pure friendship could be so exalted.'...I cannot help thinking that surely it was not platonic...I feel the infirmity of our nature & hesitate to pronounce such attachments uncemented by something more tender still than friendship.⁴⁵

Despite the possibility of a sexual relationship, biographies like Elizabeth Mavor's reclaim for Ponsonby and Butler the term

⁴³Elizabeth Mavor, The Ladies of Llangollen, Middlesex, New York: Penguin Books, 1971, xvi.

⁴⁴Ibid, xv.

⁴⁵Saturday 3 August, 1822, 210.

romantic friendship "as more liberal and inclusive and better suited to the more diffuse feminine nature."⁴⁶ The claim is based on the lack of evidence for a sexual relationship but, as Mayvor notes, many of their journals have been lost. It is more than possible that the 'Ladies', or their friends or family, destroyed the more incriminating writings.

The availability of diaries and letters has always depended on the goodwill of the inheritor, often relatives. Lister's diaries were 'lost' for well over a hundred and sixty years. In another case of 'loss', Annie Fields was advised not to publish the account of her life with Sarah Orne Jewett because the public would misread it.⁴⁷ Clearly, as Lister's cageyness in her discussion of sexuality illustrates, women had never talked about their 'criminal connections', but for us to continue the myth of the romantic (platonic) friendship is to deny those women the possibility of a creative agency.

In the summer of 1822 Anne Lister made the pilgrimage to the Ladies of Llangollen:

I am interested in these 2 ladies very much. There is something in their story & all I have heard about them here that, added to the other circumstances, makes a deep impression.⁴⁸

The other circumstances were of course her particular interest in women in intimate relationships with each other. And her

⁴⁶Mayvor, xvii.

⁴⁷Faderman, "Boston Marriages", 34.

⁴⁸Tuesday 23 July, 1822, 201.

relationship with M-. The visit to Plas Newydd both elevated and depressed Anne. The impossibility of a satisfactory outcome with M- was forcefully driven home by the comparative mutuality of involvement of the 'Ladies', but her talk with Sarah Ponsonby confirmed her faith in the notion of lifelong partnership.

Lister's discussions of the Butler/Ponsonby partnership are among the most real and moving sections of the diary. She truly seems to be searching for some kind of similarity between herself and them and wants to know more about their lives and their options. She left behind the self-aggrandizement and the constant mirroring of self through others and gazes hopefully outward at the Ladies of Llangollen.⁴⁹ Plasnewydd at Llangollen endeared itself to her "by association of ideas."⁵⁰

Lister's association of ideas was the marrying of 'variance' and English attachment to landscape. The English rhetorical device, 'grounds', successfully blurs the discursive boundaries of homo-erotic union with the facade of Victorian innocence. The perfect partnership of the Ladies of Llangollen was reiterated in the careful design and maintenance of their gardens. And so the rose that Sarah Ponsonby gave Lister subsequently took on the special significance as a gift of a visible symbol of the tended love of the 'Ladies'.

Lister's revelations demonstrate, contrary to later claims, that despite the lack of a visible community, she was not without

⁴⁹Sunday 14 July, 1822, 196.

⁵⁰Monday 29 July, 1822, 208.

models. Her ability to connect with those similar to her rested on a notion that is current in the twentieth century, namely that one recognizes similar beings. She says of Sarah Ponsonby, cravat notwithstanding, she was "mild and gentle, certainly not masculine, & yet there was a certain je-ne-sais-quoi striking."⁵¹ Later in Paris, Mlle. de Sans (a French woman born and raised in England) is picked out of the crowd very quickly. "Rather flirted with her, which she seems to like and understand well enough."⁵² Another English lodger in the Paris house 'recognized' Lister and asked her, "Etes-vous Archilles?"⁵³ It appears as though recognition depended on the 'wearing' of an English woman's mannishness.

It was not surprising that Anne Lister moved to France for a time. Paris had drawn 'variant women' throughout the notoriously relaxed Bourbon period.⁵⁴ Later, the New Penal Code of 1791, did not include a "Crimes Against Nature" section and as Anthony Copley notes, "both during the 1790 and under the Empire...France was to acquire a reputation for tolerance."⁵⁵ There was the

⁵¹Tuesday 23 July, 1822, 202.

⁵²Anne Lister, No Priest But Love, Thursday 7 October, 1824, 24.

⁵³Ibid, Tuesday, 12 October, 1824, 26. Whitbread notes that Miss Mackenzie, the English lodger, "understands the nature of Anne's sexuality." Archilles dressed as a woman and lived among the kings daughters, impregnating one of them. 30.

⁵⁴Betty Wysor, Lesbian Myth, New York: Randon House, 1974, 212.

⁵⁵Ibid, 24.

perception in England that sexual relationships between women in France were common occurrences; in fact there were several societies of homosexuals, one specifically for women.⁵⁶

Further material evidence of this tolerance was the nineteenth-century boom in lesbian literature. Lister, an avid reader, was probably familiar with the French novels on difference, such as Felicite de Choiseul-Meuse's, Julie, ou J'ai Sauve me Rose, (1807), and Diderot's La Religieuse, (1796). Jeffrey Weeks asserts that this literature "was written largely by men, for male delectation."⁵⁷ But if a parallel might be drawn it is that in the 1950s there was a similar boom in lesbian pulp novels for male consumption. Yet in interviews conducted in the filming of Forbidden Love, it is apparent that the novels were the only contact women had with 'community'.⁵⁸ Unintentionally the literature served as a discursive mechanism for women isolated by their difference. It was probably the case that women of the nineteenth century devised a similar strategy and relied on such publications as fillers in the information gap.

Lister melodramatically quotes Rousseau "I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say that I am like no one in the whole

⁵⁶Wysor, 212.

⁵⁷Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out, London, Melbourne, New York: Quartet Books, 1977, 187.

⁵⁸Aerlyn Weisseman and Lynne Fernie, Forbidden Love, Studio D, National Film of Canada, 1993.

world"⁵⁹ One might suppose from this that she did believe herself alone in the world, but the rate of her 'successes', or at least of her bragging of them, exposes the contradictions. There were women like her, she knew them, and she knew of them. "I told Miss Ponsonby I had first seen an account of them in La Belle Assemblée."⁶⁰

To the English upper classes Paris was an avenue to sophistication. Lister hoped to make contact with the nobility of Europe -- an opportunity she had not had in England, where further advancement depended on marriage. Another probable influence behind Lister's decision to move to Paris was the desire to find a suitable life partner. For Lister that meant someone of the correct class and of a style she appreciated -- that is, a feminine, sexually active partner.

In Wollstonecrafts', Mary, published in 1778, an idealized, romantic fiction is made of her relationship with Fanny Blood. Had Lister known about this book (and she clearly had an interest and access to knowledge of the existence of the 'Ladies of Llangollen'), she probably would have dismissed it as unrealistic, just as she refused to entertain the platonic myth of Butler and Ponsonby. The available English rhetoric on women's sexuality and relationships contradicted Anne's experience. Paris offered Lister the opportunity for personal congruency.

⁵⁹Wednesday 20 August, 1923, 283.

⁶⁰Tuesday 23 July, 1822, 204.

The British 'deviant' in literature "might very well be an eccentric member of the aristocracy... British ladies were considered headstrong, independent, intellectual and subject to absurd notions of equality of the sexes...she would also be...a superb horsewoman, and more often than not a fencer."⁶¹ Lister conforms to this stereotype. "She was able to spend a great deal of time on self-education, travel...walking, riding...To those who did not know her and to some who did she appeared eccentric: that her nickname amongst the inhabitants of Halifax was "Gentleman Jack" is indicative of the fact that her masculine appearance and behaviour was sufficient to cause comment."⁶²

Devoid of British Victorianisms, and set against Britishness as 'other', French literature on variant women offered either the beautiful, willing, and innocent waif or the womanly, experienced and seductive aristocrat.⁶³ Lister's aversion to masculine women, and her general impatience with the feminine "wimmy", led her away from English women to the possibilities of adventure with women of social and experiential substance on the continent.⁶⁴

However, on her first extended visit to Paris, Lister had

⁶¹Wysor, 192.

⁶²Anne Lister, I Know My Own Heart, Helena Whitbread, (ed.), xxiv.

⁶³Wysor, 192-197.

⁶⁴Saturday 9 August, 1823, 274. Wimmy, probably derived from 'wim(m)ick: ...old country word for crying,- 'she's liable to be considered to be...peevish like.' O.E.D., 3782.

difficulty shedding her attachment to English middle-class notions of partnership and did not immediately begin her program of social advancement. Further, the Parisian middle-class was experimenting with their own Victorianism.⁶⁵ Her discomfort, linguistically and culturally, compelled Lister to confine herself momentarily to a boarding house shared with other English women. This same caution narrowed her romantic choices, and once again involved her with an English woman she considered vulgar and socially inferior.

Lister was never to find what she wanted in Europe. She met, socialized and eventually involved herself romantically with the nobility, but she was never accepted into their society. As a consequence she returned to England, and there met and 'married' Anne Walker, another Yorkshire heiress. It was a liaison that was not without its tensions. Miss Walker was a hypochondriac and Lister became increasingly restless as she was confined to the all too familiar Halifax. In 1840 restlessness won out over anxiety and the Misses Lister and Walker left for a tour of Russia, and it was there, in the Caucasian mountains, that Anne Lister caught a virus and very quickly died.

* * *

The 'mannishness' Lister was so frequently accused of was indeed an imitative masculinity. Englishmen of the upper classes appeared to have access to power and freedom because of their

⁶⁵Anthony Copley, Sexual Modalities In France 1780-1980, London, New York: Routledge, 1989, 11.

style, and Lister makes every appearance of wanting access to the kind of freedom that male power guaranteed. But it is her adaptations along the frontier lines of identity, between the acceptable and the unacceptable, that prove so interesting.

Many of Lister's conversations about her 'oddity' depend on her sense of naturalness. Indeed, it is no mistake that scientific discourse enters Lister's rhetoricon lexicæ.⁶⁶ She expressed an interest in the work of Malthus, visited museums of natural science, and almost certainly knew of the evolutionary theories of Erasmus Darwin.⁶⁷ Scientific theory produced a new range of rhetorical possibilities in Victorian Britain. This was not a world in which discursive fields collided, but as Lister illustrates, they could be manipulated with considerable flexibility. Anne Lister wrote herself a script that manipulated and constructed identities out of biology, tea, gardens, horses, black, masculine clothing. Lover of women, she nevertheless managed to create a place for herself and to win the respect of her community.

⁶⁶Kenneth Burke, Counter-Statement, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1968, 123-183.

⁶⁷Anne Lister, I Know My Own..., Monday 15 December, 1817, 26.

Chapter 3. An Empty Land.

There was not a cloud in the sky- no sign of life, save a few late swans. There was frost in the air. We rode silently through wild rye grass that was up to our shoulders on horseback, then we came out on our meadow at the harbour.

When in 1924 Susan Allison was encouraged to write a story of pioneer life, J. D. MacLean and Cecil O. Scott expected an account which championed the British colonists and their contribution to the building of the province of British Columbia.² To a certain extent Mrs. Allison did give her audience a typical rendition of the genre of pioneer narrative. It contained all the necessary elements of the heroic tale: floods, fires, and armed confrontations.³ Likewise she appealed to the peculiarly British Columbian myth by recounting incidents of Indian respect for British law.

Mrs. Allison, however, intervened in the traditional narrative form with the inclusion of stories of her Similkimeen friends. Her story moves synchronically, connecting the traditional pioneer narrative to a personalized frontier story in which she

¹Susan Allison, A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison. Margaret Ormsby, ed., Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1976, 41.

²Dr. J.D. MacLean was the president of the British Columbia Historical Society, and C.O. Scott, an editor at the Vancouver Daily Sun.

³Janet MacArthur, "The 'Wild, Free Life': Contact Perspective in Susan Allison's Pioneer Recollections", unpublished paper presented at the B.C. Studies Conference '94, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, B.C., October 7-10th, 1994, 6.

is altered by her experiences on the frontier. And if inclusion of native friends in her story differs from the more widely known male accounts, in which the native population is distanced, it is because frontier life was experientially gendered.⁴

Mrs. Allison's life in the Okanagan was defined and described in terms that conformed to a British account of the pioneer experience with unique adaptations because of her proximity to the frontier and with the demands of that specific environment. Kenneth Burke accounts for this phenomenon:

The universal experiences are implicated in specific modes of experience: they rise out of a relationship between the organism and its environment. Frustration and gratification of bodily needs; ethical systems; custom; the whole ideology or code of values among which we are raised- these are involved in the modes of experience.⁵

Throughout the narrative, Mrs. Allison was consistently British, proud of the achievements of empire, and determined to make a useful contribution to the cause of building a successful colony. Conversely, she was equally insistent that such an accomplishment include the indigenous population. Susan Allison's relationship to the Similkimeen band, her nearest neighbours, illustrates the effects of 'modes of experience' in her expressions of a mediated Englishness. Consistent with the Turner thesis, Burke clarifies Susan Allison's specific locations of change. It was the cultural dimensions of Englishness that

⁴Ibid, 6.

⁵Kenneth Burke, On Symbols and Society, Joseph R. Gusfield, (ed.), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 107.

were changed, not its larger political or economic imperatives.

Cultural and political agendas were merged in those who encouraged pioneers to write their stories. Victoria and the year 1924 were at some distance from the frontier life of Mrs. Allison, so those who encouraged her to write down her experiences wished to hear more than the mere recounting of life in a log cabin. In delivering the opening address at the Pioneers Reunion, the President of the British Columbia Historical Association urged those "who have done so much to build up this great State" to write down their experiences and give the work to the archives so that "future generations of this province [will] have access to this history."⁶ Access to the provincial history was a corrective to the perceived threats to British dominance.

The 'pioneering spirit' of early twentieth century British Columbia was little different than that being rebuilt in the United States. Calvin Coolidge proclaimed that "the hearty pioneer still defends the outworks of civilization."⁷ In a time of fears of the consequences of 'indiscriminate' immigration British Columbians set about to recreate, or maintain the pioneer spirit.

One of the organizations created for the specific purpose of

⁶Dr. J.D. MacLean, in a speech at the British Columbia Pioneer Reunion, Second Annual Report and Proceedings of the British Columbia Historical Association, for the year ended October 11, 1924, 10.

⁷Schlissel, Ruiz and Monk, Western Women, Their Land Their Lives, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1988, 2.

keeping alive the contributions of the pioneers was the Order of Native Sons and Daughters. This organization was founded because "times had changed", and as Beaumont Boggs noted in his speech at the banquet held to honour pioneers,

with that progress came the great influx of immigrants to this country, and we thought we saw signs that the spirit of our forefathers would be forgotten; we thought we saw that good citizenship, as it was understood by them, might, with the influx of so much immigration from distant lands, gradually pass away and die, and so it was that a new duty came to our Society. It was the custodianship of the high principles of good citizenship.⁸

Newcomers became the early twentieth-century 'other' that the British establishment pushed against, however the portrait of the savage past was no less important to the struggle of the present. Consequently the portrait of the past 'savage' became vital in the reconstruction of the taming of the wilderness, and those who inhabited it. The 1924 narrative reconstruction was founded on an oppositional pairing of the civilized European and the Indian Savage. This version portrays the harassed settler population holding the Empire against tremendous odds. In the words of Mayor Hayward,

Well may we do honour to those who have left their native land, their parents and homes, and come out to this young country to seek their fortunes, to hew their homes among vast forests and streams, often times surrounded with great perils, wild animals, and the savage Indians of the early days.⁹

⁸Speech of Beaumont Boggs given at the Pioneers Reunion, B.C. Hist. Ass. 1924, 16

⁹Speech of the Mayor of Victoria at the Pioneers Reunion, B.C. Hist Association, 1924, 11.

There is little savagery in the Allison account. She readily acknowledged that without the goodwill and assistance of her Similkimeen friends the Allisons would not have survived the pioneer experience.¹⁰ Likewise, Theodora Stanwell-Fletcher noted in her journal:

Wherever we have gone in this country these people have been invariably generous about offering to share their homes and food with us. In this respect... they are more hospitable to the white man than the white man has been to them.¹¹

The rhetoric of the years following World War I also repositioned women in the pioneer narrative. In the 1920s women were admonished to avoid filling their children with "insidious doctrines of peace...Peace at any price is unworthy of those sons, the children of those older pioneers who entered the unexplored fastness of the Western land..."¹² Uncompromising pioneers deserved uncompromising children to continue to hold the province as a bastion of Victorian British values. It was, however, an interesting contradiction that Mrs. Allison was asked to write her account given the Victorian middle-class notions of gender roles that exiled the women to historical non-existence. One of the speakers at the Pioneer Banquet of 1924 performed an amnesic sleight of hand in the following:

Now having spoken to the Native Sons, it is more difficult

¹⁰Jean Barman, The West Beyond The West, 168.

¹¹Ibid, 169.

¹²BC. Hist. Ass. 1924, 15

to speak to the Native Daughters. But reticent as I am, I can say how proud we are of them. We can only say their deeds speak louder than words.¹³

Without Mrs. Allison's words some of the deeds would surely have been forgotten. British women of the middle class may have had an historical sense of self but it was not to be spoken, it was to be worn as a set of behaviours, as a performance.

* * *

In 1868 Mrs. Allison became the first European woman to settle in the British Columbian interior (settlement agreements having been reached between Governor Douglas and the Thompson, Okanagan and Similkimeen bands in 1860). Her first encounter in the new home was so memorable that she recalled it clearly at age eighty:

...so I was virtually alone. I had a visit from an Indian woman, a niece of Quinesco, the "Bear Hunter" and chief of the Chu-chu-ewa Tribe. She was dressed for the occasion, of course, in mid-Victorian style, a Balmoral petticoat, red and gray, a man's stiff starched white shirt as a blouse, stiff high collar, earrings an inch long, and brass bracelets...my visitor seemed to think she ought to sit upright in her chair and fix her eyes on the opposite wall. I was not used to Indians then and knew very little Chinook. I felt glad when her visit was over. I know now I should have offered her a cigar and a cup of tea.¹⁴

There was a world of difference between that first meeting with Quinesco's niece and Mrs. Allison's eventual writing of the event fifty years later. The frontier had worked its

¹³Beaumont Boggs, B.C. Historical Second Annual Report and Proceedings, 1924, 15.

¹⁴Allison, 23-24.

transformational magic on Mrs. Allison, and forged an identity far removed from the English xenophobe. While Amor de Cosmos was gaining much political ground with his vitriolic editorializing against "the few vagrants [who would] prevent forever industrious settlers from settling on the unoccupied lands"¹⁵, Mrs. Allison took the lonely high ground and publicly declared that "the White man has much to be ashamed of in his treatment of the rightful owners of the land."¹⁶

Such a marked difference in convictions regarding the colonization process underscores the essential genderedness of frontier experience. De Cosmos was not alone in demanding that "reservations [be located] for them [native populations]...and if they trespass on white settlers punish them severely."¹⁷ Governor Douglas was continually forced to deny colonists armed support as a buffer between themselves and the native communities. Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant, having decided that "Indians thirsted for settler blood", demanded that Douglas protect him from 'Indians' who had attacked and overrun his farm.¹⁸ Although these events were incredibly overblown, they

¹⁵Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations In British Columbia, 1774-1890, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977, 166.

¹⁶Allison, xliii.

¹⁷Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 166.

¹⁸Robin Fisher, "Indian Policy on the Pacific Slope", in Interpreting Canada's Past, Bumstead (ed.), 1986, 594. There was only one 'Indian' who had stopped to watch one of the farm workers. The worker panicked and hit his head on a shovel.

do show the tendency of male colonists to look to government for solutions to problems. It is likewise illustrative of the difference in the relationships between native communities and male and female settlers.

Mrs. Allison's proximity to the frontier and the Similkimeen band generated a Turnerian proclivity for innovation.¹⁹ She could not rely on government assistance; and nor, for that matter, on that of her husband. Like most pioneer women in British Columbia Mrs. Allison was left alone on the homestead while her husband was employed by the government to develop various mining, engineering and road construction projects. After 1860 the changes wrought by the frontier appear to be specific to women only.

The change from the apprehensive first meeting with the Similkimeen woman to the public support of a vanishing population demonstrates a very different pioneer experience than the one usually pictured. Mrs Allison's experientially gendered frontier challenges the traditional identity construction attributed to British Columbians. The clearly transformative nature of the frontier likewise refutes some of the tenets held by historians

¹⁹Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier In American History, Ray Allen Billington, (ed), (Toronto, London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.) Owing to the vast amount written on the frontier thesis I am not going to examine or describe it at any length. The qualities attributed by Turner to the effects of the frontier that concern this thesis are those of innovation, quick discovery of expedients, inquisitiveness, "buoyancy and exuberance which comes from freedom", individualism, and the reduction of class attachments.(vii)

of western settlement.²⁰

Traditional histories of British Columbia were constructed against the backdrop of the intentions of the colonizers, which in turn were translated into the identity myth of a foundational British law and order. While it is true that the legal framework was in place before the colony was declared, 'intention' does not necessarily match 'experience'. The lack of attention to the fundamental dislocation of experience and identity myth has contributed in no small way to the lack of communication between native communities and immigrant British Columbians today.

As on the American frontier, British Columbian identity was constructed against an 'other' which existed on the other side of the frontier 'line'. There is an illocutionary force to the word 'frontier' that lends much of its power to an assumed knowledge of meaning. It is 'one of those phrases that thinks for you' and depends on the unstated for its operation in identity construction. Embedded in frontier production are the tacit binary opposites, "civil/savage and self/other".²¹ The dependence of the notion of frontier on 'other' has contributed to geographically-marked frontiers being (at least rhetorically) the "vague, contestable areas" they are.²²

²⁰ Janet MacArthur, 2.

²¹ MacArthur, 7.

²² John Lucas, England and Englishness, London: Hogarth Press, 1990, 2.

The persuasive power of *Amor de Cosmos* resorted to hard definition for the purposes of territory consolidation. The mythology of 'law and order' laid the foundations for the fusing of 'frontier' and the 'borders' of Englishness. However, colonial myopia was not necessarily the agent of British Imperialism. It was behind the rigidity of borders, not frontier, that a sense of 'common purpose' was developed.²³ Settlers arrived in the new colony with an already highly evolved sense of 'other', particularly through the terministic screen that was Britishness.²⁴ Further to complicate the phenomenon, the presentations of Britishness and Englishness were external and internal. One was British in response to an external, national set of expectations in response to a foreign 'other'. To be British in the colonies required a performance that reflected representations of empire. However, the colonists presented a simultaneity of Britishness and Englishness, in which British (Imperial) presentations officially dominated English (internalized) behavioural demands.²⁵ Englishness was an individual, environmentally-informed response to the national performance that was Britishness. One spoke as a Briton, one acted as an Englishwoman.

The environmental provocations to *Englishness* make it ideally suited to Turnerian frontier adaptations. In isolated areas where

²³Ibid, 2.

²⁴Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action, 44-62.

²⁵Linda Colley, Britons, 366.

living conditions were often described as primitive, great care was taken to appear civilized. One was seen to be English:

I well remember the first time I met Mrs. J.F. Allison, or rather, the first time that I saw her. I was riding towards Princeton and she was riding side saddle to Granite Creek. Behind her came a number of pack horses loaded with beef which she was taking to Bob Stevenson's camp...I remember at the time thinking of the courage and endurance of a refined and educated woman like her to make her home so far out of the way from the comforts and conveniences of even farming districts nearer the larger centres. She was riding on quite serenely and appeared to be enjoying the ride and the beautiful scenery.²⁶

This portrait of Mrs. Allison presented a colonial apotheosis to an English audience. While maintaining the business of empire (production of food), she promulgated the style befitting an upper-class woman (riding side saddle), and was correctly detached from the concerns of labour (enjoyment of the landscape). Reports such as this maintained and regenerated the 'borders' of Englishness. Accounts of Mrs. Allison show her to be the perfect British pioneer. However, true to Turnerian projections, the frontier 'worked' on Susan Allison as much as she manipulated it to her own ends. While the frontier experience mediated her Englishness, the ground of mediation was more often than not the site of delineation or border construction. That is, the daily rituals of Englishness were reinforced and took on new and special significance on the frontier.

On the west coast one of the oldest rituals of inter-cultural

²⁶Allison, xxxix.

exchange was companionate tea-drinking. Quinesco's niece expected a cup of tea from Mrs. Allison because she was well acquainted with English tea-drinking practices. Her arrival announced to Mrs. Allison, or should have, the beginning of a trading partnership. The history of the Hudson's Bay Company in British Columbia demonstrates native women's expectations of reciprocity. Later in the memoir, Mrs. Allison reveals that the fur trade relationship between the Okanagan, Thompson, Similkimeen and European men was readily transferred onto European women. "The Indian women used to gather and dry Saskatoons... and when they brought me trout which they caught...I paid for them with butter."²⁷ The arrival of European women settlers did not, as historians have previously argued, serve to push native women to the margins, jetsam in 'marriage of the country' arrangements. The expectations of Englishmen of proper behaviour on the part of their British wives pushed their former trade partners to the margins of European perimeters.

The Hudson's Bay Company founded a trading Empire on tea and ceramics with which they supplied their prospective partners in preparation for the process of trade negotiations.²⁸ In fact tea became such an object of veneration in native communities

²⁷Allison, 39.

²⁸Louise Jackson, "Nineteenth Century British Ceramics: A Key To Cultural Dynamics In Southwestern Alaska", Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1991, 59.

that in one instance a baby was traded for some tea leaves.²⁹ Ceramics, specifically cups and saucers, the paraphernalia of tea drinking, are often found in nineteenth-century native grave sites.³⁰

It is not surprising that Susan Allison was somewhat nonplussed by the Similkimeen woman's presence. Colonists were not instructed in the well-established trading rituals, in fact the world they expected to find did not exist. This lack of preparation was to cause no end of trouble for Governor Douglas who often lost patience with the colonists' inability to cope with their new environment.³¹

This, however, was of little concern to the British government which based advertising campaigns on the desire to maintain the tenets of Empire in an isolated colony. The British middle- and upper-middle class were enticed to British Columbia with promises that their "school friendships can be continued unbroken, with joint sporting expeditions as happy interludes to lucrative fruit farming operations."³²

²⁹Jackson, 203.

³⁰Jackson, 209.

³¹Robin Fisher, "British Columbia and The Indians: The Transitional Years, 1849-1858", in Interpreting Canada's Past: Before Confederation, J.M. Bumstead, (ed.), Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986, 297.

³²Barman, Readings in B.C. History, 236. That these 'men of the better class' failed miserably as colonists is a recent theme in current rewriting of the myths of origin. It is perhaps a key ingredient in distancing ourselves from an apparently divided path in the face of land claims negotiations and bridge building.

When the Glennies arrived at Hope in 1860 there was little to differentiate them from other Victorian Britons in the colony. They had none of the skills necessary for survival on the frontier, and they fully expected their every need would be met by a resident servant population.³³ Their lack of preparedness was covered only for a short time. "At first Mrs. Charles was good enough to bake for us but we could not impose for too long."³⁴

Finding adequate shelter likewise posed a problem. In the fall of that year the family moved into a lightly constructed frame cabin with paper and cloth for walls and windows.³⁵ However, as quickly as finances permitted, Glennie, casting himself in the role of a noble, built "Hopelands" [which] was to be the manor house of his demesne."³⁶ This was to house the piano and the chandelier they had carried half way around the world, but even as the house was being completed Glennie was nearing financial ruin.

In their struggle to survive colonists were forced by the environment or financial restrictions to choose which symbols of Britishness were to be 'representative'. There was, therefore, a

³³Rennie Warburton, "Race and Class In British Columbia: A Comment", Readings in the History of British Columbia, Jean Barman and Robert A.J. Mc Donald, (eds), Richmond, British Columbia: Open Learning Agency, 1989, 227.

³⁴Allison, 9.

³⁵Ibid, 12.

³⁶Ibid, xvi

tendency to reduce Britishness to essential 'artifacts' which can be seen in the increased interest in manners and dress and a correspondingly greater formality in community relationships. This of course represents a partial presentation and is consistent with Jennifer Brown's assertion that European representations had always been fractured. However she notes that it was individual Europeans themselves who were fragments. Being engaged in specialized activities they were "drawn only from certain sectors of that society."³⁷

While Brown discusses an earlier fur-trading era, the intention of the British government to build a colony with the 'respectable' classes recreated the same phenomena. The middle- and upper-middle-class pioneers represented a fraction of British society. The forced essentializing of cultural symbols only further served to fragment identity. In order to recreate fragments as a complete identity most colonists lived out their lives protected within a "cultural garrison".³⁸ This was particularly true of women. "Because there was a sufficient number of persons of [Mrs. Glennie's]...own kind to satisfy her need for companionship she did not reach beyond her circle."³⁹

In her late teens and already in reduced circumstances as a

³⁷Jennifer S.H. Brown, Strangers In Blood: Fur Trade Families In Indian Country, Vancouver:University of British Columbia Press, vxi.

³⁸Janet MacArthur, 4.

³⁹Susan Allison, Pioneer Gentlewoman, xv.

consequence of Glennie abandoning the family at Hope, Susan and her mother were forced to open a school.⁴⁰ Victorian gender restrictions severely reduced their employment options and although teaching was a respectable vocation, Susan "did not like teaching but it helped out [her] small income."⁴¹ Out of step with her contemporaries she was later to recommend that all girls learn a trade so that they may make their own way.⁴²

Stigmatized and financially embarrassed by the departure of her step-father, Susan Moir was to marry at the late age (at least by colonial standards) of twenty-three.⁴³ Conditions on the frontier created a different set of criteria and although Susan had no material wealth to bring to the arrangement she had all the dowry necessary in British Columbia in the 1860s, namely connections to Victoria. However, despite her sister's marriage to Edgar Dewdney, an ambitious engineer who later became the Lt. Governor of British Columbia, Susan Allison's new home drew her far from the "confining apparatus of colonial society" and away from those who may have influence.⁴⁴ And she began her "wild, free life" with the Similkimeen band in the interior.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Ibid, 21.

⁴¹Ibid, 21.

⁴²Jean Barman, The West Beyond The West: A History of British Columbia, Toronto Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1991, 231.

⁴³Allison, xxiii.

⁴⁴Janet MacAuthur, 4.

⁴⁵Susan Allison, 21.

While she left behind the strictures of fort life Mrs. Allison carried with her the "instructions, models and experience that affected [her]... behaviour".⁴⁶ However, her ready accommodation of native expectations illustrates the transformation of identity on the frontier. The fact that Susan Allison was able to shed her English instruction more readily than her husband could was largely due to their different relationship to colonial institutions.

The traditional narrative asserts that formal metropolitan control was exerted in outlying areas because "the 'grand principle of free institutions' was not to be risked 'among settlers so wild, so miscellaneous, perhaps so transitory, and in a form of society so crude'"⁴⁷ That is, Victoria was to prevent the tendency of those on the frontier to become legislatively self-sufficient. They were, then, legally predisposed to look to the colonial government for solutions to problems. As Fisher notes, "the west was a place where old values were imposed rather than new ones created...there was little inclination to develop local institutions."⁴⁸

However true this may have been for male colonists, it was not always the case for their wives. Susan Allison did not depend on Victoria for assistance with frontier problems. Indeed

⁴⁶Jennifer Brown, Strangers in Blood, xix

⁴⁷Barry Gough, "The character of the B.C. Frontier", in Readings in the History of British Columbia, 112.

⁴⁸Robin Fisher, "Duff and George Go West: A Tale of Two Frontiers", Canadian Historical Review, LXVII, 1987, 504.

there were occasions when her only assistance lay in the history she had developed in her community. When faced with the rifles of the McLean gang Susan Allison had only her good relationship with the Similkimeen to rely on. The McLeans (sons of an HBC factor and a chief's daughter) had killed an officer delivering a warrant for their arrest (on previous charges for hunting a man who had impregnated and abandoned their sister). The McLeans and six members of the Similkimeen band were taking their sister to her mother's people when they passed by the Allison homestead.

They stopped, and one of them put up his gun pointing at an object behind me. Frosty Nose rode up to him, threw up his arms and said something to him. I turned to see what he had aimed at- it was my son...When I turned again they had all ridden on...⁴⁹

Even though she was dubious about the excuses Frosty Nose gave her, Mrs. Allison's response to the event was not one of acrimony. She ends the story noting that the young woman would be well taken care of by her mother's family. "Those Indians are good to those of kin to them."⁵⁰ They were also clearly protective of their friendship with Susan Allison.

With instructions from the Similkimeen women, Mrs. Allison cultivated friendships based on the institutionalized rituals of Englishness. The welcoming ritual of drinking tea together nurtured friendships that offer a challenge to the reconstructed "Indian" of the early twentieth-century narrative. Susan Allison's descriptions of her interactions with the women of the

⁴⁹Allison, 46.

⁵⁰Ibid, 46.

Nicola-Similkimeen band deviated from the long held official version of cultural and emotional distance between Native and European women. "Suzanne [Quinesco's sister] was a perfect treasure and so was her boy, Hosachtem, and I will always feel grateful for the kindness I received from them-they have passed away long ago.⁵¹

The development of mature friendships required a greater commitment than a mutual appreciation of tea. Both the Similkimeen women and Mrs. Allison had to construct methods to read motive in the other. At her first meeting with Mrs. Allison, Quinesco's niece displayed a shrewd understanding of the symbolic importance of clothing to Europeans. The Similkimeen woman designed a costume symbolizing clothing "as the verbal parallel to [her] pattern[s] of experience".⁵²

Throughout the tenure of the Hudson's Bay Company in British Columbia there was extensive purchasing of English items of clothing by Native women. The archaeological record indicates a marked interest in such articles of clothing as Balmoral petticoats and long tweed skirts -- items usually worn by the British middle-class.⁵³ Her choice of the starched shirt and stiff collar reflects the formal attire worn by the Hudson's Bay officials when entertaining their native trading partners with

⁵¹Allison, 28.

⁵²Kenneth Burke, Symbols and Society, 109.

⁵³Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, Indians of The Northwest Pacific: A History, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, 98.

tea, shortbread and cigars. The symbolic language of the dress of Quinesco's niece reveals her Hudson's Bay experience and showed an astute understanding of British symbols of authority. On a state visit of welcome, the Similkimeen woman combined her own regalia with 'messages' which Susan Allison should have understood as representative of a woman of position.

Two years before Susan Allison arrived in the interior, Nkwala, an Okanagan chief, confronted American gold miners who had murdered a group of unarmed Okanagan, wearing "his company-issue uniform and a stove-pipe hat, with imperial medals on his chest."⁵⁴ Nkwala had referred the matter to the British authorities but dressed up to tell the 'Boston Men' what he thought of them. Although Thompson claims Nkwala's long-standing relationship with the Hudson's Bay company had compromised his ability to act,⁵⁵ it is also clear from the historical and archaeological record that the native populations of British Columbia were well aware of American contempt for Indians. In dressing as a British military man Nkwala was restating his relationship with the British, whose laws the American miners appeared to respect.

The appropriation of symbols of authority could be interpreted as an act of submission to that authority. Burke notes that "imitative behaviour is motivated by submission...even though the

⁵⁴Duane Thompson, "The Response of Okanagan Indians to European Settlement", B.C. Studies, 101, Spring 1994, 100.

⁵⁵Ibid, 100.

behaviour may be controlled by dominant motives", as in the case, for example, of Anne Lister's imitative male clothing and manners. In an article published in 1892 Mrs. Allison appears to support Burke's argument:

In early times the women were nearly as good hunters as men, but since they have grown civilized they have given it up lest the white settlers should laugh at them, for they are highly sensitive to ridicule.⁵⁶

However, if clothing adaptations are read through the filter of Englishness they may be seen as rhetorical shifts. Both Quinesco's niece and Anne Lister adopted male clothing in a presentation of "a robustly masculine image that the English have projected down the [nineteenth] century".⁵⁷ They assumed the 'mantle' of power which imparted a social authority.

If there was any submission it resided in Susan Allison. There were no rides in the chaise to have afternoon tea sitting in wing-back velvet chairs guarded by aspidistras. Mrs. Allison was forced to reduce the accoutrements of the British upper-middle-class, and to entertain as her environment permitted.

The first thing I did was to hang white curtains in the dining-room windows. Mr. Hayes said they made the room look dark, he also did not like the tablecloth and said an oilcloth was good enough. I thought he was unreasonable at the time and for as long as I had someone to wash for me, but when I had a lot of children and had to do my own washing I agreed with him

⁵⁶Susan Allison, "Account of the Similkimeen Indians of British Columbia", in The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. XXI, 1892, 307.

⁵⁷J. B. Priestley, The English, 12.

the oilcloth was good enough.⁵⁸

She was forced to make similar concessions with her clothing. Whatever she wore Mrs. Allison made herself. On the frontier she had to 'make do' and style became somewhat irrelevant, particularly after giving birth to fourteen children, all of whom she also sewed for. Mrs. Allison loved fine clothing but in making her adjustments by exchanging style for event, she improvised in ways that were specifically English. When she was ridiculed for dressing for dinner every night Mrs. Allison said that it was "a habit [she] was drilled in as a child and has always stuck with me to some extent."⁵⁹ With raising the children, operating a store and ranch, making clothing and food, travelling about the territory as a nurse, dressing for dinner meant nothing more than taking off one's work clothes. The essentialized Englishness of Hope, then, was further stripped of its material signifiers when Mrs. Allison attached her Englishness to a temporally placed ritual, the changing of clothes at a particular time of day.

The same essentializing is evident in Susan Allison's attachment to the land and landscape. In keeping with the traditional view of a Canadian frontier David Breen argues that:

the environmental forces were rendered much less effective because the population did not seek its identity in the land, its spiritual home was elsewhere and existent technology facilitated continued

⁵⁸Allison, 24.

⁵⁹Ibid., 23.

nourishment from distant quarters.⁶⁰

While Breen recognizes a continued cultural fidelity, the "English imperial project" would have been impossible without a symbolic attachment to land.⁶¹ Consistent with this apparent dichotomy, Mrs. Allison's narrative reveals a somewhat complex response to her physical environment. In attempting to unravel the relationship between Englishness and land her upper-class background should not go unrecognized. Land-ownership had enormous cultural and economic significance to the upper classes, signifying dominance over the lower classes who worked on the land and provided the opportunity for financial gain.⁶² It is not surprising that the English upper-classes revered landscape painting and gardening.

Fifty-six years after her journey to Princeton and her new home, Susan Allison remembered, "the Skagit Valley was lovely. The rhododendrons were lovely still though not at their best."⁶³ In and of itself the mention of a few blooms is of little significance, however this was written amidst the time of a British identity crisis in 1924. Susan Allison's audience would

⁶⁰David Breen, "The Turner Thesis and the Canadian West: A Closer look at the Ranching Frontier", in Essays on Western History, Lewis H. Thomas, (ed.), Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976, 154.

⁶¹Colin M. Coates, "Like 'The Thames towards Putney': The Appropriation of Landscape in Lower Canada", Canadian Historical Review, LXXIV, September 3, 1993, 318.

⁶²Coates, 318.

⁶³Susan Allison, A Pioneer Gentlewoman, 22.

have appreciated the image of an English woman trekking out into an empty land to tend and improve the 'garden'.⁶⁴

Mrs. Allison though, was no artless chauvinist. She did continue to frame the landscape with an English eye. In, for example, her portrayal of the ride through the rye grass, opening out to "our meadow at the harbour".⁶⁵ Yet these experiences on the frontier dissolved much in Mrs. Allison that connected class to land. The environment could kill her, and the fact that it made several attempts impressed upon her the need for attention and cooperation. There was no way to assert superiority over a forest fire, or a flood that pulled house, barn and outbuildings into the river, consequently there was an expansive quality in her relationship to the land that permitted its free use by all her community.

The English venerated the contained landscape of a nature manicured and managed. The depictions of pastoral scenes either centred on a distant manor house or represented views of ownership. Picturesque painting persuaded the spectator of their essential distance from the rest of humanity, whose presence was removed by agricultural and decorative improvements.⁶⁶ While Susan Allison represented a colonial agricultural industry, she did not own her land or improvements in a recognizably English manner.

⁶⁴Coates, 317.

⁶⁵David H. Breen, 150.

⁶⁶Coates, 322.

Members of the Similkimeen band would often camp on the Allison land, sometimes quite close to the house. One night Susan Allison witnessed a 'healing' that would have inspired an armed attack in settlers closer to Victoria:

One of the Indians was very sick and called in a doctor. They promptly made the night hideous with a tomtom and chanting, varied by yells and shouts. I was dying to see what was going on, so when it got dark enough to hide me from sight I crawled out and, screened by a log fence, watched the proceedings...With a mat separating her from her patient stood the doctor—a very powerful one, I had been told. She sang and swayed from side to side without changing her place...I told one of the young women I had watched and she said I ought have come over and sat with the others.⁶⁷

Mrs. Allison did not make a panicked appeal to Governor Douglas for troops to be sent to remove 'Indians' from her land, nor did the Similkimeen feel it necessary to exclude her from the community's spiritual life.

* * *

Mrs. Allison shared with Anne Lister a keen interest to write professionally and to educate and 'improve' herself. Although several days journey from the nearest fort (Hope) Susan Allison notes that, "I had brought many good books out with me. Some of them were from my father's college library so on the whole our time was well spent."⁶⁸ Both she and her husband subscribed to a large collection of journals and magazines and Susan Allison was an enthusiastic member of both the Similkimeen

⁶⁷Allison, 34.

⁶⁸Allison, 26.

and Okanagan Historical Societies until she died. She wrote articles for the Societies and two pieces for English journals. However, much of her writing effort was focused on stories and poems about the Similkimeen band. These were in a style that reflected the congruency of her frontier iconoclasm, being a mixture of older English forms that she had learned as a young woman with new subject matter that broke the traditional conventions of form.

Literature that captivated Europeans did not have quite the same fascination for westerners, whether American or Canadian. Although British Columbians were firmly attached to the English pastoral style they felt more comfortable with simpler depictions of the western American frontier. In keeping with a western simplicity, Helmcken remarked that the British writers he liked most were Scott and Byron because "they were easily understood and did not soar too high".⁶⁹ Appreciation of a simpler style did not extend to an appreciation of American subject matter. American disregard for tradition, as evident in the following, did not suit colonists tastes:

And Barlow stanzas shall indite
A bard, the tide who tames, sir-
And if we cannot alter things
By God, we'll change their names sir.⁷⁰

Model colonists of the English upper middle class were well aware

⁶⁹J.S. Helmcken, The Reminiscences of John Sebastian Helmcken, Five Volumes written in 1892, photocopy.

⁷⁰Paul Fees and Sarah E. Boehme, Frontier America, The Buffalo Bill Historical Society in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1988, 94.

of the larger role they enacted in the Empire. A speaker at the first Pioneers Reunion explained to the guests that Britons, "for the spread of their race, left the Mother land...[and] took part in the founding of this country and maintaining it for the empire to which they belonged."⁷¹ A common form of maintenance was the invocation of empire in poetic forms. Lucas notes that such works were "at the service of the civilizing values of friendship and a common cultural inheritance without which discourse becomes impossible."⁷² The reduced material evidence of Englishness on the frontier was bolstered by an exaggerated concern with presentation which emphasized an honourable simplicity and civilized generosity.

Spread out the snowy
table-cloth

Upon the painted board,
And upon the best of everything
The larder could afford.⁷³

Neither the taming of a wilderness, nor representations of the British empire inspired Mrs. Allison's writing. Although her choice of subject matter was unusual it can be interpreted as a reading of her intentions as a directive of Englishness. There was much in her general approach to life on the frontier that reflected the notions of the ordinariness of royalty and nobility

⁷¹B.C. Historical Ass. 1924, 16

⁷²John Lucas, 3.

⁷³Mr. Mark Bate, in a speech to the pioneers of British Columbia at their first reunion in 1924, in British Columbia Historical Association Second Annual Report and Proceedings, for the year ended October 11th, 1924, 14.

so dear to the middle-class.⁷⁴

In voicing the ordinary concerns of her immediate environment Mrs. Allison both used the voice of English ordinariness and appropriated the American western iconoclastic style of the culturally marginalized. In so doing she divorced herself from elements of the pastoral style that implied "a vision of social relationships, harmoniously structured, hierarchically ordered..."⁷⁵ Those elements that remained were those related to duty and social responsibility and had served her well in the building of community with the Similkimeen band.

Just as pastoral poetry in Britain functioned as reminders to the citizenry of a "necessity of benevolence", so it reminded Mrs. Allison of her "pastoral responsibilities" to those under the British wing.⁷⁶ Her concern for those at the European margins, "a passing people" coupled with a British sense of responsibility for those under their 'protection', resulted in such poetry as "In-Cow-Masket" and "Ne-Hi-La-Kin".⁷⁷ She said the poetry was integral to her reminiscences, "for it is an account of the lives, manner and customs of some of the Simiklimeen Indians as I knew them in the 60s, 70s and 80s, while they were still a people. I may say a passing people. Now they

⁷⁴Colley, 234.

⁷⁵Lucas, 4.

⁷⁶Lucas, 4.

⁷⁷Susan Allison, Pioneer Gentlewoman, xliii.
In-Cow-Mas-Ket Archives of British Columbia, and Ne-Hi-La-Kin, Okanagan Historical Society, 2nd. Annual Report, 1927, 3p.

are nearly all gone, just a down-trodden remnant, whose land is coveted by some of their white neighbours."⁷⁸

Given the sentiments Mrs. Allison expressed it is not surprising that the European community dismissed her work as, "bad poetry, neither rhyme nor blank verse."⁷⁹ It does, however, represent a rhetorical shift that was clearly a heart-felt mirroring of adaptations on the frontier. In the conflicts of the frontier, Mrs. Allison transcends much of the behavioural coding of Englishness. Burke's claim that consciousness requires conflict was reinforced in Mrs. Allison's pioneer narrative.⁸⁰ Whether it was her intention or not she instructed her audience in changes to consciousness that occur on the frontier. Had she remained in an enclave of Englishness she may have ended up like her sister, Jeannie Dewdney, "a very partisan Conservative [who] enjoyed being chatelaine of Gary Castle in Victoria...and chose her friends... from Conservative families."⁸¹

⁷⁸Susan Allison, A Pioneer Gentlewoman, xliii.

⁷⁹Allison, xliv.

⁸⁰Kenneth Burke, Symbols and Society, 130.

⁸¹Allison, xl.

Conclusion. In England's Green and Pleasant Land.

Just as geologists can read seismic reflections of formations hidden far below the surface, so can students of Victorian Britain read rhetorical reflections of the construction of Englishness in diaries. And just as readings of geologic formations are filtered through several media to get to the reader, so too information that is the 'history' described by both Anne Lister and Susan Allison is filtered. For example, because Susan Allison wrote of her frontier experiences fifty years after the fact her perceptions were coloured by what she had learned since. Mrs. Allison read widely, was a member of both the Okanagan and Similkimeen Historical Associations, and subscribed to American and British historical and anthropological journals. Even without her specific historical interests she would have had knowledge of the work of Frederick Jackson Turner. In writing about pioneer experiences her perceptions were filtered through the terministic screen of the Turner thesis which had defined thinking about the notion 'frontier' since the late 1890s. Direct confrontation with the thesis then, is unavoidable.

The theory is also useful in the reading of the Lister diaries. Her demi-monde is the marginal world of sexual difference that resembles Mrs. Allison's geographic frontier. Lister's experiences were not described backwards through a hypothesis, rather the entries were a review of events as a

mirroring of self as she was measured against community expectations. "Mrs. Barlow tells me I am certainly not plain. They all think me a fine woman & I am very sensible and agreeable."¹

Despite the fact that the house full of boarders was aware of Anne's preference, her life at the edges of acceptable norms was accommodated by her attendance to elements of Englishness such as 'sensible' and 'agreeable'. Her willingness to acknowledge the historical and rhetorical constructions of identity helped blur some of the essential lines of difference between community and 'other', which were created by her proximity to a frontier.

In both the Lister and Allison cases Englishness was informed by their class. Both were upper-middle-class women who experienced class as a set of gender instructions.² Likewise, because of their class, both were shaped by various Victorian fascinations. One such example was the obsessive observation of the natural world and its parallels in English society. Oddity in nature became a route to account for differences between individuals. Lister explains, "as it was, nature was the guide and I had nothing to say."³

Nature notwithstanding, the grounding of identity in cultural

¹Anne Lister, No Priest But Love, Saturday 11 September, 1824, 16.

²Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution, Toronto, New York, London: Bantam Books, 1971, 4.

³Anne Lister, I Know..., Tuesday 5 August, 1823, 273.

experience was occasionally problematic. Personal experience of an event did not always correspond with the rhetoric designed to express the sensations. The resulting conflicts and adaptations have been central to this thesis in locating the challenges to Englishness and what those challenges meant for individual identity construction.

Circumstances on the British Columbian frontier were often difficult enough to test the most stable person. But the response to the series of disasters that overtook the Allison was consistently one of English detachment: 'One copes'. There was an intentional resolve to encounter adventure rather than disaster.

The fire that destroyed the Allison house and threatened the lives of eight of Susan Allison's children was clearly a catastrophic event. However, there appears to have been a 'disaster response' within the repertoire of English frontier behaviour that Mrs. Allison's nonchalant recounting complies with. Janet MacArthur claims that this conforms to the style of "the male heroic romance" which guaranteed Mrs. Allison an audience.⁴

Yet there is something peculiarly gendered and English about the listing of disasters as if they were discomforts 'one merely put up with'. Jacqueline Gresko says of a similar gentlewoman's

⁴Janet MacArthur, " 'The Wild, Free Life': Contact Perspective in Susan Allison's Pioneer Recollections", Paper presented at B.C. Studies Conference University College, Kelowna, B.C. October 7-10th, 1994.

diary that the "optimistic, capable, coping Mary Moody... looked back on the pioneering experience happily...Newspapers, memoirs and oral traditions abound with references to coping pioneers, wives and mothers."⁵

Behaviourial codes require vehicles to transport them over the territory between the individual and community. Much of the grounding of identities settled in, and depended on, such rituals as drinking tea, reading in particular areas of interest, and attention to the style of clothing. Mrs. Allison seemed acutely sensitive to the potential of clothing in the shaping and preserving of identity. It was not romanticism that impelled her to say,

The women of the tribe wore a garment something like the ladies wear today, cut like a Victoria chemise, and the foot of the garment which reached below the knee, cut in tags and fringes. This dress gave them a certain dignity and grace that was absent when they tried to dress like white women.⁶

She connected the rhetoric of clothing with the congruency of identity. This was a connection that Mrs. Allison continued to make fifty years later when writing an account of her pioneer experiences.

Like Anne Lister, Mrs. Allison clearly chose to record those

⁵Jacqueline Gresko, "'Roughing It In The Bush' in British Columbia: Mary Moody's Pioneer Life in New Westminster, 1857-1860[check]", in British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women, Gillian Crease and Veronica Strong-Boag (eds.), Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992, 46.

⁶Susan Allison, A Pioneer Gentlewoman..., 27.

events that were perceived to hold a later significance.⁷ Mrs. Allison though, wrote with an immediate audience in mind and also chose to omit some events. The crisis of Glennie abandoning his wife and her two daughters "is determinedly absent" from Mrs. Allison's recollections.⁸ Mrs. Allison detached the painful personal memories from her story because it was not pertinent to the reconstruction of the English pioneer. Helena Whitbread notes that she deliberately edited the Lister diaries to tell the love story of Anne and M-; this would probably have been Lister's choice too, however the point I make is this: neither work was intended by the authors or the editors to be a life story.⁹ They are representations of lives the authors intended to live.

But what if personal intentions contradict the dominant choices? What was it that made Lister's aberrant life-style based on non-marriage acceptable, when it was commonly held that marriage was an inevitability for women? Firstly, the rhetorical device, 'romantic love', created a pretext for an avoidance of marriage, although even Lister's community realized that her intentions moved her beyond the romantic. Secondly, Lister possessed a well-developed sense of rhetorical manipulation, or as Whitbread describes it, "Anne was a very able student of society."¹⁰ She rarely admitted anything that could be legally

⁷Anne Lister, No Priest But Love, xvi.

⁸Janet MacArthur, "The Wild Free Life", 2.

⁹Ibid, xvi.

¹⁰Anne Lister, No Priest But Love, 5.

damaging and always left herself an out. And thirdly, her class protected her somewhat. Eccentricity was expected and she took refuge behind this, however there were rhetorical positions she could not safely take without forcing exclusion from Halifax society. She could not afford to forfeit her hard won social position, and England's adapted acceptance of Locke's notions of 'social contract' made it clear that inattention to the codes of the larger community could cause one to be rejected as a leader (social or otherwise).¹¹ It was the notion of social leadership, so ambitiously cultivated by Lister that was her protection. As long as she was seen to conform to rhetorical norms, Halifax would tolerate oddities in performance.

Susan Allison's rhetorical testing came in the form of attempts to include the Similkimeen in her community, or to build community with them. Her memoirs, for example, include nothing of the reports on pot-latches that she included in the journal article she wrote for the Anthropological Institute. The most significant omission is the Similkimeen treatment of dogs, which would have strained English belief in Mrs. Allison's assertions that native populations had a capability (and therefore the right) to govern their own lands. She was well aware of the

¹¹John Locke, On Civil Government, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955, viii. Locke states, "society is the product of a voluntary contract among men who were equal in the state of nature, but who have established community, held together by political government, in order to secure their natural rights." As Willmore Kendal notes, the notion of natural rights very quickly became entangled with capitalism. John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965, 17.

irresponsibility invoked in the cliché, "wouldn't even treat a dog like that".

The inclusion of the treatment of dogs in her article also suited the intention of the author, which was to transmit to an English audience the essential humanity (civilizing potential) of Indians. She notes that "at some potlatches a live dog was torn to pieces and devoured. This practice is now quite given up".¹² An upper-class English audience expected a particular treatment of dogs. Indian willingness to modify their behaviours, that is, to give up practises that offended the English, could not fail to convince the English of native humanity.

Generally, however, Mrs. Allison's defence of native rights flew in the face of English rhetorical correctness, given that she was asked to write a story of pioneer contributions to the building of a colony. In some ways her work was given attention because she spoke from the edge; she had lived there and her audiences were the newly emigrated, or children of women like her. But there were also indications of a negative rhetorical reciprocity. The contributions of women to the colony building project was summed up thusly, "We can only say that deeds speak louder than words."¹³ Poststructuralists have built careers on such blatant writing out of the authority of the voice of women.

¹²S.S. Allison, "Account of the Similkimeen Indians", in The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London, vol.XXI, 1892.

¹³B.C. Historical Association, "Second Annual Report and Proceedings", 1924, 15.

However, reciprocity is necessary within a rhetorical community. Participants in an exchange, both informer and the informed, conform to and permit a certain amount of room for maneuvering. It is, nevertheless, incumbent upon the participants not to push the rhetorical boundaries too far. There are always consequences for the pushing and if one goes over the edge it is impossible to backtrack. The reversal of such a course was not akin to apologizing for bad behaviour. The community cannot accommodate a position outside the bounds because it represents a fundamental personal difference, and says of a person "This is who I am", and that is irrevocable.

Neither Anne Lister nor Susan Allison stepped outside the rhetorical bounds but their lives reveal the flexibility of identity structures in Englishness. These women wrote not only to relate what they had seen, and what they knew of what they had seen, but also to confirm their identities.

Being on a frontier constantly reminded Allison and Lister of the chaos facing them. At any time they could be without community. The Lister diary and the Allison reminiscences provide a coherence. It is not that their writings reveal any kind of congruency other than a continuous dignified resistance, but that their revelations correspond with their stated sense of identity. Occasionally, as in the larger picture, lived experience and the relating of it through particular filters shows, by way of contrast, how the construction operates. In other words, incongruencies between the event and the relating of

it can give clues to identity constructs. In the case of both Lister and Allison the determining factor for their decision making was the rhetoric of Englishness.

While a rhetorical structure may appear confining, for by its nature it is community-building and defining, it is also flexible and has within it bridge-building potentialities. To make use of such a tool we need to know the rhetorical foundations of our identity myths, and we need to be able to identify the elements within a particular story to make use of its persuasive strategies.

The recent broadening of historical methodology has been exciting. In applying theories such as poststructuralism historians have begun to address the problem of the interpretation of "event" at its epistemological roots. The problem of defining how we know what we know is intensified with the passing of time and the loss of particular meanings. Fortunately we have been left an historical artifact in the 'language' in which the document was written. Changes in linguistic structure can be traced and predicated over time to give some indications of how an individual or a people perceived the world around them. Like most artifacts, the remnants of experience in diaries reveals a fragmentary picture, despite the author's attempts to construct a unified self. This, however, is of little consequence in a rhetorical analysis, as the fragments have a greater interpretive value than the presentation of a whole system, because of the availability of the elements.

Diaries offer a unique opportunity for the interpretation and understanding of the nineteenth century, but they do not 'speak' for themselves. As Lister created a cypher for her diaries so diarists generally insert a cultural code in their entries. It is the cultural codes, interpreted as filters of experience, that have been central to this thesis. In cobbling together nineteenth-century ideas and interests I have constructed a methodology that reproduces the associative rhetoric of the era to examine and discuss the diarists' motives.¹⁴ The collection of information that the authors linked shows how Anne Lister and Susan Allison shaped their lives on the 'frontiered' fault-lines of cultural identity.

¹⁴Sharon Crowley, "Invention in Nineteenth Century Rhetoric", College Composition and Communication, Vol.36, No.1, February 1985, 56.

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