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## Editor's Introduction

Philippa Spoel  
Laurentian University

In this, the second volume of *Rhetor: Journal of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric*, we see once again the richly vibrant results of inviting submissions that address rhetorical studies from diverse perspectives on diverse subjects. Rather than attempting to predetermine precisely what counts as scholarly work in rhetoric, *Rhetor's* approach is to provide a forum for the voices of scholars with a range of research interests and from a variety of disciplines, yet who share a passion for “rhetoric”—in whatever terms that be defined. In these pages, then, you can expect to encounter multiple possibilities for what it means to engage in rhetorical studies. Such an approach suits the tradition of Canadian studies in the field, which has emerged largely despite the lack of explicit disciplinary frameworks in most universities to support rhetorical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Necessarily, in the Canadian context, the conversation about rhetoric has been broad-ranging and interdisciplinary, with no clearly dominant approach established. This is a context that we hope to continue, through the contributions of both Canadian and international authors and readers.

The nine articles in this volume signal the range of possibilities that the journal welcomes: they include historical studies of rhetors and rhetoricians whose accomplishments deserve more recognition, analysis of the rhetorical-political functions of characters in a literary corpus, rhetorical criticism of contemporary political and cultural issues in three different

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<sup>1</sup> This situation is, however, changing: in addition to the University of Waterloo and the University of British Columbia, which have had programs in rhetoric for many years, an increasing number of other universities also now possess undergraduate and graduate programming in rhetoric, usually under the auspices of English and French departments. One notable exception is the University of Winnipeg's recently established Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications (formerly the Centre for Academic Writing).

nations, and a study of women's health-care rhetoric. Together, these articles also generate, explicitly and implicitly, critical insights for the development of rhetorical theory.

Both Elisabeth Zawisza's "Apprentissage de la rhétorique et de la citoyenneté: Les écrits de Marie-Madeleine Jodin" and Tania Smith's "Learning Conversational Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Hester Thrale Piozzi and Her Mentors Collier and Johnson" participate in the groundbreaking work of recuperating the rhetorical contributions of historical women: Zawisza brings to light the rhetorical significance of the writings of Marie-Madeleine Jodin, the eighteenth-century French author, actor, and student of Diderot, who strategically appropriated dominant modes of masculine argumentative discourse to make a passionately incisive case for the equality of *citoyennes* in the new French Republic; Smith likewise illuminates the rhetorical accomplishments of an eighteenth-century female writer, intellectual, and conversationalist: though excluded from formal education in the arts of rhetoric and from practicing in the traditional masculine domains of oratory, Hester Thrale Piozzi's informal mentoring by Arthur Collier and Samuel Johnson helped her to become a deeply admired practitioner and theorist of the socially valued art of conversation. Not only do Zawisza's and Smith's studies provide us with new understandings of these women's rhetorical lives; they also suggest the relevance of Jodin's early feminist and Piozzi's conversational rhetorics to the ongoing project of rethinking traditional rhetorical theories and practices.

Mirela Saim's article "A New Rhetoric for Modern Jewish Studies: Moses Gaster's Redefinition of Jewish Homiletic Concepts" also offers significant new research for an area of rhetorical history and theory little known within the mainstream discipline. Working from her expertise in Jewish studies, Saim focuses on the rhetorical theory of storytelling developed by the nineteenth-century scholar of Judaism, Moses Gaster. Gaster's work and ideas, she argues,

warrant integration into Western rhetorical traditions because they greatly enrich classical and medieval-Christian understandings of the *exemplum* as a mode of narrative persuasion.

Sylvain Rheault likewise invites us to turn our attention to the (not-so-distant) past, in his article “Les rôles des personnages féminins comme arguments contre l’usage de la force dans quelques récits de combat en France dans les années trente.” Adopting a rhetorical perspective on 1930s combat novels by the politically engaged French male authors Bernanos, Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, Giono, Giraudoux, Malraux, Romain, and Saint-Exupéry, Rheault explores the *pathos* function of the traditional “silent victim” female character within these authors’ arguments against the use of force in a context in which war appeared imminent. This study demonstrates the value of investigating literary texts as legitimate—indeed, important—voices in public debates about political issues: literature, like other rhetorical activities, both addresses and responds to the circumstances of its creation.

In “The Muslim Headscarf Controversy in French Schools: A Sign of Inclusion or of Exclusion?” Nancy Senior also investigates political debate in France, though her subject (whether or not Muslim headscarfs should be banned in French schools) is much more recent and her genre (newspaper articles) more obviously central to public discourse. Examining a wide selection of newspaper coverage on this issue, Senior demonstrates how—despite their opposing views on the subject—different sides in this debate build their arguments on a similar foundation: a “universal” appeal to the French national values of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. Her critique thus reveals how similar rhetorical strategies may be used for dissimilar purposes and demonstrates the role that shared values or assumptions play in providing the grounds of possibility for a debate.

From France, we turn to political discourse in the US. Through his rhetorical analysis of Barbara Lee's September 14, 2001, speech in the US House of Representatives, Grant Cos foregrounds the significance of this speech as an eloquent and courageous—if ultimately unpersuasive—dissenting view in the decision to grant President George W. Bush open-ended authority to engage in anti-terrorist warfare. Arguing that Lee's speech constitutes a “rhetoric of reflection,” Cos uses this critique to revitalize and refine classical theories of prudential rhetoric.

Studies of rhetoric in the Canadian context are not, of course, absent from this volume of *Rhetor*. Jennifer MacLennan, in her article “Signposts of Cultural Identity: George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country*,” shows how these two texts—despite their notable dissimilarities—share rhetorical patterns of cultural resistance and ambivalence that indicate their participation in a distinctive tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric. A close analysis of Grant and Hurtig supports MacLennan's larger argument that the discourse of resistance in Canadian identity rhetoric has primarily an epideictic function. Jeanie Wills, for her part, explores the complex ideological operations of Canadian identity commonplaces in her study of political pamphlets distributed by Saskatchewan right-wing Independent MP Jim Pankiw (“‘Telling it like it is’: Jim Pankiw and Politics of Racism”). Without denying the distressingly racist nature of these pamphlets, Wills's probing critique reveals how—less evidently but therefore perhaps more persuasively—they invoke commonplace Canadian values in order, paradoxically, to undermine these values. Her study clearly signals how a reinvigorated rhetorical theory of commonplaces can help to elucidate the intricate relationships between language and ideology.

Lastly, Philippa Spoel also investigates a genre of Canadian rhetoric in her article “A Feminist Rhetorical Perspective on Informed Choice in Midwifery.” Drawing on feminist

rhetorical theory as well as feminist and cultural critiques of medico-scientific and consumerist discourses, Spoel explores the ideological and situational constraints that affect Ontario midwifery's negotiation of "informed choice" as an alternative, women-centred communication practice. This exploration contributes to research on health-care and women's rhetorics, and participates in the development of feminist rhetorical theory.

Whether you read all or a selection of the articles in this volume, we trust you will find within these (virtual) pages fresh perspectives and original research that stimulates your own thinking about rhetoric in multiple directions. We invite you to approach this collection, in true Canadian fashion, as a mosaic of views and topics on rhetoric: each article possesses its own distinctive shape and colour, but together they compose a dynamic pattern of possibilities for rhetorical studies.



## Introduction

Philippa Spoel  
Université Laurentienne

Dans cette deuxième livraison de *Rhetor : Revue de la société canadienne pour l'étude de la rhétorique*, on constate une fois de plus la richesse et la vigueur des réponses à l'appel d'articles sur les études de rhétorique à partir de différents points de vue et sur différents sujets. Au lieu d'essayer de délimiter précisément à l'avance ce qu'est la recherche en rhétorique, le rôle de *Rhetor* est de fournir une tribune aux personnes appartenant à des disciplines variées, et qui toutes sont enthousiasmées par la « rhétorique », quelle que soit sa définition. Dans les pages qui suivent, vous pouvez vous attendre à trouver de multiples possibilités d'engagement dans les études de rhétorique. Notre méthode convient à la tradition canadienne dans le domaine, tradition qui se fait jour malgré l'absence presque totale de cadre officiel universitaire consacré exclusivement aux études de rhétorique.<sup>1</sup> Bien entendu dans le contexte canadien, l'échange sur la rhétorique est large, interdisciplinaire, et exempt de la domination d'un point de vue particulier. Nous espérons poursuivre notre cheminement dans ce sens, en accueillant les contributions d'auteurs et de lecteurs du Canada et d'ailleurs.

Les neuf articles de la présente livraison montrent l'étendue de ces possibilités, depuis les études historiques sur les rhéteurs et spécialistes de rhétorique qui méritent d'être mieux connus, l'analyse des fonctions à la fois rhétoriques et politiques des

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<sup>1</sup> La situation est en train de changer. L'Université de Waterloo et l'Université de Colombie britannique ont des programmes de rhétorique depuis des années. De plus, un nombre croissant d'autres universités a des programmes de baccalauréat et d'études supérieures en rhétorique., généralement dans le département d'anglais ou de français. Une exception notoire est celle de l'Université de Winnipeg, qui a créé récemment

personnages dans un corpus littéraire, la critique rhétorique de questions politiques et culturelles contemporaines au sein de trois différentes nations, jusqu'à l'étude de la rhétorique employée dans les soins de santé destinés aux femmes. Dans leur ensemble, ces articles élaborent, tant de façon explicite qu'implicite, des positions critiques ouvrant la voie à une théorie de la rhétorique.

Elisabeth Zawisza dans « Apprentissage de la rhétorique et de la citoyenneté : les écrits de Marie-Madeleine Jodin » et Tania Smith dans « Learning Conversational Rhetoric in Eighteenth Century Britain : Hester Thrale Piozzi and her Mentors, Collier et Johnson » prennent part aux travaux d'avant-garde permettant de recouvrer la contribution à la rhétorique de quelques héroïnes de l'histoire. Zawisza met en lumière les écrits de Marie-Madeleine Jodin, auteure, actrice, et disciple de Diderot, qui a adopté les modes dominants du discours masculin d'argumentation pour défendre passionnément et catégoriquement la cause de l'égalité des *citoyennes* dans la toute nouvelle république française. Smith éclaire de façon semblable le succès rhétorique d'une femme écrivain du dix-huitième siècle, intellectuelle et virtuose de la conversation. Exclue de l'enseignement classique de la rhétorique ainsi que de la pratique des domaines traditionnellement masculins de l'art oratoire, Hester Thrale Piozzi est néanmoins devenue, grâce à l'instruction privée que lui prodiguaient Arthur Collier et Samuel Johnson, une praticienne et théoricienne très admirée de l'art de la conversation, si prisé à l'époque. Les deux études de Zawisza et de Smith nous présentent un nouvel aspect de l'activité rhétorique de ces deux femmes, et nous montrent aussi l'à-propos de la rhétorique déjà féministe de M-M. Jodin, et de la rhétorique de la conversation, compte

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un département de rhétorique, rédaction et communications (anciennement nommé Centre de rédaction universitaire).

tenu de l'effort constant de repenser les théories et pratiques traditionnelles de la rhétorique.

L'article de Mirela Saim, « A New Rhetoric for Modern Jewish Studies : Moses Gaster's Redefinition of Jewish Homiletic Concepts », nous offre aussi de la nouvelle recherche significative dans un domaine de l'histoire et de la théorie de la rhétorique fort peu connu dans la discipline conventionnelle. Ayant pour point de départ son expertise dans les études judaïques, M. Saim se concentre sur la théorie de la rhétorique dans les contes populaires, professée par Moses Gaster, érudit judaïque du dix-neuvième siècle. Selon elle, l'œuvre et les idées de Gaster justifient leur intégration dans la tradition occidentale, car elles enrichissent énormément l'interprétation classique et chrétienne-médiévale de l'*exemplum* en tant que mode de narration persuasive.

De même, Sylvain Rheault nous invite à concentrer notre attention sur le passé récent dans son article intitulé « Les rôles des personnages féminins comme arguments contre l'usage de la force dans quelques récits de combat en France dans les années trente ». Il adopte une perspective rhétorique dans l'examen de romans de guerre publiés dans les années 1930 par des auteurs français politiquement engagés, tels que Bernanos, Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, Giono, Giraudoux, Malraux, Romain et Saint-Exupéry. Rheault explore la fonction *pathétique* du personnage féminin traditionnel de « victime silencieuse » dans les plaidoiries de ces écrivains contre la force, dans un contexte où la guerre semble imminente. Cette étude prouve la valeur de l'investigation de textes littéraires considérés comme faisant partie légitime, voire significative, du débat public sur les questions politiques : comme toute autre activité rhétorique, la littérature s'adresse et réagit aux circonstances au sein desquelles elle a été créée.

Dans « The Muslim Headscarf Controversy in French Schools : A Sign of Inclusion or Exclusion? », Nancy Senior fait elle aussi de la recherche sur le débat politique en France, bien que son centre d'intérêt (le foulard musulman doit-il être interdit ou non dans les écoles en France?) soit beaucoup plus récent, et son genre, (articles de la presse écrite) se centre davantage sur le discours public. Elle examine une grande sélection d'articles de journaux sur la question et elle montre comment, malgré leurs points de vue opposés, les différents participants au débat construisent leur argumentation en adoptant une base « universelle », autrement dit en faisant appel aux valeurs nationales françaises de *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. Sa critique révèle la façon dont des stratégies rhétoriques semblables peuvent s'utiliser dans des buts différents, et démontre le rôle joué par des valeurs et postulats communs permettant de fournir les bases d'un débat.

Après la France, nous passons au discours politique aux États-Unis. Grant Cos, dans son analyse rhétorique du discours de Barbara Lee (14 septembre 2001) à la Chambre des représentants des États-Unis, met en lumière la signification de ce discours éloquent et courageux, bien que peu persuasif en définitive, en tant qu'opposition à la décision d'accorder au Président George W. Bush une autorité sans limite lui permettant de s'engager dans la guerre contre le terrorisme. Selon Cos, le discours de Lee constitue une « rhétorique de la réflexion » et l'auteur se sert de cette critique pour renouveler et raffiner les théories classiques de rhétorique de la prudence.

Les études de rhétorique en contexte canadien ne sont pas absentes de ce numéro de *Rhetor*. Jennifer MacLennan, dans son article « Signposts of Cultural Identity: George

Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country* », montre la façon dont ces deux textes, malgré leur dissemblance remarquable, ont des thèmes rhétoriques analogues de résistance et d'ambivalence culturelle indiquant leur appartenance commune à une tradition distincte de rhétorique en matière d'identité canadienne. L'analyse serrée des textes de Grant et Hurtig fournit le fondement de l'argumentation plus vaste de J. MacLennan, montrant que le discours de résistance exprimé par la rhétorique de l'identité canadienne a en premier lieu une fonction épidéictique.

Jeanie Wills, pour sa part, explore le fonctionnement complexe des lieux communs sur l'identité canadienne dans son étude des pamphlets distribués par Jim Pankiw, MP indépendant d'extrême-droite représentant la Saskatchewan (« Telling it like it is: Jim Pankiw and Politics of Racism »). Sans nier aucunement la nature fâcheusement raciste de ces pamphlets, la critique minutieuse de Wills révèle comment, de façon moins évidente et par conséquent plus persuasive, ces pamphlets citent des valeurs canadiennes usuelles en vue de les démolir. Son étude montre clairement qu'une théorie revigorée de la rhétorique des lieux communs peut permettre d'éclaircir les relations complexes entre la langue et l'idéologie.

Enfin Philippa Spoel, dans son article « A Feminist Rhetorical Perspective on Informed Choice in Midwifery », explore elle aussi un genre de rhétorique canadienne. Se basant sur la théorie rhétorique féministe, ainsi que sur la critique féministe et la critique culturelle du discours médico-scientifique et du discours incitant à la consommation, elle explore les contraintes idéologiques et les situations qui affectent en Ontario la négociation du « choix éclairé » en matière de soins de sages-femmes, en tant que pratique et style de communication autres et ayant pour centre la femme. Cette

investigation fait partie de la recherche sur les soins de santé et la rhétorique féminine, et contribue au développement d'une théorie rhétorique féministe.

Que vous lisiez la totalité des articles de ce numéro, ou seulement une sélection, nous sommes sûrs que vous trouverez dans ces pages (virtuelles) de nouvelles perspectives et de la recherche originale qui orienteront dans de multiples directions votre pensée personnelle sur la rhétorique. Nous vous invitons à considérer cette collection à la canadienne, c'est à dire comme une mosaïque d'opinions et de sujets de discussion sur la rhétorique. Les articles ont chacun leur propre forme et leur propre couleur, mais constituent un ensemble dynamique de possibilités pour les études de rhétorique.

## **Apprentissage de la rhétorique et de la citoyenneté: Les écrits de Marie-Madeleine Jodin**

Elisabeth Zawisza  
Queen's University

Le parcours d'action et d'écriture de Mlle Jodin (1741-1790) mérite d'être mieux connu<sup>1</sup> puisqu'il est hautement révélateur du rôle de ces femmes qui ont contribué au passage important pour notre modernité du sujet de la monarchie au citoyen de la république,<sup>2</sup> des aspirations de celles qui, nées sous l'Ancien Régime et la « loi du père », tenaient déjà à se définir et à redéfinir leur place dans la sphère privée et publique (la famille, la République des lettres, la cité). Suivre ainsi son cheminement est d'autant plus instructif qu'il y a peu de témoignages de première main portant sur les activités des femmes d'origine modeste, mais qui ont fait tout un travail de mûrissement pour rejoindre et même influencer la vie intellectuelle et politique de leur période. Qui plus est, les déboires de l'aventureuse Jodin, autant de défis posés à la passivité et l'exclusion du « sexe », révèlent au lecteur moderne les différentes facettes de la condition féminine en quête d'outils d'expression et de reconnaissance sociale. Son parcours pour le moins mouvementé exemplifie ainsi admirablement les concepts de « devenir-sujet » (de l'énonciation) et de « devenir-féministe » étudiés aujourd'hui par l'histoire et les théories du féminin (Havercroft 106). Il annonce cette préoccupation dont témoignent toujours les textes de nombreuses femmes venant de divers pays et traditions, soit leur besoin de mettre en relief « le long chemin ardu vers la subjectivité de la protagoniste, une quête qui se caractérise par son passage d'un rejet initial de

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<sup>1</sup> La seule étude fouillée sur la vie et la carrière de Jodin n'a paru qu'en 2001, fruit des recherches d'archives et de bibliothèques de F. Gordon et de P. N. Furbank; voir *Marie Madeleine Jodin 1741-1790*. Longtemps, Mlle Jodin a intéressé surtout comme correspondante de Diderot (voir Diderot).

<sup>2</sup> L'*Encyclopédie* de Diderot pointe en ce même moment l'importance de cette transition, en précisant: « [Q]uelques-uns ne font aucune distinction entre ces deux termes, mais il est mieux de les distinguer. Celui de citoyen doit s'entendre de tous ceux qui ont part à tous les avantages, à tous les privilèges de l'association, & qui sont proprement membres de l'état, ou par leur naissance, ou d'une autre manière; tous les autres sont plutôt de simples habitants [...] » (15 : 643). Pour la réflexion moderne sur ce phénomène, voir Genty et Hufton.

contraintes familiales, religieuses et sociales à une révolte contre les normes patriarcales incarnées par ces trois dernières instances, et enfin, à la libération de l'héroïne » (93).

Enfant rebelle d'un horloger parisien natif de Genève,<sup>3</sup> fille libertine détenue à la Salpêtrière à la demande de sa famille « déshonorée » (« rejet »), comédienne ambulante (Varsovie, Dresde, Bordeaux) qui défend sans cesse ses droits de femme et d'actrice, pupille et correspondante de Diderot<sup>4</sup> (« révolte »), Mlle Jodin publie l'année de sa mort une brochure révolutionnaire : *Vues législatives pour les femmes*. L'auteure signe le tract « Fille d'un citoyen de Genève », le dédie « À mon sexe » et le place à l'enseigne de l'épigraphe: « Et nous aussi sommes citoyennes » (« libération »). La boucle est bouclée. Dès la page titre de son dernier écrit, la femme se rapporte symboliquement à la double paternité, celle qui opprime (Jean Jodin, père réel) et celle qui ouvre une certaine perspective d'égalité (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, un des pères spirituels de la Révolution). Choix de stratégie de persuasion fort opératoire, ce philosophe adulé de ses contemporains est posé par elle en modèle de pensée sociale et politique égalitaire, en dépit de ses positions explicites peu favorables à l'égard des femmes qui agissent et argumentent en public. Car les théories féministes le montrent bien : pour les femmes, s'approprier le discours masculin pour le réutiliser de manière différente, peut être un procédé langagier particulièrement efficace qui contribue « à dénouer ce nœud patriarcal et à défaire son emprise tyrannique sur le sujet » (104).

Mlle Jodin a laissé des textes manuscrits et imprimés, privés et publics : des lettres

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<sup>3</sup> Le père horloger, dont Jodin conteste par ailleurs la loi, fut sans doute le premier à révéler à sa fille la fierté d'être ressortissant de la République modèle, qui faisait ainsi l'éloge de ses confrères écartés par la corporation parisienne jalouse de ses prérogatives: « Me sera-t-il permis de dire quelque chose en faveur des sujets industriels de ma République et de celle de Suisses, dont la circulation dans ce pays [...] n'a pas peu contribué à la perfection de notre art? Ils ont été continuellement employés par les premiers maîtres de Paris à l'exécution de leurs plus beaux ouvrages » (J. Jodin 180).

<sup>4</sup> Sur la portée esthétique et la démarche argumentative de cette correspondance, dans laquelle la pupille



personnelles, mais qui sont des lettres « d'affaires », <sup>5</sup> un mémoire judiciaire et une brochure politique déjà mentionnée. Il s'agit de genres qui illustrent et soutiennent bien le cheminement conséquent vers le social que fait l'auteure. Vu le caractère argumentatif de ces écrits, c'est dans la rhétorique, à l'époque la pierre de touche de la République des Lettres masculines, que cette femme se devra de chercher ses outils d'expression. Mais ses décisions scripturales sont à la mesure non seulement des thèmes qu'elle aborde, mais aussi de sa personnalité. Famille, Diderot, collègues acteurs brossent tous un « éthos » de la femme insoumise, partant blâmable aux yeux de la doxa morale et politique de l'époque. Le philosophe ne cesse de sermonner sa pupille: « Vous êtes violente, [...] c'est le défaut le plus contraire à votre sexe, qui est complaisant, tendre et doux » (Diderot 51). Pourtant, dès son premier écrit, qui est sa lettre à l'amant, jointe à titre de preuve à son dossier de la Salpêtrière, Jodin a tenu à dissiper tout doute sur son caractère et sa démarche: « Vous croyez que semblable à vous je me conduits par les autres [...] je n'ay jamais pris conseil que de ma tête » (« Jodin mère » 167). Ce type de commentaire auto-réflexif montre la femme, c'est encore une autre stratégie et un autre geste langagier important, jouant un rôle interdit par la société bien pensante, celui d'agent et d'auteure. Muée en sujet de l'énonciation, Jodin est à même d'articuler clairement « ce qu'elle est en train de faire, ce qui souligne en même temps le rôle décisif de l'écriture dans son parcours » (Havercroft 106).

On le sait, chaque prise de parole exploite autrement divers outils de persuasion dont

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résiste bien aux leçons du philosophe moraliste, voir Zawisza.

<sup>5</sup> Deux de ces lettres, adressées à son amant, se trouvent dans le dossier policier de Jodin portant l'inscription « Jodin mère et fille 26 Octobre 1761 » conservé à la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (Archives de la Bastille, Ms 12124) (signalées désormais comme « Jodin mère », suivi du numéro du folio). D'autres, relatives à son séjour à la cour du roi de Pologne Stanislas Auguste (1765-1766), font partie du volume *Théâtre* conservé aux Archives Nationales à Varsovie (Archives du comte J. Poniatowski, vol. I, Ms 444) (signalées désormais comme *Théâtre*, suivi du numéro du folio). Tenant compte de la pratique de plus en plus répandue et utile pour divers spécialistes, nous conservons l'orthographe originale des manuscrits cités. Sur la place de ce roi dans les Lumières européennes et sur son intérêt pour la culture, dont le théâtre, comme outil de réforme politique, voir Fumaroli.

l'analyse rhétorique moderne<sup>6</sup> permet d'examiner à fond le mouvement et les enjeux. Jodin opte sciemment, il ne faut pas s'en étonner, pour une « rhétorique des conflits » qui anime les passions, mais exploitant les tendances de son siècle, elle puise aussi dans les tournures récurrentes trouvées dans les genres littéraires en vogue.<sup>7</sup> Chacun des textes d'argumentation de Jodin mérite un examen formel et thématique à part. Diverses situations dans lesquelles elle se trouve lui font choisir des stratégies différentes, selon les préoccupations personnelles et publiques qu'elles suscitent chez elle. Dans ces pages, il sera notamment question de sa production manuscrite, jamais publiée dans son intégralité et dans la langue de l'original, car elle relate bien étape par étape une période importante d'apprentissage tant de la citoyenneté (le « devenir-féministe ») que des stratégies langagières utilisées par la femme pour réclamer ses droits (le « devenir-sujet »). Cette production moins connue de Jodin jette ainsi une lumière intéressante sur ses *Vues législatives* qui font partie d'une longue série d'écrits féminins encore plus radicaux, lesquels émergeront avec le fait révolutionnaire: cahiers de doléances, pétitions, motions, griefs; plusieurs signés par « une bonne citoyenne », « une Femme Citoyenne », « Citoyennes françaises », « citoyennes de la Capitale »,<sup>8</sup> etc. Les *Vues législatives* de Jodin, avec ses autres textes qui mettent en évidence un travail difficile de mûrissement, offrent un excellent exemple de l'accès difficile des Françaises à l'écriture publique par excellence, l'écrit politique, qui leur a permis de considérer les enjeux féminins de l'acquisition de la liberté tant désirée.

Les gestes et les écrits de Mlle Jodin—son « agentivité » linguistique et non linguistique,

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<sup>6</sup> Cette analyse, qui fonde et structure notre examen des agissements de Jodin, exploite la fonction herméneutique de la rhétorique, l'herméneutique « voulant dire l'art d'interpréter les textes. [...] On n'enseigne plus la rhétorique comme art de produire des discours, mais comme art de les interpréter » (Reboul 9).

<sup>7</sup> Michel Meyer précise que la rhétorique des conflits, à visée argumentative, est « la négociation de la distance entre les sujets, en ce sens qu'elle modalise la mise en question de l'autre, mise en question qui révèle l'une ou l'autre passion » (52). La rhétorique littéraire, à visée esthétique, « si elle n'est pas fondamentalement différente de la rhétorique des conflits, commence peut-être là où celle-ci s'arrête » (69-70).

<sup>8</sup> Ces écrits ont été réunis aujourd'hui dans plusieurs éditions. Voir, par exemple, Duhet.

pour utiliser les termes précis de certaines études féministes<sup>9</sup>—situent ainsi son cheminement au cœur même de la bataille pour le concept moderne de citoyenneté: la citoyenneté fondée sur le contrat social et l'égalité de droits (théorisée par Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke et Rousseau jugé pourtant misogyne), et la citoyenneté érigée en loi et en pratique seulement à partir de la « Déclaration des Droits de l'homme et du citoyen » (août 1789). Dans ce manifeste qui se voulait alors universel, plusieurs femmes, dont Jodin, ont rapidement repéré et contesté le sens exclusif, non inclusif, des termes « homme » et « citoyen ». Bientôt la distinction introduite par la Constitution de 1791 entre citoyen actif (qui jouit des droits politiques, privilège réservé aux hommes) et citoyen passif (qui jouit des droits civils, possibilité accordée aussi au « sexe ») allait confirmer leurs inquiétudes. En 1789, cependant, quand Jodin commence à rédiger ses *Vues législatives*, elle fait partie de ce groupe très restreint de femmes qui, au moyen de l'action directe et de la persuasion, réclament leurs droits civiques pour devenir « agents » par excellence, c'est-à-dire des personnes qui peuvent décider des lois et même exercer les fonctions publiques. Dans le cas de Jodin, c'est ce qui décide de son intérêt; il est possible de retracer en grand nombre de détails la généalogie de cette attitude où la rhétorique est érigée en technique d'expression fondamentale. S'agit-il pour elle d'emprunter les armes réservées traditionnellement aux hommes qui jouissent du privilège de raisonner et de persuader dans les affaires de la société et de l'état?

Pour ce qui est de son « agentivité » directe, « non linguistique », laquelle appuie et sous-tend la démarche discursive de persuasion, disons rapidement qu'aucun document historique

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<sup>9</sup> Élaboré par les féministes américaines, le concept d'*agency* (traduit par Havercroft comme « agentivité ») signifie la capacité de l'individu de se déterminer et d'agir (Messer-Davidow 25). En voici une définition plus développée: « Ainsi conçue, l'agentivité implique une interaction complexe entre le sujet féminin et sa société, dans la mesure où ses actions sont susceptibles d'apporter des transformations sociales sur le plan des normes, des limites, des possibilités et/ou des contraintes » (Havercroft 94). Le concept permet donc d'aborder les activités et l'écriture de la femme comme des démarches qui modifient sa conscience de soi, sa vie personnelle et la réalité sociale. Lors de ce processus, remarquent certaines féministes, la femme « sujet », individu souvent encore passif, se mue en « agent », individu actif. Voir à ce sujet Gardiner.

ne montre Jodin sur les barricades à côté des Théroigne de Méricourt, ni sur les bancs de l'Assemblée Nationale parmi les « tricoteuses ».<sup>10</sup> Et pourtant, les théories culturelles et féministes modernes insistent sur la portée éminemment argumentative, sociale et politique, de plusieurs gestes plus ordinaires que les femmes peuvent poser le long de leur vie, et qui ont longtemps été perçus comme preuve ultime de leur domesticité, de leur exclusion des préoccupations de la cité.<sup>11</sup> D'abord, par son comportement peu orthodoxe, Jodin, fille libertine, conteste déjà les règles de la famille patriarcale régie par la triade Père-Roi-Dieu; puis, muée en comédienne rebelle, elle exige avec obstination qu'on respecte le travail des acteurs et les termes de son contrat privé (ce qui est le premier pas vers la reconnaissance du contrat social); finalement, en tant qu'auteure de brochure révolutionnaire, elle pose un véritable geste de législateur, membre à part entière de l'état, pour statuer sur les questions qui l'ont marquée lors de son parcours mouvementé (prostitution, conflits de famille, divorce). Et ce cheminement fait d'actions s'appuie constamment sur les outils de l'éloquence qui, comme le met au jour l'analyse rhétorique moderne, comportent des éléments « non verbaux » (ton, gestes, vêtements, accessoires) et « verbaux ».<sup>12</sup> On trouve plusieurs traces des aspects non verbaux de la persuasion<sup>13</sup> de Jodin dans les déclarations déposées lors de son procès pour libertinage (les témoins rapportent un ton menaçant

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<sup>10</sup> Nombreuses sont les études qui examinent l'implication directe des femmes dans la Révolution; voir, par exemple, Rosa et Godineau.

<sup>11</sup> Aux travaux sur l'« agentivité » s'ajoutent donc ceux consacrés à l'« espace public » et au rôle des femmes dans l'émergence de cette sphère moderne d'action et d'écriture. Voir l'étude fondatrice de Habermas et la lecture féministe de sa théorie faite, entre autres, par Landes et dans Meehan.

<sup>12</sup> Ce double aspect des interactions est étudié aussi dans le cadre de la « nouvelle communication » qui se penche sur les unités verbales, ainsi que sur les signes para-verbaux et non verbaux des échanges. Voir une étude intéressante de Moser-Verrey sur la manière dont ce phénomène est exploité par Mme de Charrière dans sa correspondance.

<sup>13</sup> Quintilien l'a déjà vu: « Si les mots font certes grande impression par eux-mêmes et si la voix ajoute aux idées une valeur propre, si les gestes et les mouvements ont une certaine signification, à coup sûr le concours de tous ces éléments doit donner nécessairement quelque chose de parfait » (cité dans Remigy 50). C'est ainsi que les manifestations de l'agentivité « non linguistique » de Mlle Jodin, au même titre que son éloquence « non verbale », ne sauraient être séparées de son argumentation au sens strict du terme.

et des gestes violents qui marquent les échanges avec sa mère<sup>14</sup>), dans un pamphlet virulent dirigé contre Jodin actrice débutante, lequel circulait à Varsovie en août 1766,<sup>15</sup> ou encore dans une lettre du roi Stanislas Auguste adressée à son ministre des spectacles, où le monarque relate ainsi sa rencontre avec l'actrice: « La Jodin sort de chez moi, il y a eu des pleurs et de l'Éloquence » (*Théâtre* 115). Sensibleries, élans de comportement non rationnels; ces caractéristiques attribuées traditionnellement au « sexe » se laissent donc examiner comme des moyens mis à profit par les femmes pour appuyer leurs « causes ». Ce que Rousseau dénonce dans *Émile* comme un véritable empire, pernicieux pour la famille et l'état, que le « sexe faible » exerce en fait sur les hommes, les théories féministes nous font considérer comme des stratégies d'agentivité que les femmes utilisent pour dénoncer et dépasser ces lieux communs (« clichés patriarcaux », « mythes sociaux ») de l'éternel féminin (Havercroft 99).

Avant d'entreprendre un examen des traits verbaux de la rhétorique de Jodin, la question qui se pose est celle de savoir quels sont les modèles écrits de persuasion qui s'offrent à l'époque à la femme d'origine modeste, mais autodidacte. Car c'est à partir de modèles que tout « orateur » forge sa propre démarche d'argumentation. Dans son cas précis, peut-il s'agir de recours calculé à la rhétorique « érudite » élaborée dans l'antiquité et encore transmise dans les manuels, les textes et l'enseignement? Si au XVIIIe siècle « la Rhétorique triomphe » (Le Hir 141), dans quelle mesure est-elle aussi une arme utilisée au féminin? La lectrice qu'est Jodin profite-t-elle des tournures forgées par certains genres littéraires? A cette période notamment, les femmes constituent une partie importante du public qui apprécie le roman sentimental et le drame

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<sup>14</sup> Un commissaire résume ainsi la déclaration d'un oncle, dans laquelle sont rapportés les « arguments » bien particuliers utilisés par Marie-Madeleine : « il est de la connoissance dud S.<sup>r</sup> Pierre Jodin que la veuve Jodin a sollicité les parens de sa fille d'obtenir des ordres pour la faire renfermer attendu que cette fille la menaçoit très souvent de la faire perir avec un coteau ou avec toutes autres choses qu'elle trouveroit sous sa main » (« Jodin mère » 192).

<sup>15</sup> Cet écrit anonyme, qui ridiculise entre autres les tentatives de Jodin de transmuier l'ancienne prisonnière en véritable vedette, énumère les accessoires-outils dont elle se sert pour convaincre son public de cette mutation, tels que

bourgeois. Bref, il s'agirait d'établir comment cette femme réussit à dépasser la rhétorique « naturelle », l'apanage de tous (« tout le monde, dans une certaine mesure, essaie de combattre et de soutenir une raison, de défendre, d'accuser », confirme Aristote) (75), pour s'emparer de discours plus au moins codifiés, capables d'articuler les enjeux complexes de ses gestes de rébellion.

Les détails de biographie et les écrits de Jodin mettent sur la piste de quelques sources possibles des techniques qu'elle a de toute évidence maîtrisées. Tout semble confirmer que, très tôt, elle entre en contact avec la culture de textes qui communique divers modèles d'argumentation, tant sous forme d'exemples que de règles. En effet, l'inventaire après décès de son père horloger révèle la présence de « 50 livres » dans la maison familiale, sans toutefois en préciser les titres (Inventaire);<sup>16</sup> la jeune fille passe par cinq différents couvents où l'enseignement repose sur l'éloquence religieuse;<sup>17</sup> selon un témoin à son procès, la libertine découche « en chambre garnie, où elle avoit laissé des livres » (« Jodin mère » 183); Jodin actrice interprétera les premiers rôles dans le grand répertoire classique, dont Kibédi Varga a bien exposé la nature rhétorique (Kibédi Varga 110-24); finalement, Jodin auteure révolutionnaire fait constamment référence à divers ouvrages anciens et modernes, tous nourris d'éloquence. A-t-elle jamais lu les textes usuels instruisant sur les règles de la persuasion, tels que la *Rhétorique française à l'usage des jeunes demoiselles*<sup>18</sup> ou encore *Le Secrétaire des dames*,<sup>19</sup> ouvrages qui, les Lumières obligent, s'efforcent de mettre la rhétorique et le rituel épistolaire à la portée du peuple et des femmes? Il

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« la Robe vert de pomme, le petit chien Médor, les cartes d'adresse » (« Observations » 987).

<sup>16</sup> Le sondage fait par Daniel Roche indique que, dans ce milieu d'artisans, il s'agit d'une bibliothèque plutôt bien garnie (Roche 216).

<sup>17</sup> Sur le contenu et les techniques de l'enseignement conventuel à l'époque, voir Sonnet.

<sup>18</sup> Son auteur, le rhéteur Gaillard, se propose l'objectif suivant: « Ainsi donc, sans prétendre ouvrir aux femmes la carrière du barreau ou de la chaire que nous leur avons prudemment fermée, on peut leur proposer surtout ces genres des réflexions et des exemples, soit pour former le goût naissant des jeunes personnes, soit pour flatter le goût déjà formé des autres » (Gaillard 5-6). Pour Jodin, il s'agirait moins de se former le goût esthétique que de se

serait d'ailleurs utile de comparer leur contenu avec ce que proposent ces mêmes manuels destinés à un public moins restreint. Bref, tout montre que la rhétorique « naturelle » de cette femme trouve lentement appui dans les modèles textuels et peut-être même dans les manuels de règles. Dès ses premiers écrits, la lectrice muée en auteure se forge ainsi des outils d'expression dont il convient d'examiner le mouvement d'argumentation et d'idéologie.

Le premier échantillon de son écriture (Jodin a alors 19 ans) consiste en deux lettres privées adressées à son amant, drapier de profession, feuilles interceptées par la mère de Jodin et soumises aux policiers comme preuve du libertinage de la fille. La mère de Jodin agit ici en « mère patriarcale », celle qui renforce la loi du père « afin d'inculquer le statu quo paternel aux filles, histoire de les rendre plus 'sages' » (Havercroft 95). Pour répondre à l'homme qui veut dévoiler leur relation blâmable aux yeux de la société, Marie-Madeleine « violente » fait l'économie du rituel épistolaire obligé. L'absence de formules de suscriptions et les exordes *ex abrupto* (« je ne vous sçait aucun gré de vos prétendu ménagemens »; « vous aviez tord Monsieur d'avancer que je suis femme du monde »),<sup>20</sup> les tournures d'adieu expéditives (« je vous renvoye ma lettre pour que vous en fassiez l'usage qu'il vous plaira ») (« Jodin mère » 167, 169) transforment ces lettres privées en billets-déclaration (de guerre). Bref, le non-rituel épistolaire, mais la démarche conseillée par la rhétorique pour exprimer l'urgence, sert admirablement son argumentation. Autre trait marquant, et fait récurrent dans d'autres écrits de Jodin, c'est la persuasion qui aide la femme à franchir l'espace du privé, à se transmuier du sujet qui subit la pression des lois et de la tradition en agent qui tient à modifier les rapports monarchiques de famille et de société.<sup>21</sup> La femme

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former à l'art de la persuasion.

<sup>19</sup> De J. Puget de La Serre. Sur les manuels de correspondance les plus populaires à l'époque, voir Chartier.

<sup>20</sup> « La rhétorique de l'exorde consiste parfois à le supprimer, à sauter dans le vif du sujet », rappelle Reboul. Et il donne un exemple bien connu de l'intérêt d'un tel choix, le célèbre *ex abrupto* de Cicéron : « Jusqu'à quand, Catilina, vas-tu exploiter notre patience? » (Reboul 66).

<sup>21</sup> Voir à ce sujet Messer-Davidow, chap. « Agency as social-structural change ».

menacée renverse donc les rôles. Elle récuse le mythe de la féminité passive et douce; pour elle, la meilleure défense, c'est encore l'attaque. En utilisant les armes de son adversaire (et de la société patriarcale), soit la peur du scandale, l'accusée « nie le fait »<sup>22</sup> d'être libertine (« vous aviez tord Monsieur d'avancer que je suis femme du monde »; « les fautes que j'ai pu faire se renferment toute dans votre connaissance »; 167) et menace à son tour de révéler au tribunal de l'opinion publique le rôle de séducteur de son attaquant. Au besoin, elle affichera les « preuves » écrites de sa culpabilité<sup>23</sup> (« j'ai conservé vos lettres qui démontreront lors qu'il en sera temps »; 169). Comme dans tous ses textes, Jodin érige son histoire personnelle en « cause » d'intérêt général. Or, le fait de montrer les vastes implications des expériences privées est le procédé qui fonde le genre de mémoire judiciaire pratiqué aussi par Jodin (Maza), et l'une des stratégies privilégiées par les femmes en quête d'agentivité, leur permettant de faire de leur subjectivité et de leurs préoccupations partie intégrante des enjeux publics (Habermas 59).

C'est ainsi que, dans une lettre à l'amant, le « je » de Marie-Madeleine se transforme soudainement en éthos de « nous » -femmes victimes. « [A]dieu Monsieur ne vous donnez pas la peine de mecrire [...] quand au menace que je vous ai faite elle regarde aussi la police nous avons les mêmes droits de nous plaindre », rétorque-t-elle (« Jodin mère » 167). Il s'agit là d'un « glissement pronominal », examiné par Havercroft dans les autobiographies de femmes au Québec, où les différentes oscillations entre « je », « nous », « on » reflètent les passages du particulier au général ou du général au particulier, selon la manière dont le moi féminin perçoit ses relations avec la collectivité (Havercroft 102). Sous la plume de Jodin, une aventure banale entre

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<sup>22</sup> Dans la rhétorique, le procédé s'appelle l'«état conjectural ». Il s'agit d'une des « trois formes de la question rhétorique », les manières d'argumenter dans les genres délibératif (louer/blâmer) et judiciaire (accuser/défendre) (Kibédi Varga 56).

<sup>23</sup> Ce type de « preuves », appelées extrinsèques, sont les plus valables car elles « sont données avant toute invention : les témoignages, les aveux, les lois, les contrats, etc. » (Reboul 61). Vu la réputation de Jodin (« J'ai peur que vous ne respectiez pas assez la vérité dans vos discours », réitère Diderot; 152), les preuves intrinsèques, « celles



une fille d'artisan et un garçon du voisinage<sup>24</sup> prend la dimension d'une affaire publique qui suscite déjà au nom du commun des femmes opprimées, bien avant les *Vues législatives*, des thèmes de justice, de droit, d'égalité de traitement. Et si aux accents dramatiques de dédain s'ajoutent soudain un ton mélodramatique, un cliché « littéraire » qui semble tiré tout droit des romans sentimentaux fort populaires dans la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle, cette image est là pour traduire un souci réel de dignité, une exigence sérieuse de considération à laquelle nul individu, même pas une libertine, ne veut renoncer: « je m'embarace fort peut [de ceux] qui par leur engence ne sont pas faits pour baiser le bout de mon pieds » (« Jodin mère » 167). Un énorme succès à l'époque du style du roman psychologique sentimental, dont les femmes sont à la fois auteures et lectrices privilégiées, réside précisément dans sa capacité de véhiculer les expériences d'un public bourgeois de lecteurs et de lectrices, de faire usage social du vécu de l'individu (Habermas 54). Le contraste évident ici entre le discours « élevé » de Jodin et la réalité « basse » qu'il dénote s'inscrit peut-être en faux contre ce que la rhétorique classique enseigne sur le bon usage des styles.<sup>25</sup> Ce choix d'outils doit cependant inciter le destinataire réel de la lettre à prendre la femme légère au sérieux, et il invite le lecteur virtuel à considérer son histoire triviale dans ses implications les plus graves: les déboires familiaux d'une libertine mettent au grand jour les tensions qui affectent la famille patriarcale de l'Ancien Régime, ainsi que la réaction du pouvoir absolu qui, par la procédure de la lettre de cachet, appuie la loi du père et brime la révolte des

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que crée l'orateur » (Reboul 61), n'auraient peut-être pas eu la même force de persuasion.

<sup>24</sup> L'étude de Farge et de Foucault (161-65) montre que ce type de « dérangement » fréquent à l'époque est pour les parents un des motifs les plus fréquents du déclenchement de la procédure de la lettre de cachet. Ces « sorties » scandaleuses font voir les jeunes qui, en récusant les règles patriarcales, développent leur « conscience de soi » et bouleversent les rapports familiaux et sociaux.

<sup>25</sup> Olivier Reboul résume ainsi la « règle de la convenance » élaborée par les rhéteurs: « Le meilleur style, c'est-à-dire le plus efficace, est celui qui s'adapte au sujet ». Les Latins ont donc distingué trois genres de style: noble, simple et agréable (Reboul 73).

individus qui aspirent à devenir agents.<sup>26</sup>

Les textes suivants de Jodin, qui marquent encore davantage ses progrès en rhétorique et sa rupture avec la sphère familiale, concernent déjà sa carrière d'actrice au XVIIIe siècle, femme publique dans les deux sens du terme. À l'encontre du commun des femmes jugées respectables puisque confinées à la sphère privée, l'actrice traitée longtemps en prostituée constitue « un personnage atypique du paysage social » par l'action subversive qu'elle suscite dans la société orthodoxe, par sa présence au centre de l'espace public qui remet en cause le statut de la femme, les rapports des sexes et l'organisation sociale (Evain 9-12). La *Lettre à Mr. d'Alembert sur les spectacles* de J.-J. Rousseau, qui vient de paraître (1758), montre ainsi le péché que commettent aux yeux du philosophe tant l'actrice honnie que, paradoxalement, la salonnière respectable<sup>27</sup>: « une femme hors de sa maison perd son plus grand lustre, et dépouillée de ses vrais ornements, elle se montre avec indécence. [...] Quoi qu'elle puisse faire, on sent qu'elle n'est pas à sa place en public » (Rousseau 117-18). La première de ces manifestations de Jodin est un ensemble des lettres écrites dans les années 1765-1766 et adressées au comte Moszynski, ministre responsable du théâtre à la cour de Varsovie. L'une des missives est destinée au roi Stanislas Auguste lui-même. Les lettres de l'actrice concernent trois « affaires »; le mot est de Jodin, et cette appropriation du terme confirme sa volonté d'insister sur l'intérêt général des événements relatifs à son parcours. Les incidents, bien qu'ils concernent toujours la biographie de la femme, ne se déroulent plus sur la scène domestique, mais bien sur la scène du monde qu'est l'institution royale

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<sup>26</sup> Un mot d'explication sur les motifs de cette action conjointe de la famille et de l'État contre une libertine rebelle: « Côté famille, cette dénivellation entre régime des alliances et registre sexuel menace en permanence la paix des foyers par les pratiques de séduction, de détournement qu'elles engendrent et que les traités de droit s'évertuent à codifier. Côté État, les individus qui rejettent la loi des alliances deviennent des sources de danger [...] puisqu'ils constituent des forces inemployées » (Donzelot 28).

<sup>27</sup> Plusieurs études examinent le rôle important des salonnières, femmes qui ont quitté « l'intimité de leur chambre pour l'espace public du salon » (Habermas 56), dans la formation du public de lecteurs qui forge à son tour l'espace public moderne (voir Goodman, chap. « Philosophes and Salonnières : A Critique of Enlightenment

du théâtre. Ils en disent long sur le statut du métier d'acteur et sur la condition des femmes de théâtre, partant, sur la réalité dure des femmes indépendantes qui mènent à l'époque une carrière professionnelle. Les trois séries de lettres relatent, chronologiquement, une rivalité entre la troupe française et italienne (Jodin proteste dans son billet adressé au roi contre les conditions inégales de leur travail), un conflit violent qui a opposé Jodin à ses collègues (le directeur de sa troupe n'a pas placé sur l'affiche le titre de « Mademoiselle » devant le nom de Jodin et celui d'une autre actrice; l'incident a débouché sur un échange de gros mots et de coups) et, finalement, la question du départ de Jodin pour le théâtre de Dresde (l'actrice négocie avec le comte Moszynski les meilleures conditions financières de son déplacement).

En lisant ces écrits, on remarque que, avec le temps qui passe et qui apporte son lot d'expériences et de lectures, les stratégies de persuasion de Jodin se peaufinent même si elles ne lui permettent pas à elles seules de gagner toutes ses batailles. Les quatorze lettres destinées au supérieur aristocrate démontrent sa bonne maîtrise du rituel épistolaire complexe, lequel tient à la fois du littéraire et du social. Un avantage certain de son métier honni, l'actrice d'une troupe royale est une femme qui, confrontée aux défis sociaux et intellectuels de sa profession, peut dépasser les contingences de ses origines modestes. Plusieurs comédiennes, comme c'est le cas pour Marie-Madeleine, fréquentent le grand monde dont elles apprivoisent les convenances et les modes d'échange obligés. C'est aussi la période où Jodin correspond régulièrement avec Diderot. Le tuteur lui envoie à Varsovie ses missives conçues comme cours de morale et de jeu, mais qui agissent sans doute aussi comme autant de modèles d'écriture et de persuasion. Les lettres plus élaborées de Jodin respectent les règles de composition que l'épistolaire a directement héritées de la rhétorique (exorde, corps de la lettre, péroraison, clôture). L'auteure utilise correctement les

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Historiography »).

formules de suscription (« Monseigneur », « Sir ») et avec beaucoup d'adresse les formules de souscription. Ainsi, pour mieux étayer sa requête, elle termine sa lettre: « C'est avec tous les sentiments de reconnaissance que j'ai l'honneur d'être de votre grandeur Monseigneur la très humble servante et dévouée Jodin » (*Théâtre* 134). Mais, pour bien signaler au supérieur son sentiment de colère, elle peut faire l'économie de la formule finale obligée, comme elle l'a fait auparavant à l'usage du drapier : « j'attends les soldats, car je ne suis pas assez tranquille pour répéter un role Jodin » (116). De même, quand l'actrice choisit, dans la première affaire, une forme brève de billet afin de présenter au roi de Pologne, au nom de ses collègues, les griefs de la troupe française défavorisée, cette entorse au cérémonial<sup>28</sup> appuie admirablement l'argument de défi de l'épistolière, lequel structure les trois séries de lettres: il faut respecter les gens de théâtre autant que les règles d'organisation prescrites pour assurer la bonne marche des « plaisirs » du roi.<sup>29</sup> Triplement « assujettie » (en tant que femme, étrangère et actrice de la troupe royale), Jodin récuse par ces épîtres, qui ne sont plus d'obédience privée, les discours dominants sur l'exclusion des femmes des affaires publiques, la place marginale des étrangers dans un pays d'accueil, le mépris qui couvre la profession de comédien, la mainmise absolue du roi et de ses officiels sur les institutions de la monarchie. Ces écrits de Jodin font voir ce qui est nécessaire pour que l'individu entame sa transformation en « agent », à savoir son besoin clairement identifié et énoncé de produire des changements (Messer-Davidow 25).

Pour réussir sa persuasion, Jodin travaille constamment ses procédés discursifs. Comme

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<sup>28</sup> Car, par rapport à la lettre, le billet est plus court, réservé d'habitude à des personnes proches, ce qui n'est pas le cas ici, et il peut donc négliger certains éléments du rituel épistolaire (Haroche-Bouzinac 59).

<sup>29</sup> On remarque que le postulat de Jodin s'inscrit dans un débat important à l'époque sur le rôle du théâtre et de l'acteur dans la vie sociale et culturelle du pays. L'échange entre d'Alembert, qui dans l'article « Genève » de l'*Encyclopédie* leur confère une place importante dans la cité, et Rousseau, qui dans sa *Lettre sur les spectacles* insiste sur leur nature corruptrice, est symbolique des débats en cours. Voir à ce sujet Moffat.

elle ne s'adresse plus à son égal, l'épistolière construit avec soin les figures de l'éthos et du pathos les plus favorables à ses « causes » soumises aux supérieurs. Dans la première affaire, afin de représenter au mieux les intérêts de sa troupe, elle cache son je (jeu), en fait son « image personnelle » de femme violente et d'actrice libertine, derrière le « nous » -acteurs. Ce faisant, elle transforme un groupe de comédiens souvent en conflit en une corporation animée par des objectifs communs: « les bonteés Sir dont vous nous avez honorée nous fermes la bouches sur les vexations que nous eprouvons de ceux qui nous les envie » (*Théâtre* 114). Bientôt, sa brochure révolutionnaire ira plus loin encore dans ce mouvement d'« agentivité » collective qui va en s'affermissant, mouvement dans lequel l'individu longtemps marginalisé dépasse son discours de revendication personnelle pour parler au nom d'une communauté, en l'occurrence le sexe féminin. Dans la deuxième affaire, Jodin se défend bien d'avoir engagé les hostilités contre sa troupe; elle recourt à sa technique préférée de l'« état conjectural » et « nie le fait » d'attaquer la première un collègue. Dans sa version des événements, l'actrice querelleuse se présente en victime : « Ma réponse fut de tourner le dos et comme en me tournant je crachai très fort par terre, il [son collègue] s'est apropiiez ce soulagement de la nature (une belle périphrase), pour justifier un très grand coup de pied » (118). Les opposants et le « juge » Moszynski refuseront ce nouvel éthos de l'actrice et diront tout simplement qu'elle ment. Ainsi, vu sa réputation, mais surtout le contexte de l'époque, cet argument crucial que Jodin décide d'utiliser, très important pour le fait féminin, aura encore moins de chance de lui faire gagner son procès, bien qu'il soit fondé sur la « preuve extrinsèque » (rapporter les faits) normalement fort appréciée *de jure*. En effet, dès l'exorde de sa lettre, Jodin articule clairement la véritable cause du conflit, qui est pour elle le peu de respect que le supérieur et l'homme témoignent à l'égard de l'actrice et de la femme: « hier mr Rousselois m'envoya un avis avec tout nos noms, celui des femme au dessu des quels je ne n'avois point vu de m, jecris en

riant mesdemoiselles tout du long, cette leçon de politesse a déplu à Mr Rousselois » (118). Si, dans cette affaire précise, le discours de persuasion de Jodin n'a pas convaincu Moszynski, il confirme néanmoins la portée éminemment sociale que peuvent avoir des incidents et des écrits privés par celle qui s'érige lentement en agent.

Face à l'adversaire qui résiste, il n'est pas étonnant que dans la troisième affaire soumise au ministre—cause non moins difficile puisque Jodin veut rompre son contrat, mais obtenir les indemnités de départ prévues pour les acteurs renvoyés par l'administration—l'actrice opte pour une attitude qui s'inscrit en faux contre son éthos de combat analysé auparavant, mais correspond parfaitement à l'image masculine du sexe « complaisant, tendre et doux ». Ce troisième événement révèle particulièrement bien les relations ambiguës entre la rhétorique et l'éthique, entre le pouvoir et l'individu qui s'attaque à sa force (choisir la révolte ou chercher une entente?) C'est le problème longuement débattu de la sincérité ou des « roueries » de l'orateur (Reboul 50), et c'est aussi, en l'occurrence, la question importante de savoir jusqu'où peut aller la femme dans son choix de stratégies susceptibles d'appuyer sa cause. En effet, si le contexte de persuasion l'exige, Jodin renoue avec les tons de l'éloquence religieuse enseignée au couvent et valorisée par la doxa morale de l'époque: supplications, plaintes, exhortation. Difficile de dire à quel point cette nouvelle attitude de soumission est sincère, mais pour une fois, elle est efficace (l'actrice obtient les indemnités qu'elle réclamait). Conformément aux règles de l'éloquence, son discours fait tout pour bien disposer son destinataire, mais son succès en dit long sur les rapports des sexes : Jodin réussit seulement la persuasion dont les procédés répondent le plus aux attentes morales et sociales du destinataire masculin, et qui heurtent le moins sa vision de soi et du féminin. « Si la loi nous est défavorable, conseille le pragmatiste Aristote, il faut avoir recours à la loi commune, à des raisons plus équitables et plus justes » (Aristote 50). C'est donc à la bienveillance du comte que Jodin fait

appel, à son sens de justice et de convenable. « [I]l n'y a pas de tems à perdre comme vous voyez monseigneur. je vous supplie de joindre a vos bontée celle de liberer cette affaire » (*Théâtre* 117); « mon dieu, si vous connoissiez mon coeur, je suis sure que le votre si bien fesant et si sensible se saignerois, voyez monseigneur combien il va men couter pour le voiage que me restera t il » (120), implore l'actrice pressée de partir. Demande-elle au comte de payer à sa place les dettes qu'elle a contractées à Varsovie? La rhétoricienne, muée peut-être en sophiste, affirme que sa seule motivation est de ne pas « fair de tord à ces bonnes gens qui ne mérite pas d'estre trompé » (122). Par ailleurs, ceci ajoute encore aux ambiguïtés de la figure de l'actrice, ces dettes ajoutées aux sommes d'argent qui lui viennent de son amant aristocrate ont sans doute grandement contribué à l'ascension rapide de l'ancienne prisonnière de la Salpêtrière. Des revenus moralement suspects (mais combien d'autres outils a-t-elle à sa disposition?) ont permis à la femme d'origine modeste de sortir de sa situation de misère, de trouver une meilleure place auprès des grands, et finalement de réussir son mûrissement social et intellectuel.

Le travail de persuasion de Jodin se poursuit donc. Procédé rhétorique adroit et rituel social obligé, elle érige presque systématiquement ses destinataires, le roi et son ministre Moszynski, en modèles d'équité et d'intégrité: « les bontées Sir dont vous nous avez honorée nous ferme la bouche sur les vexations que nous eprouvons » (114), « vous [êtes] trop juste Monseigneur pour n'en pas proscrire vous même la loix » (119), « Vous connoissez le pois de l'honneur et de la probité. je remet l'un et l'autre entre vos mains » (121). À moins qu'il ne faille voir dans ces compliments-insinuations la figure de l'ironie, dire le contraire de ce qu'on pense, dans la mesure où les trois affaires révèlent en fait sous sa plume des grands qui ne réagissent pas suffisamment aux cas d'injustice soumis à leur considération. Pour retracer l'intégration lente des femmes dans la sphère publique, il faut noter à quel point il était important pour elles d'exiger, dans la société

marquée par le patriarcat, le respect des lois et des contrats civiques qu'elles pouvaient signer à l'époque, tels que les contrats d'acteurs. Une amélioration au moins partielle de leur statut juridique annonçait pour elles une ouverture certaine vers les changements dans l'espace politique (Habermas VIII). C'est ainsi que chacune des situations conflictuelles incite Jodin à soulever la grave question des droits légitimes de la personne, qu'elle soit libertine ou comédienne. Dans son billet adressé au roi, où Jodin expose les « griefs » des acteurs français, son exigence pour des lois équitables s'exprime déjà avec force. Afin de montrer les vrais coupables du conflit entre les troupes française et italienne, cette exigence va jusqu'à renverser la relation obligée entre inférieurs et supérieurs sous l'Ancien Régime. Le postulat risqué prend un appui solide sur le raisonnement « par analogie »: c'est du respect des droits et des intérêts des acteurs que dépend le bon déroulement des plaisirs du roi, pose Jodin; c'est de la considération accordée aux inférieurs que découle le bien-être de leurs supérieurs, conclut-elle (*Théâtre* 114). Dans une autre affaire, celle de l'honneur blessé de l'actrice qui réclame son titre de Mademoiselle (ce titre s'étalera sur les pages titres du *Mémoire sur délibéré* et des *Vues législatives*), c'est le genre noble de la tragédie qui fournit à Jodin ses tournures pour faire avancer la cause des droits de la femme. L'accusée, muée en victime muée en procureur, revendique pour elle-même la notion d'honneur qui fonde le système patriarcal et exige que ses collègues « [lui] demande pardon à genoux au théâtre, [...] dans la posture [qu'elle demande] et dans des termes honnête et soumis » (118). Et, selon son habitude, Jodin généralise immédiatement son cas afin de faire admettre à son supérieur, « par insinuation », une thèse audacieuse: « votre excellence sent bien que dans tous les états il y a son point d'honneur » (118). C'est précisément cette égalité de conscience de soi des individus, en attendant l'égalité des droits civils et civiques, qui permet à tout être d'exiger sa place de citoyen dans la cité.



Enfin le mot citoyen tombe. Jodin, sujet de la monarchie, mais aussi sujet de l'énonciation, fait entrevoir aux petits la possibilité, voire la nécessité de refuser l'ordre imposé par les grands. Avec cette révolte on n'est plus dans le social, on est dans le politique. Si elle désigne le roi par les périphrases qui l'identifient au satrape, elle tient à se compter elle-même parmi les citoyens, ceux qui ont « tous les avantages, tous les privilèges de l'association », selon la définition de l'*Encyclopédie*. Dans la conclusion de l'une de ses lettres, l'actrice offensée, en véritable révolutionnaire, menace: « Si je ne trouve pas de satisfaction [...] et qu'on traite avec dérision les droits les plus sacrés de la société alors je ne veux plus contribuer au plaisir de ceux qui me méprisent et qui sont les premiers à enfreindre les lois premiers qui sont la sûreté des citoyens » (127). En 1774, dans son mémoire judiciaire « sur délibéré », premier texte publié et donc public par excellence de Jodin, le pouvoir absolu, personnifié cette fois par le régisseur Neuville (« violent, altier et surtout incapable de procédés honnêtes ») (M.-M. Jodin, *Mémoire* 3) sera ouvertement qualifié de tyrannie<sup>30</sup> et cité devant le juge et le tribunal de l'opinion publique: « Réduite à la nécessité de me défendre avec éclat contre des diffamations, je viens implorer la protection des Loix, et me justifier aux yeux du Public » (1). Le raisonnement qu'utilise Jodin dans ce texte pour faire respecter les termes d'un contrat privé, que la femme peut signer en tant qu'être doué de raison, ne saurait être différent si elle se proposait de définir la nature du contrat suprême qu'est le contrat social, dont les femmes sont exclues sur la base d'une différence sexuelle: « [J]e sais que l'écrit que j'ai fait avec la demoiselle Montensier<sup>31</sup> est un contrat qui a pour objet notre intérêt réciproque, qu'il doit subsister tant que cette réciprocité a lieu. Si elle cesse par le fait de l'un des contractants, l'équité exige qu'il soit tenu en des dommages et intérêts vers celui qui, sur

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<sup>30</sup> « [I]l faut partir me répondit Neuville, fussiez-vous expirer, telles sont mes volontés; partez, ou je vous fais charger de fers. [...] Ses emportements furent inutiles; le sceptre de fer avec lequel il prétend nous gouverner en Despote, lui tomba cette fois des mains » (M.-M. Jodin *Mémoire*, 5, 6).

<sup>31</sup> Une grande animatrice de la vie théâtrale de l'époque, une autre féministe avant l'heure, Mlle Montensier

la foi d'une convention, a pris des arrangements analogues aux nouvelles circonstances, dans lesquelles il se trouve ou croyait se trouver » (10). À son public, l'élève des Lumières montre qu'elle a bien retenu la leçon de Rousseau, même si celui-ci écarte les femmes de la cité et de la République des Lettres.

Combien la démarche de persuasion de son *factum*—genre très populaire à l'époque, plus complexe et codifié que l'épistolaire privé<sup>32</sup>—doit-elle aux décisions scripturales de Jodin? Dans quelle mesure s'agit-il d'un produit de l'expert en argumentation, l'avocat Delaunay, dont le nom suit celui de Jodin au bas du mémoire? Dans la *captation benevolentiae* obligée de son exorde, Jodin admet modestement ne pas être « éloquente, encore Juriconsulte », pour assurer pourtant immédiatement les lecteurs potentiels de sa première publication: « je n'emprunterai la plume de personne ; sans être versée dans les sciences des loix, il est des principes que je trouve dans mon cœur » (10). En recourant une fois encore au discours métatextuel, procédé fréquent dans les autobiographies des femmes modernes (Havercroft 106), l'épistolière se transforme en auteure par excellence; les thèmes qui lui ont toujours été chers peuvent finalement toucher le grand public. Par le geste de publier, Jodin se pose en citoyenne de la République des Lettres des Lumières qui, contrairement au siècle classique, veut représenter la voix de la nation et s'opposer ainsi ouvertement au pouvoir monarchique (Goodman 35). En effet, après avoir examiné l'écriture et les idées de ses lettres privées, on admet volontiers que Jodin ait été capable de choisir elle-même non seulement la ligne de conduite de son plaidoyer, mais aussi les procédés essentiels de son argumentation. La femme insoumise qui a autrefois écrit à son amant: « je n'ay jamais pris conseil que de ma tête » (*Théâtre* 167), et qui a tenu tête au roi et au comte Moszynski, ne s'est

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est propriétaire de la troupe dirigée par Neuville.

<sup>32</sup> Sur la nature et la place des mémoires judiciaires au XVIIIe siècle, voir Maza; sur les causes célèbres impliquant les actrices, voir Vissière.

sûrement pas contentée d'un discours emprunté, et a consulté son avocat essentiellement sur des points précis de la procédure judiciaire.<sup>33</sup> Et cette fois, pour gagner à sa cause le public qui ne se limite plus à un seul destinataire (l'amant, le roi, un ministre), Jodin puise adroitement dans le roman sentimental et le drame bourgeois en vogue, afin d'atteindre un lectorat vaste, mais bien choisi, non pas l'élite de la société, mais bien l'élite du cœur; tous ceux qui, touchés par les bonnes actions et les beaux sentiments, accepteront sans hésitation les arguments de leurs semblables.<sup>34</sup>

Dans son *Mémoire*, le dernier écrit examiné ici, celle à qui on a toujours reproché son trop plein de passion, n'hésite donc pas à exploiter cette « vague des passions » qui traverse la société et la littérature, à lui emprunter certains clichés thématiques et narratifs, pour reprendre et développer la problématique sociale et politique qui n'a jamais cessé de l'intéresser. Le texte de l'actrice foisonne littéralement de tournures qui doivent capter l'attention des gens sensibles, partant honnêtes, que les Lumières veulent voir dominer dans les domaines moral et esthétique de l'époque. Voici quelques exemples de cette stratégie, véritable rhétorique littéraire qu'elle utilise à profusion: « La douceur et l'honnêteté de mes procédés » et « Un être obscur et indifférent, sitôt qu'il est persécuté, intéresse toutes les âmes sensibles » (pour qualifier l'éthos de la plaignante) (M.-M. Jodin *Mémoire* 7, 8) ou encore « O vous, âmes sensibles et vertueuses! vous, dans le sein de qui j'ai versé mes chagrins, vous qui avez essuyé mes larmes, recevez ici un témoignage public de ma sincère et éternelle reconnaissance » (9) (pour caractériser le pathos de ceux qui sont posés ici en jury élargi du procès d'un « être obscur et indifférent », mais qui réclame haut et fort ses

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<sup>33</sup> Comme, par exemple, à l'étape suivante de sa démarche: « J'ai été très embarrassée pour répondre à un quatrième [point d'accusation]: il est appuyé sur le principe latin que je n'entendais pas: non bis in idem. Je me le suis fait expliquer, on m'a dit que ce texte portait que quand on avait succombé dans une demande, on ne pouvait intenter une seconde action pour la former » (M.-M. Jodin, *Mémoire* 14).

<sup>34</sup> Sur les auteurs des Lumières qui, tel un Guillot de la Chassagne, racontent « les malheurs de l'âme sensible et vertueuse », ces personnes « pour qui naît une passion à chaque pas, en qui les situations les plus vulgaires savent créer une âme nouvelle, et qui, pour intéresser des lecteurs, n'ont pas qu'à rapporter leurs mouvements », voir Coulet 378-86.

droits). On a longtemps vu dans ce langage des sentiments le trait distinctif des femmes, la preuve tangible de leur sujétion aux passions et à la tyrannie des désirs, partant le motif suffisant pour les enfermer dans la sphère privée, les confiner dans la famille. Aujourd'hui, les théories féministes examinent la passion comme une condition nécessaire de l'émergence de l'agentivité, voire comme une des formes d'action de l'agent. Ces études reconsidèrent la vision de Habermas de l'espace public, qui est pour lui le synonyme de la raison et des activités rationnelles. Elles valorisent et incluent dans cet espace les représentations de la corporalité, les stratégies d'expression de la sphère privée, les spectacles des émotions et des relations personnelles qu'utilisent les femmes comme outils de critique et de subversion (Meehan 9).

Grâce à son choix particulier d'outils de persuasion, qui unit étroitement la rhétorique des conflits et la rhétorique littéraire, le *Mémoire sur délibéré* fait de l'expression jugée « féminine » partie intégrante de l'espace public, et introduit le « féminin » par excellence dans cette sphère. Qu'on lise la description suivante de l'apparition de Jodin devant les juges qui doivent prononcer le verdict dans son conflit avec le régisseur tyrannique. Une scène pittoresque, « littéraire » elle aussi, car sans doute imaginée par son biographe, rend parfaitement l'esprit et le projet du *Mémoire*, écrit dans lequel une héroïne autrefois obscure sort définitivement du privé pour, en rhéteur passionné de sa cause, défendre avec succès ses positions (concernant les femmes et visant aussi les femmes) : « Une influence considérable envahissait tout l'espace réservé au public. Les dames surtout étaient, en grand nombre, elles étaient désireuses de voir et d'entendre la belle tragédienne présenter ses moyens de défense. Mlle Jodin n'ayant pas été contente de son avocat, avait manifesté le désir de plaider elle-même sa cause. Magdaleine Jodin fit un exposé remarquable de la plainte qu'elle portait devant la justice. [...] Jamais elle n'obtint sur scène un pareil succès » (Solande 379). Vu la nature de ses préoccupations et de l'écriture qu'elle pratiquait,

ainsi que la place cruciale de la rhétorique dans la République des Lettres à l'époque, c'est surtout dans le domaine de l'éloquence qu'elle a cherché ses stratégies; celles-ci soutenant le mieux son agentivité non linguistique marquée de conflits et d'états d'âme. Dans tous ses écrits, Jodin, « violente », trace son parcours mouvementé, incident par incident, pour devenir féministe, intellectuelle et révolutionnaire, bref femme de conviction et de passion. L'étude importante de Barbara Havercroft, évoquée ici maintes fois, confirme à quel point les combats de vie et de plume de cette femme préfigurent et préparent ceux qui animent la démarche des écrivaines modernes. Certains de ses outils de persuasion n'ont rien perdu de leur efficacité. Les analyses comparatistes plus pointues dans ce domaine restent toujours à faire; elles pourraient tisser des liens historiques et théoriques importants entre les ouvrages venant de divers domaines et époques.

Ne connaissant pas les lettres de Jodin jeune fille et actrice, et ne connaissant son *Mémoire* qu'indirectement, le critique Paul Vernière a trouvé dans les *Vues législatives*, traité sur la prostitution et le divorce, conférant aux femmes le rôle politique de décideurs dans un tribunal familial, un reflet « de sa rude vie qui lui avait inspiré tardivement quelque sagesse »; « En 1790, à 49 ans, l'actrice est devenue femme de lettres et philosophe » (Vernière 127). Quant à la démarche de persuasion de cette brochure, Béatrice Didier a remarqué qu'« il est curieux de voir comment c'est Mlle Jodin qui raisonne et Marmontel<sup>35</sup> qui emploie des arguments sensibles » (Didier 65). Or, les écrits de jeunesse de Jodin, dont les procédés jettent une lumière importante sur l'écriture particulière des *Vues*,<sup>36</sup> constituent un témoignage précieux sur un parcours fort conséquent qui a tout d'un long apprentissage : apprentissage de la citoyenneté, qui permet à l'individu « conscient de soi » de réclamer sa place dans la société et l'état, et apprentissage de

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<sup>35</sup> L'écrivain des Lumières connu, critique des opinions de Jodin exprimées dans les *Vues*.

<sup>36</sup> Deux exemples des procédés susceptibles d'appuyer les arguments des *Vues*, stratégies narratives qui n'ont pas été exploitées auparavant : la réutilisation des figures célèbres servant de modèles et d'exemples; l'emploi systématique des citations intertextuelles tirées des livres connus de la littérature ancienne et modernes (Havercroft 99,

diverses techniques rhétoriques « affectives » et « rationnelles », qui appuient cette lutte pour les droits de la personne. Les voix se lèvent dans ce sens, dans cet avènement à la citoyenneté, les femmes jouaient un rôle qui aurait dû être à la mesure de leur place réelle dans la population. Que l'on songe à l'idée actuelle de parité pour les femmes. Aristote rhéteur l'a signalé, la construction de la société qui dépasse ses conflits et la démarche rhétorique qui appuie ce projet reposent toutes deux sur la même poursuite du bonheur. Ainsi, les « peuples chez lesquels il y a de mauvaises institutions relatives aux femmes [...] ne possèdent guère que la moitié du bonheur », conclut le philosophe (Aristote 104). La nécessité de tenir compte de l'autre « moitié » de la population, idée longtemps négligée, s'érige au XVIIIe siècle en un véritable lieu commun du discours en faveur d'une société de pleine citoyenneté pour chacun et chacune. Et c'est ce cliché qui sera posé en pierre angulaire du nouveau projet d'idéologie et de société que sont les *Vues législatives pour les femmes* de Jodin à l'âge mûr, tout comme son esprit a auparavant animé le parcours tortueux de Jodin dans sa jeunesse.

Quand les Français signalent leur zèle pour régénérer l'État, et fonder son bonheur et sa gloire sur les bases éternelles des vertus et des lois, j'ai pensé que mon sexe qui compose l'intéressante moitié de ce bel Empire, pouvait aussi réclamer l'honneur et même le droit de concourir à la prospérité publique; et qu'en rompant le silence auquel la politique semble nous avoir condamnées, nous pouvions dire utilement: Et nous aussi nous sommes Citoyennes (M.-M. Jodin *Vues*, III).

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104). C'est aussi la preuve tangible du mûrissement intellectuel de Jodin.

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## **Learning Conversational Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Hester Thrale Piozzi and Her Mentors Collier and Johnson**

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A young British woman in the eighteenth century who aspired to be an eloquent writer and conversationalist faced many challenges. It was rare for a woman to gain access to education in rhetoric because, since the classical era, rhetoric had been a largely masculine, upper-class discipline meant to prepare people to speak in official public roles. However, in the eighteenth century, some approaches to rhetoric accommodated the increasing number of women becoming educated and the increasingly important genre of sociable conversation. New opportunities within the culture made it possible for a woman to study rhetoric, practice and theorize it, and achieve widespread public acknowledgment for her eloquence and influence, although not without risks to her reputation. Studying the rhetorical development and practice of eighteenth-century British women brings to light how a category of people excluded from formal rhetorical education and practice could nevertheless participate due to shifts in cultural ideologies. Specifically, as I shall demonstrate below, these women experienced a greater opportunity to practice and learn a rhetoric of conversation in the public sphere. A brief rhetorical biography of Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821), a famous eighteenth-century conversationalist and author, reveals how she and her two mentors, Dr. Arthur Collier and Samuel Johnson, approached the study and practice of conversation as a rhetorical art. It also helps us understand the importance of conversational rhetoric in forming eminent rhetors and rhetoricians.

Only a few modern and eighteenth-century scholars of rhetoric would acknowledge that such a woman's success in public or semi-public eloquence could be considered a rhetorical career. As one may gather from the majority of treatises on rhetoric, the traditional concept of a

successful rhetorical career is one in which the rhetor 1) develops his skills and identity as a rhetor through formal rhetorical education in schools and universities, 2) earns fame through public speaking or writing in church or government or other formal institutional settings, and 3) is described as an “orator” by the public at large. Each of these criteria generally exclude historical European women before the twentieth century, most of whom had no access to university education and no access to official church or government leadership positions. Calling a woman an orator (except in the case of a queen) was rarely intended as praise, as we see, for instance, in Addison’s frequently reprinted *Spectator* essay, which criticized four types of “female orators” in 1711 (435-40). However, because most rhetoricians have presumed that serious male rhetorical practice is formal and public, they have tended to overlook informal and less public ways of learning, practicing, and earning fame as a rhetor. It has been difficult for some scholars to imagine how rhetoric was learned and practiced outside of formal institutions by women before the nineteenth century, and how it could have been learned well. For instance, the rhetorical historian Robert Connors claims that “In western culture, women were excluded from formalized training in rhetoric and from forums within which oral civic discourse could be practiced almost absolutely before the seventeenth century and in most situations before the nineteenth.” Although the first part of his claim is true, Connors is not attempting to assess the value and potential depth of informal rhetorical training, and his second claim about women’s exclusion from “forums within which oral civic discourse could be practiced” is not entirely applicable to eighteenth-century Britain because Connors’s view is based on a narrower, later concept of “civic discourse” and where it is usually practiced.

## **Enlightenment Women and the Rhetoric of Conversation**

Studies of pre-nineteenth-century women's participation in rhetorical education and civic discourse have emerged to demonstrate these women's participation in, rather than absolute exclusion from, rhetorical theory and practice. For example, Jane Donawerth's study of the seventeenth-century French author Madeleine de Scudéry discovers a "rhetoric of conversation" at work. She claims that Scudéry's letters, dialogues, and novels concerning the conversational salon advocate "rhetorical education for women" and that Scudéry "appropriate[s] rhetoric for women as a means to political power" ("As Becomes" 306). Scudéry's works in English translation may have persuaded her British readers to imagine women's potential to become "orators" in forums already open to them. Her book *Les Femmes illustres*, a collection of fictional orations delivered by queens in domestic settings, was published in English in 1756, 1681, and 1693, the latter two editions using the title *Heroick Harangues of the Illustrious Women*. Eighteenth-century editions in 1714, 1728, and 1768 were named *The Female Orators*, and the phrase *Worthy the Perusal and Imitation of the Female Sex* was in the title as well. As seen in Thomas Baker's discussion of rhetoric in 1708 (55), it became widely known among scholars that Madeleine de Scudéry herself had been given the first prize ever awarded by the French Academy for her eulogy of Louis XIV in 1761 (Donawerth, "Volume" 7).

Because women practiced and theorized rhetoric mainly in genres that many scholars have not considered rhetorical, and because women were rarely recognized as orators or rhetoricians, their contributions to rhetorical history through other genres and other terminology have been overlooked until recently. Yet rhetorical historians are well aware that the range of genres discussed in rhetorical theory has altered over the centuries according to changes in cultural and political contexts. In medieval times, letter writing became a rhetorical art; in the

Renaissance, poetry and courtly conversation became theorized as rhetorical genres. It all depended on which genres became highly valued and were theorized as “rhetorical” arts for gaining influence. In eighteenth-century Britain, among the new genres achieving social power and influence were the periodical essay, the novel, literary conversation, and correspondence.

In many ways, eighteenth-century Britain constructed what Cicero had regretted was lacking in his own time: a theory of conversational rhetoric. According to Dieter Berger, “The number of courtesy works on conversation [...] has been estimated to amount to over two hundred titles between the years 1650 and 1800” (82). Eighteenth-century authors rarely explicitly called conversation “rhetoric” because of the formalistic and scholastic connotations of the term “rhetoric” and the obviously informal nature of conversation; yet they occasionally considered conversation as rhetorical, as seen below, partly because of the strong influence of ideas expressed in contemporary translations of Cicero’s *De Officiis*. *De Officiis* was very popular in the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century: L’Estrange’s 1680 translation was in its sixth edition by 1720, and Thomas Cockman’s translation was in its tenth edition by 1792. In *De Officiis*, Cicero divides the power of rhetoric into two parts: *sermo* (conversation) and *contentio* (the speech of public argument), saying that while rhetoricians have formulated rules for *contentio*, they have neglected to theorize *sermo*. That a form of rhetoric lacked a formalized theory in Cicero’s time was not necessarily indicative of its low value in his estimation. Cicero states that conversation is equally worthy of rhetorical study; it simply takes place in a different setting: “in social circles, in philosophical debates, and in meetings of friends.

It should also follow after banquets.” The topics of conversation, he explains, are not merely household matters, but also politics, professions, and learning (*De Officiis* 1: 132).<sup>1</sup>

Two further examples, besides the example of Madeleine de Scudéry given above, demonstrate that some eighteenth-century readers were aware of the idea of a rhetoric of conversation. In 1771, an English translation of a Prussian belletristic treatise *Elements of Erudition* appeared a year after the popular translation of the author’s letters. In his chapter on rhetoric, the author, the statesman Jacob Friedrich Bielfeld, preceptor to Prince Ferdinand and the chancellor of Prussian universities, classifies rhetorical genres in a way that prioritizes conversation:

Anciently rhetoricians divided discourses into three sorts, which they called, 1. Ordinary elocution, that is, such as is used in common conversation: 2. The ordinary elocution in writing, from whence comes the epistolary style, the form and disposition of letters on all sorts of subjects: and 3. The elocution of compliments for all occasions, as well verbal as written. All these matters are directed by particular rules in the old systems of rhetoric, where those, who are curious to see them, may easily find them. (Bielfeld 104)

In this conversational-epistolary view of rhetoric, we find echoes of *De Officiis*, but little trace of the epideictic, deliberative, and forensic genres, and yet the author asserts that the rules of rhetoric (he describes the figures and commonplaces) are applicable to these everyday uses. One must look in his later chapter on eloquence to find a discussion of political and sacred rhetoric. *The Lady’s Rhetoric* of 1707, as I explain elsewhere (Smith 349-73), also cites Cicero frequently. It is a rhetorical handbook for ladies that explicates Classical rhetoric and French belletristic rhetorical principles in everyday English and applies them to conversational situations relevant to a lady’s experience. The bookseller’s advertisement promotes the usefulness of *The Lady’s*

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<sup>1</sup> See also a discussion of Cicero’s view of women in conversation in John F. Tinkler, “Renaissance Humanism and the Genera Eloquentiae” (284), and in Robert W. Cape, Jr., “Roman Women in the History of Rhetoric and Oratory” (117).

*Rhetorick* for people “of whatever Sex or profession they are,” as it is suitable to any “Place and Calling,” and “useful and pleasing to such of both Sexes, as desire to improve themselves in this excellent Art of Speaking and Writing Elegantly” (*Lady’s Rhetorick* A2, A2v). Therefore, in eighteenth-century Britain it was rare but not unprecedented to theorize conversation as “rhetoric” and to teach traditional rhetorical theory in a way that included women.

Traditionally, rhetorical genres were defined as those deemed to be “public”—forensic, epideictic, and deliberative rhetoric was conducted only by men in public settings. Yet narrow definitions of rhetoric as “public” still do not disqualify the genre of mixed-sex intellectual conversation as a rhetoric. To eighteenth-century Britons, this genre could be public. Historians of eighteenth-century culture have showed that despite discourses that distinguished separate spheres of public/male and private/female, conversation was often acknowledged to be a realm of women’s and men’s public life. Mixed-sex intellectual and literary conversational networks, the most famous of which were led by Elizabeth Montagu, Hester Thrale, and Elizabeth Vesey, have been recognized by Jürgen Habermas, Deborah Heller, and Lawrence Klein as an early form of the “public sphere” and as a very important institution of literary education and patronage for men and women. Habermas’s theory of the “public sphere” envisions the enlightenment conversational salons, coffee houses, and periodical press as a “literary public sphere” that gained in its time the power to become a “political public sphere” that critiqued, moderated, and filtered the influence of the state. Habermas acknowledges that the salon or coffee house was a training ground, a place where publications were tested by criticism before they went to print (34). But to eighteenth-century women, conversational gatherings were more than merely training grounds for written publication or for men’s formal oratory. They were already sites for public rhetorical performance.



Heller and Klein extend Habermas's theory of the public sphere, showing that what were nicknamed "Bluestocking" salons were not just for "literary" discourse and entertaining chit-chat; they were fully public. Heller finds "in the Bluestocking salons an institution of public dimensions, governed and in large part constituted by women, whose self-described purpose is the practice of what they call 'reason' or 'rational conversation'" (60). Heller's argument "supports a more positive assessment of women's intellectual, cultural, and, indeed, public agency" in the eighteenth-century conversational salon (60). Conversational salons were sites of what Klein calls "the associative public sphere, a sphere of social, discursive, and cultural production," which suggests that "people at home, both men and women, were not necessarily in private" ("Public/Private" 104, 105). It does not minimize their value to rhetorical history that these spaces and discourse practices were a more important public space for women than they were for men. Therefore, a rhetorical sphere's importance should not be judged by the gender or social status of the people who theorize and practice in it, nor by its resemblance to the rhetorical spheres we think of as "public" in our own culture.

If we were to include theories and practices of conversation in our study of rhetorical history, we would be able to arrive at a more comprehensive and accurate typology of the most influential and widespread realms of rhetorical practice. Rhetorical historians since Douglas Ehninger in 1952 have identified at least four major "trends" in eighteenth-century rhetorical treatises: neoclassical, belletristic, psychological-epistemological, and elocutionary. However, these classifications of rhetorical theory were based on Enlightenment treatises on rhetoric written by and for men. These classifications were not developed during the eighteenth century, did not include the much larger range of literature that theorized the art of conversation, and did not consider how women as well as men may have learned, practiced, and theorized rhetoric.

To understand the “trend” of conversational rhetoric in their culture, we need to look not only to the large volume of advice and theory about eloquent conversation (a few examples of which are mentioned above) but also to the ways in which conversation was actually learned as an art. A brief rhetorical biography of aspects of Hester Salusbury Thrale Piozzi’s rhetorical education and practice under two of her mentors provides modern scholars and students with a focused case study of how a woman learned the rhetoric of conversation in the eighteenth century.

### **Hester Thrale Piozzi’s Formation as Conversational Rhetor and Theorist**

Hester Thrale Piozzi<sup>2</sup> (1741-1821) was one of the pre-eminent leaders of conversational salons in eighteenth-century Britain, and an author who published poetic, biographical, historical, linguistic, religious, moral, and political works. She is best known as the close friend, correspondent, and hostess of essayist and dictionary writer Samuel Johnson (who was so influential that scholars often speak of the “age of Johnson”). The frequent guests at her home included a variety of statesmen, actors, lawyers, scholars, artists, novelists, and historians. She was friend and mentor to the famous novelist Frances Burney, who wrote in her own voluminous diary about her experiences in Hester’s company. Hester was well connected with other conversational circles of men and women organized by Elizabeth Montagu and others. Sir Pepys claimed “that he had never met with another human being who possessed the talent of conversation in an equal degree” (McCarthy 265, 204). After the death of her first husband Mr. Thrale, Hester chose a controversial marriage to the Italian musician Gabriel Piozzi in 1784, and many of her former friends and even her daughters deserted her. Shortly afterwards, following

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<sup>2</sup> Hester was known by many surnames: Lynch, Salusbury, Thrale, Piozzi. She was christened Hester Lynch Salusbury in her maternal grandmother’s and father’s names, and Thrale and Piozzi were her first and second husband’s surnames. She was known as Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Piozzi during the period of her life upon which I focus. I shall most frequently refer to her as Hester to avoid confusion.

Samuel Johnson's death, she emerged as an author in several conversation-like genres and on conversational topics, such as her *Anecdotes of Johnson* (1786) and her experimental anecdotal history of the world, *Retrospection* (1801). In her conversational handbook of English usage for foreigners, *British Synonymy* (1794), she articulated her theoretical understanding of conversation as rhetoric.

After her controversial second marriage, Hester successfully restored her public reputation by using her conversational powers to forge new networks of intellectual friends with whom to converse and correspond. In early nineteenth-century Bath, her conversation became a legend and almost a tourist attraction to the younger generation, and her birthday ball in 1820 had six hundred guests. When Frances Burney D'Arblay heard news of Hester's death in 1821, she compared Hester to the feminist salonnière, novelist, philosophical writer, and critic Madame de Staël (1766-1817). She said that both women "had the same sort of highly superior intellect, the same depth of learning," and that "Their conversation was equally luminous, from the sources of their own fertile minds, and from their splendid acquisitions from the works and acquirements of others" (qtd. in McCarthy 265).

Hester Thrale Piozzi's lifetime rhetorical accomplishments are prodigious, especially when considered in light of the challenges facing women who aspired to rhetorical fame and influence. Due to a conjunction of cultural, political, and economic preconditions, and not least, the friendship and tutelage of her mentors, she learned to use language prudently to persuade, building for herself a surprisingly resilient career of social eminence as a conversation hostess, as an intellectual companion of eminent men and women, and as an author.

## **Tutelage under Arthur Collier**

Hester Salusbury (later, Hester Thrale) was a young prodigy in language and literature who learned early to associate women's language skills with social influence. In a family that was often brought to its knees financially due to conflict over inheritances and her father's quick temper, Hester and her mother took every opportunity to soothe nerves, to divert attention from stressful situations and conflicts, and to inspire more sociable motives such as hospitality and charity. Hester was petted by her high-ranking family members and acquaintances in London. When Hester was seven, the Duchess of Leeds would send for her to read aloud Milton to her guests. Her love of learning and quick development also appeared at the age of ten, when over the course of several months Hester "read Rapin's Hist[ory] in French: Plutarch's Lives & Livy in the same Language—every Word;—besides long Translations that [she] laboured hard to make from French to English & from English to French" (*Thraliana* 1: 292). Hester was later taught Italian so she could correspond with her wealthy aunt, Lady Salusbury, who had also learned the language in her youth. When Lady Salusbury died in 1759, the year Hester turned 18, Hester became known as an heiress of a fortune and began to receive offers of marriage, and she gloried in the increased attention she received from family members, her tutor, her suitors, and noble and learned men and women. Later in her adulthood, when grieving the death of yet another child, or when seething over legal battles over the inheritances she had lost due to her uncle's remarriage, she would look back fondly on the years when "I used to be my Father's Favourite, my Mother's Comforter and Companion, & my Uncle's Darling.... my Influence was courted by every one" (*Thraliana* 1: 296). She wrote that in this period of happiness, "my friendship for Dr. Collier commenced; a Man of perfect Worth, profound Erudition, and polish'd

Manners: a Man who engrossed my whole heart, & deserved it [...] his *sweetest Angel* as he call'd me" (*Thraliana* 1: 297n).

Arthur Collier, LLD (1707-1777), was son of the published philosopher of the same name, a lawyer of Doctor's Commons, and friend of the novelist Henry Fielding and grammarian James Harris. Dr. Collier had an affection and respect for intelligent young women, many of whose literary talents he nurtured with care. Before tutoring Hester, Collier had educated his own sisters Jane and Margaret, and had tutored the novelist Sarah Fielding. He was Hester's educator for up to five years before her marriage in 1763 (McCarthy 7-8; *Thraliana* 1: 301 n1). Hester wrote, "Dr. Collier of the Commons called himself [my] preceptor" (*Piozzi Letters* 2: 500-501); and "From Dr. Collier I learn'd Latin & Criticism, and gained the little Knowledge of Logic which I have: he was to me a most attentive and disinterested friend" (*Thraliana* 1: 301 n1). Hester's journal contains several Latin poems Collier wrote to her, and she kept over 100 of his Latin letters to her (Clifford 26). Collier's influence was very strong in Hester's life: "his influence ... operate[d] on my Mind on almost every Occasion" (*Thraliana* 1: 305).

Collier was a lawyer, a wit, a scholar, and private instructor, but never published any works on rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is clear that he taught Hester and other women about rhetoric along with the other arts of the standard *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric). He used to tell her "women should learn rhetorick in order to persuade their husbands, while men studied to render themselves good logicians, for the sake of obtaining arms against female oratory" (*British Synonymy* 1: v-vi). Like a good preceptor, he provided a reason why the study of rhetoric was relevant to his female pupil. As the quotation above illustrates, he adapted rhetorical instruction to the uses of a woman in the domestic sphere, where rhetoric helped to guard a woman against false persuasion and enabled her to persuade more effectively in domestic situations.

Collier once told Hester that he wrote “the reply to Lord Shaftsbury’s Arguments in Cylinda’s Story” in *The Cry* (1754), a dramatic fable by Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier (*Piozzi* 2: 249). This passage is an example of conversational rhetorical criticism in which Cylinda’s father’s old friend (representing Collier) listens carefully to Cylinda’s praises of Shaftesbury, gains her respect and attention, and then persuades her to change her mind and believe that she has in fact allowed her “imagination to be warmed by the florid style and specious reasonings” of Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*. If this is a faithful representation of Collier’s mode of conversational rhetorical education, it demonstrates that he must have armed his tutees to defend themselves against persuasive appeals in writing and encouraged them to read philosophical works critically and converse about them with men.

However, eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical careers, whether as poets or as conversationalists, were necessarily different than men’s because of women’s dependency on marriage and the expectations of feminine ethos. Collier learned the hard way that teaching women to be scholars and wits could be dangerous to their future. Although he had encouraged his earlier female pupils in their scholarship and publication, the difficulties caused by his sisters’ and Sarah Fielding’s reputations for learning convinced him to recommend marriage to Hester instead of the life of a female writer. The problem with forming a woman to be a rhetorician in print publications and making her unashamed of knowing scholarly languages (Latin and Greek) was that it could delay or prevent her marriage. He probably feared that some men might have viewed her as an intellectual competitor who would pay little attention to household matters, and perhaps even become a nag or shrew. Arthur Collier often regretted that his sister Jane, who had “amiable manners, and such abilities,” was only known to the world by her satirical publication on household rhetoric gone awry, *The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*

(1753). Problems also appeared in the Fielding household where Collier tutored Sarah. Collier told Hester that when Henry Fielding saw his sister Sarah “construe the sixth Book of Virgil with Ease [... he] began to tieze [sic] and taunt her with being a Literary Lady &c. till at last She resolved to make her whole pleasure out of Study, and becoming justly eminent for her Taste and Knowledge of the Greek Language, her Brother never more could perswade himself to endure her Company with Civility” (*Piozzi Letters* 2: 249). Accordingly, one of Collier’s last letters to Hester before her marriage implored her to give up learning Latin, since it “won’t make one a bit younger Richer, or Handsomer, and the only women that I ever knew made much of the matter all lived to be old maids” (Clifford 40). To ensure this would not happen to Hester, not long before she met her future husband Mr. Thrale, Dr. Collier was among the four men who pressured her uncle to endow Hester with ten thousand pounds on her marriage.

Preparing her for marriage, Collier armed Hester with the skills of inspiring affection as well as admiration for her rhetorical skill. To do so required an understanding of what society generally believed was appropriate and praiseworthy in women’s communication. The eighteenth century highly prized physical grace and decorum as the art of rhetorical delivery applied to conversation. The 1776 translation of Cicero’s *Orator* reads that an orator’s “decorum” and “our very looks, our gesture, and our walk” ought to be “suited to time and character” (*Cicero’s Brutus* 287). Likewise, Hester’s early tutor understood the arts of physical deportment and decorum as acquirements to be learned by a consummate rhetorician: “Doctor Collier had a notion that any Woman might be handsome if she would; meaning that Grace & Carriage were so near to every thing in the Affair of Beauty that any Woman of Condition might procure it if she would take Pains—Tis plain Lord Chesterfield thought the same of Grace in general” (*Thraliana* 1: 13). As we can gather from Hester’s diary and publications, Collier was

also an important figure in her education in conversation, especially in humor and raillery. These points appear in Cicero's *Orator* as essential for the orator using the Attic or simple style: "smart sayings and quick repartees, and ... humour" (*Cicero's Brutus* 297). Hester's diaries relate a few of Collier's smart and witty *bon mots*, which reveal a deep suspicion about the perversity of human nature. His sayings reveal that sincerity is not always the best policy, and that one both needed to cloak one's true feelings sometimes, and be wary of insincerity in others. For instance, he observed that "those who had the Word Gratitude oftenest in their Mouths, had the Love of Tyranny most deeply in their hearts" (*Thraliana* 1: 24).

Hester's keen rhetorical analysis of Collier's rhetorical performance and its effects pointed out which elements of a man's conversational rhetoric were not worthy of her imitation. In her diary *Thraliana*, she highlights his "assimilating Temper," his ability to "take his Share in any Conversation," his "Taste of general Knowledge" and enjoyment of all types of people. At the same time, she was well aware of his conversational faults. She notes that he loved talking more than listening, disputed on controversial points of religion and politics, and used logic to corner people and point out their fallacies for ridicule. Even if he did all this "with an Air of great Civility" to soften the offense, his manner could not eliminate the feeling of pain in his interlocutor. Another fault was his playful perversity in insisting on talking about "curing Hams, or making Minced Pyes" when a male conversationalist was willing to engage in a critical or metaphysical discussion with him. Hester concludes that he was admired far more than he was loved.

Although Collier's satirical insights into human character equipped Hester with some of the means of gaining and keeping relational power, he himself lost that power in Hester's family. Collier and Mrs. Salusbury occasionally competed for influence over Hester. When Hester



confided in Collier her distress about her mother matching her with Henry Thrale, Collier wrote back with advice not to marry Mr. Thrale, and her mother promptly persuaded Hester to break off correspondence with Collier, which Hester later regretted (*Thraliana* 1: 305).

### **Samuel Johnson's Influence**

Hester became acquainted with Samuel Johnson in 1765, two years after her marriage. Just as Collier and her mother competed for influence, Hester perceived that her mother was also jealous of Samuel Johnson's influence over her (*Thaliana* 1: 182). Indeed, he was extremely influential in her development as a conversational rhetor. And yet, by the end of her relationship with Johnson, she had learned to moderate his influence with her increasing sense of confidence in her own abilities. She became his collaborator in conversational eloquence, and easily surpassed him in politeness and decorum.

Not long after Samuel Johnson joined the Thrale household, he began to perceive that Hester was not using her abilities and that Mr. Thrale would appreciate a woman who would shine in conversation. Thrale was a brewer rising in social class to be a Member of Parliament, and he seemed to have need of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century aristocratic model of a wife, a companion who, as Hawley says, "was supposed to embody and display the wealth and rank of her father or husband in her ornamental attire, witty and elegant speech, and lavish hospitality. While chaste, and obedient, she was not meant to be silent or retiring" (xix). However, Hester's mother, Mrs. Salusbury, did not believe it was proper for a wife to be so much in public, so she kept Hester at home, and insisted that she educate her young children.

Happily for Hester, Samuel Johnson interposed in this impasse of influence between the domestic and the aristocratic model of femininity and helped Hester to perform in her drawing-room some aspects of this aristocratic kind of conversation for which, after all, she was already

trained by Collier. Early in her friendship with Johnson, Hester received important advice from him that enabled her to consider assisting her husband with her rhetorical skills. She once complained to Johnson that Mr. Thrale did not treat her with much kindness, perhaps expecting him to give some marital advice. However, Johnson's insight into her communication patterns was very helpful in expanding her conversational expertise beyond the traditionally feminine domestic sphere, where she could compensate for her husband's lack of verbal skill and thus serve him better and sustain her household. Johnson explained to her that she was spending all her time with her baby and mother, being neither useful nor ornamental to Henry with her wit and beauty, that she was not knowledgeable enough about his business nor active in protecting his property, and that she shared none of his pleasures (*Thraliana* 1: 309). Hester then told her mother she would like to learn more about Thrale's brewery.

However, Mrs. Salusbury continued to hold sway and discourage Hester from public entertainments and from involvement in Thrale's business, until a crisis erupted in his brewery in 1772. Mr. Thrale was tranquil and silent by temperament, and did not know how to deal with the fact that he had purchased bad hops the year before and it had spoiled all his beer. He began to lose sleep and appetite, and finally asked for advice from Hester, Johnson, and Mrs. Salusbury. While Hester was "big with child," Johnson drove her to town, "insisted on [Hester] talking to the Clerks authoritatively," and she conciliated them. Hester discovered that the source of the problem was Mr. Thrale's overconfidence in a manager, Mr. Jackson, who had persuaded Thrale to buy the hops. Learning this, her mother's "Delicacy was blunted about [Hester's involvement in] the Trade." Jackson was fired, money was borrowed, and the company was reorganized due to the joint efforts of Hester and Johnson. Although she lost her child, which she attributed to the stress, she learned that "Women have a manifest Advantage over Men in the doing Business;

every thing smooths down before them, & to be a Female is commonly sufficient to be successful, if She has a little Spirit & a little common Sense.” Hester’s own conclusion to this episode of life states that this crisis greatly increased Mr. Thrale’s respect for her, and Mrs. Salusbury’s respect for Johnson (*Thraliana* 1: 311-13). Hester came to understand that using her rhetorical abilities outside of the home could help her gain influence within it.

Hester assisted her husband with political canvassing, which increased her public reputation. In 1774, the Thrales and Johnson went on a tour of Wales, which concluded when they stopped at Edmund Burke’s home and received “the ever hateful News—that Parliament was dissolved, & we must all go home to canvassing” (*Thraliana* 1: 316). Hester and her husband now “hurried to Town to quiet the Minds of our Constituents who were run mad with Republican Frenzy, and had made choice of a half American Representative.” She conciliated enough of the voters and Mr. Thrale won the election. Her husband treated her very kindly afterwards for being “useful at the Election” (*Thraliana* 1: 317).

Hester’s activity as a canvasser for her husband’s position as Member of Parliament for Southwark became publicly known. In 1774, she became a character in a satiric essay in the *London Magazine*. In the “Harlequin’s Plan for a New Parliament,” she and other women writers and conversationalists such as Elizabeth Montagu, Charlotte Lennox, and Catharine Macaulay magically replace Members of Parliament. Although none of the above women were described at all, Hester was jestingly called a “very petticoated Demosthenes” as testament to her publicly known verbal ability. The article also hinted at Samuel Johnson’s role in empowering her, saying that she was elected by “Chesterfield’s hottentot” (it was believed that Chesterfield had been describing Johnson when he described in his letters, published in 1774, the character of a respectable hottentot). In 1777, Hester reported that “Mr. Johnson and I are abused in the

Newspapers most ridiculously for Rambling Sam and the witty Electionora; [but] one would wonder how such Stuff could seriously grieve any one” (*Thraliana* 1: 24). Such public jibes may have been lightened or counterbalanced in her mind by the fact that in 1777 Hester was presented at court. Thus the brewery crisis and Mr. Thrale’s election campaigns provided opportunities not only for the rise of Samuel Johnson’s influence with the Thrales, but also for Hester’s increasingly public conversational expertise and reputation. Johnson and Hester’s mutual support enabled them to weather the notoriety and flattery that could result from a woman’s public rhetorical activity.

Samuel Johnson’s role as Hester’s mentor and collaborator in the conversational public sphere is rarely noted in biographies of either of them, but can be seen in Hester’s writings. Although Johnson was a prolific writer, he often expressed a value for conversation that surpassed that of literature. Talking with each other about conversation confirmed their belief in the social value of their expertise as facilitators and conversationalists. Conversation in the Thrale household became a sphere in which conversational rhetoric was learned and theorized and a site where people could engage in criticism of literary, scholarly, and political rhetoric. Rhetorical criticism enabled friends to improve their own ideas and expression in a variety of genres. One of the common activities of their parties was to read aloud and discuss creative literature, occasionally pieces written by someone present in the room, in order to better understand their beauties and flaws. Hester’s circle also discussed social and political news that was shared in print newspapers or reported by conversationalists whose roles involved them in political processes. In this era, knowledge was still largely transmitted orally, and print publication, although on the rise, was not the only way to public fame as a rhetor, creative writer, or scholar. To Johnson, fame as a writer was not sufficient in itself to establish a person’s more

widespread social usefulness; an author needed to participate in everyday communication of his skill and knowledge where he could informally teach what he knew: “when [Johnson] saw a person eminent in literature, though wholly unconvertible, it fretted him” (*Anecdotes* 266).

Hester agreed that one’s knowledge gains importance and social usefulness primarily by being communicated personally in conversation, noting, for example, that “This fact the learned Doctor Parr taught me where to find [in a book]; but it is a greater distinction for me to have gained it from his conversation” (*British Synonymy* 1: 276).

Johnson and Hester continually reiterated their belief that conversation was an important means of their own education. Samuel Johnson’s education, according to Hester’s second-hand account, was carried out largely by having a book in his pocket to read when he had a moment, and, as he said, “by running about the World with my Wits ready to observe & my Tongue willing to talk” (*Thraliana* 1: 164). Johnson recommended to young Miss Thrall, Hester’s daughter, that soon after listening to something being said in serious conversation, she ought to go to someone else and explain what it meant to exercise her memory and understanding. On a similar principle, Johnson encouraged Hester to write down and reflect on conversation in her *Thraliana*.

Neither Hester nor Johnson minimized the aesthetic and entertaining purposes of conversation. She reports Johnson as saying “There is in the world no real delight (excepting those of sensuality) but exchange of ideas in conversation” (*Anecdotes* 267). In *Thraliana*, Hester records that “Common, every Day Sense and a Power of Conversation on many Subjects was the Character Mr. Johnson most delighted to meet with” (1: 171). Johnson was not merely a passive recipient of the pleasure of Hester’s entertaining conversation. A great part of the delight that Johnson had in travelling with her family and friends was in the conversation that took place

in a coach with his captive audience (*Anecdotes* 276), and Hester tells of how he repeatedly kept his friends awake until three or four o'clock in the morning to converse with him, recalling them despite their attempts to retire (*Anecdotes* 125).

Hester also learned by reflecting on the faults of Samuel Johnson's conversational skills, as she had from her early tutor Arthur Collier. She learned the skill to bear with the conversational roughness of both men, smoothing it over to prevent it from spoiling general conversation in a party. Johnson provided a negative example with his often rude and combative speech and his rough manner, of which examples abound in her *Thraliana* and *Anecdotes*. In contrast to his own practice, Johnson would continually extol the virtues of a sweet and soft temper, such as Dr. Burney's (*Anecdotes* 144). When Johnson and Dr. Burney were together, she made sure "to keep those parts of their characters out of sight wch [sic] would have offended the other. This was a mighty easy operation to me, & I grew skilful in it by long Practice; nor was it in itself difficult, as Mr Johnson's great Deficiency both in sight & hearing put him so far in one's power" (*Thraliana* 1: 182). On one occasion, Frances Burney observed how virtuously Hester quietly bore Johnson's sharp rebukes during conversation. Hester explained to Burney, in Johnson's hearing, that she did so because her own vanity was flattered by his attention, and because "I have received more instruction from you [Johnson] than from any man, or any book" (D'Arblay 1: 129). Yet in this very same conversation, Hester frankly and directly charged Johnson with severity and cruelty to her guests. Johnson defended his behaviour by saying that she often asked him to commend people or things against his own judgement. Hester had the last word, however, when she defended why she, on the contrary, was usually lavish in praise: "Why I'll tell you, sir, ... when I am with you, and Mr. Thrale, and Queeny [Miss Thrale], I am obliged to be civil for four!" (D'Arblay 1: 129).

## Hester's Theories of Conversational Rhetoric

Arthur Collier's and Samuel Johnson's influence on Hester went far beyond her personal development as a publicly known and multi-talented conversationalist. Their influence was also a catalyst that, when combined with her continual practice, wide reading, writing, and reflection on the topic of conversation, enabled her to develop her own theories of conversational rhetoric, most clearly expressed in *British Synonymy* (1794).

In *British Synonymy*, Hester Thrale Piozzi's central claim is that the study of language is the basis of all knowledge and scholarship, and that principles of effective language use have their basis in conversational usage, not formal rules of grammar (or, by extension, rhetoric). Therefore, Hester reasons that one should go straight to the source and be a student of conversation: "These are the niceties of language that books never teach, and conversation alone can establish" (2: 29). Fine linguistic distinction is "learned only by conversation, or by trifling books like this [*British Synonymy*], wholly and solely colloquial" (2: 61).

Hester's *British Synonymy* provided important assistance for rhetors who needed to learn the "decorum" of conversational diction and usage. The eighteenth-century translation of Cicero's *Brutus* raises the issue of "decorum" and claims that "An unacquaintance with [decorum] has been the source of innumerable errors, not only in the business of life, but in Poetry and Eloquence. An Orator, therefore, should examine what is becoming, as well in the turn of his language, as in that of his sentiments" (284). Accordingly, the work is not merely about distinguishing between nearly synonymous words, but it subtly persuades readers to adopt the commonplaces and cultural beliefs that Hester wishes to be connected with the words. She also provides situational examples that demonstrate how terms are applied to different types of people, situations, and subject matter.

Hester's most articulate contribution to rhetorical theory is *Oratory, Eloquence, Rhetorick*, a brief essay within *British Synonymy* (2: 81-85). Selections from this essay illustrate how she connects women, rhetoric, and conversation. In this passage, Hester associates the goal of persuasion with the role of the male "orator" and the female "oratrix." A female actress proves her claim about women's higher probability for success in pleading one's defense (being an oratrix): "As proof of this, who would not rather choose Mrs. Siddons to plead a cause for immediate pardon from one's sovereign than Sheridan or Fox?" She notes that eloquent female conversationalists display their art even though they would openly deny that they have studied rhetorical theory: "I have a friend particularly eminent in such powers of charming her audience.... When she reads this, however, Mrs. P— will acknowledge that the very rules and terms of RHETORICK are unknown to *her*." To some degree, Hester approves of women's feigned or real ignorance of rhetorical rules. Rhetoric, Hester reasons, if it merely constitutes knowledge of theories and rules, is impotent without the powers of oratory and eloquence. As proof of this, she cites Samuel Johnson's opinion that persuasion in the House of Commons and in church (assumed to be consistent with formal rules of rhetoric) was rarely effective because it lacked genuine oratory and eloquence. And yet, Hester states very clearly that the science and practice of rhetoric are worthy of study: "ORATORY [is] a charming thing, ELOQUENCE a fine thing, and RHETORICK a great thing—for it comprises them both." While she associates "rhetorick" with the scientific or theoretical study of technique, and primarily with men in public office, she gives to women the palm of "eloquence" and acknowledges their skill in persuasive oratory. By the logic of her essay, rhetorical theory is the capstone of advice and principles that are built on the foundations of eloquent conversation and skillful oratory. Thus, she honours rhetorical traditions



and theories without relinquishing or minimizing the achievements of men and women in oratory and eloquence.

Hester's early formation under Arthur Collier helped her theorize the rhetoric of *sway*, the skillful influence deployed by those with limited authority, such as wives and private tutors. In her preface to *British Synonymy*, she cites Dr. Collier's quip that "women should learn rhetorick in order to persuade their husbands" (*British Synonymy* 1: v-vi). Taking Collier's cue about the applicability of rhetoric to the domestic sphere, Hester theorized the skill of "sway" as a type of government:

we must be GOVERNED *somehow*—either by RULE, as a husband in his house, where all acknowledge his authority; or like a wife in her family, who SWAYS by influence, and holds her limited power by perpetual attention not to disgust by its too rough exertions. Despotick sovereigns are obeyed as the *man* is in this case:—limited monarchs are contented to carry every point as a woman in her circle,

*And win their way by yielding to the tide,*

only adopting skill instead of strength. (*British Synonymy* 2: 231-32)

No doubt Hester was familiar with John Trusler's book of synonyms and his discussion of the synonyms *weight*, *influence*, and *sway*: Trusler writes, "Taking these words in the sense of having power over the minds of others; weight implies prevalence, though small; influence seems to have more force; sway is more absolute.[...] The art of finding out and taking advantage of the weakness of men forms the sway we bear over them" (149). As understood by both Trusler and Hester Thrale Piozzi, the skill or art of "sway" is more than a verbal strategy; it is a larger, strategic understanding of one's audience and the situational opportunities for influence. This perspective on the persuasive opportunities latent in a rhetorical situation is fundamental to the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric. As seen in this example, as well as in *The Lady's Rhetorick* and writings by Scudéry, women's rhetorical theory was adapted to

conversational situations and occasionally proceeded by way of analogy to public, masculine genres of rhetoric—by comparing and contrasting the techniques of persuasion in government to the techniques of persuasion used in the home or conversational salon.

## **Conclusion**

In Hester Thrale Piozzi's life and writing, one can see an example of a woman whose education and experience convinced her to consider intellectual conversation an important rhetorical arena for women and men. She learned this art early in life from her early tutelage under Arthur Collier, and developed it more publicly with the mentorship and collaboration of Samuel Johnson. As a mature thinker and writer, she was able to define the constituent qualities of the art and examine its close relationship to the domain of masculine, formal argumentative rhetoric, at the same time as she argued for the superiority and ancient origin of conversational eloquence. Hester's own rhetorical life and writing serve to confirm Collier's recommendation of rhetorical education for women, and also to confirm Collier's and Johnson's belief that mixed-sex intellectual conversation was a primary cultural scene for effective persuasion, rhetorical education, and entertainment.

Rhetorical educators today can benefit from observing three features of her rhetorical training that were especially effective. First of all, we see the example of a woman learning rhetoric in a way that made it applicable to the influential relationships and genres that were accessible to her as a woman of her social class. Although the rhetoric of modern mass media and politics is important in any society, it is relatively inaccessible to all but a few whose careers lead them down that path. However, conversational rhetoric is accessible to all, and extremely influential in a variety of cultures even if they do not theorize them as thoroughly as the

eighteenth-century British did. Reading eighteenth-century conversational rhetorics and advice books would raise students' awareness of the potential civic purposes and subtle strategies of rhetoric in this genre.

Secondly, even in a culture where men and women had very different rhetorical careers, Hester learned a lot from her male mentors and from masculine rhetorical theory, not only from the imitation of female conversationalists in the Bluestocking world. This demonstrates that although gender is an important factor for rhetorical *ethos* and one's choice of strategies, most rhetorical principles can translate across genders, and therefore men can learn from women's rhetoric, and vice versa. By comparison with men's rhetoric, Hester became more aware of both the cultural limitations and opportunities for women's rhetoric.

Thirdly, and most importantly, in the records of Hester's life we can observe her and her mentors not only continually practising their art and reflecting on their practice, but also using private, informal writing to describe conversational anecdotes, critique them, and develop theories of good conversational rhetoric. Hester's practice of keeping a journal of conversational anecdotes and character portraits was one of her most important methods of rhetorical self-education, which strengthened her conversational skills and furnished materials for her later published works. Samuel Johnson first suggested in 1768 that she keep a diary of conversation; thereafter she collected her observations in the *Thraliana* diary, which was officially begun in 1776. The edited collection, ending in 1809, now comprises over 1,000 pages of text in two volumes in Katherine Balderston's edition. Some of the rhetorical theories of conversation that she constructed through informal writing in *Thraliana* were later expressed in her *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson* and *British Synonymy*.

Rhetorical historians should continue to conduct primary biographical research into men's and women's rhetorical lives in order to better understand how both men and women interacted with each other to learn, practise, and achieve fame as rhetoricians, as Hester Thrale Piozzi did. This will help to develop a more comprehensive view of rhetorical history that can encompass the contributions of both sexes through all genres, and the importance of informal ways of learning rhetoric and informal forums of rhetorical practice. Biographical analysis of the processes of informal rhetorical education and identity formation is very important to rhetorical history in general, but especially for women and for politically marginalized groups, such as religious dissenters in eighteenth-century England. If people suspect that women like Hester Thrale Piozzi were just naturally eloquent without the benefit of careful informal and self-education about rhetoric, then their rhetorical expertise and success may seem either a matter of luck or something that they could not help but express—hardly an art. But if there is biographical evidence that a number of eighteenth-century women were tutored in rhetoric and mentored in conversational arts, and that some theorized conversation as rhetoric, then our rhetorical tradition is not as limited to formal oratory as some have supposed.

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## **A New Rhetoric for Modern Jewish Studies: Moses Gaster's Redefinition of Jewish Homiletic Concepts**

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...the telling of stories has a key part in educating us into the virtues.  
(Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue* 201)

In the history of Western rhetoric, there are conspicuous gaps waiting to be filled and barriers still waiting to be broken down in an overall act of integrative synthesis. Such an attempt at integration is the topic of this paper, which aims at retracing the comparative methodology applied to the rhetoric of storytelling in the work of Moses Gaster, a scholar trained in the academic study of Judaism, a discipline known initially as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Closely related with the general program of reform of Modern Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was born as a discipline that sought to apply a program of integration and research to the history of cultural transmission; as such, the modern study of Judaism followed a rigorous and systematic program of inquiry into an ever broader area of resources, trying to understand how the struggle for Jewish emancipation could be supported by the work of the humanist scholar. In this context of modernization, the work and the ideas of Moses Gaster stand apart, both for their originality and for their omissions, as we shall see. They are today still either unrecognized or greatly misunderstood, leaving a massive gap in the understanding of this important area in the history of ideas.

Moses Gaster was born in Bucharest in 1856, in a Jewish middle-class family; after finishing high school in Bucharest, he went to Germany and enrolled in both secular and religious studies, obtaining a doctorate in Romanic studies from the University of Halle in 1877 and, in 1881, a rabbinic diploma from the Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar, the famous

theological seminary of Breslau and the intellectual centre of the newly established discipline of Jewish studies. There he studied with illustrious scholars representing the new discipline: Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875), Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891) (history), and David Rosin (1823-1894) (Rabbinic Philology, homiletics, and *midrash*). After his return to Bucharest, Gaster took an active part in the intellectual life of the recently liberated Romania,<sup>1</sup> publishing and teaching on Romanian popular literature, which was at the time a disciplinary sub-field of Romanian philology. Instead of considering his Eastern European roots a handicap, he was able to see in them an opportunity for building a new field of cultural studies. At the same time, he also took an important part in the fight for the recognition of civic rights for Romanian Jews; in 1885, during one of the anti-Semitic backlashes, he was expelled and forced into exile. On his arrival in England, he was invited to give the Ilchester lectures at Oxford, a series of conferences in which he described and analyzed important structural elements of the East European culture, mostly Romanian, defined by him as “Greeko-Slavonic [sic].”<sup>2</sup> In the following years, he became Haham of the Sephardic community and a leader of the budding international Zionist movement.

His research also flourished, and he published an impressive number of scholarly books and papers: for some, Gaster indeed tried to do too much, while, for many others, he remains a polymath, whose knowledge of the popular culture was both widely encyclopaedic and minutely precise. In retrospect, one can recognize today that, due to this great diversity in scholarly interests, Moses Gaster’s grasp of the dynamics of theories and methods that, at the time, tried to make sense of a vast and barely charted territory was not only quite extensive but also

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<sup>1</sup> Romania gained state independence in 1877, after the war against the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The theoretical conceptualization of the ancient and popular cultures of the Romanians is still a matter of intense controversy, since the debate is perceived as bearing geopolitical consequences. Gaster’s definition of Romanian culture as “Greeko-Slavonic” stresses the religious character of the Romanian culture and neglects the powerful Latin influences. In the end, this definition has a powerful effect of opposing the religious and the linguistic in the representation of popular ethnic identity.

exceptionally accurate. He seems to have been mainly interested in articulating a comprehensive theory of the meta-literary tale, in its dual realization as popular (i.e., ethnographical and folkloric) and religious short story. Thus, his scholarship extended to an analysis of both the classical folkloric (“popular”) story and the rabbinic short story, or *aggadah*,<sup>3</sup> following in his theoretical articulations a complicated road as he tried to adjust his thought to the methodological lexicon of the times. Starting as an adept of Friedrich Max Müller’s theory of solar mythology, in time he developed a personal theory that stresses the changing and adaptive capacity of the popular culture, with a central focus on communication, migration, and contacts. His, therefore, is a broad anthropological and humanist vision that privileges communication. To his fellow folklorists, engaged in the survival interpretation of popular literature that was prevalent at the time, he would often recommend: “Stop looking for origin and start looking for transmission!”<sup>4</sup>

Increasingly concerned with a functional understanding of cultural phenomena, Gaster did indeed look for a unifying semiotic element of what he and his contemporaries believed to be two separate, yet not entirely unrelated, cultural fields: the religious tale and the “popular” story. Thus, when, in 1924, he published his *Exempla of the Rabbis*, Gaster did indeed achieve a *redefinition*<sup>5</sup> of the rabbinic tale within a field of the Humanities that was already looking for a formalistic (and—arguably—a pre-Structuralist) approach. I believe that this redefinition is important for many reasons, signalling a turning point in the study of Jewish oral literature and opening the way towards a new and more complex understanding of the relationship between

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<sup>3</sup> נגזר

<sup>4</sup> See *Gaster Anniversary Volume* (1936) and *Gaster Centenary Publication* (1958). Gaster’s interest in the communicative dimension of the folkloric narrative, particularly the Jewish one, is expressed in an early study *Jewish Folk-lore in the Middle Ages* (1887), where he stresses that the specific contribution of the Jews to an ideal universal stock of literature, constituted also by their mediation and “spiritual” exchange between East and West.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of *redefinition* has its origin in rhetoric (first mentioned by Quintilian), being currently used by Quentin Skinner as an epistemological construct that links the past and the present in a continuous yet complex intellectual history of ideas.

Jewish and non-Jewish traditions, between parallel histories of oral creation and communication, and ultimately between the sacred and the secular. Last, but not least, Gaster's bold redefinition of the *aggadah* as *exemplum* did indeed anticipate a renewal of the scholarly interest in preaching that is—once again—intensely explored nowadays.

In his complex and multifaceted cultural synthesis, Gaster's identification of the *exemplum* with the *midrashic aggadah* is quite paradigmatic, engaging a significant reconceptualization of the Jewish homiletical tradition by linking it with the history and the terminology of classical rhetoric, of Aristotelian-Ciceronian genealogy, yet preserving a significant link with the pre-modern tradition of the *derashot*,<sup>6</sup> at the centre of the mainly medieval religious tradition of sermon composition. In my present contribution, I would like to probe in some detail the full impact of this cultural translation, by examining the correlations and the differences between Gaster's study of *exempla* and the study of *exempla* and *aggadot* by his contemporaries.

When Moses Gaster started his study of the rabbinic tale, he knew that he was already continuing in the scholarly tradition of great forerunners, the founding fathers of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*: the first generations of the *Haskalah* scholars realized the importance of retrieving the history of liturgical traditions in support of their claim that Judaism has survived by change and adjustment. Starting with Leopold Zunz's foundational study *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (The History and Development of Jewish Homiletics), published in 1832, the exploration of homiletic practices and discourses became the focus of examination for many scholars: Adolf Jellinek (1821-1894), David Kaufman (1852-1899), Sigmund Maybaum (1844-1919), Louis Ginzberg (1873-1953), and

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<sup>6</sup> *Derasha* (pl. *derashot*): "sermon" in Hebrew.

Wilhelm Bacher (1850-1913), to cite only a few.<sup>7</sup> The entire movement that strove to adjust and renew the traditional knowledge of the Jews, correlating and synchronizing it with the modernizing movements in the Western world, was strongly predicated on the basic assumption that the values of change and progress were necessarily positive. At the same time, another basic assumption was the one that articulated the reality of change and progress through the possibilities of an efficient educative process: instruction had to be persuasive and the pulpit should also be used towards this goal.<sup>8</sup>

Sermons and sermon composition thus have an extremely important function within the general project of popular betterment: homiletic, or the rhetoric of preaching, receives a central significance. Much as their Protestant and Catholic colleagues, the Jewish scholars also believed in the fundamental merits of instruction and edification. In their fight for Jewish modernization, the founders of the Haskalah looked then into the traditions of synagogue practices of eloquence in order to discover and rebuild a tradition of instruction from the pulpit that, in their opinion, could be traced back to Biblical times. At Breslau, in particular, the homiletic tradition was highly valued: Gaster's interest in the sermonic tale was probably born at the seminary, where, in the footsteps of Manuel Joel and under the guidance of both Heinrich Graetz and David Rosin, the study of preaching models became central to the knowledge of Jewish tradition. The Jewish *artes praedicandi* were also perceived in their quality of witnesses from the past, which had to be modified and adjusted to modern times. But, like many reformers, in their haste to change and critique, the first generations of the scholars of the Haskalah jettisoned most of the *derashot*

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<sup>7</sup> For a classic and quite comprehensive overview of the fundamental changes in the nineteenth-century Jewish ideology of homiletics, see A. Altmann's two studies: "The New Style of Preaching in Nineteenth Century German Jewry" and "Zur Frögeschichte der jüdischen Predigt in Deutschland: Leopold Zunz als Prediger." A complex and lucid view of the history of the German Haskalah is given in Michael A. Meyer's *Judaism within Modernity*. The current renewal of scholarship in Jewish traditional and modern homiletics is mentioned further.

<sup>8</sup> "The Jewish preacher is first and foremost a teacher of Torah," writes Ely E. Pilchik in *The Textual Sermon* (88).

tradition, thought to be embarrassingly primitive for the new age of modernity. Gaster, in contrast, chose to focus his scholarship on this particular field of narrative tradition, otherwise ignored or neglected, realizing its value.

Nowadays, the history of Jewish preaching is able to recover a living and lively tradition of homiletic practices and discourses<sup>9</sup> that has long been neglected; but, especially in Gaster's times, the general tendency has been to think about the homiletic tradition of the Jews in terms that were highly segregated, following trends and models that were quite close to the religious presuppositions of the scholars involved, so that different historical traditions remained enclosed within already differentiated denominational fields. Gaster's analysis, however, was different because it was programmatically comparative. As I have already mentioned, Gaster also started by studying the *aggadot* as a particular type of discourse in the Talmudic and post-Talmudic ages, with an interest in the identification of the "popular" stream. He looked deeper than most into the functional articulation of these collections of stories and decided that, in fact, the tales he was studying qualified as *exempla*. This realization allowed him to align them with similar storytelling *corpora* and, in turn, he could proceed to a comparative study of reappraisal and redefinition. His comparative redefinition has at least two elements that deserve our attention: one is the definition of *exempla* in terms of rhetorical conceptualizations characteristic of the nineteenth-century understanding of the past, the other is the consequence of this definition for the future paradigm of Jewish Studies.

In the second part of the nineteenth century, the academic research of *exempla* became a scholarly discipline that brought together a careful philological methodology and an assumption of return to a history of the "popular" voice that was otherwise lost. This new disciplinary field

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<sup>9</sup> Among others, by David Ruderman, Marc Saperstein, Fabrizio Lelli, Jean-Pierre Rotschild; see the Works Cited.



was the study of “folk-lore,” actively engaged in the search for scholarly recognition. The timely rediscovery of large sermonic *corpora* encouraged a type of scholarship that was fast becoming multidisciplinary and comparative. In the beginning, the effort was focused on the retrieval and classification of the tales, within linguistic and national limits, but soon the sheer quantity of the material made necessary an intense work of conceptual revision. Starting with the last decade of the nineteenth century, every *exemplum* specialist was challenged by the difficulty of defining the object of his or her study: the ubiquity of medieval *exemplum* is only matched by its polymorph typology, and this, in turn, necessitates comparative methods in both evaluation and discussion.

The disciplinary regime of the *exempla* study was by its discursive location transitional and interdisciplinary, bringing together notions from folklore, poetics, rhetoric, and Biblical criticism. These studies seem to have appropriated the “mission” of the folkloric studies, first articulated by Herder in the eighteenth century: to retrieve the popular spirit by collecting its anonymous creations living in oral variations as stories.<sup>10</sup> In a similar way, the homiletic *exempla* were also thought to be representative of the culture of the people, frequently hidden by the higher forms of the written culture. In fact, they had the added interest of being preaching aids, thus pointing to a pragmatic context. As such, the medieval collections of *exempla* clearly revealed normative codifications that were an integral part of the collections. Sermons, in turn, were shaped by pre-existing sermonic models and revealed a specific eloquence pointing to a rhetoric proper to the public religious space. The academic study of *exempla* became an endeavour that defined a particular field in the humanities, a discipline that brought together

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<sup>10</sup> See Herder’s *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774), *Alte Volkslieder* (1774), *Volkslieder* (1778), and others. For Gaster, as for other Jewish thinkers, this vocation would also be supported by similar views expressed by Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the main voice of the Jewish Emancipation.

methodologies that adjusted and adapted to the study of the higher culture the methodological practices and procedures proper to the study of the oral, “lower” culture and that sought to impose on both an integrative semiotic. At the same time, the study of *exempla* provided an important link between the sacred and the profane in a culture that was increasingly secular. The many studies and collections of *exempla* published between 1890 and 1920 are illustrative in this sense.

In Gaster’s case, however, the overlapping fields of narratology and cultural (or folkloristic) ethnography provided an opportunity to reshape the generic typology of the short rabbinic story, which, in turn, made Gaster perceive it as a particular realization of a rhetorical structure. This means that he had to reorient the purely religious approach to the Jewish narrative, mostly represented by rabbinic theology, in order to include the tale or the story in a wider and more comprehensive discursive frame; so, instead of focusing on the religious content of the tale, Gaster’s approach stressed the quality of orality in its presence and transmission. In turn, this approach engaged a revision of his former tale-theory, mostly secular, in order to accommodate its study to a predominantly religious and scriptural context. In this way, Moses Gaster had to reshape and rethink a complex set of methodological assumptions and thus accomplished a paradigmatic shift in methodology, which, in turn, led to his new understanding of the Talmudic tale. Consequently, the medieval collections studied by him have been included in a new interpretive paradigm that is controversial because it still displays the contradictory ideological pressures that lead to its main constitutive strategies. On the one hand, Gaster had to take into account the traditional opinion according to which the *aggadot* belong to pre-Talmudic

times, thus satisfying the principles of the *Volkskunde* (ethnographic) ideology of his time.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, in order to accomplish this task, he had to acknowledge an element of change and, in turn, this element is justified by the change in the preaching tradition itself. Or, change in preaching and praying practices was—as we have seen—also advocated by the Jewish reformers of his time, who were eager to support their ideology of Jewish modernization by an argument from tradition. This signification is clearly seen if we also examine Gaster’s sense of social meaning pervading his ideology of Judaism as an ethnic religion.<sup>12</sup>

In Gaster’s view, the homiletic practice is essentially and centrally defined by its social value, by its being situated in the religious public space. This is a space of community affiliation, of shared knowledge, and of congregational ties that both define and represent Jewish identity through a powerful awareness of sociability. The “*exempla* of the rabbis” then have an iconic as well as an indexical meaning because they are located at the very centre of a culture of shared worship: stories transmit codes of practical behaviour, of ideal attitudes, and of various cultural practices, foregrounding social rules, procedures, and normative ethical structures. The normative meaning of the *exemplum*, is, in the context of the Rabbinic Talmudic culture, defined by its very existence as an associative element in the overall Halakhic (legalistic) frame.

According to Gaster, the rabbinic *exemplum* is shaped by its homiletic function, and it is indeed this specific discursive function that satisfies the needs of social meaningfulness; in turn, this particular yet central signification changes any previous meaning these tales might have had in the past, in different contexts:

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<sup>11</sup> Nowadays, the general opinion is that the stories studied by Gaster as *exempla* are medieval, and thus definitely post-Talmudic. The earlier dating currently reproached to Gaster is also a result of his desire to retrieve and reinvent a Palestinian heritage.

<sup>12</sup> The complex redefinition of the Jewish religion as both civic ideology and plural paradigms of the sacred forms the topic of a different study, in progress.

The character of these stories becomes then somewhat altered. The tale is no more told nor listened to for the mere pleasure of telling or listening. It is not the mere aesthetical enjoyment of the production of a lively and poetical fancy as they were when told and heard for the first time. In the new collections they are made to serve a purpose: they are told as an “*exemplum*” in order to teach a lesson, to convey a “*moralisatio*”. They serve, so to say, as a basis for sermons. They are the starting points for homiletical interpretations of the Scriptures and are not merely incidental illustrations as in ancient times. (Gaster, *Exempla* 6)

A careful study of the illustrative tale is then an open invitation to perceive the *aggadah* in a new paradigmatic frame and is bound to realign it with the prevailing parallel scholarship in the field, studying the preaching tools as integrated into medieval rhetoric.<sup>13</sup> Defining the *aggadah* as *exemplum* leads to its virtual integration in a rhetorical tradition that has for centuries been thought alien at best, and hostile at worst, many times misunderstood and misjudged: the Christian tradition of preaching, or sacred rhetoric.<sup>14</sup>

For the most part, every author that has previously studied the *aggadah* has indeed perceived it as an illustration of Jewish diversity in separateness and isolation. In order to develop his critical methodology of the *haggadic exemplum*, which is programmatically comparative, Gaster had to create a new discursive order, the order of modern Jewish rhetoric, which—in his time—was almost non-existent and in our own is slowly emerging. It is for this reason perhaps that his originality is hardly acknowledged, even within the discipline of the Jewish studies. The type of analogical comparatism thus practised is rather more “genetic” (not

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<sup>13</sup> He also stresses, later in his study, “I am reclaiming for the history of the homiletic literature not merely one but a number of books, whose connection with the sermon has not been sufficiently recognized.” (*Exempla* 23).

<sup>14</sup> The first Jewish published text to even include the word “rhetoric” in its title (although not in its text) is probably Ludwig Philippson, *Die Rhetorik und Judische Homiletik* (1890). The book is a collection of papers published previously in the Jewish press and published posthumously by M. Kayserling, who probably did choose the title. In the original German text, the terminology used is usually either *Redekunst* (“art of discourse”) or *Beredsamkeit* (“eloquence”). Despite its obvious fragmentation and lack of system, the publication offers a good image of the effort towards rhetorical theorization and reflection involved in the creation of a normative discourse regarding Jewish preaching practices. This was done by updating the elements of traditional Jewish liturgy through an adaptive process of imitation after modern Protestant homiletics.

quite “historical”), because its focus is towards the establishment and retrieval of the ancient root and origin, the very source of the *exempla*-tales. In Gaster’s case, however, genetic comparatism and folkloric parallelisms coincide in a structural functionalism that is quite distinct in its analyses. Moreover, according to Gaster, the historicity of the comparative view is an integral part of what he perceives as the persistent part of the “Jewish spirit,” the Jewish “Volksgeist” expressed in the communal discourse. In his thought, the main feature of the Jewish spirit would be a deeply ingrained sense of criticism, of freedom of expression. Speaking of Maimonides’s attempt to simplify the interpretation of the Halakhic code by reducing its “shield” of historical explanations and thus considerably diminishing the argumentation from authority, Gaster notes,

However great the respect may be in which men of learning are held in Judaism, however important may be the position assigned to them, there is nothing in it of blind obedience, of accepting their pronouncements in matters of law as final rules. The Jewish spirit always loves to soar in the free atmosphere of thought and research, and will never submit to be put into the strait-jacket of fixed forms and norms, unless at the same time the reasons are given, the whole mechanism of argument and discussion, of logical interpretation and deduction is laid bare.

(*Studies and Texts* 703)<sup>15</sup>

The identification of the rabbinic tale with the exemplum leads Gaster to a careful method of abstracting and indexing his corpus, a methodology of a comparative style that is inclusive and broad. His abstracting and indexing of the aggadot found in the *Sefer ha Masyiot*, a collection of Hebrew tales from the Middle Ages, is thus similar to Crane’s, Liebrecht’s, and Oesterley’s and, closer to us, to the one used by Tubach in his work.

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<sup>15</sup> Gaster adds, “We like to see the things grow, to watch them from their first inception to the final ripening, and we insist of being present during the whole period of evolution and growth. Every precept is at some time a religious duty, and we are not expected to perform them at the simple bidding of an individual, however highly placed in our estimation, unless we hear also the motive, the pros and cons of the controversy, and are placed in a position to adopt one decision or the other” (*Studies and Texts* 703).

Once the similarity between *exemplum* and *aggadah* is recognized, Gaster is able to draw some interesting consequences, since he is clearly able to integrate a whole terminological register proper to the structural and exegetical rhetoric of the Jewish homiletics into the broad rhetorical terminology of classical inspiration used by the *exempla* scholars. Furthermore, he will follow the same methodology in redefining the status of the Yiddish collection of tales *Maaseh Buch* (*Ma'ase Book*) and, later, will even try to discuss along similar lines the collection of “popular” stories gathered and adapted by Anton Pann, a nineteenth-century Romanian folklore editor and publisher. Gaster, like his English, French, and German colleagues engaged in the study of *exempla*, is little interested in refining a differentiated typology of the illustrative tale: for example, he does not distinguish between parable and story, or between the *mashal* and the *ma'aseh*, a distinction that is today constituted as basic for the semiotic of the “midrashic imagination.”<sup>16</sup> He repeatedly defines the *haggadic exemplum* as a broad and all-inclusive category of narrative structures, defined by a unique homiletic function: “אגדה (Agada, legend, story)”, or “*Mashal*, that is a parable, an allegory, a story [...] *res gestae*, *Ma'aseh*, or as I would prefer to call them, *Exempla*” (*Exempla* 4; emphasis mine).

As I have already argued, Gaster treats the *exemplum* as a narrative discursive class defined by its homiletic function, a redefinition that is very close to that used by scholars examining Western medieval preaching practices. Needless to say, this approach is quite distant from the initial discussion found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (112-16). In turn this might explain the fact that in Gaster—as in Crane, for that matter—there is a lack of rhetorical references to the classical tradition of antiquity, even as it is used. Instead, the definition and discussion of the

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<sup>16</sup> See in this sense David Stern's many studies that show that between *parable/mashal* and *maase/exemplum* there is a semiotic antagonism, the first being truly polysemic, the second univocally determined by context; see Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (1996) and Michael Fishbane's edited collection *The Midrashic Imagination* (1993).

*exemplum* are mostly related to homiletical sources and rhetorical medieval authors: Gregory, Beda, and Alanus ab Insulis for Crane, explicit *midrashic* inspiration and critique for Gaster. Consequently, the probatory function held by the *exemplum* in Aristotle (where it is the rhetorical inductive counterpart of the *enthymeme*) is frequently replaced by the illustrative one. Furthermore, it is repeatedly stated that this short illustrative tale has, beyond its original ethical value, a strong aesthetic one and thus should also be appreciated as literature.

Before concluding this rather brief discussion, I would like to add a last note, this time related to the relation between Gaster's work on Jewish *exempla* and the revival of scholastic interest in the study of the medieval *exempla* currently taking place in many European countries: France, Germany, and Italy.<sup>17</sup> The present-day study of *exempla* points, on the one hand, to the great richness and variation of this narrative genre and, on the other, to its pragmatic functionality within the medieval culture of sermonic communication. Just as Gaster was led by his previous folkloric research to an understanding of the *haggadic* narrative material as rhetorical, more recent scholarship on ancient and medieval Christian homiletic is trying to differentiate between homiletic *exempla* and non-homiletic (or extra-homiletic) *exempla*. If the rhetorical quality of the *exempla* is not really challenged, attempts to arrive at a better understanding through the examination of a trans-discursive definitional comparison have led to a more precise comprehension of the exemplary discourses in fields such as history, theology, and pedagogy.<sup>18</sup> This better recontextualization of the *exempla* collections has also been accomplished under a more thorough study of the argumentation function of the short narrative

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<sup>17</sup> All these countries have developed strong schools of *exempla* scholarship and have been the scene of an intense movement of retrieval, editing, and publishing of important collections of medieval and late medieval collections of *exempla*, in turn generating a renewed interest for the *artes praedicandi*. Among the most prolific scholars in this area are J.Cl. Schmitt, J.Berlioz, C. Delcorno, P. von Moos, M.A. Polo de Beaulieu, F. P. Knapp, and W. Haug.

<sup>18</sup> See Jean-Yves Tilliette, "L'*exemplum* rhétorique: questions de définition" in *Les exempla médiévaux. Nouvelles Perspectives* (1998), and Peter von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik. Das rhetorische Exemplum von der Antike zur Neuzeit und die historiae im Policraticus Johannis von Salisbury* (1988).

form proper to the *exemplum*, an element clearly included in the classical Aristotelian-Ciceronian canon that forms the theoretical and methodical background for the use of *exempla* throughout the intellectual history of the West. This history is still awaiting the integration of the richly distinctive yet still segregated Jewish voice(s).

Moses Gaster's *Exempla of the Rabbis* brings a new and excitingly erudite voice to this overall history. His voice is an important contribution to discussions of the relationship between religious practices and ideas and other fields of scholarship in the humanities. By extending his research into orality along the lines inaugurated by the nineteenth-century studies of the *exemplum*, Gaster did, in fact, succeed in opening and articulating a new field, dedicated to comparative rhetoric, for the already respectable, yet mono-dimensional and still "enclosed" discipline of Jewish studies. His study of the Jewish homiletic register eloquently voiced the need for a systemic comparative approach to the vast and unruly "sea of tales."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This is a slightly changed version of the paper presented at the convention of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, UCLA, 2005, and read there by Susan Green. Parts of the research have been conducted with the financial support of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and have been subsequently used for various preliminary communications on related topics. For the improved accuracy of this version, I am indebted to the two anonymous referees who suggested valuable improvements. I would also like to thank the editor of *Rhetor*, who pursued her task with professional and collegial perseverance.



## Appendix 1

### Moses Gaster: Bio-Bibliographical Data

- 1856 Born in Bucharest, Romania, in a family of Sephardic and Ashkenazi ancestry.
- 1873 After being educated in Romanian public schools, Gaster went to Breslau and enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he became a disciple of Heinrich Graetz and David Rosin; in the same time, he took university courses at Breslau and Leipzig, registering for a degree in Romanic philology at the University of Halle; among his professors were Wilhelm Dilthey (Philosophy), Franz von Miklosich (Slavistics), Gustav Gröber (Romanic philology), and Stenzler and Schmulders (Semitic philology).
- 1877 Earned his PhD under the direction of Gustav Gröber, the most influential Romanist of the period, who encouraged him to further study the Romanian language and literature. Gröber published Gaster's first research papers on Romanian phonetics in the prestigious *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*.
- 1878 Gaster returned to Bucharest where he engaged actively in the Jewish movement for civil rights, collected manuscripts and old books, and studied popular culture. Published on various topics of Romanian folklore and participated in the *Junimea* (Young Romania) circle, a national intellectual movement dedicated to the intensification and spread of Enlightenment ideas in Romania; within this great Modernity project, Gaster prepared a monograph on Romanian popular literature and an anthology of old Romanian texts.
- 1881 Graduated from the Breslau Seminary and was ordained rabbi.
- 1883 Publication of *Literatura Populară Română* (Romanian Popular Literature).
- 1885 In October he was forced to leave Romania by government decree; after a brief period in Vienna, he settled in England (where he would be granted English citizenship in 1893).
- 1887 Delivered the Ilchester Lectures on Greeco-Slavonic Literature [sic] at Oxford, under the sponsorship of Fr. Max Müller and on the recommendation of Franz von Miklosich and G. Ascoli. Became Chief Rabbi, *Haham*, of the Sephardic Communities of British Jews and served as principal of the Judith Montefiore Theological College in Ramsgate (publisher of the *Montefiore College Reports*).
- 1891 Publication of his two volume *Chrestomatie Română*, a collection of early Romanian texts (sec. xvi-xix).
- 1894-1896 Publication, in a preliminary and partial form, of the *Exempla of the Rabbis* as a Montefiore College Report

- 1899 Publication of the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, a translation into English of a collection of Jewish medieval “legendary stories” with a lengthy critical introduction and a “full index.”
- 1889-1924 Contributions to various publications of folklore, Jewish culture and religion, homiletics, Romanian and comparative philology, etc. Served as president of the Folklore Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and as vice-president of the Royal Asiatic Society. Maintained a vast correspondence with many important scholars and political figures. Already very active in the Zionist movement, became a key figure in the persuasive campaign that led to British Government’s granting of the Balfour Declaration, considered today the first political step in the creation of the Jewish national state. In characteristic manner, Gaster disagreed with the final wording of the document, expressing strong reservations as to its political expediency.
- 1918 Resigned as *Haham*, but retained some influence in English political circles, as in the wider circles of the international Jewish movements for freedom, emancipation, and statehood. After 1933, despite his advanced age, he would participate in the efforts directed to saving the German Jews from the Nazi persecution.
- 1924 Publication of *The Exempla of the Rabbis*
- 1925-1928 Publication of the 3 volumes of *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*
- 1932 Publication of *The Samaritan Oral Law and Ancient Tradition*; the work opened a whole new field in the study of Jewish oral literature and raised the question of cultural diversity within Jewish and Hebrew traditions.
- 1934 Publication of *Maa’sseh Book: Book of Jewish Tales and Legends Translated from the Judeo-German*
- 1936 Publication of his critical edition of *Anton Pann: Povestea Vorbii*, Gaster’s last big work on oral communication and popular culture narration, dedicated to a Romanian popular storyteller, an iconic editor-publisher of mass literature and a religious composer of music.
- 1939 Moses Gaster died on March 5 after a short illness.

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# Les rôles des personnages féminins comme arguments contre l'usage de la force dans quelques récits de combat en France dans les années trente

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Picasso, lors d'une discussion : « [...] les femmes sont des machines à souffrir. »  
(Malraux, *Miroir des limbes* 800)

## Introduction

Qualifier de poudrière la situation politique des années trente, en Europe, pourrait passer pour un euphémisme. Dans un contexte politique tendu, alors que Mussolini et Hitler consolidaient leur emprise sur le pouvoir et qu'un conflit armé apparaissait inévitable, des gens de lettres comme Aragon, Bernanos, Brasillach, Céline, Drieu La Rochelle, Giono, Giraudoux, Malraux, Nizan, Saint-Exupéry, ont posé des gestes politiques concrets : ils ont écrit des articles dans les journaux, ils ont participé à des manifestations, ils sont devenus membres de partis politiques. Certains sont même allés au cœur des événements, au front, par exemple pendant la guerre d'Espagne, en tant que reporters ou combattants. Par leurs écrits, les littérateurs participaient aux grands échanges d'arguments sur la place publique. Ils étaient « engagés », selon le sens qu'Astier donne à ce terme, pour qui l'engagement se définit comme le fait de « combattre pour une idéologie [...] qui aiderait à modifier ou à détruire et remplacer l'ordre établi, et pour des valeurs qui permettraient enfin (peut-être?) de donner ou de redonner un plein sens à la vie » (27).

Dans la tourmente des événements des années trente, ont été publiés des récits de combat où les héros adoptent diverses stratégies face à l'usage de la force. Les textes de ce qui constitue le corpus du présent article ont été choisis parce que les auteurs ont participé à des combats.

Bernanos, Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, Giono, Giraudoux, Romains sont des vétérans de la Grande Guerre, tandis que Malraux et Saint-Exupéry ont vu le feu lors de la guerre d'Espagne. Il apparaissait pertinent, vu le sujet de l'article, de réunir des auteurs ayant de l'usage de la force une expérience directe. Les textes retenus sont essentiellement des récits de combat, où la menace de la force, ou sa potentialité, apparaît dans sa plénitude. Il faut remarquer dans ces oeuvres la relégation des personnages féminins à des rôles particuliers.

La question qui est posée ici consiste à déterminer quels rôles ont été réservés aux personnages féminins et quelles sont les visées argumentatives de ces rôles. La réflexion aura pour point de départ un commentaire de Simone Weil sur l'*Iliade* développant les implications pour les humains de l'usage de la force. Suivra une description des stratégies argumentatives qu'il est possible d'adopter pour contrer l'usage de la force avec une interprétation des rôles actanciels attribués aux personnages féminins découlant de ces stratégies.

### **L'usage de la force et les sexes**

Dans ses réflexions sur les conflits de son époque, Simone Weil sonde les sources historiques à la recherche d'explications sur le pourquoi des guerres. Rappelons, à propos de la philosophe, que son œuvre, même si elle a été publiée à la fin des années quarante, a été écrite au plus fort des tourmentes politiques des années trente. Dans ce contexte, Weil, analysant le plus vieux poème épique d'Occident, propose que « le vrai héros, le vrai sujet, le centre de l'*Iliade*, c'est la force. La force qui est maniée par les hommes, la force qui soumet les hommes, la force devant quoi la chair des hommes se rétracte » (11). Dans une optique rhétorique, l'usage de la force permet de régler un litige sans avoir à faire de sacrifice. La force départage immédiatement un perdant et un gagnant. Dans les années trente, les exemples d'usage de la force par les nations



ne manquent pas : la conquête de l'Éthiopie par l'Italie en 1935, l'envoi de troupes par Hitler et Mussolini en Espagne en 1936, l'Anschluss en 1938. Si les exactions commises au nom de l'idéologie fasciste abondent, il ne faut pas non plus passer sous silence celles qui furent motivées par des visées communistes révolutionnaires. Dans tous les cas, « Reared on war [First World War], extremist ideologues preferred violence to reason, action to rhetoric » (Mazower 22). Pour les penseurs promouvant ces idéologies absolues (Jünger, Marinetti, Drieu la Rochelle), dans un climat où le compromis ne semblait plus possible, la force brute apparaissait comme un moyen tenu en haute estime. Partout en Europe, afin de prendre le pouvoir, des formations politiques s'étaient dotées de milices pour effectuer des coups de main. Il s'agissait de véritables formations paramilitaires, avec uniformes et encadrement hiérarchique. D'autre part, les penseurs qui, comme Marx, Lénine et Trotsky, avaient réfléchi à ce que devait être une révolution populaire, affirmaient que la prise du pouvoir par le peuple ne pouvait se faire sans passer par la lutte armée. Ainsi, on lit chez Trotsky : « Le pathétique et la poésie de la Révolution résident dans le fait qu'une nouvelle classe révolutionnaire devient maîtresse de tous ces instruments de lutte et qu'au nom d'un nouvel idéal pour élever l'homme et créer un homme nouveau, elle mène le combat contre le vieux monde, tour à tour défaite et triomphante, jusqu'au moment décisif de la victoire » (89). Lorsque les arguments rhétoriques traditionnels ne suffisent plus, la pensée cède le pas à la force (Weil 21) et la lutte armée apparaît comme le seul moyen de régler le problème, c'est-à-dire de « poursuivre la politique par d'autres moyens » (52), comme dirait Clausewitz. L'usage du pouvoir de contrainte pour remporter le litige et soulager la tension, n'est pas sans conséquences importantes pour l'argumentation.

L'usage de la force l'emporte sur la raison et la justice. Bernanos parle d'ailleurs de l'emploi de la force comme de « l'indiscutable légitimité du plus fort » (98). S'il est vrai que la

justice aussi s'appuie sur la force, il faut que cette dernière soit mesurée. Or ce n'est pas le cas dans le discours de combat, où l'usage de la force n'apparaît soumis à aucun contrôle.

L'usage incontrôlé de la force détruit l'essence même de l'homme qui en est victime, puisque « la force, c'est ce qui fait de quiconque lui est soumis une chose. Quand elle s'exerce jusqu'au bout, elle fait de l'homme une chose au sens le plus littéral, car elle en fait un cadavre » (Weil 11). Il faut s'attendre à trouver dans les textes de combat un processus de déshumanisation de l'autre, qui permette de banaliser l'élimination de ce dernier.

L'usage de la force amène inévitablement à parler des armes parce qu'elles sont des instruments au service de la force et parce qu'en tant que symboles, elles exercent une fascination ensorcelante chez ceux qui convoitent ou craignent le pouvoir. Weil constate d'ailleurs, dans *Écrits historiques et politiques*, que les armes en viennent parfois à prendre toute la place : « De même la guerre, de nos jours, se définit par la subordination des combattants aux instruments de combat; et les armements, véritables héros des guerres modernes, sont, ainsi que les hommes voués à leur service, dirigés par ceux qui ne combattent pas » (233). Par un curieux équilibre des choses, à la chosification de l'ennemi correspond la personnification des armes. En effet, certaines armes portent des noms; il suffit de penser à l'Égide de Zeus, à Durandal, l'épée de Roland et à Excalibur, l'épée d'Arthur. Il en fut de même lors de la Grande Guerre pour désigner certaines armes, avec l'artillerie (le fameux « 75 »), la mitrailleuse (la Chauchat), le char (le Renault FT17), et l'avion (le Nieuport 17). Malraux se laissera envoûter par la puissance des avions de *L'Espoir*, dont il fera presque des personnages à part entière, qu'il s'agisse des avions de son escadrille ou des avions russes qui, à la fin, renversent le sort des armes en faveur des Républicains. On peut noter, au passage, que les avions de *L'Espoir* portent des noms : le *Jaurès*, le *Marat*, et le *Canard*. Malgré leur esthétique douteuse, les armes modernes, par leur

potentiel destructeur et leur symbolisme viril, plaisent aux hommes que la force fascine. On ne s'étonnera pas que, dans *Verdun*, Romans décrive le tir d'un puissant canon en usant de connotations sexuelles (262). Le symbolisme du phallus semble omniprésent : l'épée se présente tout en longueur, le fusil décharge par le bout. On peut faire les mêmes observations à propos du char et de l'avion.

L'allusion au phallus amène à parler d'une dernière caractéristique de l'usage de la force : le combat armé reste, à peu d'exceptions près, l'apanage exclusif du mâle. Ce fut le cas non seulement dans les années trente, mais aussi tout au long de l'histoire humaine. John Keegan, adoptant un point de vue anthropologique dans *A History of Warfare*, constate que le conflit armé se révèle être une affaire presque exclusivement d'hommes : « Women, however, do not fight. They rarely fight among themselves and they never, in any military sense, fight men. If warfare is as old as history and as universal as mankind, we must now enter the supremely important limitation that it is an entirely masculine activity » (76). Cette remarque du célèbre historien militaire pourrait expliquer pourquoi les personnages féminins occupent si peu de place dans les œuvres épiques ou dans les récits de guerre. Toutefois, leur effacement en tant que combattantes ou en tant que personnages ne signifie nullement que les femmes, au cours des siècles, soient restées indifférentes à la guerre, bien au contraire. Andrée Michel fait remonter le discours antibelliciste des femmes françaises au moins jusqu'à Christine de Pisan (11), mais ce sujet déborde le cadre du présent article.

### **Le rôle de combattante**

L'argument « héroïque » par excellence contre l'usage de la force consiste à user soi-même de la force. En pratique, il s'agit de combattre jusqu'à changer le rapport de force en sa

faveur. À noter qu'il n'est pas possible de simplement niveler le rapport de force, il faut que l'un des partis en vienne à dominer l'autre. Le combat résulte inévitablement en une situation où il y a un gagnant et un perdant. Pour qui utilise la force, le danger est grand, on le constate, d'en devenir une victime potentielle : « Qui frappe de l'épée périra de l'épée » rappelle Bernanos dans *Les grands cimetières sous la lune* (109). « C'est ainsi que ceux à qui la force est prêtée par le sort périssent pour y trop compter », renchérit Simone Weil dans son analyse de *l'Illiade* (22). La philosophe présage bien le risque d'escalade : « Un usage modéré de la force, qui seul permettrait d'échapper à l'engrenage, demanderait une vertu plus qu'humaine, aussi rare qu'une constante dignité dans la faiblesse » (26). Combattre l'usage de la force par l'usage de la force a pour conséquence, rappelle Girard, d'alimenter le conflit jusqu'à ce que soit entièrement consumé l'un ou l'autre des partis belligérants (46). Quoi qu'il en soit, le héros d'un récit de combat doit être en mesure de contrôler l'usage de la force, et non pas de se laisser dépasser par elle. Pendant la guerre d'Espagne, alors que la vérité était tout autre selon l'historien Thomas Hugh (205-206), Malraux présente, dans *L'Espoir*, des troupes républicaines faisant preuve de clémence en préservant la vie des prisonniers, et des nationalistes exécutant les leurs.

Dans une oeuvre littéraire, on désigne comme combattant un personnage qui use de la force pour parvenir à ses fins. Aucun des auteurs étudiés ne laisse aux personnages féminins l'option de prendre les armes. Il peut être intéressant de rappeler que les femmes n'obtiendront le droit de vote en France qu'en 1945. Jusqu'à ce moment, en vertu du code Napoléon, les femmes seront encore considérées comme des mineures. Il n'est donc pas envisageable de leur laisser l'usage des armes puisqu'elles n'ont pas, aux yeux des écrivains mâles de l'époque, de dispositions naturelles pour ce faire. D'autant plus, comme on l'a vu plus tôt, qu'un fusil ou une épée symbolisent si puissamment et si exclusivement la virilité.

On pourrait objecter que l'amazone, ce personnage issu de la mythologie grecque, portait les armes et savait les manier. Les textes la présentent cependant comme une femme dénaturée; l'amazone devait se brûler un sein afin de pouvoir tirer à l'arc. L'usage de l'arme, symbole exclusivement masculin, ne pouvait se faire qu'en sacrifiant une part de féminité. Il en fut de même pour Jeanne d'Arc qui a dû sacrifier ses longs cheveux afin de ressembler à un homme. De plus, Jeanne d'Arc a toujours affirmé avoir été choisie par Dieu « le père ». Elle se bat en Son nom et c'est Lui que l'on respecte en Jeanne, non pas la femme qu'elle est. Pour Rallo et ses collègues, la femme combattante doit donc nier sa féminité (139). Par contre, si certaines femmes symbolisent la guerre, comme Marianne et Jeanne, Brosnan rappelle que c'est parce qu'elles personnifient la mère patrie encourageant ses enfants à combattre (44). L'hymne national français commence d'ailleurs par ces mots : « Allons enfants de la patrie... ».

Mais pour en revenir aux personnages féminins des années trente, le fait est qu'il était, rhétoriquement parlant, trop audacieux de donner une arme à un protagoniste de sexe féminin. Et si on lui en avait donné une, ç'aurait été une erreur, comme le rapporte Saint-Exupéry dans « À la recherche de la guerre », un article écrit alors qu'il couvrait la guerre d'Espagne et qu'on trouve dans *Un sens à la vie*. Apercevant quatre hommes et deux femmes qui défendent un village, il note : « Je remarque d'ailleurs que les deux femmes ne savent pas tenir un fusil » (97). On lit dans la même série de reportages sur l'Espagne qu'il trouve « raisonnable » qu'on n'admette pas les femmes au départ des hommes pour le front (94). Les femmes sont ensuite désignées comme des « mères » qui « accouchent » des hommes. Cette vision quelque peu réductrice laisse entrevoir la conception hétéronormative d'un monde où chacun a un rôle prédéterminé à jouer. Le raisonnement ressemble à ceci : les attributs traditionnels des personnages masculins se prêtent admirablement bien au combat et il ne vaut pas la peine de

remettre les choses en question en attribuant les mêmes caractéristiques aux personnages féminins. Dans l'esprit des auteurs du corpus, donner l'usage de la force aux personnages féminins, ce serait soit risquer de dénaturer ces dernières, comme les amazones, soit risquer un usage inefficace de la force, puisqu'elles n'ont pas les compétences nécessaires.

Afin de mettre les choses en perspective, il vaut la peine de faire un rapide survol de l'évolution du rôle de combattante depuis la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. En réalité, même dans les nations les plus progressives, très peu de femmes ont embrassé la carrière des armes et les institutions militaires résistent hypocritement à leur présence, ce qu'entérine Creveland dans *Men, Women and War*. Dans la littérature, les personnages féminins faisant usage de la force restent rares. Cependant, on remarque l'émergence d'un nouveau type de personnage féminin dans la culture populaire, la superhéroïne, qu'on pourrait qualifier d'amazone féminine puisqu'elle combat et porte des armes sans rien sacrifier de sa féminité. On peut penser à Wonder Woman, à Barbarella (Jane Fonda), qui combat avec ses charmes, à Ellen L. Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), qui sait se servir des armes mieux que les hommes dans *Alien*, enfin à Xena (Lucy Lawless), qui combattait tout en étant enceinte.

Pour en revenir aux personnages féminins des années trente, s'il ne leur est pas donné l'option de prendre les armes, quels rôles leur reste-t-il?

### **Le rôle de pacifiste**

Au point de vue argumentatif, en faisant la promotion de la paix et de l'amour, on oppose à la force son antithèse. En gros, l'idéologie pacifiste consiste à affirmer que le maintien de la paix à tout prix reste une option préférable au combat, peu importent les enjeux. Giono souscrit inconditionnellement à cette vision pacifiste et son engagement passionné dans cette voie, à

l'aube de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le conduira en prison pour avoir incité les Français à refuser d'obtempérer aux ordres de mobilisation. Giono, dans *Le grand troupeau*, présente les personnages masculins et féminins comme des êtres débordants de vie. La vitalité hyperbolique de ces derniers contribue à créer un effet de contraste saisissant avec le phénomène de chosification décrit par Weil. À cette fin, le texte regorge de petits détails crus qui distinguent l'être vivant du cadavre : « Olivier rota un rot puissant » (159). Micheline Tison-Braun note que les paysans et les paysannes font naturellement figure de pacifistes (223) puisque leur occupation les amène à communier avec la nature. Puisque la guerre, qui détruit la vie, n'est pas une activité naturelle, les personnages dans *Le grand troupeau*, et plus particulièrement les paysans étant près de la nature qui crée la vie, se révèlent naturellement opposés à la guerre. Rhétoriquement parlant, Giono s'appuie sur le lieu de l'essence. Toujours de manière antinomique, comme l'usage de la force entraîne la destruction, la paix est envisagée comme un espace de création, d'où cette affirmation du papé, en conclusion du roman, en parlant d'un garçon qui vient de naître : « C'est là-dessus qu'on peut bâtir » (248). L'enfant, par essence, est une « créature », donc un produit de la paix, une continuation de la création. Pour rester près de la nature, pour favoriser la pro-création, le rôle attribué à un personnage féminin qui servira le mieux les visées pacifistes sera celui de sujet érotique.

Dans les années trente, lorsqu'on fait référence à la Grande Guerre, on s'en souvient comme d'un répertoire d'atrocités : des tranchées, de la boue, des rats et, surtout, une mort anonyme qui plane sur tout cela. Pour l'écrivain, il apparaît comme hors de question de faire un quelconque rapprochement entre ces horreurs et la femme comme sujet érotique (il faut cependant mentionner qu'Apollinaire a exploré des associations de ce genre, entre autres dans les poèmes qu'il a consacrés à Lou). En temps de guerre, l'homme consacre ses énergies à la

destruction de l'ennemi et cette mission doit l'accaparer tout entier. Le personnage féminin comme sujet érotique se voit immanquablement évacuée du texte de combat : il faut éviter de distraire le guerrier de sa tâche, mais aussi il importe de tenir à l'écart des activités de destruction un personnage voué à la « création ». Il s'agit encore une fois d'une vision hétéronormative du monde où les rôles sont prédéterminés. Dans les contes traditionnels, le héros qui revient victorieux de sa quête reçoit une femme en récompense (Propp). Cependant, dans le contexte des années trente, où les combats sont motivés avant tout par des idéologies, les récompenses potentielles s'inscrivent dans des projets de société plutôt que dans des quêtes individuelles. Ainsi, on ne trouve pas un seul personnage féminin ayant la parole dans *L'Espoir* de Malraux, roman où les héros incarnent d'abord des mouvements de société. Pour en revenir à Giono, sa stratégie argumentative contre l'usage de la force dans *Le grand troupeau* consiste d'abord à présenter le personnage féminin comme un sujet érotique, puis à lui accorder une importance égale à celle du personnage masculin. Le protagoniste de sexe féminin devient ainsi un obstacle à l'usage de la force. Giono alterne les épisodes du front, dépeint comme un monde sans femmes, et de l'arrière, dépouillé de ses hommes, ce qui met en évidence la facticité grossière imposée à l'ordre naturel, où l'on s'attendrait à trouver ensemble les hommes et les femmes. Dans les tranchées, les personnages masculins pensent aux épouses, auprès desquelles ils souhaitent retourner, et non pas à l'ennemi en face. Le désir érotique naturel mine la volonté de détruire.

### **Le rôle de martyr**

Céline, dans *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, dépeint Bardamu comme un personnage profondément marqué par son expérience de la Grande Guerre. C'est que l'usage de la force fait nécessairement des victimes. Dans le récit épique traditionnel, on les voue pudiquement à



l'oubli. Dans l'imagerie populaire, les glorieux tableaux de soldats fonçant au pas de charge, comme on en trouve à la galerie des batailles du château de Versailles, ont fait place, après la Grande Guerre, à des photos en noir en blanc montrant aussi bien des canons et des soldats que des ruines et des cadavres. En effet, la photographie d'actualité, encore à ses débuts, fournissait au peuple avide de nouvelles des images toutes fraîches du front. À cause du danger de s'exposer en première ligne et des pellicules qui demandaient un certain temps d'exposition, les photographes en venaient plutôt à braquer leur objectif sur des scènes plus faciles à croquer, c'est-à-dire les morts et les paysages de destruction (Puisseux 80). En partie à cause de ces nouvelles images, la victime allait prendre de plus en plus de place dans les récits de combat.

L'homme qui combat tire gloire de ses actions, même si son camp a perdu. Andrée Michel constate cependant que la femme, une fois le conflit terminé, est souvent détruite dans ce qui fait son identité (26). Réfugiée, elle a perdu sa maison. Veuve, elle a perdu son mari. Mère éplorée, elle a perdu un enfant. Violée, elle a perdu sa dignité. Dans les textes de combat, on ne s'étonne pas des misères que le personnage féminin doit endurer. Selon la tradition chrétienne, n'est-ce pas une « grâce » héritée de la faute originelle et que Dieu lui accorde, puisqu'on trouve dans la Bible : « À la femme, Il [Yahvé] dit : je multiplierai les peines de tes grossesses, dans la peine tu enfanteras des fils. Ta convoitise te poussera vers ton mari, et lui dominera sur toi » (*Gen. 3:16*). S'inspirant de cet esprit, Claudel écrit, dans *L'Annonce faite à Marie* : « VIOLAINE — [...] Le mâle est prêtre, mais il n'est pas défendu à la femme d'être victime » (157). Dans le corpus des années trente, le lot des personnages féminins semble être de souffrir. Même Giono, qui semblait faire bande à part avec ses idées pacifistes, fait dire à Julia qui force Madeleine à boire une tisane au goût horrible dans *Le grand troupeau* : « Force-toi, tu es une femme » (210). Dans le contexte, il faut comprendre : « Force-toi, tu sais endurer la souffrance ».

Quelle est au juste la valeur argumentative du rôle de martyr? Le protagoniste de sexe féminin souffre, autant dans son corps (prisonnière, blessée, violée) que dans son âme (veuve de guerre ou mère éplorée) et témoigne ainsi des abus de la force commis par l'autre camp. Pour la propagande, le personnage féminin martyrisé devient la preuve tangible et irréfutable que l'ennemi ne sait pas faire montre de mesure et qu'il est à blâmer pour l'escalade dans l'usage de la force. Si aucun protagoniste de sexe féminin ne prend la parole dans *L'Espoir*, en revanche Malraux exploite les victimes féminines.

Aurait-on pu envisager le personnage féminin qui souffre comme une victime émissaire, selon la conception qu'en propose René Girard? Dans les textes que nous avons vus, les souffrances des protagonistes de sexe féminin ne servent pas à mettre un terme à la vengeance sociale, bien au contraire. Les souffrances, réinvesties dans l'escalade de la violence, servent plutôt à aviver le *thymos*, cette colère qui excite le guerrier à tuer. Ainsi, les personnages féminins jouant le rôle de martyres participent à la propagande belliqueuse.

### **Conclusion : Le silence des personnages féminins**

Dans le contexte d'une Europe particulièrement tendue au point de vue politique, plongés malgré eux dans une période de profonde incertitude, sur la scène nationale autant qu'internationale, les écrivains du corpus circonscrit pour le présent article ont voulu proposer, par le biais de l'écriture, des idées pouvant contribuer à construire une société nouvelle et plus juste.

Les passions étant alors trop vives pour qu'il soit possible d'engager sérieusement un débat raisonné, les stratégies rhétoriques que les écrivains devaient utiliser s'appuyaient d'abord sur le pathos, l'idée étant de provoquer dans le public des émotions susceptibles de contrer un

usage incontrôlé et immodéré de la force.

Pour promouvoir efficacement leurs idées, il fallait que les écrivains recourent à des stéréotypes immédiatement accessibles au public. Plutôt que d'inventer de nouveaux rôles pour les personnages féminins, qui auraient sans doute mieux incarné les réalités nouvelles ainsi que les aspirations légitimes des femmes vivant à leurs côtés, les écrivains du corpus — tous des hommes — ont choisi de se rabattre sur les rôles masculins et féminins traditionnels.

L'imminence de la guerre représentait alors un danger pressant, et il paraissait plus urgent d'encadrer si possible l'usage de la force que de repenser le rôle traditionnel des femmes. La convention tacite des écrivains semble avoir été de s'accrocher à des certitudes, fussent-elles périmées, de manière à mieux faire face au grave conflit armé qui pointait à l'horizon.

Dans une perspective rhétorique globale, pour contrer l'usage de la force, les écrivains français engagés dans les grandes questions de leur époque avaient à leur disposition trois stratégies relevant du pathos : la force, la paix et la souffrance. On a vu comment se définissaient les visées argumentatives propres à ces stratégies, et comment étaient ensuite déterminés les rôles correspondants des personnages féminins. Qu'un écrivain choisisse de contrer l'usage de la force par l'usage de la force et le personnage féminin se voit refuser le rôle de combattante sous prétexte qu'on ne peut la laisser utiliser des armes, outils qui augmentent la force, certes, mais trop empreints de symbolisme masculin. Inspiratrice de l'amour et de la paix, le personnage féminin sera encore une fois mis à l'écart du récit de combat puisqu'elle nuit à l'usage de la force. Néanmoins, des écrivains comme Giono mettront en valeur l'érotisme des protagonistes de sexe féminin afin de soutenir leurs visées pacifistes. Enfin, les écrivains du corpus retenu n'hésitent pas à présenter le personnage féminin comme victime de la brutalité adverse. Cela sert bien le récit de combat en donnant au personnage masculin des raisons de combattre.

Les écrivains étudiés pour cet article se contentent d'encarcanner les personnages féminins dans des rôles qui servent leurs visées argumentatives. Aux personnages féminins n'est pas donné le rôle de sujet parlant. On n'entend pas ce qui pourrait constituer une perspective féminine sur la situation. Cette suppression aliénante de la parole chez les personnages féminins, créées par des auteurs masculins, frise la censure. Benoitte Groult, dans la préface du livre de Madeleine Gagnon, évoque le silence historique dans lequel on a relégué les femmes (10). Gagnon, à son tour, citant *Le livre des questions* d'Edmond Jabès, rappelle que « le silence n'est pas le mutisme » (24). En poursuivant cette ligne de pensée jusqu'au bout, on pourrait affirmer avec Marguerite Duras que « le silence, c'est les femmes » (104).

En faisant la synthèse des énoncés précédents, il en résulte l'idée que le silence des personnages féminins ne devrait pas être interprété comme un refus de parler. On l'a vu, la principale stratégie rhétorique employée par les écrivains du corpus consiste à présenter les personnages féminins comme des martyres afin de susciter le désir de vengeance des personnages masculins. Pour les écrivains mâles, le rôle de la martyre n'a pas de voix, il s'agit simplement de subir l'usage de la force.

Il resterait à découvrir la stratégie féminine sur les manières de contrer l'usage de la force. Selon les catégories qui ont été construites pour le présent article, il s'agirait encore de présenter le personnage féminin comme une victime de l'usage de la force, mais de lui donner la parole. C'est le projet de Madeleine Gagnon dans *Les femmes et la guerre*. Sans voix, le personnage de la martyre n'est qu'une excuse pour continuer le cycle de la violence. Seul un personnage de martyr ou de martyre prenant la parole a une chance de rompre le cycle de l'horreur. Mais c'est une démarche qui demande beaucoup de courage et, malheureusement, l'usage de la force s'accommode trop bien du silence.

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## The Muslim Headscarf Controversy in French Schools: A Sign of Inclusion or of Exclusion?

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The question of the Muslim headscarf, *le voile islamique* or *le foulard islamique*, is more controversial in France than in other European countries, and arouses more passion for and against it.<sup>1</sup> To be precise, the garment in question, a form of hijab, is the scarf or shawl that covers the head but not the face.<sup>2</sup> Some Muslims say it is an essential part of the faith that women should cover their heads and hair; others say it is not a religious requirement but rather a custom in the culture of some countries. In France, a law passed in 2004 forbids the wearing of *signes religieux ostensibles* (conspicuous religious signs) in public schools. Although the law applies as well to kippas, large crosses, etc., it is generally recognized that, in practice today, the main object is the veil or scarf worn by some Muslim women.

Over the years since 1989, when the question of the veil in schools arose, an enormous amount on the subject has been written in newspapers, magazines, and books. The issue is approached from legal, historical, political, and religious angles;<sup>3</sup> there is no clear division between the political left and right; and feminists take different stands. The arguments studied here are addressed to people having power or influence over the laws or the schools, and to the educated reading public who influence those who have such power. I have not considered any

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper was presented at the Congress of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric in May 2005.

<sup>2</sup> In this article I have used “veil,” more often than “scarf” or “headscarf,” to reflect a shift in French usage. The word that used to be more common to designate the garment, *foulard*, or “scarf,” suggests a very French item of clothing usually worn around the neck. The term that is more frequent today, *voile*, or “veil,” gives a different picture; the effect is to set the wearer apart from the rest of society. (*Voile* is also used for a nun’s veil.)

<sup>3</sup> A master’s thesis by Coryse Ciceri presented in 1998 at the Faculty of Education at the Université de Montréal analyzed articles about the veil in three daily newspapers in France and three in Quebec over a period of several months in 1994-1995. Ciceri grouped the arguments into the (partially overlapping) categories of *juridico-politiques*, *culturels*, *socio-politiques*, and *psychopédagogiques*. Although many of the same arguments that she observed are still used now, the categories in which I have grouped them are different.

arguments addressed to particular religious or ethnic groups (although the writers' religious beliefs and ethnic origin could of course be relevant to their point of view), or those in languages other than French. My study is limited to sources available to members of the general public in France, and addressed to them as French citizens.<sup>4</sup>

The debate that led to the law will be examined in the light of analyses of argumentation by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, particularly their discussion of the speaker's or writer's adaptation to the intended audience, and of universal values in relation to more particular ones. What I call here a debate resembles in some ways what Douglas Walton calls a forensic debate, whose purpose is to win a victory over one's opponent "by impressing the audience (or referee) of the debate," and in other ways what he calls a persuasion dialogue, in which each participant tries "to prove his own thesis by the rules of inference from the concessions of the other participant" (5). On both sides of this question, writers have accepted certain common values or premises.<sup>5</sup> While these values are reaffirmed by the different participants, they are nevertheless re-examined and reinterpreted in the new context of citizenship in France.

In order to be effective, arguments used to persuade people to adhere to a certain point of view must be suited to those people. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write, such argumentation "is, in its entirety, relative to the audience to be influenced" (19). For this reason, "knowledge of those one wishes to win over is a condition preliminary to all argumentation"

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<sup>4</sup> Most of my sources are books; I also cite newspapers, magazines, and some websites. Although some of the books are written by Muslims or people of Muslim background, they are addressed to the general educated French reading public (including Muslims) rather than specifically to Muslims as such.

<sup>5</sup> According to Govier, premises are acceptable if they are defended in a cogent argument; if they are necessary truths; if they are common knowledge; if they are based on testimony by an appropriate, credible person; or if they are put forward by people who possess specialized knowledge in the area. They are unacceptable if they are known to be false; if they are inconsistent; if they depend on faulty assumptions; or if they are not more certain than the conclusion, for example, if they beg the question. (Govier 78-92)



(20). In sum, “There is only one rule in this matter: adaptation of the speech to the audience, whatever its nature” (25). Furthermore, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca point out, universal values such as the True, the Good, the Beautiful, and the Absolute are very general, and specifying their contents will lead to disagreements.<sup>6</sup> This is certainly true in the case studied here.

In this debate about the veil, a garment with great religious and/or cultural significance, writers on both sides of the question have mainly avoided appeals to religion and called instead on principles of the French Republic, which were first proclaimed during the French Revolution and which even now appear above the entrance to government buildings: “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.” We will also see below the corollary value, specific to France, of *laïcité* (the secular nature of the state), and an anti-value, seen as dangerous: *communautarisme*.

### **Rhetorical Context**

Muslim immigrants to France, like other people living in the midst of a culture different from their own, must situate themselves in the continuum of separation—integration—assimilation. It is sometimes a delicate balance to be both Muslim and European, that is, a Muslim member of a society that has a strong Christian tradition. Indeed, some scholars maintain that the concept of Europe was formed over the centuries in opposition to Islam (see, for example, Gresh). Other writers emphasize the question of how Muslims choose to live in the modern world (see AlSayyad, AlSayyad and Castells, Leveau, and Leveau and Hunter, among others). The special case of France and its complex history of relations between Church and State must also be

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<sup>6</sup> “The claim to universal agreement, as far as [universal values] are concerned, seems to us to be due solely to their generality. They can be regarded as valid for a universal audience only on condition that their content not be specified; as soon as we try to go into details, we meet only the adherence of particular audiences.” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 76)

considered. Finally, as various authors point out, integration into French society today is not a matter of fitting into a fixed, uniform society; European life itself is changing rapidly, with immigration, globalization, and the increased importance of the European Union at the expense of the nation (see AlSayyad, Leveau and Hunter, and Lubeck). All these factors affect ideas and discourse about the veil.

Many of the voices that one hears are those of people who are not directly affected; they would not themselves have to consider whether or not to wear the veil. The majority of those who have written on the matter are white men (i.e., of European ancestry); a considerable number are women of European origin; some are Muslim men. Women who are either practicing Muslims or of Muslim tradition are a minority among those who express their opinions. There are of course exceptions; notable ones include the leaders of the movement *Ni putes ni soumises*, particularly Fadela Amara, and the writer Chahdortt Djavann. On the side of conservative Islam, one can find some female voices on various websites.<sup>7</sup>

Women in France may of course wear hijab in public and at universities; the question is whether it should be allowed in elementary and secondary public schools. The issue arose in 1989 in a school in Creil, a suburb of Paris, and the law that took effect in September 2004 was the outcome of the intervening years of debate about the place of Muslim immigrants in a France facing the challenges of immigration, the European Union, and globalization.

Europe, including France, “is increasingly becoming a multicultural society” (AlSayyad and Castells, Introduction, 2), and the adjustments necessary for this change are not always easy.<sup>8</sup> For centuries there was little ethnic diversity in France. After World War II, and especially

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<sup>7</sup> For a Canadian comparison, see the thesis of Tabussum Ruby, who interviewed Muslim women in Saskatoon about their views on the hijab.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bassan Tibi, both Europe and immigrants need to change: “the call for a de-ethnicization of

with decolonization, many people from the former colonies came to work in France.<sup>9</sup> Most of these immigrants came from Algeria and other North African countries, later from other countries in Africa and from the Middle East. At first they were men who expected to return to their home country after a few years. Either they were single, or they left their families at home. Thus these men were a foreign presence, and little effort was made to integrate them into French life. Around the 1970s, policies changed and families began coming to France, usually with the intention of staying. Once there are families, the children have to become part of French life, to be educated and, in most cases, to enter the work force. For the majority of first- and second-generation immigrants, the process of integration has been fairly successful, and they are part of the social and economic life of the nation.<sup>10</sup> Most are Muslims by origin, even though many of them do not practice their religion. The majority of those who practice consider their religion to be quite compatible with life in France. The fundamentalists are a minority; but they are a minority that gets a lot of attention.<sup>11</sup>

The veil or its absence has increasingly been regarded as a marker of religion, and/or of political and social views. In most cases in France, it is no longer part of family tradition; in recent years, some young women have adopted it, often against the wishes of their parents.

Among the reasons given by observers or by the women themselves are identification with a

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European identity” is correct, but it “must apply equally well to the identity of migrants” so as to avoid “one-way tolerance” (32).

<sup>9</sup> For summaries of the history of Muslim immigration in France, see Tibi; Leveau and Hunter; Malik 120-130; and Fetzer and Soper, 62-69).

<sup>10</sup> One problem is unemployment, which is rather high among young people in France in general and particularly high among those of immigrant backgrounds. One reason for the difference is the fact that young people of immigrant backgrounds have on average less education than those of long-established families, but there is also some discrimination based on ethnic differences (Leveau and Hunter 8-9.)

<sup>11</sup> Leveau and Hunter describe a range of tendencies among Muslims in France, in particular secular, conservative, fundamentalist, and Islamist. Islamists are similar to fundamentalists in some ways, but in addition wish to re-create “the ideal Islamic society and polity that existed at the time of the Prophet.” This movement is not very significant in terms of the number of active adherents, but it is important “because it appeals to a segment of Muslim youth who feel frustrated and excluded” (Leveau and Hunter 11).

homeland that has taken on mythic status for the young; pressure from the new fundamentalist or Islamist movements, and from young men who follow them; and a desire to protect oneself against male aggression by showing that one is modest and properly behaved, and that one should therefore be respected (Benbassa 59; Khosrokhavar 205-206.)

Because of the importance of schools in forming the values of the younger generation, questions about integration, assimilation, differentiation, and identity will naturally arise in this context. Within the schools themselves, there is supposed to be no differentiation among people for reasons of religion or ethnic origin. Thus the central part of the 2004 law specifies that the following is to be inserted in the Code de l'éducation:

Art. L. 141-5-1. - Dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit.

Le règlement intérieur rappelle que la mise en oeuvre d'une procédure disciplinaire est précédée d'un dialogue avec l'élève. (Loi encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité)

(In public schools, collèges, and lycées, the wearing of signs or clothing by which pupils conspicuously show their religious adherence is forbidden.

Internal rules recall that there must be a dialogue with the pupil before disciplinary measures are taken.)

The matter cannot be solved on a case-by-case basis in individual schools because the French educational system is very centralized. This is both an advantage, as it assures a fairly consistent quality throughout the country, and a disadvantage, as a problem in one school can become a problem for the whole system.

The 2004 law is based on certain fundamental principles of the French Republic. Like the French state, the French school system is *laïque* (“secular” or “neutral”) in matters of religion.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Fetzer and Soper note the important role that *laïcité* has played in the debate on the veil in schools. They consider that France's approach in this as in other matters related to Muslims is simply wrong: “In strong

The reasoning that led to *laïcité*—and to the 2004 law—is summarized in what is informally called the Stasi report, from Bernard Stasi, chair of the Commission de réflexion sur l’application du principe de laïcité dans la République. The report states: “La République française s’est construite autour de la laïcité” (“The French Republic was constructed around laïcité”). All democratic states, it says, respect freedom of conscience and the principle of non-discrimination; but France has erected *laïcité* to the rank of a founding value. This ideal was formed by the history of France; it is not a timeless value disconnected from society and its changes.<sup>13</sup>

The history to which the Stasi report refers includes the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, which were particularly harsh in France. It also includes the fact that until the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, all education in France was controlled by the Catholic Church. The revolutionary government tried to establish schools, but did not get very far before the French Revolution ended. Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a struggle between what was called *les deux France* (the two Frances): on the one hand, the conservative Catholic element of society, and on the other hand, the secular republican element (see Rémond).<sup>14</sup> A crucial step was taken in the 1880s during the Third Republic. Under the leadership of Jules Ferry, minister of Education, a number of laws were passed that made

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contrast to Britain, France not only has done precious little positively to accommodate Muslims' religious practices but has also exerted all too much effort to make Muslims' life even more difficult than it already is for this largely immigrant-origin, working-class population” (90). They seem to assume that French Muslims do or should identify themselves solely with their religion, not with their country. “Indeed, the situation for Muslims in some parts of France appears so bleak that one wonders why more do not emigrate to a more hospitable country such as Britain or Canada” (97).

<sup>13</sup> This statement that a fundamental French value is not timeless and universally valid contrasts with a widespread idea that French values are indeed universal ones, rational and based on the nature of things. According to Grossmann and Miclo, “Lorsque la France s’identifie à son idée de civilisation, elle ne parle jamais de ‘civilisation française’, mais de civilisation tout court” (“When France identifies itself with its idea of civilization, it never speaks of ‘French civilization,’ but simply of civilization”) (31). See also Coq on the relation between *laïcité* and the French Republic.

<sup>14</sup> In recent times the expression *les deux France* is sometimes used to refer to the division between the rich or well-off and the poor.

education—at least in elementary schools—secular, free, and obligatory. In 1905, just over a hundred years ago, a law was passed separating Church and State. Extremely controversial at the time, it was eventually accepted and remained so until recent years.

According to Alain Touraine, a member of the Stasi commission, the reasoning behind the law on religious signs in schools may seem complicated to those who do not know the history of France; but this history, with the long struggle between Church and State, is no stranger than printing “In God we trust” on the dollar, or having the Queen as the head of the Church of England (253). Because the year 2005 was the hundredth anniversary of the law of separation of Church and State, there was much discussion of the history and present practice of *laïcité*. There were special publications, public lectures, and controversy about whether the state was really neutral towards religions.

In the debate about the veil, certain kinds of reasoning, such as arguments from religious authority (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 305-10) were avoided; in this case, appeals to religion could clearly be divisive and counterproductive. As we have seen (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 19-25, Govier 78-92, Walton 5), successful argumentation must be adapted to its purpose and intended audience, and the assumptions made must be acceptable to that audience. As they wanted to rally both longtime and new French people to their views, authors on both sides of the question—often quite explicitly—tried to show that their point of view accorded best with the three principles in the motto of the French Republic: *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.

### ***Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité***

*Liberté* includes freedom of religion, which was Article 10 of the 1789 Déclaration des droits de l’homme: “Nul ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions, même religieuses, pourvu que leur

expression ne trouble pas l'ordre public établi par la loi.” (“No one shall be disturbed for his beliefs, even religious ones, provided that their expression does not trouble the public order established by law.”) It is guaranteed in Article 2 of the 1958 Constitution of the Fifth Republic: “La France [...] assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances.” (“France [...] ensures equality before the law to all citizens without regard to origin, race or religion. It respects all beliefs.”) This provision is found in Article 1 of the Constitution as now amended. As we shall see below, women at the time of this constitution in 1958 did not in fact enjoy full equality before the law; but at least the principle of equal rights was recognized, and would later be extended to all citizens.

The most obvious argument from freedom of religion is that people should be allowed to express their religious convictions, especially if their doing so does not harm other people. This is precisely the point made in some of the demonstrations against the new law, in which veiled women carried French flags and called on *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, thus proclaiming allegiance at the same time to their religion and to France. Furthermore, some people say that forbidding the veil restricts the religious freedom of Muslims in a way that other religions are not restricted. According to Yves Sintoner, no one has been excluded from school for wearing a kippa or a cross, and the appeal to *laïcité* in the matter of the veil is only a pretext for other motives (26-29).

Other people claim on the contrary that allowing the veil would restrict the freedom, religious and otherwise, of girls of Muslim background. François Pouillon writes that the veil brings religious arguments and divisions into the schools; it divides “good” Muslims from “not-good” ones, and so puts pressure on those who do not wear it. It is an offensive by

fundamentalists, carried out in a public space from which it should be excluded (20).

*Égalité* means that all citizens enjoy the same rights. The French Republic considers citizens to be individuals in direct relation to the state, without intermediary bodies or institutions. All citizens should have equal access to opportunities, especially education.<sup>15</sup> *Egalité* would also imply that religions have equal status.

As we have just seen, some people think that banning the veil is discriminating against Muslims; thus according to these people, Muslims are denied equal rights. According to Esther Benbassa, Muslims now hold the unenviable position of dangerous other that was previously held by Jews. The stigmatization, xenophobia, and racism that immigrants experience, in addition to world events unfavourable to Arabs and Muslims in general, “produce” more wearing of the veil by those who identify with their origins (18). Jean-Michel Helvig says that some see the interdiction of the veil as being in itself a stigmatization of Muslims in general. However, he goes on to say that this is not entirely convincing, considering that the great majority of Muslims in France do not object to the law (7).

The key question under the heading of equality is a particularly sensitive one: equality between men and women. It took many years to ensure equal rights before the law for all citizens, regardless of sex. French women received the vote in 1944, as compared to 1920 in the United States, 1928 in England, and various dates in Canada depending on the province. Other aspects of equality were won gradually; for example, the right of married women to administer their own property, to work outside the home, and to have a bank account without the permission of their husbands was acquired only in 1965 (Ligue des droits de l’homme).

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<sup>15</sup> According to Rémy Leveau, girls of North African origin take better advantage of the school system than do boys of the same group, and in general their attitudes are closer to those of the wider French society than those of the boys. He adds that “in a context of exclusion in which girls progress far better than boys, the latter will tend to use the traditional model in order to enforce stricter social control upon their sisters” (153).



Having established the equality of men and women and thus the inclusion of women as full participants in the state, most French people are firmly attached to this principle. Almost any religious or cultural symbol would have been easier for them to accept than one that stands for the inferiority of women. However, the principle of equality can be used on the other side as well. Some people say that to forbid the veil is to refuse to let young women make their own decisions. Others say that excluding from schools those who insist on wearing it prevents them from being exposed to ideas of equality.

The argument from equality is used mostly against the veil. For Fadela Amara, “le voile n’est pas un symbole religieux. C’est un outil d’oppression à l’égard des femmes” (“the veil is not a religious symbol. It is an instrument of oppression towards women”). According to Gaye Salom and Alain Seksig, the headscarf is “incontestablement une marque de discrimination des femmes, intolérable pour un pays de droit comme le nôtre, qui fait de l’égalité l’un des principes de base de sa république” (“unquestionably a mark of discrimination against women, intolerable for a country ruled by law such as ours, which makes equality one of the fundamental principles of its republic”). For Fethi Benslama, “Le voile [...] vise à interdire le corps de la femme, qui est pensé comme pervers et menaçant à l’égard de l’ordre social, entendu que cet ordre est masculin. Tout le reste est du blabla” (“The veil [...] aims to ban the female body, which is seen as perverse and threatening to the social order, it being understood that this order is male. All the rest is blabla”) (440). François Pouillon adds that the cultural context of the headscarf is a refusal of *mixité*, that is, coeducation of boys and girls, and a refusal of certain activities and studies for girls.<sup>16</sup> The object is to put girls, or put them back, under the laws of a community rather than

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the young women who wore the veil to school refused to take part in physical education classes. Among the Muslim groups that supported them, some also called for girls not to study biology and other subject matters deemed unsuitable for them.

those of equality (20).

Elisabeth Badinter argues that the 1989 controversy was the first great defeat of the principle of equality, when a difference in status between men and women was accepted: “En acceptant le port du foulard dans les écoles publiques, la République et la démocratie françaises ont peut-être fait la preuve de leur tolérance religieuse, mais elles ont carrément abandonné l’exigence de l’égalité des sexes sur le territoire national” (“By allowing the veil to be worn in public schools, the French Republic and democracy may have proved their religious tolerance, but they clearly abandoned the requirement of sexual equality in France”) (191).

Probably the most hard-hitting argument against the veil is in the short book by Chahdortt Djavann, *Bas les voiles!* (“Down with veils!” or “Veils off!”). She begins, “J’ai porté dix ans le voile. C’était le voile ou la mort. Je sais de quoi je parle.” (“I wore the veil for ten years. It was the veil or death. I know what I’m talking about.”) According to her, based particularly on her experience in Iran, the veil is a mark of inferiority; women are taught to hate themselves and their bodies. Djavann believes that minors should not wear the veil at all in France, in school or out of it, and that parents who make their daughters wear it should be considered guilty of child abuse. Adults, however, should be allowed to do as they like; after all, she says, in France all kinds of peculiar behaviour are allowed (7).

According to many writers, the principle of *fraternité* implies inclusion: immigrants, or people of immigrant background, should be integrated into French life.<sup>17</sup> They argue that public schools are the great instrument for instilling republican values in young people. From this proposition, two opposite conclusions are drawn. Some people maintain that nothing that

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<sup>17</sup> Ruby describes the hijab as “a symbol of Muslim women’s identities, a tool to oppose Western standards, and a device to resist assimilation” (8). For these women, inclusion in the group implies a deliberate separation from the wider society. Other women in the study reject the veil while valuing their identity as Muslims. Although made in a Canadian context, these observations could also apply in France.

contradicts republican values should be allowed in the schools. People from immigrant backgrounds should have every opportunity to become part of French life. Alain-Gérard Slama writes that unfortunately it is necessary to forbid the veil in school; it is a sign of *le fait identitaire*, which defines a person by the group to which he or she belongs (155-56). Benslama says that radical Islamists, unable to exclude women, now propose to “inclure cette exclusion dans l’espace public” (“include this exclusion in the public space”) (440).

The opposite point of view is that no one should be excluded from the schools. If girls who wear the veil are not allowed in state schools, either they will not go to school at all, or they will attend schools run by fundamentalists, and so will be separated even more from full participation in French life. According to Farhad Khosrokhavar and Françoise Gaspard, the girls who wear the veil are often the best integrated ones; their motto is “Françaises et musulmanes” (“French women and Muslim women”) (24). Benbassa points out that in other European countries, “L’importance de la scolarisation prime sur l’exclusion” (“The importance of schooling takes precedence over exclusion”) (77-78). Some people concede that there is indeed considerable pressure on young people to publicly profess Islam; but Helvig argues that the public schools should not exclude anyone. If young people in the schools are subject to pressure and to religious obscurantism, then public schools are the best chance for them to escape from these influences (6). According to Khosrokhavar, it is a mistake to place too much importance on the headscarf, which girls may wear for many different reasons such as family pressure or a search for identity. Often young people are attracted to radical groups for a time, then leave them. Rather than be concerned about such matters, one should insist on what is essential: regular attendance at school. These writers maintain that while the girls who wear the veil may very well not be doing so freely, it is worth letting them do it, in order to keep them in school.

This garment, often seen as a sign of exclusion and subordination, may serve to help them become full and equal participants in the wider world.

In summary, proponents of both sides of the debate make strong arguments for interpreting the values of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* either to support or to oppose allowing the veil in schools. Public opinion was divided on the question at issue even if it was in agreement about the assumptions and values. As we know, the anti-veil view, judged to be more compatible with *laïcité* in the schools, prevailed.

### **Individualism or *communautarisme***

The question of the veil is part of a much wider debate on the place of immigrants in France, the extent to which they should adapt to the customs of the country, and their rights and responsibilities. The issue is often expressed in terms of the danger of *communautarisme*. This word does not mean quite the same thing as “communitarianism” in English-language political philosophy. The following contrast between the English-language view and the French one is much oversimplified, but it helps to explain why *communautarisme* is considered so threatening in France. In the English-language concept of communitarianism, human beings are seen not simply as atomistic individuals concerned only with their personal advantage. Rather, they are part of many social groups (e.g., family, neighbourhood, town, region, religion, profession, interest groups), which contribute to the formation of their values. It is through these intermediate groups that people learn to be citizens (see Mulhall and Swift, and Rasmussen).

In the French view, a citizen should be a separate individual standing in direct relation to the state.<sup>18</sup> Loyalty to any other group, rather than contributing to citizenship, risks being an

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<sup>18</sup> Slama writes that “La laïcité à la française, en effet, n’est pas seulement une doctrine pluraliste. C’est un

obstacle to it. *Communitarisme* means, then, that a person is first and foremost a member of a certain *communauté* (religious, linguistic, etc.) rather than being a truly loyal citizen. One might say that it is the evil twin of multiculturalism. French people often associate it with the United States, to show by contrast the virtues of their own approach.<sup>19</sup> Danièle Sallenave criticizes “la ‘visibilité’ à l’américaine,” leading to “la France des différences,” and to a “discours d’hostilité aux principes républicains” (27-29). Canada is also sometimes offered as an example to be avoided.<sup>20</sup> *Communitarisme* is feared because it is seen as directly opposed to one of the basic values of the republic: equality of individual citizens in public life.<sup>21</sup> In this context, the veil is not simply a garment, not simply a religious symbol or cultural custom. According to some people, wearing it is a way of declaring one’s opposition to fundamental principles of French citizenship. It is thus a focus of debate on the question: to what group do people hold allegiance?

### Later developments

The September 2004 *rentrée* (return to school) was relatively calm; almost everyone accepted the new law. Some demonstrations took place, but not as many or as large as might have been expected. There were several reasons for the acceptance, including two that I will mention here:

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combat pour la liberté, pour l’idéal d’une société constituée d’individus autonomes, aussi rationnels que possible” “French-style *laïcité* is not just a pluralist doctrine. It is a combat for freedom, for the ideal of a society made up of autonomous individuals, as rational as possible”) (150-51).

<sup>19</sup> According to Jean-François Revel, French people do not seem to realize that when a New Yorker claims to be Irish, or Jewish, or Italian, this is an ordinary piece of information in a society made up of immigrants, not a rejection of one’s nationality (165).

<sup>20</sup> René Andrau states that Canada has chosen to organize its state on the multiculturalist model. He quotes the Canadian law on multiculturalism, putting in bold type and commenting on the parts that mention multiculturalism, while ignoring the parts that insist on equality of all citizens (79-82).

<sup>21</sup> Measures of affirmative action (*discrimination positive*) are also excluded by this value, because they make distinctions between different categories of citizens. Nicolas Sarkozy’s call on November 16, 2006, for help to disadvantaged groups was vigorously opposed by Michèle Alliot-Marie, minister of Defence, who accused Sarkozy of promoting *communitarisme* (see Saunders). The surprising thing about this exchange is not the reaction, but the fact that a politician of the right such as Sarkozy would consider such measures and would say publicly that racism exists in France.

the French Muslim response to the August 2004 kidnapping of two French journalists by Iraqi terrorists, and the position taken by the Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF) regarding the new law.

In August 2004, just before the beginning of the school year, a group of Iraqi terrorists took two French journalists as hostages and threatened to kill them unless the government of France annulled the law about religious signs at school. In response to this action, French Muslims, as well as other groups, took a stand against interference in the internal affairs of France, and the two men were released after 124 days. The hostage-takers, counting on support from French Muslims, had misjudged their target audience, and their action had the opposite effect from the one intended. Instead of turning French Muslims against their country, it pushed them to its defence, and united French people of all religions against terrorism.

Another reason was internal to France. One of the more militant organizations, the Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF), realized that defying the government openly was not wise. In 2003, Nicolas Sarkozy, minister of the Interior at the time, was hissed when he spoke at the UOIF Congress.<sup>22</sup> It seems to be generally agreed that this hardened the resolve of the government, by convincing it that compromise would not work and that a law was needed. At the UOIF Congress on March 25-28, 2005, the leaders took a much more conciliatory line. One of the invited speakers was Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Paris Mosque and considered to be a moderate. Boubakeur stated that Muslims did not want *communautarisme*; the declaration was considered important enough to be shown on the television evening news.

At the same time there seemed to be a lively controversy, in the anniversary year of *laïcité*, about whether the state really is neutral or whether there is a double standard. Benbassa

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<sup>22</sup> For a description of the atmosphere of the 2003 Congress, see Kaci (16).

quotes Charles de Gaulle as saying that “La République est laïque, mais la France est chrétienne” (“The Republic is secular, but France is Christian”) (76). Despite the intervening years since de Gaulle’s remark, and despite the fact that many French people of Christian tradition no longer practice any religion, there may still be a considerable amount of truth in it. The role of Christianity in France’s history is seen in the civil and school calendar, still based on the Christian calendar; the major Christian holy days are also holidays for school and work. An earlier version of the new law about religious signs in schools proposed the addition of two new school holidays, one Muslim and one Jewish. This move was rejected by the president, Jacques Chirac.

Another indication of religious attachment—and lack of religious neutrality on the part of the state—occurred when Pope John Paul II died on April 2, 2005. The French flag was flown at half mast; according to official sources, this was done because the pope was a head of state who died while in office. Other government reactions were not so easy to explain. The mayor of Marseille gave civic employees a half-day holiday so that they could attend mass or watch the funeral on television. More important, because more official and affecting the whole country, is the fact that Dominique de Villepin, minister of the Interior, sent a telegram to prefects all across France telling them to attend mass in their departments. The message also suggested that they should pay a condolence call on the local bishop.<sup>23</sup> As might be expected, this raised much controversy; one letter to *Le Monde* asked how people of other religions should be expected to react to this abandonment of religious neutrality. In addition, the pope was referred to on the state television channel as “le Saint Père” (the Holy Father) until many members of the public protested that the title was inappropriate for a channel claiming to be neutral and objective. The

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<sup>23</sup> See articles, editorials, and letters to the editor in *Libération* on April 5, 2005, and *Le Monde* on April 6, 2005.

whole incident relaunched the question of whether *laïcité* applies only to religions other than Catholicism.

### **Old Values, New Meanings?**

The controversy about the headscarf or veil in schools, together with the kinds of arguments used on both sides, is an episode in France's change from being a nation of almost all old-stock Catholics to one including a large component of people from other backgrounds and other religious traditions. The secular nature of the state can be a great advantage in this transition, provided that the policy is applied equally. The precise way in which this is to happen will surely be a subject of discussion in the years to come. In the case studied here, both pro-veil and anti-veil writers in France (unlike the Iraqi hostage-takers) knew their audience and addressed it capably by appealing to values cherished by the public (the inclusionary values of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*) and warning of dangers generally feared (the exclusionary value of *communautarisme*).

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca observe that notions that confirm certain universal values, or "that are compulsorily valid either as sacred texts or as legal prescriptions," are difficult to reject: "In such cases, the whole effort has to be directed only to the interpretation of the propositions" (135). Furthermore, abstract values "seemingly manifest a revolutionary spirit." They can readily be used for criticism because they "seem to provide criteria for one wishing to change the established order" (79). The values of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*, proclaimed by the French Revolution and gradually integrated into the established order over the next two hundred years, still have the power to challenge that order as they are revisited and reinterpreted. In a Europe undergoing the effects of immigration and internationalization, as



Bassan Tibi maintains, both long-established inhabitants and immigrants need to change for the sake of mutual tolerance and harmony (32). Appealing to the values of the Republic, as defenders of both sides did in this debate, may in the long run help to “de-ethnicize” both sides and reinforce immigrants’ sense of belonging. It will be interesting to see whether the specific ways in which these values are understood converge or become more different.

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**Dissent and the Rhetoric of Reflection:  
Barbara Lee's September 14, 2001, Speech**

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H.H. Cooper has broadly defined terrorism as “the intentional generation of massive fear by human beings for the purpose of securing and maintaining control over other human beings” (881). This fear-for-control strategy was manifest in the acts of September 11, 2001, resonating powerfully among citizens and legislators throughout the world. Since September 11, terrorist acts throughout the world have doubled, occurring in such places as Madrid, Kirkuk, Tunisia, Bali, Mombasa, Riyadh, Istanbul, Casablanca, Jakarta, Sharm el Sheikh, and London. In the United States, the Bush administration's initial response was a controlled military strike on the Taliban-run government of Afghanistan. In addition, the administration launched a wholesale military action against Iraq, toppling Saddam Hussein's dictatorial reign.

However, the last three years have shown a slow devolution from what was considered a swift, surgically successful military action to a drawn-out, bloody quagmire in which the US and its few coalition supporters are finding it less possible to maintain basic societal stability, much less the installation and promotion of democracy. In an assessment of American anti-terrorism policy, Mark Danner argues that the rise in international acts of terrorism found its genesis in the tone and the attitude of the American response to September 11. Around the world and increasingly in the United States, a growing concern over the US invasion of Iraq has initiated a much-needed debate about American foreign policy and its bearing upon war and peace and terrorism. The Bush administration has continually countered this criticism with calls for national unity and requests for other countries to aid in the Iraq mission.

In the early stages of conflict, John Murphy recognized the Bush administration's ability

to control the war's representation for the American people (607-32). Framing a coming struggle in apocalyptic terms, the Bush administration grounded the country's problems on important cultural touchstones of manifest destiny and national redemption. Indeed, war declaration rhetoric is a distinct area of presidential action and legitimation, usually recognized as one of the most important roles a US president can have (Campbell and Jamison; Ivie). This great request for war powers usually generates some opposition and dissent, however tepid. It is a cliché to state that dissent is a cornerstone of democracy and, more specifically, an essential element in the discussion of public issues. However, in this over-communicated and hyper-nationalized age, the case for full and contentious public deliberation on matters of war and peace, fully accepting a rhetoric of dissent, is absolutely essential. It calls for the application of the age-old notion of prudence to increasingly compressed and rushed public deliberation. Such a rhetorical act emerged from the heated discourse of the fall of 2001. The act was a speech by Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

Barbara Lee's September 14, 2001, speech on the floor of the US House of Representatives is remarkable as an example of what I call a "rhetoric of reflection." The only member to vote against giving President George W. Bush open-ended war-making authority against the agents involved in the September 11 attacks, Lee gave a speech that was unique and brave and controversial. Her vote entered her into a small club of Congressional war dissenters such as Jeannette Rankin from Montana, Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Ernest Gruening of Alaska (Samuel 33). The speech garnered significant criticism in the press. For example, conservative *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Debra Saunders compared Lee's vote to European and American appeasement prior to World War II and labeled Lee's action a throwback to the "peacenik talk" of the Vietnam War era (qtd. in Nichols 29). However, even in

the face of stringent criticism and public shock, some recognized the significance of Lee's act. Peter Carlson argued that, historical import and slander aside, Barbara Lee's vote and speech were wholly pragmatic and recognized that "we're grieving. We need to step back and think about this [military action] so that it doesn't spiral out of control. We have to make sure we don't make any mistakes" (C01).

The purpose of this essay will be to analyze Lee's speech rhetorically, from a perspective that Carl Burghardt identified as ethical criticism. Specifically, this essay will identify the "rhetoric of reflection" as a subset of a much larger (and older) area of prudential rhetoric. Drawing on the ideas of Edwin Black's "second persona" and Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's "audience addressed/audience invoked," this study examines the rhetorical means by which US Congresswoman Barbara Lee constructed a brief, prudential argument against granting the US president unlimited war powers. I will argue that the idea of a reflective rhetoric is both a surface level appeal and a deeper explication of a pragmatic public policy position.

Three important concepts drive this essay. The first is the idea of the constructed audience. This idea evolves from the writings of Black, and Ede and Lunsford. Black's notion of the "second persona" as a means to read and understand a world view is primary in this analysis. Black believes that the "implied auditor" of a discourse can determine the moral substance of that discourse. From this perspective, both the audience and its morality lie in the language of the speaker. Likewise, Ede and Lunsford's notion of "audience invoked" is "a construction of the writer, a created fiction ... The writer uses the semantic and syntactic resources of language to provide cues for the reader which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text" (160). While both concepts posit a constructed audience, Black's idea is focused on the moral dimension of language use. Ede and Lunsford provide more



resources for the social dimension of the persona of the created auditor.

The second guiding concept of this paper is the idea of the reflective “no.” Ray Fabrizio, Edith Karas, and Ruth Menmuir identify four “voices” in what they call the “rhetoric of no.” Of these four voices (an impassioned no; a discursive no; a reflective no; and an ironic no), it is the “reflective no” that is most significant in our present political climate. As Fabrizio, Karas and Menmuir note, whereas “[t]he impassioned writer reaches out to the reader principally with his feeling[,] the discursive writer reaches out to the reader with his subject, trusting him to perceive its validity. But unlike both of these, the reflective writer reaches out to his reader only incidentally. His primary interest is in what his subject means to him” (249). The reflective writer or speaker is conversing with him- or herself. However, the authors note that the reflective dissenter is not unaware of the audience; rather, he or she is working out or thinking through the subject before an audience. A rhetor is “impelled to express himself even when he feels that what he is saying will cause no change in the world ... his real purpose is to give outward expression to his inner thoughts and feelings” (Fabrizio, Karas, and Menmuir 249-50). This form of dissent rhetoric is highly personal and “intimate,” with the author “articulating his subject for its own sake” (250).

The third concept is Edwin Black’s “prism” metaphor. Using the prism to analyze Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, Black noted that “its aspects reflect back and forth on one another in such radiant multiplicity that, diamond-like, its fires are somehow both protean and integral” (22). Following Black’s approach, the various reflections of style, argument, and ethical stance of the speech will be examined to determine how these many “facets” contribute to the reflective, prudential nature of Barbara Lee’s speech.

## Context

### *Vietnam Syndrome*

Caught up in the anger and emotion following September 11, few would have thought that the spectre of Vietnam, and what some had called the Vietnam Syndrome (Karnow; Simons), would reappear in public discourse and policy; yet given the many events of the last twenty-nine years, this spectre echoes in the words of US Representative Barbara Lee. Michael Klare defines the Vietnam Syndrome as “the American public’s disinclination to engage in further military interventions in internal Third World conflicts” (1). This disinclination is, as Klare states, “a prudent and beneficial alternative to the interventionist policies which led us into Vietnam in the first place” (1).

As Geoff Simons points out, various American administrations have pushed an interventionist agenda for some years. These impulses were given voice at the time of the Persian Gulf War, captured in President George H. W. Bush’s statement that “we’ve finally licked the Vietnam Syndrome” (Simons 21). Within this statement lies the belief that the unwillingness of the American people to be the world’s police had subsided, and that the United States was more believable in its claims to use all the means necessary to support its international policy initiatives. Lloyd Gardner goes further, observing in the Johnson administration’s contribution to the syndrome that

Reducing the history of the Vietnam War to the abstractions ‘credibility’ and ‘reliability’ made it possible to deal with that history on terms established by the outcome of the Gulf War. But the end of the cold war raised more profound questions about how to interpret the Vietnam experience and the meaning of the ‘syndrome,’ questions others besides historians must ponder. (543)

The central question raised by Lee’s speech is how history and collective memory shape war policy. The literature on public memory and US involvement in Vietnam is growing in rhetorical

studies. Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci's study of the Vietnam War Memorial, Hasian and Frank's analysis of the Goldhagen debates, and Dionisopoulos and Goldzwig's analysis of Vietnam revisionist rhetoric have all explored the link between the rhetorical function of remembering and history. The link between rhetoric, policy, and memory is profound in the connection a people find between an identity and shared history. The meaning-making function of the Vietnam experience is still valid and exists as a prudent reminder or warning not to make rash decisions about policy.

### **Dissent and Public Memory**

John Murphy noted the difficulty that congressional dissenters had when attempting to argue against a presidential proposal for military action. Through an analysis of the anti-war discourse of Robert F. Kennedy and Sam Nunn, Murphy concludes that a congressional dissenter must use both deliberative and epideictic rhetorical strategies to combat a president's calls for war. The dissenter is hard pressed to challenge a president's authority to make epideictic appeals for the morality and appropriateness of war. Murphy finds that "the war rhetoric of the presidency has become an almost insurmountable obstacle to successful dissent" (76). Kendall Phillips argues that the role dissent plays in society is stunted by the dominance of consensus within public argument. This limits the individual rhetor's ability to use rhetoric to create resistance.

The anti-interventionist position dissenters usually take is located on the periphery of public memory. More than history, it represents the "intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions" (Bodnar 14). It speaks to the official interpretations and perspectives on war while simultaneously voicing the specialized interests that are part of the "official," national whole, but that represent more diverse values. As John Bodnar observes, public memory is a

broad continuum of beliefs about a society's past that help it understand its past, present, and future. More specifically, "It is fashioned ideally in a public sphere in which various parts of the social structure exchange views. The major focus of this communicative and cognitive process is not the past, however, but serious matters in the present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both official and vernacular cultures" (14-15).

Public memory, particularly when it is used to shape public discussion, can also function as a constraint on dissenting views. Kathleen German finds that, to promote unity and public support for the Persian Gulf War in 1991, President Bush had to transcend the public memory of the Vietnam War. She argues that directive language served the purpose of framing and providing an overarching justification for going to war against Iraq in 1991. Carolyn Marvin claims that patriotism in the United States is a complete religion. In Marvin's conception, the nationalistic impulse in America has become sanctified and functions as a ritualistic set of memories to support. This impulse served as a strong justification for the Persian Gulf War and an equally strong one for current military efforts in Afghanistan and Iran. This syndrome is inherently connected to the first Persian Gulf conflict in 1990, under then-President George H.W. Bush. Jerry Lembecke asserts that a psychological, yet mythic, connection exists between the Vietnam War veteran's disgraced return to the US and attitudes toward veterans of more recent military conflicts. He believes this served as a rationale for quelling dissent during the Persian Gulf War. Indeed, Stanley Karnow cites George H.W. Bush's assertion that "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all" as an attempt to change the collective memory of the country. Karnow's analysis notes that "his [Bush's] deployment [of troops] had been preceded by sharp divisions in both Congress and in American public opinion," and that "the country was sober and uncertain as widespread doubt and anxiety tempered the manifestations of

patriotism” (15).

## **Analysis of the Text**

### *Arguments in the speech*

The introduction to Lee’s September 14 speech announces the sympathy she personally felt for those slain in the events of September 11, acknowledging that “only the most foolish or the most callous would not understand the grief that has gripped the American people and millions across the world” (par. 1). She mentions that the events of September 11 had left her to “rely on my moral compass, my conscience, and my God for direction,” and acknowledges that “our deepest fears haunt us now.” The significant thing about the introduction is that, while it acknowledges the fear, anger, and sadness of the events, it includes (as do other parts of the speech) a pivot phrase that asserts Lee’s main idea: “Yet I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States” (par. 2). Based upon the three foundations of morality, individual conscience, and spirit, she asserts an anti-interventionist thesis.

Lee recognizes that the use of force resolution will pass, pointing out “we all know that the President can wage a war even without this resolution” (par. 4). She humbly urges the “use of restraint,” asking her fellow members of the House to think through their actions. With this statement, she constructs the first part of her argument—that an analysis of the long-term ends is essential to all the US does in the arena of foreign policy, particularly if that policy would engage war-making activity. This statement also serves as evidence of Lee’s reflective rhetoric. Much as Fabrizio, Karas, and Menmuir have argued, Lee “thinks through” her argument for her audience. However, this public demonstration serves as a counterpoint to those supporting the use of force resolution being debated. It is at this point of her speech that she approaches the heart of her

argument.

Lee makes four claims that serve as the main points of the message. First, she claims, “we are not dealing with a conventional war. We cannot respond in a conventional manner.” The many variables involved include “national security, foreign policy, public safety, intelligence gathering, economics, and murder” (par. 5). Second, she states, “we must not rush to judgment.” In the heat of emotion, she warns, the US may forget common decency and humanity in its acts and run the “risk that women, children, and other non-combatants will be caught in the crossfire” (par. 6). Third, she asserts that the US cannot “let [its] justified anger over these outrageous acts by vicious murderers inflame prejudice against all Arab-Americans, Muslims, Southeast Asians, or any other people because of their race, religion, or ethnicity” (par.7). Fourth, she warns that the US must “be careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target. We cannot repeat past mistakes” (par. 8). Again, this last statement in this section of the speech serves as a pivot to move the listener/reader into a broader rationale, the heart of the anti-interventionist argument she is asserting. The heart of this argument is linked to public memory, the two tied together to prompt policy. This is clear when Lee remembers 1964, when “Congress gave President Lyndon Johnson the power to ‘take all necessary measures’ to repel attacks and prevent further aggression. In so doing, this House abandoned its own constitutional responsibilities and launched our country into years of undeclared war in Vietnam” (par. 9). Lee recognizes the problems of granting authority a blank cheque to take whatever action it deems necessary. She draws upon a touchstone of the Vietnam Syndrome reflected in both interventionist (“take all necessary measures”) and anti-interventionist (“urge the use of restraint”) perspectives. As Geoff Simons has suggested, the different world views “compete” for a dominant interpretation, where one view asserts the limitations and ethics of military power,

while the other considers the “suitability” of military power used prudently. Simons finds that “the Vietnam experience, like the Bible, could be read any way the readers chose” (25). He states that both visions have informed American foreign policy and that they both comprise the lessons America has learned from its experience in Vietnam.

Lee cites Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, who was one of two US senators to vote against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in 1964. Quoting Morse, she asserts, “I believe that history will record that we have made a grave mistake in subverting and circumventing the Constitution of the United States.... I believe that within the next century, future generations will look with dismay and great disappointment upon a Congress which is now about to make such a historic mistake” (par. 10). Her use of Morse’s words serves as a touchstone to the anti-interventionist perspective on sanctioning open-ended conflict. She underlines the point by stating that “Senator Morse was correct, and I fear we make the same mistake today. And I fear the consequences” (par. 11), taking a reflective stance toward the issue of war and the use of force. Her final call for reflection is found in her concluding statement. Again, in pain, Lee comes “to grips” with her controversial vote through the “very painful yet beautiful memorial service today at the National Cathedral.” Through the service, she claims to have found the courage to stand on principle, to stand for a moment of silence, of reflection. The final line of the speech proclaims her moral purpose. Quoting the “member of the clergy” speaking at the memorial service, Lee hopes that, “as we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore” (par. 12). This statement would briefly become a slogan for those opposing any rash, war-like solutions to the multi-faceted problem that was September 11. It would also be a lonely, muted, disregarded statement.

### *Stylistic Characteristics*

The style of Lee's speech is significant on two levels. On a macro-level (the speech as a whole), it exhibits characteristics of both a deliberative and a prophetic style. It is deliberative in the sense that its aim is "to win assent of a deliberative assembly (an election crowd, a legislature, a jury) to a position," which the speaker must articulate by "appealing mainly to the political, moral, or religious predispositions of his [or her] audience" (Brown 12). By contrast, prophecy is "an oracular piece of instruction or warning, bold and dogmatic, often highly diffuse, sometimes seemingly addressed to one or a very few persons whose near presence is acknowledged by more or less use of the second personal pronoun" (13). Lee's speech is a synthesis of these two styles: it is aimed at a congressional and national audience to persuade them on an important point of policy, while articulating acknowledged personal beliefs and values that invite a grave warning of tragedy. She concludes on both a prophetic and a deliberative note, juxtaposing the "fear" of making the same mistake the US made in Vietnam with the hope that the country does not become "evil" in order to vanquish evil.

On a sentence-level analysis of the speech, Lee expresses her four main ideas negatively, in a Burkean, hortatory fashion. These four tenets serve as her alternative approach to a war policy. In a tightly parallel structure, her counter-policy could be stated as follows

- 1) A complex exigency demands a complex response.
- 2) We must deliberate fully and carefully.
- 3) We must be fair and open to other races, religions, and ethnicities in what we do.
- 4) We must define an end point to hostility and have "a focused target."

A failure to recognize any of these points could result in the repetition of "past mistakes."

Lee phrases these statements in a style that James Jasinski (citing Lanham) identifies as a periodic style. To understand this style, one must understand the tension between running and



periodic styles and the centrality of structure and reflection in sentence composition. One style (running) values an open-ended, “stream of consciousness” quality to word placement, while the other (periodic) values organized, reflective use of language. According to Jasinski, periodic style “looks like the way in which a person’s mind is after the individual has sorted through the complexity of his or her experience” (540), exhibiting a mind that has reflected upon and structured its ideas accordingly. Lee’s speech exhibits these qualities of reflection and organization through a personal, ethical stance.

Lee reflects upon the national experience and, through her conscience, asserts that there “must be some of us who say, let’s step back for a moment and think through the implications of our actions today—let us more fully understand its consequences” (par. 4). From this stance of ethical reflection, Lee arrives at a personal epistemology in which she knows that this is an unconventional conflict and that America “cannot respond in a conventional manner” (par. 5); she knows that the country “must not rush to judgment” as “too many innocent people have already died” (par. 6); she knows that Americans cannot allow “justified anger over these outrageous acts by vicious murderers inflame prejudice against all Arab-Americans, Muslims, Southeast Asians, or any other people because of their race, religion, or ethnicity” (par. 7); and she knows that Americans must not enter into “open-ended” conflict or risk making the mistake of another Vietnam. Each sentence here prefaces a clear assessment of the situation. When combined, they lead the listener/reader to the only supporting material she introduces into the speech: the historical situation of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and Senator Wayne Morse’s prophetic words. Here she leads with the historical situation and Morse’s prophetic declaration. She concludes her thought with her fearful reflection on the consequences of the actions the US Congress was about to embark upon.

## **Interpretation of the Text**

While Fabrizio's concept of reflective dissent is a helpful way to characterize Lee's dissent, the preceding argument and style analysis suggest an underlying mode of thought in play with this form of reflective dissent. The ancient ideal of "prudence" is a concept that bears significantly upon contemporary deliberation. Robert Hariman, relying on an Aristotelian definition of the term, defines prudence thus: "Neither scientific nor artistic nor contemplative, it is the capacity for reasoning about particular cases of contingent affairs with regard to what is good or bad. This reasoning occurs through deliberation and is completed in action" (viii). Jasinski notes that prudence is something that, like rhetoric itself, is both practical and not systematic. It serves to "mandate careful reflection on the context of action and the relevant norms of propriety and appropriateness. But the concept of prudence is frustrating because it resists the systemization and precise explication that constitute our modern standards of intellectual rigor" (468). More often than not it contends with what Martha Nussbaum identifies as the Aristotelian "movement back and forth between particular and general" (316). Prudential discourse requires the measuring of the specific case in relation to the general principle.

Barbara Lee's speech functions as a prudential critique of imminent legislative action to be taken by the US House of Representatives. The specific situation of the use of force resolution was balanced against the general principle of anti-interventionism. As Kirt Wilson observes, though, prudence is a contested concept, functioning as "a contested space that political actors struggle to control through discourse ... a coveted space of legitimacy that [speakers] attempt to occupy by discursively controlling its meaning" (133). In Lee's speech, it is the principle of reflective restraint, evolving from the public memory of US involvement in Vietnam (general principle), that frames Lee's message of dissent. Lee's prudential stance recognizes the

fragmented nature of conflict and the fragmented nature of terrorism (specific case). In her speech, she creates an auditor who is, above all things, rational about not supporting a use of force resolution. The invoked audience, while prodded by its fears, is deliberate about its inability to control the situation. Lee readily admits to a situation that is so fluid that it could be beyond control in many instances.

On the level of ideology and foreign policy, Geoff Simons claims that “Vietnam forced the United States to refine its pursuit of global hegemony, with ethical factors continuing to weigh nothing in the scale of realpolitik calculation” (xv). Thus, the control sought by anti-intervention advocates can be seen as little more than constraints or parameters by which the US can further seek global hegemony. Barbara Lee’s prudential discourse functions within a political situation that is fragmented, with varying notions on what to do about terrorism. The contested meanings of the Vietnam War bear on the meanings of current military actions. The noteworthy element in Lee’s reflective address lies in how it attempts to infuse US policy (whether it is hegemonic or not) with some ethical constraints that are grounded in pragmatic, deliberative action. The speaker is “just facing the facts,” no matter how fragmented and diffuse they may appear.

## **Conclusion**

Barbara Lee’s speech almost seems prophetic, given the current state of American foreign policy in the Middle East. It is most important as a touchstone for public memories of the Vietnam War and its relation to current American military activities. Lee creates a reflective, deliberative audience—an audience she suspected was not readily and actually there with her at the moment of her speech. The significance of Lee’s speech, as rhetoric of dissent, lies in its ability to fight

the public's ability to forget. As Brian Snee has illustrated, speakers, in addition to finding ways to enhance a particular kind of public memory, also have strategies to "discourage public debate and diminish public memory." This "amnesic" rhetoric is used to "forestall the communication and commemoration that foster collective contemplation" (189).

This study concludes that a notion of "reflection" serves as a specific form of rhetorical prudence. While not universal, rhetoric of reflection can create a space that enables an audience to contemplate and weigh the collective principles of a society against the immediacy and particulars of a given political situation. Within recurring situations of war and peace, such a stance is of grave importance and enables a political community to understand the fear-for-control appeal at the heart of terrorism. The preceding prismatic analysis and interpretation of Lee's text reveals a highly emotional, non-deliberative setting. Barbara Lee sought to fight the impulse to sanction the retaliation against the enemies of the United States and leave space for her colleagues and the American public to contemplate the new world they would encounter after September 11, 2001.

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## Signposts of Cultural Identity:

### George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country*

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As every student of Canadian culture knows, the rhetoric of Canadian identity is marked by persistent patterns of cultural resistance, combined with anxiety over the country's potential disintegration from any of a multitude of causes, ranging from the economic to the political. These motifs permeate scholarly and popular discourses, at once reflecting and helping to shape the culture that produced them. The recurrence of these intertwined themes across so many of our cultural expressions points to something greater than a mere pragmatic necessity. Although Canada's circumstances certainly make its citizens more vulnerable than most nations to American influence, the fact that "Canadians are forever taking the national pulse like doctors at a sick bed" (Atwood 33) is more than simply a product of the "geographical fate" that made them neighbours to the United States (Dorland ix). The pervasiveness of themes of loss and resistance suggests that these themes also perform a ritual function in the process of identity formation, enacting and preserving the rhetorical vision that unites Canada and shapes its cultural ethos.

The nature of that vision, and its function as an expression of identity, is the subject of this paper, which offers a comparative analysis of two signal discourses in the tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric, one contemporary and one a classic: Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country* (2002) and George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* (1965). While each can be understood to have arisen out of specific historical and political circumstances, what is more interesting from the perspective of this analysis is their participation in a discursive tradition that transcends their particular context and that binds them, in sensibility, pattern, and content, to other



expressions of Canadian identity. It is this tradition that is the primary focus of this paper.

Although both Grant and Hurtig offer a “passionate defence of our Canadian identity” (Emberly 15), their books differ in tone and outlook. Grant’s book is the more resigned and pensive, Hurtig’s the more positive and heartening. The difference between the two works is primarily in the level of hope each expresses—no small matter, as Grant himself acknowledges: “By writing of the defeat of Canadian nationalism, one encourages in a small way the fulfilment of the prophecy. Most men, when in a weak position, need immanent hopes to keep alive their will to fight against odds” (13). What Hurtig provides is exactly that immanent hope, allowing the possibility that there may be a way out, that, in his words, “we don’t have to . . . let our corporate elite, our selfish plutocracy, our radical right, and our inept politicians continue to sell our country” (303).

The optimism of Hurtig’s book may be somewhat surprising, considering that, during the more than thirty years that separate the two books, the process of continental integration that led Grant to conclude in 1970 that Canada had already “ceased to be a nation” (97) actually escalated. Despite Canada’s being further along that road, Hurtig is not ready to give up; he is less resigned than Grant and full of insistence that “we *can* be the best country anywhere, or at least one of the very best” (349). He seems, in fact, to be reacting directly to Grant’s conclusion: “Far too many Canadians, including far too many Canadian nationalists, say it’s already too late. I say to heck with that. Even if the chances are slim, . . . nothing else should be more important” (419). Nevertheless, Hurtig isn’t unreservedly optimistic about the situation facing us; indeed, he recognizes the possibility that “unless some very important changes are made soon, Canada is going to become no better than a totally dominated, weak colony of the United States” (301). The resistance he encourages may “fail. But an even greater failure will be if we don’t even try.

What a terrible tragedy that would be” (433).

Both Grant and Hurtig acknowledge that their books are propelled by anger—anger at the failures of governance that have left Canada vulnerable to “widespread homogenizing, continentalist forces” (Emberly 15) that are eroding traditional Canadian values. In Grant’s words, Canadian willingness to “use the government to protect the common good ... [and] restrain the individual’s freedom in the interests of the community” (77) are the values that have “shaped our institutions and ... penetrated into the lives of generations of Canadians” (49-50). These values allowed Canadians to create and preserve “at every level of ... life—religious, educational, political, social—certain forms of existence that distinguish [Canada] from the United States” (84). Despite its tone of guarded optimism, Hurtig describes his work as “a harsh and angry book” (431); but he insists that such anger is an appropriate response to the fact that “our country is being sold out and our national soul is being squashed.” If now “is not a time for harsh words and anger,” he demands, “when will it be?” (431).

Grant’s book, like Hurtig’s, was written “too much from anger” (12), but in tone it seems not so much angry as meditative, even melancholy, as befits a lamentation for “what has been lost” (106). Though also written in the first person, it is less colloquial and more formal than Hurtig’s exhortation. A lamentation, Grant explains, is an appropriate response to “the death or the dying of something loved. This lament mourns the end of Canada as a sovereign state.... Lamentation is not an indulgence in despair or cynicism.... there is not only pain and regret, but also celebration of passed good” (24). As a lament, the book functions as a kind of “celebration of memory; in this case, the memory of that tenuous hope that was the principle of my ancestors” (26). The hope he speaks of—an impossible one, as it turns out—was “that on the northern half of this continent we could build a community which had a stronger sense of the common good

and of public order than was possible under the individualism of the American capitalist dream” (12). It is how this hope has played out that forms the centrepiece of both works.

Both writers take as ground for their arguments the impending—and perhaps inevitable—disappearance of the Canadian nation and of Canadian values, and each ponders the shape of what will remain after the erosion of Canadian sovereignty is complete. Neither envisions full political integration with the US, however; both recognize somewhat grimly that the American empire’s interests would be better served in keeping Canada as a kind of “vassal state ... a nation essentially in name only—an economic, social, political, and cultural colony, a place not a country, a feeble remnant of a once proud nation” (Hurtig 431). Though they argue similarly on this point, their very similarity illustrates the differences in tone that are typical of the two books. Hurtig’s tough and exhortative style features more direct, concrete diction than Grant’s and relies on rhetorical questions to heighten his audience’s emotional reaction and promote their active engagement with his cause: “Why would the American Republican Party want over 20 million adult Canadians, most of whom would likely vote Democrat? Better, they will say, Canada should be a northern Puerto Rico, a servile, non-represented, non-voting colony. And anyway, they will say, we’re already well on our way to owning the whole country” (431). Grant makes the same point, but in a declarative form that leaves no room for doubt, and with muted, more abstract language: “the dominant forces in the Republic do not need to incorporate us. A branch-plant satellite, which has shown in the past that it will not insist on any difficulties in foreign or defence policy, is a pleasant arrangement for one’s northern frontier” (97).

This preoccupation with the country’s potential dissolution and the tenuousness of its survival is, of course, as Margaret Atwood famously established in 1972, “a national habit of

mind” (13), and places both books firmly within a recognizable Canadian tradition.<sup>1</sup> What threatens Canadian survival is the country’s willing embrace of the relentless corporate liberalism of the American empire and its self-interested corporations, which Grant argues “has destroyed indigenous cultures in every corner of the globe. Communist imperialism is more brutally immediate, but American capitalism has shown itself more subtly able to dissolve indigenous societies” (76).

According to Atwood, the pervasive Canadian motif of survival has a number of distinctive features: “Victims abound; the philosophy is survivalism, the typical narrative a sequence of dire events which the hero escapes (if he does escape) not with triumph or honour or riches but merely with his life” (“Canadian-American Relations” 386). Grant’s and Hurtig’s books can be seen as studies of the same pattern of victimage, and their narratives present sequences of events that are, at least to Canadian traditionalists, dire: Hurtig describes, in rich and specific detail, “the tragic sell-out of Canada [by a] ... selfish, grasping, and greedy plutocracy” (xiii), while Grant situates his story of honour and loss in the “tragedy of [former Prime Minister John] Diefenbaker ... [whose] inability to govern is linked with the inability of this country to be sovereign” (25).

But these works have more in common with each other, and with others in the tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric, than simply a preoccupation with the question of survival. I have

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<sup>1</sup> It seems that it is part of being Canadian to see virtually every social, political, or economic event as a crisis presaging the demise of the country; for instance, Canada’s continued existence has been seen to be threatened not only by NAFTA and the FTA, but by the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, by the Oka crisis, by the Constitutional talks, by the Charlottetown Accord, by Quebec’s threats of a referendum on separation, by the referendum itself, by the debate over Senate reform, and even by the cuts at the CBC. While all of these issues are serious enough, only in Canada is talk of the country’s demise part of nearly every discussion, whether political, cultural, or economic. See, for example, Marci McDonald, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*; Charles Gordon, “Canada’s Imminent Breakup”; Joe Clark, *A Nation Too Good to Lose*; David Orchard, *The Fight for Canada*; Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, *Take Back the Nation*; Don Braid and Sydney Sharpe, *Breakup: Why the West Feels Left Out of Canada*; Maude Barlowe, *Parcel of Rogues*; Marjorie Montgomery Bowker, *On Guard for Thee*; and Duncan Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Papers*.

discovered in my study of the tradition a number of other recurrent elements, including the persistently ironic depiction of identity in a culture torn between the expression of its own distinctiveness and its desire for the economic prosperity afforded by close ties with the American empire. In explaining *Why We Act Like Canadians*, Pierre Berton somewhat playfully characterizes this complex dynamic as “a bit of a love-hate relationship” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 5), but Margaret Atwood is somewhat more cynical: “Part of the much-sought Canadian identity is that few nationals have done a more enthusiastic job of selling their country than have Canadians. Of course there are buyers willing to exploit, as they say, our resources; there always are. It is our eagerness to sell that needs attention” (“Travels Back” 113). Grant frames the same issue as an inescapable problem: “Those who want to maintain separateness also want the advantages of the age of progress.” Unfortunately, he explains, the two desires are not reconcilable, since “nationalism can only be asserted successfully by an identification with technological advance; but technological advance entails the disappearance of those indigenous differences that give substance to nationalism” (88). In other words, the luxury of nationalism is feasible only for a dominant nation that sets the agenda of culture and commerce.

Nationalism, then, is an economic impediment, since by its very nature it resists the homogenization that is necessary to establish and sustain corporate capitalism. Branch-plant economies must inevitably give rise to branch-plant mentalities. Thus, the pressing question, articulated by Lawrence Martin and quoted by Hurtig, remains, “How long can a country continue to integrate with a neighbour ten times its population without eventually losing itself in the process?” (xiii). Grant’s answer is definitive—it cannot: “Once it was decided that Canada was to be a branch-plant society of American capitalism, the issue of Canadian nationalism had been settled” (56). For Hurtig, the process is not settled, and can still perhaps be halted, although

“for that to happen, important changes have to be made very soon” (xiv).

Both books explore the ambivalence of Canada’s relationship with the US, which so permeates Canadian experience, but they differ in perspective. As George Grant explains the problem, “We want through formal nationalism to escape the disadvantages of the American dream; yet we also want the benefits of junior membership in the empire” (11). Hurtig, optimistic in spite of the “disastrous accumulation of factors that together are likely to prove fatal” (402), nevertheless offers the possibility that Canada can retain its independence and still enjoy a high standard of living, that it can be at once “a prosperous, independent country” and remain “in charge of its own future, instead of a dependent and weak American colony” (399). By contrast, Grant believes these two goals to be mutually exclusive, and is resigned to “the impossibility of [traditional Canadian-style] conservatism as a viable political ideology” in an era dominated by the homogenizing forces of corporate liberalism and technological change (78).

In addition to its emphasis on Canada’s ambivalent relationship to the American empire, and the irony of identification that this relationship produces, the rhetoric of Canadian identity frequently features as a protagonist a heroic “everyman” figure, who is offered as a representative, even quintessential (though not necessarily typical) Canadian. This individual’s experience is conflated with the broader Canadian cultural reality; thus, what happens to the protagonist is a depiction in personalized terms of what is taking place in the culture at large. In many instances—though as Grant’s narrative demonstrates, not universally—this protagonist is the rhetor him- or herself, a feature that gives the discussion of Canadian cultural identity an even more intensely personal flavour, as I have observed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See my articles, listed in the Works Cited.

Hurtig's book follows the pattern explicitly, at least at the outset, positioning itself as a kind of memoir:

Even when I was young, it always seemed to me that we were fortunate to live in Canada. My parents were in their teens and quite poor when they came to this country from Eastern Europe, but through hard work and determination they, and most of their friends, managed to work their way up out of poverty....

I was a child born in the Great Depression. I watched my two brothers go off to war, one of them serving overseas with the Canadian army for almost five years. I followed the war closely and when it was over, when my oldest brother finally came back to Canada and we heard his stories of heroism, terror, and sacrifice, I too began to count my blessings that I lived in such a fortunate country. I was, even beginning in my early teens, a proud Canadian. (3)

Although Grant, unlike Hurtig and others, never positions *himself* as the quintessential Canadian, he nevertheless uses a similar technique of personalization, embodying the crisis of Canadian nationalism in the figure of Diefenbaker. The book is not simply a partisan discourse, however; Diefenbaker is shown as flawed in judgement and in leadership, but despite his mistakes, he is also shown as deeply nationalistic, a representative Canadian, a nationalist who simply “could not give ... loyalty to the great Republic to the south” (50). Although Diefenbaker in his passionate nationalism has been accused of being anti-American, Grant asks us to consider instead that his stance “did not imply anti-Americanism, simply a lack of Americanism.... he was surely being honest to his own past when he said that he thought of his policies as being pro-Canadian, not anti-American” (50). In Grant's narrative, Diefenbaker represents something larger than himself, and “his inability to govern” is not simply a product of his own foibles and weaknesses; instead, it “is linked with the inability of this country to be sovereign” (25).

Not altogether surprisingly, given the resistant nature of Canadian identity rhetoric, the “authentic” Canadian portrayed in many of the discourses in the tradition is almost always in

some measure an outsider, an eccentric who is nevertheless distinguished by heroic acts of resistance. This figure is typically out of step with the prevailing mood of the time in attitude, insight, or action, and is frequently comic, sometimes tragic, and sometimes both at once. One need not look too far to see how well Diefenbaker fits this profile. Indeed, it would be hard to conceive of a more dramatically eccentric public character than Diefenbaker, in whose leadership the “leap to unquestioned power, the messianic stance applied to administrative detail, the prairie rhetoric murdering the television,” when combined with “a conception of Canada that threatened the dominant classes,” estranged him from the power politics of Ottawa (27).

Diefenbaker’s biographers describe him as “a westerner, an outsider, a romantic parliamentarian of the Edwardian era” (Smith xiii), a “renegade” who nevertheless “had a large, abiding love for his country” (Newman xii). He was a universally acknowledged “champion of the underdog [who] took office looking for dragons to slay” (Donaldson 192). His prairie roots, his suspicion of political deal-making, and “a kind of weird manic grandeur” (Hutchinson 316) helped to render him “a man out of time and place in late twentieth-century Ottawa” (Smith xiii)—in just exactly the same way that Canada’s traditional “conservative idea of social order,” which he so embodied, was incompatible with “the religion of progress and the emancipated passions” that marks American corporate liberalism (Grant 72). Grant elaborates: “The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada. As Canadians we attempted a ridiculous task in trying to build a conservative nation in the age of progress, on a continent we share with the most dynamic nation on earth. The current of modern history was against us” (25-26).

The tale told by Grant, then, is an essentially tragic one. It is the story of “the defeat of Canadian nationalism,” but it is no abstract depiction. Instead, the story of loss is personalized



and its sadness heightened by the portrayal of its hero as a man of honour, but flawed, a man of “deep loyalty,” who nevertheless found himself “impotent in the face of [the] disappearing past” (49). Unlike media portrayals of the time, however, Grant’s project is not intended to reduce public issues to “foibles of personality” (27). In fact, he attempts the opposite by embodying the fate of the country in the defeat of the man, and in the process he infuses both with high seriousness and tragic power.

Diefenbaker’s profound sense of nationalism is shown to have been anchored in a tradition that had provided a “counter-thrust to the pull of continentalism,” and enabled the country to exist at all (49). To a nationalist of his convictions, the idea of continentalism represented the surrender of Canada’s autonomy: “We shall be Canadians first, foremost, and always,” he intoned, “and our policies will be decided in Canada and not dictated by any other country” (quoted in Columbo 153). Unfortunately, his was a tradition fast disappearing, dissolving not only because of continentalist pressure from outside, but because of abandonment by the corporatist elites within the country. For years, as Grant points out, Diefenbaker’s more opportunistic Liberal predecessors “had been pursuing policies that led inexorably to the disappearance of Canada” by forging closer economic ties with the US. Sadly this course of action also ensured “the impossibility of an alternative to the American republic being built on the northern half of this continent” (25-26). There seems to be no doubt that Diefenbaker’s leadership failed, but this failure was as much a result of the cumulative effect of these policies as of his own character, a fact that Grant argues has been largely unrecognized by analysts and commentators: “No credit is given to the desperate attempts of Diefenbaker and his colleagues to find alternative policies, both national and international, to those of their predecessors” (26).

Whether Grant’s analysis of Diefenbaker’s failures would satisfy a political scientist or a

historian is not for me to say. What matters here is that what makes Diefenbaker the hero of Grant's tale is the very quality that reveals him to be flawed: "his nationalism ... a deeply held principle for which he would fight with great courage and would sacrifice political advantage" (43). While his rivals under Pearson adapted their policies "to suit the interests of the powerful, ... Diefenbaker was willing to bring the dominant classes of society down on his head." His downfall, Grant argues, is not the result simply, or even mainly, of self-pride; instead, it is the outcome of devotion to a nobler cause, to "that aspect of virtue known as love of country" (43). This devotion, combined with his status as an outsider and his eccentric, larger-than-life persona, makes him, in Grant's narrative, the quintessential hero in the tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric. Diefenbaker *is* Canada.

As Peter Emberly puts it, Diefenbaker's nationalism was noble because it was both genuine and anchored in "the conservative and communitarian strands in our heritage, once understood as containing enduring concepts of what is good for humanity" (19-20). It was a tradition that placed social order above the rights of the individual, and thus one that "stood in firm opposition to the Jeffersonian liberalism so dominant in the United States" (49-50). These are the "distinctive virtues" that underlie the Canadian social order, which in the age of progress may seem little more than "antiquarianism or romanticism, if not worse" (Emberly 20). Nevertheless, even now they remain central to public conceptions of Canadian difference.<sup>3</sup>

Every narrative needs an antagonist, and the forces opposed to Diefenbaker in this tale are "the Canadian establishment and its political instrument, the Liberal party" (53), who represent the Americanization of Canada through their commitment to continentalism and its

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice*; Pierre Berton, *Why We Act Like Canadians*; Richard Gwyn, *The 49<sup>th</sup> Paradox*; and Seymour M. Lipset, *Continental Divide*.

“process of universalization and homogenization” (11). Most of these “economically powerful” members of the new branch-plant economy “made more money by being the representatives of American capitalism and setting up the branch plants” than by maintaining Canadian independence (61), and to them nationalism is at best an unnecessary encumbrance, at worst an impediment to prosperity and progress. If Diefenbaker is the personification of an old-fashioned nationalism founded on Tory principles of collectivism and a “sense of the common good standing against capitalist individualism” (12-13), then the corporate elite represent the “homogenized culture of the American Empire” (26). Having embraced continentalist unification as both necessary and desirable, these elites stand to lose “nothing essential to the principle of their lives by losing their country” (61), for they are motivated by self-interest, by “individualist and capitalist greed” (13).

It is possible, Grant allows, that his tale might under other circumstances have had a happier ending. However, what would have been needed to bring this about is “an influential group that seriously desired the continuance of the country after 1940 [and that had] the animation of some political creed that differed from the capitalist liberalism of the United States. Only then could they have acted with sufficient decision to build an alternative nation on this continent” (61). Unfortunately, no such group existed among Canada’s new corporate elite, for whom it made sense that Canada, as “part of the total resources of North America [and] ... an undeveloped frontier within that total” (54), should willingly take its place as “part of the great North American civilization” (53). After all, according to corporate liberalist philosophy, “it is only in terms of such realities that our nation can be built. Only as a friendly satellite of the United States can we ... influence the American leaders to play their world role with skill and moderation. Doing this is not negating nationalism but recognizing its limits” (53). For these

people, Canada should, and must, be integrated into an economically unified continent with all barriers removed; to them, since the forty-ninth parallel has meaning only insofar as it “results in a lower standard of living for the majority to the north of it,” the sooner it is eliminated, the better (100). Simply put, “continentalism is the view of those who do not see what all the fuss is about. The purpose of life is consumption, and therefore the border is an anachronism” (100).

Hurtig recounts what is essentially the same tale of struggle and potential defeat; however, the outcome of Hurtig’s tale is less certain, since there yet remains a glimmer of hope that, despite the onslaught of American corporatist values, Canadians can maintain their distinctiveness and some shred of sovereignty. The hero of Hurtig’s tale differs from Grant’s, but the villainous forces are the same, and he spells them out in detail. They include

a selfish, grasping, and greedy plutocracy abandoning the work of generations of Canadians, and the dreams of the vast majority of people who live in this country, for American standards and values and priorities.... avaricious and arrogant CEOs, cowardly public servants, and myopic academics who couldn’t care less about national integrity, Canadian sovereignty and independence, or preserving the quality of life that has made Canada such a good country in the past. (xiii)

This group is made up of a “Canadian political and corporate establishment [who are] fixated on the United States” (249); it is, as Hurtig observes, the “corporate elite, our selfish plutocracy, our radical right, and our inept politicians [who] continue to sell our country” (303). As in Grant’s narrative, these people are driven by “arrogance [and] greed” (305) and have little concern for the survival of Canada (xi). Instead, they seek “the rapid integration of Canada with the United States ... the meshing of Canadian standards and policies with American policies, so that nothing stands in the way of their growing power” (xi). As a result of putting personal gain ahead of national interest, their actions are characterized by “self-serving well-financed

lobbying, and, frequently, grossly unprincipled and even illegal conduct, all seemingly without conscience” (302). This group includes “our current crop of corporate leaders and media magnates” (305) and far-right think tanks such as the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute, as well as politicians like former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney “and friends” (351), “Jean Chretien’s Liberals [who] ... have been almost totally dominated by the agendas of big business” (405); and former Alliance leader and current Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who, “in his first major speech in the House of Commons ... presented the most pro-American agenda since Brian Mulroney” (413). In short, as in Grant’s book, the enemy is “the radical right, who are abandoning our country for their own personal gain” (432), and Canadians can surely “do much better than continuing to let these people dominate our government and run our country” (302).

Opposed to this group are the “we” of Hurtig’s text, himself and his readers, who—like Grant’s Diefenbaker—represent “the majority of Canadians,” and whose wishes differ significantly “from those of our radical-right plutocracy” (323). Like Hurtig himself, and unlike the neo-conservative supporters of Big Business, these people “care about the survival of Canada” (402), and their “love of country [is] combined with a respect for tradition” undreamed of by those who occupy positions of power “in our corporate boardrooms” (403-404). Unlike these forces of Big Business and the corporatist politicians, Hurtig and his readers do not want to see Canada and the Canadian way of life “subjugated to corporate control” (413). In fact, in stark contrast to the corporatist elites, Hurtig’s heroes “love [their] country and care deeply about its future” (433), and they want very much “to see it survive” (417). It is in their “visceral passion for this country” that Hurtig situates Canada’s strength, for this passion makes this group a “potentially indomitable force that could stop the sellout of Canada” (402). Thus, the hero of

Hurtig's book is not Hurtig himself, nor is it any other single champion. Instead, it is the "many, many millions more proud Canadians who love their country" (432) and who care about its survival. In short, the hero of Hurtig's as yet unfinished tale is the audience, whom he hopes "will go to work to help save our country, before it's too late" (xiv).

What makes Grant's and Hurtig's books interesting as documents in the tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric is their depiction of the central conflict of the Canadian experience as a struggle over core values—a dispute over what constitutes the good life. This same conflict fuels much of the rhetoric of Canadian identity, which can be seen as the ongoing attempt to retain "fragments of a way of life and ... remembrance of our foundations" (Emberly 20-21) that made "us" Canadians in the first place. "Canadians *are* different. And thank God for that," declares Hurtig (191), and what makes them different—as every Canadian knows—is a commitment to "social policy ... as one of the foundation stones of national identity" (219). This is why so many Canadians point to health care as a defining feature of Canadian society. As important as health care is, however, what it stands for is more important still.

Grant distinguishes between what he terms an "ethic of self-restraint" and an "ethic of freedom" as the core elements in the struggle over values that defines the Canadian identity (72). A society organized by an ethic of self-restraint privileges public order, security, and tradition over the rights of the individual, and emphasizes a society's responsibility "to protect the public good against private freedom" (83). By contrast, a society organized by an ethic of freedom emphasizes individual rights, liberty, and exemption from government control. According to such a philosophy, "social order is a man-made convenience, and its only purpose is to increase freedom. What matters is that men shall be able to do what they want, when they want" (70). The two systems are philosophical and ethical opposites, offering incompatible visions of the good.

One ethic is that of an essentially conservative society, and the other an expression of revolutionary idealism. One provided the foundation for British North America, and the other gave birth to the American revolution. Grant explains, “The early leaders of British North America identified lack of public and personal restraint with the democratic Republic. Their conservatism was essentially the social doctrine that public order and tradition, in contrast to freedom and experiment, were central to the good life” (83). For both Grant and Hurtig, traditional conservative values provide a link to the past, and to the vision of difference and resistance on which Canada was built. As Grant recounts,

the generation of the 1920s took it for granted that they belonged to a nation. The character of the country was self-evident.... To be a Canadian was to be a unique species of North American.... We were grounded in the wisdom of Sir John A. Macdonald, who saw plainly more than a hundred years ago that the only threat to nationalism was from the South, not from across the sea. To be a Canadian was to build, along with the French, a more ordered and stable society than the liberal experiment in the United States. (25)

The problem for contemporary Canada is that its corporatist elite have abandoned that founding wisdom to embrace an American-style notion of freedom that has become almost a “religion of progress and the emancipated passions” (72). It is important to note that, although the members of this corporatist group are frequently referred to as “conservatives,” they are nothing of the sort, as both Grant and Hurtig are careful to emphasize. Grant explicitly distinguishes “the Americans who call themselves ‘Conservatives’” from true conservatives who hold to the Tory ethic of self-restraint on which Canada was built. In fact, he argues, the corporatist elite are not conservatives at all, but

old-fashioned liberals. They stand for the freedom of the individual to use his property as he wishes, and for a limited government which must keep out of the marketplace. Their concentration on freedom from governmental interference has more to do with nineteenth-century liberalism

than with traditional conservatism, which asserts the right of the community to restrain freedom in the name of the common good. (76-77)

Like Grant, Hurtig is at pains to draw out this important contrast between so-called “neo-conservatism” and traditional conservatism as represented by the old Progressive Conservative party, whose “distinctive hallmark ... [was] its respect for tradition combined with a love of country” (413). He quotes Dalton Camp, for whom “as a Tory Canadian, neo-conservatism is as alien ... as Marxism or fascism or Dadaism.” Far from reflecting traditional conservative values, according to Camp, neo-conservatism “rejects the idea of Canada and the ideals that have, for so long, been the inspiration for the kind of society that has become a political wonder of the world.” It is therefore, Camp says, “a mistake to call neo-conservatism anything other than the enemy of the society those of my generation built over the years since the war” (quoted in Hurtig 414).

In its repudiation of American-style capitalist values and assumptions, the tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric has often been dismissed as mean-spirited and bigoted American-bashing. Indeed, some have claimed that Canadian identity doesn’t even exist apart from its tradition of rampant anti-Americanism. Pierre Berton, for example, writes of “the latent anti-Americanism that has always simmered beneath the deceptively placid surface of Canada’s external relations (5-6); J.L. Granatstein argues that “Canadian anti-Americanism has for two centuries been a central buttress of the national identity” (4) and calls for an end to such “glib, mindless prejudice” (287).<sup>4</sup>

Others, however, have offered a somewhat different take on the subject of Canadian cultural resistance. Northrop Frye, for instance, argues that what is being resisted is not genuine

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Robert Fulford, “Anti-American Cant a Self-inflicted Wound”; Jamie Glazov, “The Sickness of Canadian Anti-Americanism”; and Theodore Plantinga, “Anti Americanism and Canadian Identity.”



American culture and values but the debasement of these same values into an instrument for unrestrained corporate advantage and greed. Indeed, far from being anti-American, Canadian resistance may even be “in the United States’ best interests” (“Conclusion” 75), since the oppositional themes in Canada’s rhetoric of identity are really directed at a pervasive “anonymous, mass-produced, mindless sub-culture ... dominated by advertising and distributed through the mass media ... [whose] effect on American culture is quite as lethal as its effect everywhere else” (“Sharing” 64). Although Canadians are used to thinking of such corporatist, mass-culture messages as “an Americanizing influence,” Frye argues that corporatist mass culture is a product of industrialization, and therefore “is American only to the extent that the United States is the world’s most highly industrialized society” (“Sharing” 64).

As Hurtig points out, it isn’t just Canadians who reject the corporatist agenda; many Americans question it as well. In fact, as many “anti-American criticisms originat[e] from respected American sources, people who love their country, but despair over what has been happening to it” (185) as from Canadian sources, an assertion confirmed by, for example, the work of Michael Moore, Gore Vidal, or Lewis Lapham. In resisting corporate liberalism, Canadians are, in effect, joining thoughtful American critics of those who attempt “to hijack the American dream for [their] own selfish reasons” (Willis xii). In fact, Canadians may even have an important role to play in this regard, as Marshall McLuhan suggests, since “sharing the American way, without commitment to American goals or responsibilities, makes the Canadian intellectually detached and observant as an interpreter of the American destiny” (McLuhan 226-48).

Indeed, given Canada’s position on the fringes of the empire, its branch-plant status, and

its distinctive core values, it would surely be more surprising if its cultural discourses were *not* flavoured by anti-Americanism, since all human identities are built up by dissociation as well as by association. As John Fiske explains, all social allegiances rely on a vigorous “sense of oppositionality,” having “not only a sense of *with whom* but also of *against whom*” (24). Kenneth Burke calls this process “identification by antithesis,” noting that all identity formation necessarily involves not only “congregation” but also “related norms of differentiation” (268). In fact, Burke argues, we cannot fully understand identity formation *unless* we recognize the inescapable extent to which every “‘unification’ implies [a corresponding] *diversity*” (Burke 271).

Thus, Canadians’ insistence on their differences is not simply “mindless prejudice” but an attempt to reclaim a system of value that is largely incompatible with the corporate world order that forms the larger context. This theme is persistent enough to have become what Norman Fairclough calls an “anti-language”—a cultural code that provides a “conscious alternative” to the codes and forms of the dominant culture (91). As such, it provides a means of repudiating its influence and asserting at the same time an alternate set of values. While all cultures incorporate a sense of the other, anti-languages are an especially prominent feature of cultural identification for marginalized cultures, and as long as Canadians remain subservient—or, the more subservient they become—they can expect such passionately resistant discourse patterns to persist. As Grant explains,

national articulation is a process through which human beings form and re-form themselves into a society to act historically. This process coheres around the intention realized in the action.... But a nation does not remain a nation only because it has roots in the past. Memory is never enough to guarantee that a nation can articulate itself in the present. There must be a thrust of intention into

the future. When the nation is the intimate neighbour of a dynamic empire, this necessity is even more obvious. (31)

Hurtig, though less philosophical and more pragmatic, responds to the same impulse of repetition and re-enactment. “I have written on many of these subjects before,” he observes, but he notes that he is prompted to repeat and elaborate these same themes because of “the degree of pessimism about the survival of Canada” that he sees around him (xiv). By re-enacting the cultural pattern, he also shows himself a member of a community of voices, and his book is filled with the quoted comments of others in the same Canadian community. Hurtig and Grant, in fulfilling a recognizable pattern in the rhetoric of Canadian identity, both establish themselves within the tradition and provide a ritualized affirmation for their readers.

As I have elaborated elsewhere (MacLennan, “Dancing”), the repudiative rhetoric of Canadian identity is not, as some appear to have supposed, an instrumental rhetoric aimed at challenging American attitudes. Instead, as with all rhetorics of identity, it is an epideictic genre intended to celebrate and affirm identity for those within the culture, and its repudiative patterns are not antagonistic but agonistic—a form, in the words of Northrop Frye, “of Canadian self-definition.” Echoing Burke’s notion of “identification by antithesis,” Frye argues that “identity is only identity when it becomes, not militant, but a way of defining oneself against something else” (“Conclusion” 75)—against, in this context, meaning “simply ... differentiation” (86). Canadian identity can only be defined and confirmed as figure in the context of the pervasive and inescapable American ground against which Canada finds itself as an unalterable fact of Canadian existence.

But a question still arises. If such discourses function, in the words of Berton, as “a necessary form of cultural protectionism” (9), then we are forced to ask: protection from what? It’s tempting to respond that the answer is obvious; it’s American capitalist expansionism that

Canadians need protection from. However, lurking about the edges of every discourse in this tradition that I have studied is another possibility, one hinted at by Margaret Atwood when she declares that “it is our eagerness to sell that needs attention” (“Travels” 113).

Perhaps, after all, the epideictic rhetoric of Canadian identity does have a greater symbolic purpose. While it is undoubtedly intended to affirm a Canadian sense of identity through its ritual enactment of a familiar cultural pattern, it also persistently attempts to draw Canadians’ attention to what they might prefer not to recognize, that the enemy is inside the gates, that it is not Americans but Canadians who are so busily “dismembering our country” (Hurtig 324). They are contemptible, they are self-serving and greedy, and they care nothing for Canada, but they are nevertheless “*our* corporate elite, *our* selfish plutocracy, *our* radical right, and *our* inept politicians,” as Hurtig points out (303).

This same point is made by both Grant and Hurtig; although it is American-style values that present the threat to Canadian independence and survival, it is not in this case Americans who are wielding them. It is not Americans who have the power to sell out the country or undermine its integrity; instead, it is those self-interested corporatist Canadians who do not care about preserving Canadian traditions, values, and social structures. Canada’s challenge is that Canadians are, whether they like it or not, and no matter how peripherally, participants in a larger culture, whose central values Canadians have provisionally embraced in exchange for the prosperity afforded by their ties with the American empire. Canadians have accepted “all the advantages of that empire.... Yet, because [they] have formal political independence, [they] can keep out of some of the dirty work necessary to that empire” (Grant 11). Canadians have imagined that they can continue to hold onto their own values of collectivism and social responsibility, and to believe that they are, and can remain, different from their economic

masters.

As Grant points out, “the central problem for nationalism in English-speaking Canada has always been: in what ways and for what reasons do we have the power and the desire to maintain some independence of the American empire?” (9). The affirmation of a Canadian vision and Canadian values, the repudiation of revolutionary idealism and corporate liberalism that it entails, is an attempt to come to terms with this central problem at a time when it seems as though Canada has relinquished both the power and the desire. But as Margaret Laurence once observed, people who feel that hope is irretrievably lost do not write books (Lever 31), and in a sense the answer to Grant’s question lies in its asking. Part of the tradition that Canadians so desperately want to preserve is the tradition that these books are part of, as well as the one they discuss. Canadians cannot hope to retain our differences if they have forgotten what those differences are; Canadians cannot ever have the power to resist total assimilation if they have no reason to desire it. “It is a disadvantage these days for any general thesis to be tied to past events,” Grant warns, “because ... our memories are killed in the flickering images of the media, and the seeming intensity of events” (9). But memory and tradition can be preserved, if they continue to be articulated and affirmed.

What this means is that the rhetoric of Canadian identity provides one final stroke of irony, for part of the identity we so desperately want to discover lies in the very discourses through which the search is conducted. Despite its sometimes quite harsh repudiation of the American other, the rhetoric of Canadian identity has never been primarily an exercise in anti-Americanism, for the simple reason that it has never really been about Americans. Instead, it is about Canada, about Canadians reminding themselves of who they are and where they have come from, about renewing and communicating to subsequent generations of Canadians the

values that made Canada's forebears reject the republic in the first place.

In the end, Canada's hope of resistance to total assimilation lies in Canadians' capacity to remember. Writing about the necessity of resistance is itself an act of resistance—to the failure of memory, to the loss of understanding of what it means to be a “unique species of North American” (Grant 25). In writing about collective loss, what has been lost may be found; in writing about the irretrievable, what has been taken away may be yet be recovered. And if the rhetoric of Canadian identity has anything to teach, it is this: the day that a uniquely Canadian tradition is truly lost will be the day on which Canadians can no longer wonder where it has gone.

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## “Telling it like it is”: Jim Pankiw and Politics of Racism

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Through the analysis of three political pamphlets, this paper examines the paradoxical nature of commonplaces. Commonplaces themselves can be understood in two related ways: first as sources of arguments and patterns of thinking, and secondly, as proverbs, epithets, and “familiar observations” (Lanham 169). This paper will examine commonplaces in the sense of patterns of thinking as well as “familiar observations,” in particular, about Canadian identity.<sup>1</sup> Commonplaces of Canadian identity speak persuasively because audience and rhetor share an implicit and complex cultural understanding. Because this understanding is unstated and rooted in intricate ideological systems, commonplaces can be used to foster adherence to values that, in fact, contradict the audience’s understanding of these commonplaces. Ideological systems are expressed in what Michael McGee calls the “ideograph”: “an ordinary language term found in political discourse [that] is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (15). McGee defines “ideographs” as “the basic ... building blocks of ideology” that “signify and ‘contain’ a unique ideological commitment” (7).<sup>2</sup> McGee argues that ideology “in practice is a political language ... with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behaviour” (5). Commonplaces reflect ideological systems and, for Kenneth Burke, are both “a survey of the things that people generally consider persuasive,” and assumptions that could be “treated under the head of

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer MacLennan has done extensive work on what she terms “the rhetoric of Canadian identity”; her work has provided a springboard for many of the ideas in this paper, particularly the papers “A Culture of Identity: Canadian-American Difference in the Non-fiction Writing of Margaret Atwood” and “Signposts of Cultural Identity: George Grant’s *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig’s *The Vanishing Country*,” which appears in this issue of *Rhetor*.

<sup>2</sup> McGee distinguishes his concept of the ideograph as distinct from “ultimate” or “God” terms because they “call attention to rational or ethical functions of a particular vocabulary” while the ideograph calls attention to the social function (7).

‘attitudes’ or ‘values’” (Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 56).

The political pamphlets under discussion exploit the commonplaces of Canadian identity that are familiar to their audience, and through that familiarity, these commonplaces have obtained the status of common-sense assumptions. Common-sense assumptions are embodiments of ideologies that are, in turn, embedded in the common-sense assumptions. These assumptions are “implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted ... rarely explicitly formulated, examined, or questioned” (Fairclough 64). The pamphlets use phrases and key terms—ideographs—whose meanings seem self-evident, but this very self-evidence allows the rhetor to use the commonplaces to advance his agenda without challenge. In this sense, the commonplaces in these pamphlets have a mechanical function that disguises the ideology behind them. Thus, when an audience accepts the commonplaces, it is also, unknowingly, buying into the ideological assumptions.

The cluster of social values that are woven into patterns of Canadian identity discourse include a respect for diversity, multiculturalism, inclusiveness, collectivism, justice, peace, and order.<sup>3</sup> However, because these values, as they are used in the pamphlets this paper discusses, are not propositions, but rather “ideographs” that take on the force of “a logical commitment ... [and of] an accurate empirical description” (McGee 7), they can have an ugly underside. In a series of pamphlets mailed out by Jim Pankiw, who served as an independent Member of Parliament for the Saskatoon-Humboldt riding until the June 28, 2004, election, commonplaces of Canadian

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer MacLennan’s work cites a variety of scholars and cultural commentators who have addressed Canadian attempts to distinguish Canadian thought and values from American ones. See, for instance, Richard Collins, *Culture, Communication, and National Identity: The Case of Canadian Television*; R. Bruce Elder, *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture*; Eli Mandel, David Taras, and Beverly Rasporich, *A Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*; Pierre Berton, *Why We Act Like Canadians: A Personal Exploration of Our National Character*; June Callwood, *Portrait of Canada*; George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*; W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*; Joseph Barber, *Good Fences Make Good Neighbours: Why the United States Provokes Canadians*; Malcolm Ross, ed., *Our Identity: A Book of Canadian Essays*; and Bruce Hutchison, *The Unknown Country: Canada and Her People*.

identity are invoked and perverted to advocate policies and ideas that many people consider to be racist.<sup>4</sup> The pamphlets select and foreground issues such as social harmony and tolerance, justice, economic health, and freedom of speech, all values that Canadians embrace. At the same time, however, the pamphlets imply that Saskatchewan's treaties stall efforts in these directions. Pankiw, in effect, uses commonplaces of Canadian identity as propaganda<sup>5</sup> devices to assail notions of Canadian identity. The paradox exists in that Pankiw uses the values embedded in these commonplaces to *reject* social harmony, collectivism, tolerance, justice, and economic health.

While Pankiw has distributed many such pamphlets, this paper will focus on three typical examples. They are *It's Clear Who the Racists Are*, *Stop Indian Crime*, and *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?*<sup>6</sup> Central to the claims in Pankiw's pamphlets is the questioning of the judgments that motivated giving First Nations people "unique constitutional status" (Canadian Human Rights Commission). The manner in which the pamphlets raise these questions is tasteless at the least, and possibly discriminatory. While the questioning of Canadian acts and charters is political, Pankiw poses the questions in such a way that people have levelled accusations of racism at him. However, the questions raised by the pamphlets are not inherently racist, even if Pankiw may be motivated by racism.

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<sup>4</sup> Before becoming an independent MP, Pankiw was a Reform Party candidate, so he has a commitment to the political "right." According to John Warnock in *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Protest and Discontent*, "political forces on the right in Canada have been carrying out a campaign against treaty rights for Aboriginal people and have gained support well beyond their political allies. The Reform party and the subsequent Canadian Alliance have called for the Assimilation of Aboriginal people into white society" (154). However, Pankiw's calls for assimilation are particularly controversial.

<sup>5</sup> By propaganda, I mean "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell 6). These authors argue that "systematic" is an important part of their definition because it means "precise and methodical, carrying out something with organized regularity." Pankiw's pamphlets may be characterized as "systematic" because each pamphlet mailed out attacked some aspect of Canadian social policy.

<sup>6</sup> Since I did not live in Pankiw's riding, I have had to rely on people who did to collect the pamphlets for me. Consequently, I do not have the exact dates for each pamphlet. However, these pamphlets are a sampling from a variety that were circulated between 2001 and 2003.

I propose to show that the overt discrimination evident in the documents actually overlies another agenda, one that intends to weave Canada's social fabric into an American-style pattern. Further, because the pamphlets foreground race, discussions of racism actually act to help disguise the covert agenda. Pankiw uses the pamphlets to attack, indirectly, initiatives of the federal Liberal government dating back thirty years or more, from multicultural policies to the 1982 Constitution Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which affirms and recognizes treaty rights; further, Pankiw implicitly rejects the information provided by the 1996 Royal Commission report that "identifies the legal, political, social, economic and cultural issues that need to be addressed to ensure the future survival of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people" (Canadian Heritage). The political situation is entangled with racial issues, and thus Pankiw often stands accused of being racist; but racism is not the only issue behind his efforts. He implicitly advocates an American-style "melting pot" social construct wherein the social policies that make Canadian identity distinctive are abandoned.<sup>7</sup> Pankiw's pamphlets represent his political desire to "redeem" Canada from Liberal policies, but that redemption is earned through the sacrifice of Aboriginal people's rights, and the ideas that many Canadians hold dear. He scapegoats First Nations people, and as he does so, he undermines Canada's understanding of itself as having unity through its diversity.

Rather than understanding the pamphlets as advocating American-style values,<sup>8</sup> however,

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<sup>7</sup> That Canada's social policy plays a fundamental role in Canadian identity and that those social policies make Canada distinct from the US is discussed by Mel Hurtig. In fact, according to a 2000 Ekos poll quoted in Hurtig's 2002 book *The Vanishing Country*, "Beyond all, Canada differs [from the US] in the role the state and social policy have served as one of the foundation stones of national identity" (219).

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer MacLennan's "I Can't See the Difference. Can you See the Difference? Canadians, Americans, and the Discourse of Resistance" cites Pierre Berton, along with "other scholars and commentators" who identify historical, political, and sociological factors that demonstrate differences between Canadian and American values. American history is revolutionary, their political system is a constitutional republic, and theirs is a culture of individualism. Another of the key differences is that Canadian identity rhetoric is permeated by expressions of self doubt, but, as Jamie Portman observes in "And Not by Bread Alone," the US has "precious few anxieties concerning its culture" (344-45).

many Saskatonians see only racism; indeed, some have argued that the pamphlets constitute hate literature. While the pamphlets appeal to particular values that Canadians take pride in, they also undermine the very concepts of equality and justice that Pankiw seems to advocate. Despite the widespread criticism of Pankiw as racist, he nevertheless has had significant political support in Saskatoon. For example, in 2003, he ran in Saskatoon's mayoralty race and garnered significant support; in fact, he won 22.66% of the vote.<sup>9</sup> In addition, even though he suffered defeat in the June 2004 federal election, he still managed to earn 20.2% of the vote in his riding.<sup>10</sup> Amazingly, his support came even after a series of complaints about the pamphlets made to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in April 2004.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of the outcome of the tribunal, what urgently needs to be addressed is how Pankiw's rhetorical appeals garnered such response from a significant number of the electorate.

The common assumption of many people is that Pankiw's support comes from a racist electorate. In part, this judgment about the audience is formed by a judgment made about the nature of the pamphlets. Those who advocate this view of the audience suggest that this level of racism in Saskatoon reflects a Saskatchewan-wide problem. The common assumption about Saskatchewan seems to be that the province's history and political economy is predicated on racism.<sup>12</sup> This assumption, combined with Pankiw's appeals, makes the racism theory one that seems to be common sense. In fact, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca assert, "The particular culture of a given audience shows so strongly through the speeches addressed to it that

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<sup>9</sup> Atchison took 30.33% of the vote; Zakreski, 25.52%; Pankiw, 22.66%; the incumbent, Maddin, 18.99%; Carroll, 1.97%; and Syet, 0.54% (Saskatoon City Clerk's Office).

<sup>10</sup> The NDP party candidate took 25.5%, the Liberal party 25.4%, and Conservative 26.7%. The remainder of the vote went to the Green Party (1.9%) and to a candidate with no affiliation (0.3%) ("Candidate").

<sup>11</sup> These complaints resulted in a CHRC investigator recommending a human rights tribunal; if the tribunal finds the complaints to be substantiated, Pankiw might be required to pay as "much as \$20,000 in compensation for pain and suffering caused by the discrimination" (Adams A1).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this topic, see "The Political Economy of Racism" in John Warnock's *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Discontent and Protest*.

we feel we can rely on them to a considerable extent for our knowledge of [the culture]” (20). However, while there are most certainly racial tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and have been since settler days, other audience assumptions, more insidious ones, may be driving people’s acceptance of Pankiw’s rhetorical appeals.

These pamphlets urge Saskatchewan residents to believe that social policies, multiculturalism, and treaty rights are endangering the survival of the province. The anxiety about survival has been a common theme in Canadian writing, and out of this generative main theme comes a variety of patterns. For example, anxiety about survival encourages expression of national self-doubt. This self-doubt has been expressed as fear for the country’s survival, and Jim Pankiw exploits this self-doubt by engendering fear for the survival of the province. Much Canadian writing about identity expresses themes of loss, such as George Grant’s *Lament for A Nation* or even as seen in the title of Mel Hurtig’s book *The Vanishing Country: Is It Too Late to Save Canada?* Pankiw’s pamphlets suggest that non-Aboriginal people are facing the loss of things they value because of social policies and treaties. Pankiw invokes themes of loss, suggesting that non-Aboriginal people are denied benefits that are given to Aboriginal people, resulting in Aboriginal people having an unfair advantage over non-Aboriginals. This theme is not a new one in Canadian Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to expressions of loss, Canadian writers also express resistance and repudiation, frequently of American culture.<sup>14</sup> However, Pankiw instead urges his audience to resist the government’s recommendations to accept diversity and exhorts them to repudiate

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<sup>13</sup>Daniel Francis writes that, historically, “Native people were kept distinct and separate on their reserves, their behaviour closely controlled by a host of special laws and regulations. They received special privileges which aroused White resentment while they were refused the most fundamental rights available to other Canadians.... [A situation which resulted in] non-Natives [beginning] to think that Natives were getting something for nothing, an opinion which persists to the present day” (216-17).

<sup>14</sup> See Jennifer MacLennan, “Dancing with the Neighbour: Canadians and the Discourse of ‘Anti-Americanism.’”



Canada's acceptance of its legal relationship with First Nations people. In using commonplaces of Canadian writing, Pankiw inflames fears about cultural survival, not in the face of Americanism, but in the face of multiculturalism. His pamphlets reproduce patterns of national self-doubt, but they encourage the audience to doubt the very things that other authors have posited as foundations of Canadian identity. Pankiw latches onto and encourages a Canadian habit of resistance, which is usually patterned as defiance against assimilation into mass American culture; Pankiw, however, encourages resistance to and repudiation of Canadian tolerance and respect for diversity as he insists on assimilation of First Nations people. While he embraces the commonplaces of Canadian identity, he uses them to advocate a rejection of that very identity; he also repudiates other commonplaces such as Canadians' innate trust of the government to make decisions. George Grant asserts that this trust arises from Canada's British and French roots, which allowed the state "much wider rights to control the individual than was recognized in the libertarian ideas of the American constitution" (69). In repudiating trust in governmental decisions, Pankiw's discourse has a revolutionary tone to it, echoing the revolutionary nature of American history. Pankiw's pamphlets wield commonplaces of Canadian identity as propaganda devices and use these devices to question Canadian social identity, but also to advocate implicitly for an identity more closely allied with American values such as assimilation.

As a corollary of the commonplace theme of survival in Canadian writing, Canadians are preoccupied with what threatens their survival, which in Canada includes a harsh geography and a culture almost overwhelmed by its proximity to the United States. In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood argues that Canadians' preoccupation with survival "is necessarily also a pre-occupation with the obstacles to that survival" (33). Pankiw's pamphlets show a preoccupation with what

they present as obstacles to survival. They raise the spectre of Saskatchewan's economic and social demise. However, the threat arises not from American cultural values, but from within a culturally divided Saskatchewan itself. In the pamphlet *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?* Pankiw offers a point form list of "special race-based privileges" an Aboriginal person receives: tax exempt status, preferential hiring and training, free university tuition and admission concessions, Criminal Code leniency, and "free universal health care." These claims, combined with frequent reminders from Saskatchewan media that the province has a rapidly growing Aboriginal population, ratchet up economic anxiety. In fact, this anxiety, exacerbated by racial problems, is another commonplace of the Canadian imagination. According to Daniel Francis, the "imaginary Indian" has always been scapegoated as an "impediment to national progress and civilized values" (82). By making economic claims, Pankiw encourages fears that too many people not paying taxes will mean that non-Aboriginal residents will be overburdened, leading to the province's demise. He turns Canadian preoccupations with identity to his advantage, encouraging an emotional response rather than a rational one.

Of course, Pankiw only tells part of the story with his list. For example, Aboriginal people do pay taxes, only not on purchases made on reserves. First Nations people pay income tax too, although Status people employed on reserves are exempted. In addition to fanning fears about taxes, Pankiw stimulates job fears that unqualified Aboriginal people will be preferred over qualified non-Aboriginal people. He sidesteps the distinctions of the Employment Equity Act, such as the specification that employers may give preferential treatment to qualified Aboriginal people in "hiring, promotion or other aspects of employment, when the primary purpose of the employer is to serve the needs of Aboriginal people" (Canadian Human Rights Commission). Pankiw attempts to make non-Aboriginal people resent Aboriginal people by

advising his electorate that Aboriginals receive a free education. While it is true that some First Nations people may have their tuition paid by their band, not all band members are able to take advantage of this benefit for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that bands have only finite funds.<sup>15</sup> However, the accuracy of Pankiw's list of "race-based privileges" is irrelevant because "facts" are subordinate to purpose, and Pankiw's purpose is to emphasize that Saskatchewan's economic survival is at stake. He uses these claims to fuel economic fears and inflame feelings of suspicion and resentment. Saskatchewan is a have-not province, so when Pankiw's pamphlet claims "a litany of government largesse and racist schemes, extorted from hard-working taxpayers by Indian lobbyists," he implies that the treaties are the basis of Canada's economic challenges and, by extension, Saskatchewan's economic problems. That Canadians are familiar with the themes of survival and preoccupation with obstacles to that survival, means that Pankiw's assertions are packaged in a familiar form, which makes them easier to accept uncritically.

One aspect of Canadian survival themes, according to Margaret Atwood in *Survival*, is to portray "nature-as-monster." She claims that "the values ascribed to the Indian will depend on what the white writer feels about Nature," asserting, "America has always had mixed feelings about that" (91). She argues that unlike America's "good guy/bad guy" Native dichotomy, Canada's "dual literary tradition for Indians" puts Aboriginal people in either a victor or a victim role. She claims that American writers "go for moral definitions based on intrinsic qualities the Indians are thought to possess.... The Canadians ... zero in on the relative places of Indians and whites on the aggression-suffering scale" (92). Thus, according to Atwood, in some

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to financial obstacles that university students who are Aboriginal face, there are also enrolment and retention problems. Aboriginal youth, for a variety of reasons, simply are not moving from high school to university. According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, "48% of young Aboriginals off reserve drop out of high school compared with about one-third of non-natives" ("Native Health").

representations, Aboriginal people constitute a threat and are portrayed as victors and tormentors. Likewise, Francis's *Imaginary Indian* illustrates how Aboriginal people seem to be portrayed either as "the noble savage" or as "ignoble savages," who at their worst are "wicked blood-thirsty red skins" and "enemies of promise" posing a "threat to survival" (221-22).

This pattern of imagery that portrays Aboriginal people as threats—as victors and tormentors of non-Aboriginal people—pervades Pankiw's pamphlets, but plays out differently in each one. In the pamphlet entitled *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?* there are images of three girls: one Caucasian, one Asian, and one Black. The fourth child is a boy who appears to be Aboriginal. In the group picture on the front of the pamphlet, he stands smiling amidst the other children. The inside of the pamphlet tells another story however; here, the three girls are shown standing together under a headline that says "Special race-based privileges: none." The boy, now isolated from the group, stands by himself under a headline that lists seven "special race-based privileges." In this picture, he stands in a belligerent posture, shoulders angled aggressively toward the viewer, and glowers into the audience's eyes. Although this pamphlet appeals to economic fears, it also fans anxieties about social harmony in Saskatchewan where racial issues are often at the forefront of people's minds. By singling the boy out and segregating him from the rest of the group, the pamphlet appeals to a pattern of imagery that Atwood argues is prevalent in Canadian writing by non-Aboriginal peoples. As she says, in Canadian discourse, "Indians ... have rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made into projections of something in the white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish" (91). The boy in the pamphlet is a projection of a fear. The text above his picture supports and emphasizes economic concerns, but the image suggests the boy's belligerence. This belligerence carries the threat of violence. The threat that this boy suggests rests on an enthymematic understanding of racial fear

and on stereotypes of Aboriginal men, which conjure up notions of criminality and violence: tormentors of the non-Aboriginal. Pankiw exploits racist patterns and images that intensify fears. His panacea to social ills is assimilation because, for Pankiw, multiculturalism is an obstacle to survival rather than an element that strengthens Canadian society, and he seems to prefer the “melting pot” metaphor to the “mosaic” metaphor.

Aboriginality as a threat to provincial and national order, or as a threat to “civilization,” plays out more fully in the pamphlet *Stop Indian Crime*. This pamphlet was mailed out after September 11, 2001; thus, the imagery gains intensity from its historical context. In this pamphlet, the imagery of the Aboriginal person as victor/tormentor is clear. So-called “Indian crime” in Saskatchewan is conflated with terrorism. The first page has a big red stop sign on it and the headline “STOP INDIAN CRIME.” The back page has a picture of a Canadian soldier nose to nose with a person wearing camouflage gear. The caption under this picture says “Indian Terrorist confronts Canadian Soldier at OKA 1990.” Because the image is juxtaposed with information about crime statistics in Saskatchewan, it makes an argument by association. The photo, taken in the previous decade and in a different province, is irrelevant to the argument, but a powerful visual arouses powerful emotions. In fact, this Oka photograph is an iconic image in Canadian culture and may be understood as a “visual commonplace.” The audience is supposed to conflate the “Indian terrorist” with the crime statistics. The Canadian soldier’s face is visible while the Aboriginal person’s face is masked and he is swaddled in camouflage. This juxtaposition of revealed face / hidden face speaks on a symbolic level, suggesting the Mohawk man can only be known as a part of an armed, masked mob, never as an individual. The Canadian soldier’s image evokes associations of patriotic pride, order, law, and civilization, while the word “terrorist” and the image of the masked, armed person evoke a whole host of

fears centred on terrorist activity as it is portrayed in the United States.

The text, “Indian Terrorist confronts Canadian Soldier,” heightens the contrast between Indian terrorist and Canadian soldier. Indian terrorist is the subject of the sentence; he is the one who does the confronting. The representative of Canada, the soldier, is confronted, the object of an aggressive action. This grammatical construction mirrors the “arguments” in the pamphlet, which suggest that First Nations people are lawless criminals who follow no rules of engagement, people whose “sprees” rampage over Canadian people and civic order. It suggests that Canada needs a government-sponsored army to protect non-Aboriginal Canadians from “Indian Terrorists.” Interestingly, Pankiw now relies on Canadians’ trust in the government to restore order! The text above and below the picture says, “If you can’t do the time ... then don’t do the crime.” The “you” in this sentence obviously does not include the implied audience of the pamphlets, but its usage asks the audience to consider who would do the crime. The “you” is “Indian criminals” and the phrase “can’t do the time” intends to foreground justice issues that Pankiw has raised elsewhere in the pamphlet, suggesting that “sentencing circles” are irrelevant without explaining what they are or how or why they are convened. The pronoun “you” works to further segregate the audience for the pamphlet from the “Indian terrorist” that the pamphlet portrays. The word “crime” is also vague, as is “terrorism,” which encompasses a vague set of violent actions.

In *It’s Clear Who the Racists Are*, Pankiw exploits another set of fears, although they are still closely aligned with anxiety about survival. These fears coalesce around racial tensions. This pamphlet features quotations from a series of inflammatory remarks made by David Ahenakew during “A December 13, 2002 address to an FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indians] conference on Health Canada policy.” Ahenakew is quoted as saying, “these goddamned

immigrants: East Indians, Pakistanis, Afghanistan, whites and so forth...” This quotation runs under a completely unrelated photo of Ahenakew and Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Tellingly, Pankiw did not quote comments that Ahenakew also made about Jewish people. These comments, anti-Semitic in nature, have resulted in criminal charges and in Ahenakew being stripped of his Order of Canada, but they are not as useful to Pankiw because these anti-Semitic remarks will not call forth the effect he hopes to achieve. By focusing on Ahenakew’s alleged dismissal of “white” people as “goddamned immigrants,” Pankiw can exacerbate racial tensions. The back page of this pamphlet features several other alleged quotations from a variety of First Nations leaders, spanning 1990 to 2002. They also serve to heighten fear and resentment: “We really should have killed you all for a hundred years” is attributed to Chief Bill Wilson. Melvin Laboucan, listed as the “former chief of Woodland Cree” is quoted as saying, “You’re going, you’re going ... You’re getting out of our country ... This is our country.” These quotations feed irrational fears of armed insurgence and genocide initiated by Aboriginal leaders, who are painted as bellicose and racist themselves. Pankiw also quotes Perry Bellegarde, Grand Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations,<sup>16</sup> as saying “*the non-First Nations* people are indeed treaty beneficiaries in their continued use and enjoyment of the Treaty/Indian lands *now called Canada*” (Pankiw’s emphasis). Pankiw’s selective quotation of Bellegarde’s words reinforces the view that Aboriginals enjoy unfair privileges in Canadian society, thus encouraging feelings of resentment in non-Aboriginal readers.

Pankiw claims that a “majority of people have been intimidated by Indian lobbyists,” suggesting that laws and government policies have been passed only because of threats and intimidation, rather than through common assent or parliamentary process. He interprets the “offensive remarks ... [of] prominent Indian lobbyists” as acting to strip “the veneer away from

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<sup>16</sup> Perry Bellegarde served as Grand Chief of the FSIN from May 1998 to October 2003.

their hidden agenda.” This hidden agenda, insinuates Pankiw, is the reclamation of all land and the extermination or exile of all non-Aboriginal people. Even as Pankiw denies that Aboriginal treaties have any validity, he insinuates that Aboriginal people are thirsty for revenge, suggesting that he understands that Aboriginal people have been treated abhorrently, perhaps even criminally in Canada. Again, Pankiw’s tracts place First Nations people in the victor/tormentor pattern that Atwood identifies as recurrent in Canadian literature.

Another commonplace of Canadian identity is the expression of a pattern of national self-doubt. Pankiw exploits the familiarity of a common theme by implicitly questioning whether or not Canada’s ongoing experiment in diversity and mosaic as a cultural construct is working. While other Canadian writers express patterns of national doubt, questioning whether Canada will survive as a nation or be assimilated into the United States, Pankiw’s questioning takes national doubt in a new direction. He implies that Canada’s racial tensions will tear it apart and leave Aboriginal people the winners in this cultural conflict. Pankiw not only neglects to acknowledge the inequities experienced by First Nations people, but he also challenges the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which affirms that treaty rights allow “Aboriginal peoples to protect their cultures, customs, traditions, and languages” (Canadian Heritage). Pankiw simplifies a complex situation and provides easy answers: Saskatchewan’s economic survival depends on equality, which for Pankiw means treating everyone the same regardless of circumstances. He casts doubt upon one of the tenets of Canadian identity: that diversity, plurality, and tolerance will strengthen the country.

The pamphlets do not express any recognition that Canada might lose something valuable if it forsakes multiculturalism and abandons its treaties, but they do foreground a loss of “equality.” The threat the pamphlets implicitly stress, then, is one to individualism, a



characteristic prized in American ideology. Pankiw's implied readers respond to his appeals because they are frightened of losing what status they have in the social hierarchy and are threatened by a change in the status quo, which might result in a grimmer economic fate than they already foresee for themselves. Pankiw repudiates collectivist traditions that are fundamentally Canadian, while implying that treaties and multiculturalism threaten Canadian traditions and Canadians themselves.

Twenty percent of the audience for these pamphlets demonstrated their support for Pankiw by voting to re-elect him as their independent MP in the federal election of 2003. Pankiw's inversions of the commonplaces of Canadian identity "spoke" to them on some level. Rhetorical theory presumes that all messages, in both content and design, are material aspects of the rhetor's expectations of the audience. Edwin Black argues that discourse implies a second persona, an auditor, for whom the discourse is designed: "in all rhetorical discourse, we can find enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something" ("Second Persona" 119). Correspondingly, Pankiw's pamphlets invite his audience to believe certain concepts, but what he invites it to *be* is more complex. Pankiw uses commonplaces of Canadian identity to lever the audience toward accepting American values. His tracts contain an overt invitation to racism but also a covert invitation to embrace American-style assimilation. While the invitation to racism is explicit, the invitation to Americanism is more implicit and subtle.

Mostly, people in Saskatoon assume that those who supported Pankiw are racists swayed by discourse that invites and encourages racist views. It might even be argued that if Pankiw's supporters were not already racists, the pamphlets encouraged them to adopt racist views. For example, the pamphlets encourage people to believe that the difference between First Nations people and non-Aboriginals arises out of "race-based" social policy rather than out of the

complex historical interplay between society, government, and First Nations.

By equating race and culture, Pankiw exploits another kind of racial anxiety. The pamphlets implicitly argue that race has become the medium of social identity. According to Edwin Black, inherent in an ideology that roots identity in race is the notion that those who are not of the race are excluded (*Rhetorical Questions* 21-51). Pankiw's intended audience cannot become part of the race that they believe is being privileged. They cannot benefit from treaty rights, tax exemptions, employment equity, or anything else that they perceive First Nations people get and they do not. Their concerns may be inherently about fair play and justice, and induced not by racism but by fear of loss, which provides a powerful motivation. Psychologist Robert Cialdini points out that "People seem to be more motivated by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining something of equal value" (238). Non-Aboriginal people may fear that they will not get the same social and economic benefits that they perceive First Nations people to be getting.

The pamphlets imply that First Nations people receive "special treatment" under the law and in society. While the pamphlets are inflammatory, asking ordinary people to "get mad" over this political discrimination that seems to prefer First Nations people to non-Aboriginal people, the pamphlets simply fan a spark of fear into a flame. In a province where unemployment looms for many, a public figure who suggests that employment equity rests solely on racial qualifications rather than merit fosters discontent. The pamphlets' emphasis that some social policies confer "special" benefits on the basis of race incites fear and resentment in those non-Aboriginal people who believe their poverty excludes them from full participation in society as much as racism excludes First Nations people from the same. The pamphlets invite and encourage the audience to see itself as a collective voice of reason resisting dangerous liberalism;

they position the audience as a resistant voice speaking out for a beleaguered populist movement.

In Saskatchewan, a microcosm of a larger Canadian scene, racial tensions are magnified partially because of an increasing Aboriginal population, which is frequently alluded to in the media. The context for Pankiw's pamphlets thus is a very particular scene. As Kenneth Burke explains, in *Language as Symbolic Action*, "critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose" (77). Pankiw's pamphlets may be better understood as responses to concerns about issues posed by the rhetorical situation that exists in Canada, but perhaps seems more immediate in Saskatchewan. The rhetorical situation includes one where concerns about racial harmony are paramount, as are Canadian-American relations due, in part, to national and international events since 9/11.

The Saskatchewan situation has been described by some as inherently racist and arising out of a veritable tradition of racism and racist discourse. For example, Noel Dyck, a Saskatchewan sociologist, writes in "Negotiating the Indian Problem" that the "Indian 'question' or 'problem' [is] a significant element in interaction between Indians and non-Indians on the Canadian prairies." He goes on to claim, "ideas about public problems involve both cognitive and moral judgements" (132). Pankiw's pamphlets present these "problems" in language that, while not always racist, certainly allows for and even encourages that interpretation. He presents socio-economic problems as though they are solely about race.

While Pankiw repudiates the tenets of a multicultural society and scapegoats First Nations people, he is not the first Canadian to assert an identity by repudiating another culture. According to Burke, identification by antithesis is one of the most powerful modes of identification. It is "union by some opposition shared in common." Burke claims that "temporary alliances in wartime [and racism] are obvious examples," asserting that identification by

antithesis is the most “urgent form of congregation by segregation” (“Rhetorical Situation” 268). Unlike much discourse of Canadian identity that repudiates American cultural values and is often heard as anti-American, Pankiw’s discourse, which repudiates Canadian social policies and questions particular acts and charters, is heard as racist, but not as anti-Canadian or pro-American. Rather than dismissing Pankiw’s discourse as simply racist, we need to understand how its rhetorical appeals engaged so many people and earned their approval.

According to Mel Hurtig, Canadians believe that Canada is distinct from the US in its “health care, social programs, education, the justice system, ... cultural institutions, and multiculturalism”(180). These are the very issues that Pankiw foregrounds in the pamphlets and attacks. But the common sense assumptions that Pankiw’s critical audience brings to bear on the pamphlets make racism apparent, rather than his attack on the very beliefs he seems to advocate. For example, Pankiw seems to believe that diversity endangers social programs, such as health care, and endangers the Canadian justice system. He implicitly accuses Canada’s honouring of its First Nations treaties of harming the country economically and socially and not benefiting First Nations people. His discourse about inclusiveness contradicts Canadian understandings of inclusiveness. Finally, he interprets Canada’s commitment to honouring treaties, to the model of the mosaic, and to inclusiveness as racist and exclusionary. To Pankiw, inclusiveness means assimilation and equality means uniformity. Pankiw alleges disastrous financial and social ramifications in what most Canadians recognize as an inclusive society; thus he foregrounds and exploits his audience’s economic and racial anxieties and fears. By attacking social policy, Pankiw emphasizes what individuals may lose, rather than what the nation gains, thereby giving presence to American-style individualism rather than Canadian-style collectivism. Because Pankiw’s claims invoke commonplaces of Canadian identity, however, they seem credible and

invite people to accept his statements without examining them critically. At the heart of Pankiw's pamphlets lies not a strong, regional racism, but logomachy—a dispute over the meaning of words, and in particular over what multiculturalism and diversity mean to Canada and to Canadians.

Edwin Black asserts that “a determination of genre precedes judgment of value” (*Rhetorical Questions* 39). When we determine that Pankiw's pamphlets are first and foremost examples of racist discourse, we judge them only on that evaluation. Because of the abrasiveness of his pamphlets, Pankiw is often dismissed as a crank; but this dismissal is thoughtless, perhaps even dangerous. By dismissing everything in the pamphlets as part and parcel of the bigotry and discrimination that most see in them, Pankiw's critics are stifling debate and making it easier for everyone to accede to the erasure of what has been considered distinctly Canadian values. When we examine the ideological assumptions behind Pankiw's use of commonplaces, we see that his invitation to reject Canada's commitment to social policy has been accepted by many people. This acceptance suggests that the issues raised and the rhetorical appeals made in Pankiw's pamphlets need to be addressed directly and immediately, and perhaps not exclusively in Saskatchewan. Ultimately, Pankiw's pamphlets may be used to help us answer how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will live in harmony. They may help us to understand whether social policies of the last thirty years have helped First Nations people and Canadians from diverse cultures take an equal part in the life of the nation. They may help us to reassert and defend why Canada's social construct of “mosaic” builds a stronger country.

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## A Feminist Rhetorical Perspective on Informed Choice in Midwifery

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When I was pregnant with my first child, my spouse and I assumed that our baby would be born in hospital. We also took for granted that I would follow the standard routine of blood and ultrasound screening tests. In the end, though, after discussing our options at length with our midwife and after reading a range of materials she made available to us, we chose to plan for a home birth and we chose not to have some of the blood and ultrasound testing that is routine in medical maternity care. In retrospect, I realize that our midwifery care facilitated a valuable process of *informed choice* for us.

Within Ontario's recently regulated profession of midwifery, informed choice functions as a guiding principle for its model of maternity care.<sup>1</sup> In Kenneth Burke's terms, we could characterize informed choice as a motivating "god-term" (Burke, *Rhetoric* 33) for Ontario midwifery. It constitutes an essential feature of the women-centred rhetoric of health-care communication that midwives have consciously sought to enact by contrast with the more hierarchical and paternalistic modes of communication that traditionally occur within biomedical obstetrical contexts.<sup>2</sup> Informed choice, according to the College of Midwives of Ontario, "is a decision-making process which relies on a full exchange of information in a non-urgent, non-authoritarian, co-operative setting" ("Midwifery" 5). This process is intended to encourage "the

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<sup>1</sup> Regulated midwifery began in 1994 in Ontario. Since that time, midwifery has become a regulated health profession in British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. Saskatchewan passed a Midwifery Act in 1999, but it has not yet been declared in practice.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning power asymmetry and paternalism in medical communication generally, see, for example, Richard Gwyn, *Communicating Health and Illness* (61-81), P. Treichler, R. Frankel, C. Kramarae, K. Zoppi, and H. Beckman, "Problem and Problems: Power Relationships in a Medical Encounter," E. Mishler, *The Discourse of Medicine: Dialectics of Medical Interviews*, and D. Silverman, *Communication and Medical Practice: Social Relations in the Clinic*. Concerning the disempowering dimensions of biomedical obstetrical care, see Robbie Davis-Floyd, "The Technocratic Model of Birth," Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, and Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, and Ann Oakley, *The Captured Womb: A History of Medical Care of Women*.

woman to actively participate in her care throughout pregnancy, birth, and post-partum period and make choices about the manner in which her care is provided” (5). Informed choice, then, can be understood both as an ideological principle guiding the midwifery model of care and as the rhetorical practice of midwives exchanging information with women in order to facilitate expectant mothers’ decision-making. From my perspective as a rhetorician, informed choice is not simply a desired goal or outcome of midwifery care; it is a rhetorical process of communication that occurs between a woman and her midwife throughout the course of maternity care.

In this paper, I want to interrogate the combined principle-practice of informed choice in Ontario midwifery from a feminist rhetorical perspective. I am interested in exploring the possibilities and the limits of informed choice as a women-centred, feminist mode of health-care communication. My analysis will focus on how informed choice is defined within the College of Midwives of Ontario’s policy document entitled “Informed Choice Standard.” Through its 1991 Midwifery Act, Ontario included midwifery as one of the province’s self-regulated and provincially funded health professions, with the concomitant requirement to establish a College of Midwives of Ontario (CMO) as the governing body for the profession. The CMO is led by a council composed of approximately two-thirds members of the midwifery profession and one-third members of the public. The CMO’s primary duty, according to Ontario’s Health Professions Procedural Code, is to “serve and protect the public interest” by establishing and maintaining “standards of qualification, practice, knowledge, skill, and professional ethics for midwives” (Ontario, “Regulated” sec. 4). To fulfill this mandate, the CMO has produced and continues to produce numerous regulatory documents for governing the emerging profession of midwifery.

These documents form a rich and integral textual site for the definition and negotiation of informed choice as a distinctive feature of the midwifery model of care within the larger landscape of Ontario's medically dominated health-care system. In this paper, I want to consider the extent to which informed choice in the Ontario midwifery context offers a model of women's health-care communication that could be defined as a feminist rhetorical practice. Drawing on a selection of values and criteria for feminist rhetoric that have been articulated in recent research and theory, I will first look at the CMO's "Informed Choice Standard" (the main but by no means only policy document on the subject), focusing in particular on how it defines informed choice as well as the terms that are associated with, or cluster around, this central term.<sup>3</sup> In the latter part of my discussion, I will consider how the (potentially) feminist rhetorical practice of informed choice in midwifery is challenged by the dominant medico-scientific and neo-liberal consumerist discourses that shape mainstream health-care and that, inevitably though ambiguously, affect midwifery discourse and values. Through this analysis, I foreground some of the rhetorical and ideological tensions that Ontario midwifery negotiates in its definition of informed choice. These tensions suggest that the discourses of scientific medicine and neo-liberal consumerism constrain the possibility for a feminist rhetorical practice of informed choice in midwifery and may contribute to some problematic assumptions in the CMO's definition of this principle about what counts as a "women-centred" approach to health-care communication. I begin, however, with the good news: namely, how informed choice in Ontario midwifery could be considered a feminist rhetorical practice.

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<sup>3</sup> Burke refers to this kind of rhetorical study in *Attitudes Toward History* (232-33) and *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (20). For a more developed review of cluster analysis, see Sonja Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism* (69-76).

## **Informed Choice: A Feminist Rhetorical Practice?**

In choosing to look at informed choice in midwifery as a potentially feminist rhetorical practice, I am interested, in the first place, in recognizing this mode of communication as a significant but underexplored domain of women's rhetoric: in its essence, it consists of women (midwives) communicating with women (expectant mothers) about womanly subjects (pregnancy and birth). In this sense, I see myself as participating in the larger project to recuperate and validate women's diverse rhetorical practices and perspectives.<sup>4</sup> However, rather than focusing on the contributions of individual women rhetors, my study foregrounds the significance of a collective and, to some extent, institutionally structured women's rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> As Barbara Biesecker argues, in recovering and revalidating women's rhetorics, it is important to avoid the ideology of individualism that informs studies of "the autonomous speaking subject who is both the origin and master of her discourse" ("Negotiating" 238); instead, she encourages researchers to explore the vast array of collective, everyday, heterogeneous rhetorical practices in which women engage and which create (rather than simply reflect) a range of possibilities for discursively structured subjectivity and action ("Negotiating" 238-40). In studying the midwifery rhetoric of informed choice, I am less concerned with how individual women communicate than I am with how the midwifery community defines for itself a practice of communication that occurs among women and about women, and that discursively shapes socio-politically located opportunities for female rhetorical agency and action.

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<sup>4</sup> On the question of recovering women's rhetorics as part of the feminist rhetorical project, see Karen A. Foss, Sonja K. Foss, and Cindy L. Griffin, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories* (17-22) and Patricia Bizzell, "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric." A few recent collections that exemplify the diverse and exciting research in this area include Andrea Lundsford's groundbreaking compilation *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe, eds., *The Changing Tradition*, and Molly Wertheimer, ed., *Listening to their Voices*. Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald's anthology of women's rhetorics likewise offers an important contribution to the recovery of female rhetorical practices and perspectives.

<sup>5</sup> On this issue, see, for example, Diane Helene Miller, "The Future of Feminist Rhetorical Criticism" (363) and Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric" and "Negotiating with Our Tradition."

Although female participation would seem to be a prerequisite for a feminist rhetorical practice, it would be naive to claim that all women's rhetorics or that all research on women's rhetoric is necessarily feminist.<sup>6</sup> In this case, however, I am exploring whether informed choice in midwifery is a form of women's rhetoric that also could be called feminist. Certainly, for Ontario midwives, the communication principle and practice of informed choice represents one way in which this community of women actively seeks to resist and reconfigure more hierarchical and alienating forms of traditional medical communication. Despite—or perhaps because of—its recent incorporation within the mainstream health-care system, midwifery in Ontario intentionally seeks to articulate alternative ways of providing, and communicating within, maternity care; it employs, to paraphrase Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald, “different means of persuasion” that may subvert the traditional means and ends of biomedical discourse and, in so doing, contribute to the reinvention of a women-centred rhetoric of maternity care (xvii). Does informed choice, as it is defined in the CMO documents, then, constitute an alternative health-care rhetoric that functions as site of “feminist intervention into biomedical discourse” (Willard 117)? I suggest that there are indeed significant ways in which it does, though, as I discuss in the second half of this paper, the CMO understanding of informed choice likewise has noteworthy limitations.

According to Barbara Willard, informed decision-making is a central feature of the reconfigured relationship between care provider and care receiver<sup>7</sup> that is at the heart of the

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<sup>6</sup> On this point, see Sutherland (254).

<sup>7</sup> The terms *caregiver* and *care-receiver* are of course rhetorically inadequate for reinforcing the values of egalitarianism, partnership, and mutuality that Willard proposes, since they imply a kind of sender-receiver relationship. The phrase “participants in the health-care communication situation” might therefore be preferable, but also probably more opaque—and it would not draw our attention to the inadequacies of our common language for identifying the participants in ways that accord with the values that Willard advocates. A similar, more localized problem exists with how to name the participants in the midwifery health-care context: Ontario midwives, in an effort to avoid the connotation of passivity and devaluation that the word “patient” has acquired, have selected the term “client” for referring to women who seek their care. But the use of “client,” which implicitly identifies the

alternative and women's health-care movements: an "egalitarian partnership" based on "mutual respect and understanding," which empowers women to become informed and take control of their own health care (131). These are values that accord with some of the prime features identified by North American feminist rhetorical critics and theorists as alternatives to "traditional ... adversarial, combative, goal-directed, ends-oriented efforts at persuasion" (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 12). For Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, feminist rhetoric is "invitational," not coercive or dominating, and is grounded in the principles of equality and self-determination (2); for Patricia Darlington and Becky Mulvaney, a feminist rhetorical practice engenders "reciprocal empowerment," a mode of interaction that simultaneously affirms the "personal authority" or agency of the speaker and seeks to support or empower the "other" (140); for Cheris Kramarae, the study of women's rhetorics provides the grounds for developing a feminist rhetorical theory that values interconnection, trust, mutuality, and equal access to information (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 48).

In what ways, then, does the Ontario model of informed choice in midwifery communication represent a "different" means of women's rhetoric that simultaneously resists and reconfigures traditional or dominant forms of biomedical rhetoric? Can we say that, within the field of health-care communication, it constitutes a rhetorical practice that, at least potentially, enacts the kinds of feminist values suggested by the growing research on women's rhetoric and the re-envisioning of rhetorical theory that is emerging out of this research? In particular, what do the CMO policies on informed choice suggest about how we can reconceptualize the relationship between rhetor and audience in the health-care context and the knowledges generated through this relationship?

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midwife as the "professional" in the situation—with all the attendant cultural prestige that this term connotes—is likewise somewhat problematic. My own preference is to refer to the midwife as the "midwife" and to the woman as the "woman" or as the "expectant mother."

The status of “informed choice” as a motivating god-term for Ontario midwifery is apparent both in its “intensity” and its “frequency” (Foss 73) within the CMO documents: not only does the phrase occur frequently in CMO policies other than the “Informed Choice Standard,” but it also possesses significant intensity because of its status as one of the three fundamental principles for the Ontario model of midwifery care (the other two being “continuity of care” and “choice of birthplace”). The sheer repetition of the phrase “informed choice,” combined with its presentation as a central principle of midwifery care give it, as Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca would say, a definite rhetorical “presence” (174-76) in the CMO’s policies.

Even though the CMO documents never use the terms “feminist” or “rhetorical” in their descriptions of informed choice, the language of at least some of the policies does indeed invoke an alternative, empowering, women-centred approach to maternity care. The midwifery understanding of informed *choice* explicitly contrasts the mainstream medical concept of informed *consent*: the term *choice* suggests the power or opportunity to choose actively among alternatives, whereas the term *consent* implies a more passive compliance with direction provided by a higher authority. According to Farah Shroff, within Canadian midwifery, “[t]he goal of informed choice ensures that midwives provide birthing women with comprehensive information about their care, so that *they* may be the primary decision makers during the course of their midwifery care” (18). This, she argues, “is in direct contrast to informed consent which is, at least in practice, legal protection for physicians” (18). The midwifery view of informed choice goes beyond a mainstream understanding by including explicit support for women’s right to be informed and to control their health care, as well as by valuing a more diverse, less hegemonic approach to the kinds of information and choices explored through the health-care



relationship. It also, in some respects, advocates a more interactive, reciprocal approach to communicating information than is typical in mainstream contexts.<sup>8</sup>

Consonant with the feminist ideals of the women's health-care movement, the CMO's "Informed Choice Standard" begins by asserting women's right to be informed and to be active participants in their health care: "Women have the *right to receive* information and be *involved* in the decision making process throughout their midwifery care" (2; my emphasis). This statement suggests some of the complex set of values and assumptions at work in Ontario midwifery's definition of informed choice: drawing on a discourse of women's rights, it emphasizes the goal of women becoming active agents (i.e., they are "involved").<sup>9</sup> The value of women as agents in their own health care is further reinforced by the statement that "Midwives encourage and give guidance to clients wishing to seek out resources to assist them in the decision making process" (2). Notably, this second statement suggests that women do not simply receive information from midwives; they are also active, self-motivated seekers of resources. The ultimate purpose of informed choice further supports an ideology of self-determination because it is supposed to help women act as "primary decision-makers" (CMO, "Informed" 1) in their own health care.

The "Informed Choice Standard" continues by explaining that "[i]t is the responsibility of the midwife to facilitate the ongoing exchange of current knowledge in a non-authoritarian and co-operative manner, including sharing what is known and unknown about procedures, tests, and medications" (2). In this passage, terms used to characterize the process of informed choice, such

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<sup>8</sup> We should also note how Shroff's phrase, "midwives provide birthing women with comprehensive information," largely replicates rather than questions a unidirectional model of communication that grants epistemological privilege to the care(information)-provider. The persistence of this model is discussed below.

<sup>9</sup> The wording of course also asserts the unidirectional view of communication (i.e., women "receive" information), demonstrating the complex problem of negotiating between midwifery's reciprocal and interactive philosophies and the medical establishment's hierarchical mindset. This problem is further developed in the second half of this paper.

as “facilitate,” “exchange,” “non-authoritarian,” “co-operative,” and “sharing,” resonate with feminist values of egalitarian relationships, non-coercive communication, and equal access to information.

Additionally, the explicit guideline that “current knowledge” should include both what is “known and unknown” indicates a subversive rhetorical strategy: midwives are expected not only to communicate what is easily accepted within the standard biomedical frame of reference, but also to share other types of research and evidence that may not fit within this frame, research and evidence that midwives themselves draw on to support their alternative approaches to maternity care—such as, for example, sharing information concerning the risks of hospital birth and the safety of home birth. Likewise, by highlighting what is “unknown” as well as what is “known,” midwives potentially call into question the authoritative certainty of medico-scientific knowledge, encouraging women to think critically about the maternity care information they receive and assumptions they may hold before making decisions about their own situations.

If the kinds of information that midwives give women access to exceeds the medical frame, then so do the choices that they offer to women, as my own experience attests. Most notably, the choice to give birth at home is one that redefines and subverts the dominant medical discourse of hospital-based childbirth—and it is the choice that the medical community has most strenuously resisted in accepting midwifery as a regulated form of health care. But midwives also resist and reconfigure standard medical “options” in subtler ways: for example, by explaining to women the chain of potential physical and ethical consequences that may stem from having a routine blood test in the early stages of pregnancy to assess risk for fetal abnormalities, or by explaining that virtually no research has been conducted on the possible harmful effects of ultrasound, or by offering fathers the opportunity to “catch” their babies as

they are born.

Perhaps most importantly from a rhetorical perspective, the language of the CMO descriptions of informed choice indicates a more reciprocal, egalitarian, two-way process of communication. Terms such as “interactive,” “cooperative,” “non-authoritarian,” “share,” and “exchange” suggest a dynamic, mutually respectful conversation between participants in the health-care context rather than simply a one-way transmission of information from the expert sender to the uninformed receiver. In significant, if not all, ways, the CMO guidelines characterize informed choice as a rhetorical process through which midwives facilitate, encourage, and support women to become more active and knowledgeable participants in the caregiving process. In ideal terms, the process of informed choice both presupposes and supports the rhetorical agency of women as well as midwives in the health-care encounter. At least potentially, then, this model of informed choice suggests the possibility that it can foster a kind of “reciprocal empowerment” (Darlington and Mulvaney) between midwives and childbearing women: an interaction of mutual engagement that simultaneously affirms the “personal authority” or agency of the rhetor and seeks to empower the other to become, likewise, an agent in the rhetorical exchange and the health-care process. In these ways, I think it is fair to say that the CMO definition of informed choice offers an important alternative to mainstream models of communication in health care, models that tend to have a much more consistently limited conception of informed choice as simply the transmission of information from the professional (the informed sender-speaker) to the patient (the uninformed recipient-audience).

However, for all that Ontario midwifery does, in very real and important ways, constitute an alternative, women-centred form of health care, it is also now part of the system that it formerly resisted. The regulatory documents that describe midwifery’s approach to informed

choice are precisely those that play a central role in negotiating midwifery's new status as part of the health-care system. It is no surprise, therefore, to see within the language and rhetorical contexts of these documents tensions and ambiguities, limits as well as possibilities for conceiving informed choice as a feminist rhetorical practice. As Ritchie and Ronald note, "one of the basic *topoi* of women's rhetorics ... might be said to include accommodation and subversion working together" (Introduction xxiv). Within the feminist rhetorical project, exploring this complex, ambiguous *topoi* foregrounds the importance of engaging in the critique of dominant rhetorics alongside the recuperation and revalidation of women's voices. Susan Jarratt reminds us that "[i]f the Western intellectual tradition is not only a product of men, but constituted by masculinity, then transformation comes not only from women finding women authors [rhetors] but also from a gendered rereading of that masculine rhetoric" (2).<sup>10</sup>

In the context of this study of women's rhetoric, we should then ask to what extent midwifery's understanding of informed choice, as articulated within the CMO's policy documents, accommodates while also subverting or challenging mainstream/malestream health-care values and ideologies? Specifically, to what extent is the feminist rhetorical practice of informed choice destabilized and potentially undermined by two dominant, interrelated discourses—namely, a medico-scientific discourse and a neo-liberal consumerist discourse—circulating within the broader health-care culture in contemporary Western society? These are large questions that deserve extensive replies; in the remainder of this short paper, I will attempt only to provide a preliminary groundwork as the basis for fuller analysis and discussion.

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<sup>10</sup> On the importance of engaging in a critique of the gendered nature of dominant, traditional rhetorical frameworks, see also Miller, and Biesecker, "Coming to Terms" and "Negotiating with Our Tradition."

## Challenge I: Medico-Scientific Ideology and Discourse

As feminist philosophers have pointed out, the dominant Western ideal of knowledge-making privileges a rational, disengaged, masculine knower who uses an ostensibly value-free scientific-analytic methodology to produce objective, universal knowledge.<sup>11</sup> According to philosopher Lorraine Code, “[i]mplicit in the veneration of objectivity central to *scientific* practice is the conviction that objects of knowledge are separate from knowers and investigators and that they remain separate and unchanged throughout investigative, information-gathering, and knowledge-construction processes” (31-32). This epistemology is problematic because it denies its own situated interests, emotional engagements, and intersubjective nature, and because it marginalizes and invalidates alternative modes of knowledge-making such as embodied, experiential, spiritual, emotional, intuitive, anecdotal, and environmental knowledges.

In the context of a reductive, mainstream conception of informed choice, the problems of this kind of ideology/epistemology appear in the following assumptions: 1. The model assumes that the information that the health-care provider conveys to the patient is scientifically objective and value-free, derived from a biomedical model of what counts as real knowledge or information. 2. It presumes a sender-receiver, transmission model of communication in which the information or knowledge being conveyed exists objectively apart from the people participating in the communicative situation. 3. It assumes that once the patient has received this information, he or she is then adequately prepared to make a rational, autonomous informed choice about his or her course of care.

From a rhetorical perspective—let alone a *feminist* rhetorical perspective—these assumptions are highly problematic. It is possible, as I have just argued, to interpret the CMO

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<sup>11</sup> See for example the work of feminist philosophers and theorists such as Lorraine Code, Donna Haraway, Alison Jaggar, Genevieve Lloyd, and Margrit Shildrick.

“Informed Choice Standard” as countering or at least calling into question some of these assumptions. At the same time, however, the language of this policy document reveals points of ambiguity, moments of uneasy accommodation between a feminist rhetoric/epistemology of informed choice and a scientific, biomedical one.

This occurs both in how the policy characterizes the nature of the information being communicated and in the action of communicating it. For example, although the CMO guidelines imply that midwives should provide women with “current knowledge” that exceeds (and hence conceivably subverts) the boundaries of mainstream medical knowledge, the specific mention of providing information about “procedures, tests and medications” suggests that these medical subjects nonetheless should form the main focus of the informed choice process—rather than a diverse range of embodied, experiential, spiritual, emotional, intuitive, anecdotal, and environmental knowledges.

Similarly, the communicative actions of “exchange” and “sharing” seem nicely attuned to a feminist perspective on the speaker-audience relationship, suggesting that midwives and women are engaged together in a reciprocal, egalitarian communicative process. However, the statement that “Women have the right to *receive* information” (CMO, “Informed” 1)—while it does, importantly, assert the need for information not to be withheld from women—reinforces the mainstream transmission model of communication: the position of the expectant mother is to receive information from the knowledgeable midwife. If the term “receive” suggests a unidirectional model of communication, then it is also possible to interpret the terms “exchange” and “sharing” from this perspective: that is, midwives are experts who share or exchange the information they possess with women who lack this information. In other words, these apparently feminist rhetorical terms do not necessarily indicate that informed choice is a process

of “reciprocal empowerment,” one that encourages expectant mothers to share or exchange their own different knowledges with their midwives in a mutually engaging and responsive fashion. The coexistence of the term “receive” with words such as “sharing” and “exchange” raises the question of whether the CMO guidelines conceive the midwifery process of informed choice as potentially recreating the knowledges of both expectant mothers and midwives through the cooperative sharing of the situated, diverse knowledges of both participants in the rhetorical exchange, or are more typically and conservatively talking about giving women the information that midwives possess in order that women may then make ostensibly rational, autonomous choices about their courses of care?

The medico-scientific challenge to a feminist rhetorical ideal of informed choice appears even more strongly when considering how other CMO policies indirectly address—and diminish—the midwifery definition of informed choice. Thus, for example, in an important document entitled “Indications for Mandatory Discussion, Consultation and Transfer of Care,” the informed-choice objective of ensuring that the expectant mother acts as the primary decision-maker in her course of care becomes attenuated, displaced by an initial assertion of the midwife’s primary role in the decision-making process: “As primary caregiver, *the midwife* together with the client *is fully responsible* for decision-making” (College, “Indications” 1; my emphasis). In this opening sentence, the midwife functions as the main actor while the client is subordinated to a secondary role: not only is the client positioned after the midwife almost as a kind of parenthetical accompaniment in the subject clause, but the singular verb “is” reinforces the view that it is really the midwife, not the midwife and the client together, who makes the decisions.

In the context of this document, such an assertion of the midwife’s role has important rhetorical functions. The “Indications” policy, which outlines how and when midwives are

required to consult with physicians concerning the women for whom they care, represents a key site of negotiation between the newly regulated profession of midwifery and the established medical profession. As such, midwives must unambiguously demarcate their own status as primary caregivers while simultaneously reassuring the medical profession that they are prepared to work within at least some of its terms.

For midwives, the rhetorical context of regulation within the main, medically dominated health-care system necessarily constrains the degree to which midwifery's alternative, women-centred ideals may operate. As a result, the rhetorical process and caregiving relationship of informed choice articulated elsewhere in the CMO policies is diminished and even undermined by this document. Rather than characterizing the midwife and the expectant mother as active, cooperative participants in the caregiving process, the CMO policy constructs the midwife's job—in traditional nominalized medico-scientific language—as the “detection of an indication for consultation” in her passive female subject (“Indications” 1). Following consultation with medical authority, the midwife is expected to plan with the physician (and without the expectant mother's direct participation) an appropriate course of care for her “client” (“Indications” 2). The “Indications” policy demonstrates how, for midwives and the women for whom they care, the exigencies of an established medical discourse, values, and epistemic framework curtail—but do not wholly obstruct—the available means for recreating a different language and practice of maternity care.

### **Challenge II: Consumerist Ideology and Discourse**

The overt and implied links between informed choice and health-care consumerism further challenge the claim that informed choice in midwifery constitutes a feminist rhetorical practice.



Since the beginning of the lobbying efforts to have midwifery become a regulated health-care profession in Ontario, health-care consumerism and its key value of “choice” have formed an important motivating context. In the 1980s prior to regulation, midwives and self-proclaimed midwifery “consumers” drew heavily on the premise that, as health-care consumers, women have the right to *choose* midwives as their caregivers. For example, the Midwifery Task Force of Ontario—a well-educated, articulate group of midwifery consumers—argued that in selecting midwifery care, they had made “responsible decisions and informed choices” (6), and they warned that should the government *not* regulate midwifery as an autonomous health-care profession, “an underground midwifery system that remains *responsive to consumer needs* would [continue to] develop” (8; my emphasis).

To the extent that the discourse of consumerism emphasizes women’s health-care rights and needs concerning pregnancy and birth, it appears consonant with a feminist approach, in particular the liberal feminist values of self-determination and individual empowerment; and to the extent that informed choice counters the abuses of a paternalistic medical system in which, as Richard Gwyn explains, health-care experts make decisions for their patients based on what they consider to be in the patient’s best interests (79), it certainly represents a significant movement in the direction of granting women greater freedom of choice and control over their reproductive lives. As some feminist and health-care critics point out, however, both “consumer” and “choice” have become problematic terms on which to base an empowering, women-centred model of health care. To the extent that informed choice participates in a mainstream consumerist culture of choice, these criticisms indicate the possible limits of informed choice as a feminist rhetorical practice in midwifery.

One of the problems with engaging in a discourse of “rights,” “choice,” and “control” in

the context of midwifery care is that, as Nadine Pilley Edwards points out, it “leaves little space for negotiation and relational decision-making in which control can be relinquished” (14). We can see this tension between a rights/choice discourse of individual self-determination and a rhetoric of relational, mutually engaging decision-making in the CMO “Informed Choice Standard,” where references to the childbearing woman’s “right to information” and role as “primary decision-maker” occur alongside terms that emphasize the enabling relational dimensions of the informed-choice interaction: “shared responsibility,” “interactive process,” “encourage,” “assist,” “facilitate,” “exchange,” “non-authoritarian,” “co-operative.” A rights-based discourse of choice implies an adversarial environment in which the appeal to “rights” functions as the premise for making a “choice” that conflicts with the recommended course of action. Pilley notes how, among the British women she studied, “while some ... felt that knowing their rights was of some benefit, appealing to these was a far cry from the supportive relationships they felt they needed [with their midwives]” (16).

If not conflict and adversity, a consumerist discourse of informed choice at the very least risks stressing the rhetorical distance and disengagement, rather than proximity and engagement, between caregiver and care-receiver. According to nursing philosopher Sally Gadow, “the hallmark of consumerism is indifference to outcome. In health care this is expressed as professional disappearance from clinical decision making. As moral agents, professionals cease to exist; they function only as adjuncts to patient autonomy. Patients too disappear, to reappear as consumers” (35). In relation to informed choice, this “disappearance” of the caregiver from decision-making is associated with the assumption that the responsibility of the health-care professional is to convey information to the patient who will then be enabled to make an autonomous decision. The duty of the professional is to be non-directive so that the patient’s

choice remains (ostensibly) truly autonomous. This consumerist perspective on patient autonomy and non-interference in decision-making by the health-care provider contrasts—and I think undermines—the midwifery values of partnership, exchange, and shared decision-making that the informed choice policies articulate, as well as the feminist rhetorical values of interconnection, mutuality, and reciprocal empowerment.

The association of informed choice with patient autonomy and self-determination appears based on a mainstream bioethical version of autonomous decision-making that presupposes, according to feminist ethicist Susan Sherwin, “articulate, intelligent patients who are accustomed to making decisions about the courses of their lives and who possess the resources necessary to allow them a range of options to choose among” (24). While this description may apply to many women being cared for by midwives—especially those who worked hard for midwifery to become a self-regulating, autonomous health-care profession—it may not sufficiently address the increasing diversity of women, and in particular of their socio-cultural identities and locations, for whom regulated midwives care. The standard bioethical concept of autonomous decision-making may not adequately account for the complex realities and needs of women living in diverse social, cultural, economic, and political situations. It certainly does not acknowledge that any attempt to facilitate informed choice necessarily engages midwives and expectant mothers as rhetorical agents in a dynamic, intersubjective communicative exchange.

Abby Lippman likewise points out that, although “choice” has functioned as a key principle of the women’s health-care movement, the consumerist discourse in which it is increasingly embedded “encourages and reflects an atomised, individualised view of social life, a society in which private citizens are presumed to act alone and only in their best interests” (283). Framing choice in terms of individual consumers ignores how women’s lives are fabricated

through intricate, interdependent social webs (283). It is noteworthy that the CMO “Midwifery Model of Practice” emphasizes that the principle of informed choice supports decision-making as a “shared responsibility between the woman, her family (as defined by the woman) and her caregivers” (CMO, “Midwifery” 5). At the same time, though, this nod toward the intricate, interdependent social webs of women’s lives exists in tension with commonplace, neo-liberal assumptions about the value of (ostensibly) individual, autonomous decision-making.

Further, Sherwin, Lippman, and Judy Rebeck all critique the rhetoric of individual choice for fostering illusions about the degree of power and control that women really have in a health-care situation and for obfuscating rather than dismantling social inequities (Sherwin 28). In Lippman’s assessment, the kind of individualism fostered by the ideology of consumer choice “hides the social conditions that produce ill health” and it masks “the operations of power that construct choices” (285). Rebeck concurs, noting how “the idea that individual choice is the most important social value is not particularly feminist. In fact, in a society of unequal power, an emphasis on individual choice alone usually gives those with power the only real choices” (88). Although these critiques are not directed at the rhetorical and ideological function of “choice” in midwifery caregiving specifically, they are—at least for Lippman and Rebeck—aimed at re-evaluating the appropriateness of this god-term for the women’s health-care movement, given the term’s increasing currency within mainstream health-care consumerism. They suggest that this currency that may not, in fact, support feminist ideals of caregiving and health-care communication.

For midwives, the views of another Canadian midwife may provide the most compelling argument for engaging in a careful consideration of the potentially problematic as well as positive meanings of informed choice for its alternative, women-centred ideal of caregiving and

communication—an ideal that must be negotiated within and is necessarily affected by dominant health-care discourses. Cautioning that the incorporation of midwifery within mainstream health care threatens its emancipatory agenda because of the dominant consumerist, neo-liberal discourse of choice, Quebec midwife Céline Lemay urges midwives to actively resist this normative discourse by giving voice to “la voix du ‘féminin’ chez les sages-femmes, celle qui n’a pas peur de ne pas être en accord avec l’établissement car le manque de conscience des idéologies en jeu et le manque de courage pourra faire alors du choix un simple instrument du maintien du statu quo” (39). In effect, Lemay is inviting midwives to continue to resist and subvert—rather than uncritically accommodate—the mainstream rhetoric of choice through the self-critical practice of a women-centred and feminist rhetoric that is not afraid to challenge normative discourse and values.

## **Conclusion**

A feminist rhetorical perspective on informed choice in midwifery creates space, I believe, for understanding the midwifery approach as a meaningful alternative to mainstream models of health-care communication. In the context of the growing research on women’s rhetorics and the concomitant development of feminist rhetorical theories, the midwifery communication model of informed choice functions as a significant example of an explicitly women-centred mode of discourse grounded in such feminist values as egalitarian partnership, mutual respect and understanding, invitational rather than coercive communication, reciprocal empowerment, interconnection, trust, and equal access to information. Unlike studies of the rhetorical achievements of individual female rhetors, exploring the midwifery model of informed choice means exploring a rhetorical practice that both emerges from and structures a whole community.

It exemplifies a mode of female rhetoric that does not simply demonstrate the value of women's communication approaches within the existing standards of 'successful' health-care rhetoric, but one that potentially reconfigures health-care rhetoric (and specifically the rhetorical practices of informed choice) at an institutional, systemic level. In this sense, it can be viewed as a form of collective female communication that helps to "reconceptualize and reconstruct rhetorical concepts and theories that contribute to the ideology of domination" (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 28).

At the same time, however, it is important to explore the epistemological and ideological constraints that necessarily structure midwifery's policies on informed choice. These constraints, I suggest, arise both from midwifery's position as a newly regulated profession within the dominant health-care system and its attendant medico-scientific discourse, as well as from the problematic intersection of the (liberal) feminist values of individual "choice" and "autonomy" or "self-determination" with a neo-liberal consumerist rhetoric of health care. Attending to these constraints reveals how the CMO policies function as complex, heterogeneous boundary texts that simultaneously subvert and accommodate dominant discourses and ideologies of health care. Appreciating midwifery's "different means of persuasion" means likewise understanding the terms of the established, masculinist discourses within and against which this alternative, feminist rhetoric must be negotiated.

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