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THE TRANSMUTATION OF FEMINIST CRITIQUE FROM NOVEL TO FILM
THE CASE OF *LES FOUS DE BASSAN*

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RÉSUMÉ FRANÇAIS

La suppression et la déformation de l'expérience réelle des femmes ainsi que de la critique féministe par le discours culturel dominant sont des problèmes identifiés par les féministes œuvrant dans plusieurs champs académiques. Cette thèse répond à l'appel de la traductrice-théoricienne féministe Luise von Flotow qui recommande des analyses fines et approfondies des textes traduits ou adaptés pour l'écran afin de documenter plus précisément le processus subtil et complexe de ce qu'elle nomme la correction patriarcale dans le domaine de la reproduction culturelle. Afin de contribuer à ce vaste projet, nous offrons une étude comparée détaillée du roman *Les Fous de Bassan* d'Anne Hébert et son adaptation cinématographique réalisée par Yves Simoneau en tenant compte des aspects symboliques, structuraux, psychologiques et sociohistoriques du récit ainsi que des méthodes signifiantes employées au cinéma, telles le mouvement de la caméra, la mise en scène, et le montage.

Pour encadrer l'approche interprétative, nous lisons les textes "comme une féministe", d'après le type de lecture proposé par la théoricienne littéraire Diana Fuss. Pour ce faire, nous nous servons de concepts avancés par des théoriciennes féministes en littérature et en histoire, telles Marilyn French, Gerda Lerner, Adrienne Rich, et Rosalind Coward, dans le but de préciser

certains aspects du vécu féminin et aussi pour aborder le manque de consensus parmi les critiques concernant la présence, le type, et le degré de féminisme dans le texte original. Nous examinons comment Hébert nous dévoile et réprovoque le fonctionnement patriarcal dans les sphères privé et publique; comment elle démontre la résistance des femmes à leur place sociale; comment elle révèle les moyens utilisés par le patriarcat pour se perpétuer et enfin comment Simoneau les récupère par maintes stratégies de transécriture afin de créer une vision à la fois plus positive du patriarcat et plus fortement reliée aux thématiques préférées de la tradition masculine.

Précisément, nous comparons les rouages de la famille patriarcale, tels que vécus par le père, la mère, le fils et la fille, avec une attention particulière aux suppressions et transmutations de l'expérience maternelle (actuelle et/ou manquée), de la domination paternaliste de la fille, et du drame du fils. À travers ces analyses, nous scrutons les rapports entre (grand-)parents et (petits-)enfants selon le sexe de chaque personnage principal afin de dévoiler l'impact de leurs rôles socio-sexuels sur leurs relations intrafamiliales. Nous regardons également la tyrannie patriarcale manifestée par l'Église, y compris la manipulation de la Parole par le représentant de Dieu pour contrôler les femmes. Nous disséquons la lutte entre le jeune patriarche en formation et les femmes modernes en devenir, examen qui nous mène à éplucher la représentation de la violence faite aux femmes, notamment l'évocation réelle et symbolique du viol dans les deux textes.

Bien qu'elle transpose fidèlement certains éléments du récit original, nous concluons que l'adaptation filmique fait subir au roman d'Hébert une

transformation idéologique importante, qui a pour effet de réduire au silence ou à tout le moins d'écarter de la thématique centrale certains aspects clés de la critique féministe que l'auteure fait de la société patriarcale. Parmi les écarts les plus importants, notons la restructuration à plusieurs niveaux du drame central entre hommes qui dominent et femmes qui résistent en une lutte plus simplifiée et plus directe entre père/Père et fils/Fils, et de plus, à l'intérieur de cela, le renversement de la trajectoire filiale masculine et la mutation et l'expurgation des problèmes que pose la socialisation masculine pour la femme. L'oppression du fils par un ordre paternel oppressif et répressif devient ainsi tout simplement le problème fondamental. Cette réduction de la thématique d'Hébert se traduit par une atténuation considérable des abus patriarcaux, tant dans la sphère privée que publique, et par l'effacement de l'étendue de la société patriarcale. Elle conduit également à la récupération et au musellement de la femme moderne et de son désir par de nombreuses techniques de reconstruction. Enfin elle se manifeste dans la préférence marquée pour la fraternité au détriment de la solidarité féminine.

La lecture détaillée nous permet de démontrer que les changements repérés ne sont ni accidentels (c'est-à-dire des conséquences naturelles et inévitables de la compression générale du contenu, une idée soutenue par certains théoriciens du scénario et évoquée par certains critiques de ce film), ni engendrés par les défis littéraires d'un récit caractérisé par la symbolique, l'intériorité, le fantastique, un tissu social, et une structure narrative polyvalente. Non seulement y-a-t-il des solutions cinématographiques pour ces aspects problématiques, mais Simoneau utilise insuffisamment ou s'approprie pour ses

propres fins les moyens mis à sa disposition par le roman pour offrir une interprétation audio-visuelle des préoccupations féministes d'Hébert.

En effet, Simoneau s'adonne à une réécriture calculée de la perspective féministe du texte par un grand nombre de « corrections » subtiles aux aspects figuratifs du roman, corrections qui ne sont pas exigées par le médium lui-même. Il procède, entre autres, par la réassignation et la transformation d'objets symboliques, de couleurs, d'espaces, de jeux de lumière, et de lieux; par la suppression ou la réécriture de dialogues ainsi que par la redistribution des mots dits; par la substitution ou par l'effacement de citations bibliques; par la sélection et par la consolidation de personnages selon le sexe et par la reformulation de leur rôles symboliques; par la reprise et par la transposition de gestes; par des modifications aux costumes; et par des méthodes de montage qui superposent de nouvelles notions par l'entremise des interactions et des chevauchements des significations déjà mutées. Toutes ces stratégies consistent soit à récupérer le conflit homme-femme sous la forme diluée du drame père-fils, soit à effacer la présence de la voix féminine désirante ou contestataire, soit à oblitérer l'émergence de la modernité féminine sous presque toutes ses formes, ou soit à mitiger une représentation négative du patriarcat.

Qui plus est, nous révélons à plusieurs reprises des ambivalences chez Simoneau face à la situation des femmes sous le patriarcat, ambivalences que l'on retrouve par ailleurs dans d'autres de ses films. Même si ces équivoques compliquent l'interprétation du film, par les ambiguïtés qu'elles entraînent, elles s'opposent à toute insertion d'une critique féministe au sein du film. En effet,

l'adaptateur oscille entre une vision stéréotypée et conventionnelle de la femme et de son désir et une vision parfois misogyne, l'une et l'autre des visions qu'Hébert a tenté d'ébranler si non de défaire dans son roman.

Après avoir démontré que Simoneau expurge la critique du patriarcat qu'Hébert a inscrite dans son récit et qu'il y a peu de raisons cinématographiques pour les changements identifiés, nous concluons en offrant une analyse du contexte social antiféministe dans lequel baignait la création de l'adaptation et qui aurait pu influencer les décisions de Simoneau. Nous terminons en proposant quelques suggestions pour une approche de lecture féministe en adaptation cinématographique.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

To contribute to the study of patriarchal correction in the remediation of Canadian letters, this dissertation explicated some of the key transformations which Yves Simoneau's film adaptation made to the feminist critique of patriarchal society inscribed in Anne Hébert's novel *Les Fous de Bassan*. To accomplish this task, I did comparative close readings using analytical concepts applied by feminist literary and historical theorists, such as Diana Fuss, Marilyn French, Adrienne Rich, Gerda Lerner and Rosalind Coward. To unmask subtle as well as obvious transformations, I considered symbolic, psychological, structural and sociopolitical aspects of the two texts and paid attention to the cinematic creation of meaning. The study of the film adaptation found a vast array of deviations from the novel that, in large measure, either attenuated, sidelined, cut or otherwise undid the source text's underlying critique of the fate of women in patriarchy and their concomitant resistance to their social situation. Because of the highly targeted nature of the modifications and the non-cinematic explanations for most of the transmutations, I conclude that Simoneau makes them largely for ideological reasons, which situates the adaptation within the social backlash against feminism of the 1980's.

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INTRODUCTION

“Where find the root? Where re-join the source?”
— May Sarton, “My Sisters, O My Sisters”

Film adaptation, a variation of what is now called “remediation” or “transmediation”, is a major form of cultural production and transmission.¹ For instance, researchers estimate that between a third to over one half of all commercial films in English are based on literature.² However, historically, source texts by women have been underrepresented, with most film adaptations in English-speaking countries derived from male-authored works since the beginning of the 20th century. In Québec the situation is particularly flagrant. For the period 1922-1996, approximately 85% of film adaptations were based on male-authored texts, in spite of the increasing importance of female authors in the Québécois canon after the 1930’s and women’s almost equal production of novels in the province after 1960 when the vast majority of the adaptations were made.³ This situation points to a number of areas of feminist study, including the fate of those female-authored works which manage to make it to the screen.

As part of the larger feminist project of studying how feminist ideas and visions fare in cultural transmission and reproduction, this dissertation enters

the area of transmediation to document how the feminist critique of patriarchal society found in one particular Québécois novel, *Les Fous de Bassan*, holds up in its commercial film adaptation.⁴ The dissertation also outlines and applies a feminist methodology or approach and a practical method that, it is believed, will be useful to similar, future, comparative feminist studies concerned with transmediation.

One of the goals of literary feminists has not only been to recover but to make available works by women to a wider audience in order to document, study and celebrate women's literary production. While discussing the gender politics of literary distribution, Rosalind Coward suggests in her well-known essay "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" that commercial film adaptations contribute to that goal by assuring the greater access to what she terms profeminist literary works (236). Although she acknowledges that inherent differences in motion picture and print media may affect content, she nevertheless assumes that commercial film adaptations preserve the essentials of the feminist authors' ideas. Unfortunately, Coward's view that such adaptations provide wider access to profeminist texts fails to acknowledge the distortions to and the dilutions and omissions of feminist stances or representations that others have observed in film adaptations of feminist or "profeminist" texts made wholly or in part for mass or commercial markets.

For instance, feminist literary critic Marilyn Hoder-Salmon summarizes her impressions of numerous film adaptations of both male and female authored texts made by Hollywood as follows:

Most films based on women's stories with even a jot of feminist theme or characterization retain... little trace of their original feminist content in their cinematic versions..... [R]egardless of the degree of feminist ideas and content in novels chosen for adaptation, Hollywood has reduced their themes in translation, denying or trivializing women's experience (2 and 3).

While Hoder-Salmon does not support her comments with much hard evidence from her own viewings, she cites a few studies by others of individual adaptations that do, including those in Geoffrey Wagner's classic *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975). These studies, however, were not on contemporary feminist novels and were for the most part analyzed before the advent of feminist criticism. Nonetheless, her observation correlates with general trends noted by scholars of commercial feature film adaptations in the United States and Canada, i.e., that they tend to normalize or neutralize radical ideas, tone down or bowdlerize social criticism, and dilute or erase calls for collective action, a reflection of the "normalizing" effect of dominant culture through its controlling ideology, described variously by theorists like Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes and Northrop Frye.⁵ Thus, contrary to Coward's contention, film adaptation can actually undermine the material objective of literary feminism: that of increasing the availability of feminist writers and their ideas, at least in film form.

This situation as it concerns feminist or profeminist texts can be seen as part of a recurring historical phenomenon by which records of feminist or profeminist perspectives and actions have been silenced or otherwise lost over time. Indeed, one of the effects (some would argue functions) of patriarchy is to keep women unaware of their past. Affirms feminist historian Gerda Lerner, "Women's lack of knowledge of our history of struggle and achievement has

been one of the major means of keeping us subordinate" (226). Moreover, the omission of women's claim for emancipation from historical and cultural accounts has helped ostracize subsequent generations of feminists and has thus impeded radical change. Observes Adrienne Rich, "[T]he erasure of women's political and historic past... makes each new generation of feminists appear as an abnormal excrescence on the face of time" (1979 9-10). The cleansing of feminist critique from a source by its film adaptation is thus of concern to feminists, especially to those who had hoped that feminism could widen its influence through forms of mass cultural transmission.

However, while the expurgation of feminist content has been popularly observed in film adaptations of feminist novels by women and is evidently part of a larger historical problem, the phenomenon has received relatively little critical attention as a category of academic research from feminist critics themselves, especially feminist film critics (Hoder-Salmon 7) although the field is now gradually being explored in American and other world letters. One exception in Canadian and Québécois literature is the initial work of Christiane Lahaie, who, for instance, applies a feminist lens to narratology to briefly study the adaptations of *Laura Laur* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. However, much work remains to be done, particularly in the Canadian and Québécois context. Recently, Luise von Flotow, a Canadian feminist translator and theorist concerned with gender politics in translation, identified the need to document how women writers have fared in translation and, of particular interest to this dissertation, how gender issues affect translated media such as film (1997 90, 91). Among other things, she calls for more extensive and thorough studies of

what she terms “‘patriarchal’ corrective intervention” in translation to expose its degree and subtleties (58). One can extend this call to the field of transmediation.

Such study need not be confined to the fields of translation or film studies, in which adaptation studies are at times considered. This type of project fits comfortably within the parameters of comparative literature as well. Notably, it constitutes part of source and influence studies concerned with the transmission and transmutation of form and content, including ideological and aesthetic concern or interests, across literatures. It also belongs to comparative literature’s concern with intermedia studies: comparative work between literature and other art forms. Indeed, translations and mistranslations themselves have also been investigated within the field of comparative literature (Fletcher 126-127), viewed among other things as “rare and precious test-cases, as microcosmic dramas in which are acted out the rituals and disputes of different linguistic, generic or ideological forces” (Scott in Fletcher 127). Film adaptations also constitute such test cases.

Von Flotow states that comparative feminist translation study of the comprehensive, in-depth sort she advocates “requires painstaking... line-by-line comparisons [of entire texts, whether single poems or complete novels].... It also demands acute sensitivity for minute changes in literary tone and messages” (66). While the actual line-by-line comparisons von Flotow describes are irrelevant to novel-film comparisons, the meticulous attention to subtle changes which she favours is accepted as a necessary, relevant and illuminating way to more precisely delineate ideological transmutations in film

adaptation. It also more fully ensures the identification of sources in the originating text, guarding against facile assertions about what the film adaptor has either created, substituted, cut or otherwise changed.

In order to allow for the detailed level of study that von Flotow calls for, this dissertation focuses on the feminist comparison of one novel and its film adaptation. The thesis thus dispenses with the binary English-French linguistic approach of much Comparative Canadian Literature. As such the dissertation pushes the boundaries and parameters that define this field, implicitly suggesting that it embrace comparative studies between literature and other media produced either in Canada or in Canada and elsewhere, not just between literature of two, typically the dominant, linguistic groups. This is not to say that comparing how feminist content is treated transmediatically between linguistic groups is not a worthy area of study; it is simply a more long-term goal.⁶ In any case, the study as proposed here, either intermedially or intermedially with the linguistic component, has never been done in the field.

Why has the adaptation of Anne Hébert's novel *Les Fous de Bassan* been chosen as a first case study? Firstly, although there is debate on the feminist stance of the novel, several critics have read it as implicitly or at least partially feminist; thus it is a novel with arguably feminist content vulnerable to "mute-ation" — silencing and transformation. Indeed, as I will be demonstrating in the thesis, the novel's symbolic construction of the very notions of patriarchy and resisting sisterhood, of would-be patriarch and contesting modern woman, makes it an excellent test case for studying the transmutation of the critique of patriarchy and the fate and struggle of women within that social order.

Secondly, its adaptation is a commercial film adaptation,⁷ which received a theatrical run, television airing and video distribution. Moreover, it is readily available for not only purchase and study but for rent in video rental stores. Thus, as much as a modest Canadian/Québécois film can, it has carved a place for itself in the local mass culture market. It was made for and has exerted influence within that market. Thirdly, it is feature length; consequently, the novel's actual story would receive the maximum narrative space that cinematic form would allow for development (in other words, the novel's story was not further curtailed by compression into an even shorter cinematic narrative format).

Fourthly, its creative crew (director, main scripters) is of the same cultural origins as the source text's author (Québécois) which nullifies somewhat the consideration of other influencing cultural factors. Moreover, both the crew and the author were working with the same cultural audiences (Québécois and French) in mind. Some of the other readily available adaptations of feminist or profeminist texts based on Canadian literature written by Canadians in English that were initially considered for study were made by non-Canadian directors and scripters working outside of Canada, mainly for either American or otherwise wider international audiences. These factors seemed to implicate additional cross-cultural considerations, which while necessary for future study, were, in the interests of simplicity, put aside for the first case study.⁸

Fifthly, this particular film adaptation has been identified as in need of comprehensive, in-depth analysis by both scholars of Québécois cinema (Lever 1995; Véronneau 1997) and by scholars of Québécois literature (Green 1996).⁹

Sixthly, the few initial, scholarly comparative studies on this novel and its adaptation do not use a feminist methodology, even though Janet M. Paterson advocates the increased application of a feminist approach in studying Hébert (1992).¹⁰ As a result, the full range of both obvious and subtle transformations of concern to a feminist critic have not been identified, let alone explicated or discussed. Indeed, although these studies note a few conspicuous alterations that a feminist critic would recognize as of ideological import, such as the film's focus on the male protagonist and the omission of some secondary female characters, these studies either do not satisfactorily qualify, contextualize, demonstrate or examine even these changes in terms of their feminist significance. They generally either explain away the transformations as the demands of the cinematic medium or simply overlook, ignore or even dismiss their ideological significance altogether.¹¹

Most particularly on the last point, Janis L. Pallister stands in solid defense of Simoneau's choices in her mytho-thematic study, flatly denying the significance of any changes involving gender, such as removal of the female narrators, as well as the omission of both secondary female and male characters. Moreover, she glosses over or disregards important aspects of the female experience in patriarchy that Hébert was critiquing, such as the deathly experience of married women and the vulnerability of latent female modernity. She thus either fails to recognize or outright rejects the feminist significance of a number of Simoneau's changes, especially those involving female characters or their social status.

Given the superficial inquiry into the masculinization of the text in the film adaptation and the lack of feminist analysis, this film stands as a good source sample for a detailed feminist study that documents these changes as part of the larger feminist project of delineating mass culture's silencing, assimilation or distortion of feminist critiques of patriarchal society and patriarchal ideology. Moreover, since there is no consensus on how to read the gendered or social changes of this adaptation, research that takes these matters overtly into account will help, if not settle that debate, at least clarify why they are important considerations in this case study.

Methodology

Drawing from Diana Fuss's argument that one can read like a feminist, I propose to do a comparative reading as a feminist of Anne Hébert's novel *Les Fous de Bassan* with Yves Simoneau's film adaptation of the same name. Following the cue of feminist standpoint theorists such as Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, I have developed an approach for this feminist form of interpretation and investigation from my personal standpoint as a feminist, from my knowledge and exploration of women's experiences of oppression in patriarchy, and from my academic understanding of the general goals of Western feminisms and their specific manifestations in literature and film criticism.¹² As a result of this reflection, I have chosen to look for the source text's engagement with Western feminisms' general concern with charting and critiquing the situation of women in patriarchal society and the process by which the film version either embraces

or distorts, minimizes, neutralizes, sidelines, masculinizes, silences or otherwise alters that demonstration and critique.

Thus in keeping with the methodologies proposed by feminists in the social sciences as well as in literary and film studies, this analysis makes gender and gender dynamics a central focus of the comparative “close readings” of the two texts, recognizes the historical oppression of women in a male-dominated society, and acknowledges the political nature of women’s personal lives. This study positions itself against sexism, misogyny, androcentricity and gendered essentialism, choosing to look for male-female differences in social construction rather than biological sources.

However, contrary to the argument of some feminists, my stance acknowledges that while lived experience as a woman in patriarchy may enrich one’s ability to understand and interpret that experience in one’s own or in other real or imagined women’s lives, it is not a prerequisite to that understanding or interpretation. What is essential is a feminist awareness of the historical and contemporary social position of women in patriarchy. Just because Yves Simoneau, the principal adaptor, is male does not deny him the capacity to read for and portray a denunciation of patriarchal society. Consequently, it is not his sex that prevents him, from the outset, from imaginatively and empathetically recognizing and then cinematically reproducing a feminist critique of patriarchy. It would be his full or partial adherence to or solidarity with — whether he is conscious of it or not — a form of the dominant ideology of patriarchy and/or his insufficient or lack of either knowledge of, interest in, or sympathy with either or both feminist social analysis or feminism’s

political goals. Indeed, he demonstrated having the latter knowledge, at least to some degree, in his earlier film *Les Yeux Rouges, ou les vérités accidentelles* which he wrote and directed. Therefore, one could reasonably assume some ability for him to positively apply that knowledge in later work should he so choose, although his ambivalence toward feminism's goals in that earlier film would also augur his continued diffidence. This position that one's sex and personal experience as a woman is not a requisite to feminist reading and analysis finds agreement with both the feminist literary theorist Diana Fuss (23-37) and feminist translation theorist Sherry Simon (7, 168n3).

I should note here that the naming of Simoneau as principal adaptor of this film version is somewhat symbolic. The process of creating a film adaptation of a novel is complex, potentially involving one or more scriptwriters, sometimes story editors as well as the director, and also, depending on the project, the producer, the principal film editor, and even the actors, who may ad lib on screen. In spite of the fact that the adaptation process is a collective effort, I single out Simoneau, the film's director, to represent the filmmaking team. Here I follow Donald F. Larsson's method of referring to one "adaptor" for the purposes of simplification (74-75). This approach recognizes the director as a central and controlling or leading player in, as well as an often continuous player throughout the pre-production, production and post-production phases. It is thus through her or him that the process of ideological mediation is (consciously or unconsciously) chiefly negotiated. Even in commercial film, where the director's power as "auteur" is often curbed as he or she caters to

perceived market demands, the director remains a key human “site” through which the “naturalizing” process of ideological mediation passes.

In the case of *Les Fous de Bassan*, although several scriptwriters were involved in adapting Hébert’s novel (three who eventually received credits) and although the film project went through two pre-production directors before Simoneau, he assumed a decisive role in the concluding negotiations on the final script with Hébert, readapted what became the definitive script with Marcel Beaulieu, and directed the film as we see it, bringing his own visual stamp. Interestingly, before Simoneau’s arrival on the project, Hébert personally but unsuccessfully appealed to the producer, a woman, Justine Héroux, to stop the production of an earlier version of the script by Sheldon Chad that Hébert had considered “sensationalist”. Only the threat of a lawsuit from her publisher, Seuil, and further complications within the adaptation project itself allowed for the later involvement of Simoneau and the development of the ultimate compromise script (Slott 1989/90 18-21).

To return to the issue of reading as a feminist, not only do I choose to read the novel as a feminist and to understand Simoneau, as symbolic adaptor, as capable of reading like a feminist (if he so decides and prepares himself), but I choose to understand that Hébert is writing as a feminist, that is with a feminist’s critical eye of patriarchal society. In her interviews, she manifested a grasp of feminist concerns and expressed support for the feminist cause. For instance, in 1980 she stated in an interview that feminism was “absolument nécessaire” and she declared at the 1988 Montreal meeting of the Conseil International d’Études Francophones, “On ne peut être femme sans être

feministe” (Bishop 1993 199; 206-207). Indeed, she cites French feminist Hélène Cixous at the outset of Nora’s narrative in the novel, contextualizing this symbolic, latently modern female character within the effervescence of contemporary feminism. Thus although Hébert neither perceived herself as an “écrivaine engagée” nor set out to be a politically didactic writer, her world view was so impregnated with a sympathy for the feminist cause that it in fact ordered and informed her work. Feminists who study the interpretation of literature and film remind us that the author’s position as feminist can be taken as a legitimate guide in reading her text (Coward 1985 231; Fuss 35; Kuhn 16).

My feminist stance as critic and my acceptance of Hébert as a feminist writer has led me to read her novel *Les Fous de Bassan* for signs of her critical stance of the subordination of women by men and has led me to conclude that, in spite of some debate to the contrary, the novel expresses a feminist, or at least profeminist, vision.¹³ Hébert not only documents the intimate operations of patriarchal society but depicts female displeasure with or opposition to traditional, harmful, or subjugating gender roles. Indeed, she presents the rise of a resistant maternal presence from which issues forth the first generation of latently modern women who harbour an instinctive hope for equality with men. Thus a counter, incipiently feminist vision emerges in the novel to subvert the dominant patriarchal world, in part through female voices of desire. She plays with clichéd views of women not to stereotype her female characters or their behaviour, as some critics literally interpret, but to expose patriarchal ways of thinking and controlling women. While she unflinchingly delineates the harsh realities of women’s experience in a destructive, defensive patriarchy, she also

reveals the ultimate downfall of that patriarchal world when it fails to adapt to the inevitable change heralded by the arrival of the modern woman with egalitarian aspirations. Finally, she intimates the survival of the female spirit beyond gender roles. Her novel thus fits well into the definition of feminist literary art proposed by Marilyn French in her useful article "Is There A Feminist Aesthetic?": the novel documents and endorses authentic female experience in patriarchy and offers a feminist perspective of that experience, portraying patriarchy within a critical and ultimately non-triumphant light.¹⁴

My comparative analysis examines both content and form in the novel and film as they aid in explicating the comparison of the novel's development of a pre-feminist reaction to and a profeminist critique of patriarchy and its mechanisms of perpetuation and the ways the film either embraces or changes these elements. I also recognize the poetic and symbolic play of meaning in the novel, heeding the call of critic Scott Lee, who advocates reading this particular novel according to the internal relationships of its images and vocabulary or to what he terms "[le] système de la rhétorique du texte" (374). However, I relate the symbolism I discuss to Hébert's larger engagement with her feminist concerns with women's position in society, which Lee does not.

Moreover, following the lead of feminist film critics such as Annette Kuhn, I consider, as is relevant to the topic under comparison, the formal ways cinema produces meaning, for instance through the cinematic image (camera angle, shot length and type, camera movement, and image composition) as well as through editing, *mise-en-scène* and sound (6-7). I also pay attention, when pertinent, to the variations on the Oedipal drama of the male protagonist, a

dominant concern in narrative film according to feminist film critics such as Teresa de Lauretis, who draw from tenets of psychoanalysis. Finally, and most notably in the dissertation's final analysis of the struggle between the would-be patriarch and the modern woman, I acknowledge the sociohistorical backdrop in Québec against which this conflict occurs. Thus, in the tradition of comparative literature and political literary analysis, I engage in the practice of methodological "métissage" as described by feminist comparatist Margaret R. Higonnet (2),¹⁵ unmasking and contextualizing feminist thematic concerns with readings informed by the sociohistorical, the psychological, the rhetorical or the poetic creation of meaning.

Methods

I undertake the comparative "close readings" by applying concepts feminists, especially radical feminists, use to analyze women's position and experience in society, such as patriarchy, paternalistic dominance and rape as an expression of sexual politics in patriarchy. These discussions in turn expose problems such as the abusive outcomes of marriage and motherhood or the destructive consequences of patriarchy's defensive adherence to traditional gender roles and allow for the comparison of how these problems are represented, suppressed and/or critiqued in the two texts. By then contextualizing these situations, when relevant, within the male protagonist's psychological drama and the historical rise of the modern woman or a pre-feminist sisterhood, the ideological changes in the film, such as those involving the underlying reasons for male violence against women, are made clear.

This approach means that scenes in the novel and scenes in the film are not compared to each other in their entirety. Rather smaller elements of a scene may be compared, when two or more comparable scenes exist, or concepts or representations of certain relationships may be compared in first their sociological and then their symbolic manifestations as they relate to the particular issue or concept under analysis. At times I return to a poly-
emblematic image or scene, such as Pat's and Pam's mural in the novel or the film's ending, because it contains elements related to a new topic, symbol or narrative strand under discussion. This tack recognizes the need to take into account what feminist translation theorist Sherry Simon terms the "overlays of meaning" (133), which are so integral to poetic texts and which must be documented in comprehensive translation or transmediation comparisons. This procedure unveils the multiple levels of suppression and substitution, acknowledges the complex, interrelated ways a cinematic adaptation can recreate meaning, and reveals ideological ambiguities the adaptor sometimes inscribes.

When useful or relevant, I refer to existing readings of the novel as supporting evidence or as points of departure to clarify Hébert's position in her novel, which I then compare with my reading of the film. This approach shows that mine is not simply an idiosyncratic interpretation of the novel, but a reflection, at least on a general level, of a shared view of the novel. Nevertheless, although the goal of the dissertation was not to produce a new reading of the novel *Les Fous de Bassan* but to produce a comparative rereading of the novel and its film adaptation in order to expose the film's

acquiescence or resistance to Hébert's feminist vision, I often extend, nuance and challenge existing readings of the novel and add original readings of it in order to undertake the comparison. In many cases, I study parts of the novel that to date have not been well explicated or have been ignored in order to grapple with what Simoneau has chosen to put on screen. Thus, to paraphrase Canadian literature comparatist Philip Stratford, the process of textual comparison has revealed new, unforeseen things about the source text.

As a final caveat to my methods, I used a commercial video copy of the film to study the visual components of the film adaptation. The use of this medium may have resulted in some inaccuracies in a few of my observations since the video transfer darkens the original image, especially of dimly lit scenes, and since the new format affects camera framing. However, no other way to watch the film was available and this method of viewing is standard in film studies. To aid in the study of the script itself, I produced a transcript of the film's dialogue and annotated it with descriptions of the scenes. In order to identify the placement of women in the narrative and other relevant aspects related to narrative order, I also broke up the film into narrative sequences and scenes, a practice advocated by feminist film theorists like Annette Kuhn who draw from the structuralist approach to film study.

The Capacities of Novel and Film

Implicit in this comparative study is my acceptance that, in spite of the differences in print and film media, a film is able to portray much of what a novel does. Although various aspects of a literary work are vulnerable to alteration in

film adaptation, including point-of-view, figurative language, tone, narrative structure, and interior action, film adaptation theorists remain divided on which of these changes are inherent to the disparate capacities of the two media. However, the theorists do agree on one point: that the transformation of a novel into a feature-length film often requires the compression and selection of story elements, characters, settings and scenes. These modifications may in turn produce a variation in the ideological stance of the adaptation, if the transformed or omitted source element had helped create that stance and if the adaptor does not find cinematic equivalences or other compensatory ways to voice it. However, ideological permutation is not inevitable because techniques for ensuring its re-creation are generally possible.

Indeed, some critics, such as Larsson, assert that film is more able to express meaning than the novel. Firstly, he reminds us that even though a film must use cinematic (not literary) devices to convey narrative, the conventions and codes of film narrative derive from the novel or more broadly from the tradition of narrative. Both media share a propensity to tell a story, but simply use different “languages” to do so. In addition, the cinema, which Susan Sontag calls “a pan-art” (247), also draws from other art forms, such as the theater, the fine arts, photography, music and mass cultural forms, all of which are constantly evolving in their ways to communicate. As Larsson argues, “With this wealth of resources incorporated into the narrative codes of film, there is no reason that any novel should be impoverished by its translation from page to screen” (71). Affirms Joy Gould Boyum, “The problem [in adapting challenging works, such as stream-of-consciousness novels] would seem to lie... in such

extra-aesthetic matters as money and rights and above all, I suspect, courage — the courage to take risks, the courage to come up with new forms, the courage to tackle genius” (196).

In the case of *Les Fous de Bassan*, some critics have claimed that Hébert’s novel is unadaptable to film due to its figurative language, interior action and multiple points-of-view. However, a review of the position of adaptation theorists suggests that all these aspects can be rendered in some form on screen, if only in a more limited way.¹⁶ Indeed, thoughtful critics have convincingly argued that interior action, which is popularly considered the most difficult to portray cinematically, may be successfully conveyed, as surrealist and modernist filmmakers have aptly demonstrated (Boyum 187-196). Furthermore, the visual depiction of mental states and unvoiced interpersonal conflicts without excessive voice-over is certainly possible in mainstream film. Claire Denis’ film *Beau Travail* (1999) loosely based on Herman Melville’s “Billy Budd” is a recent case in point. Moreover, while Hébert is a symbolic writer, her tropes are generally highly visual, both metonymical and synecdochical, and integral to the story and thus very transposable to the screen and unobtrusively insertable within the film narrative.¹⁷ Indeed, Simoneau’s adaptation is noted for its poetic qualities. He simply does not engage with Hébert’s poetics in the ideological way that she does, as this dissertation will show.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1 examines the representation of the private sphere in Griffin Creek in the novel and the film — the private world which radical feminists

perceive as political as it both maintains and reflects women's oppressed status in the larger society. Most particularly, this chapter compares the representation of patriarchal marriage as headed by the patriarchal husband and father, the "engenderation" of the son by the father, and paternalistic dominance of daughters, all of which serve to sustain and perpetuate patriarchy. This chapter also briefly discusses the ideological significance of changing the locale of this local patriarchy from coastal community to island village.

Chapter 2 scrutinizes the representation of motherhood in the novel and film. While many critics of the novel have qualified some of the central mothers as bad, this chapter nuances these readings to highlight the subtleties of Hébert's reprobation of the motherhood experience in patriarchy and then tackles the problem of Simoneau's superficially positive but latently incestuous portrayal of the only mother on screen. In making these analyses, the chapter distinguishes between the mother-son and mother-daughter relationships to differentiate between the gender issues associated with these relationships.

Chapter 3 reviews how the struggle between the patriarchal and the emerging solidarity of the female line takes place symbolically in nature, notably in and around the sea, an entity traditionally associated with the maternal principle. The chapter then demonstrates how Simoneau reappropriates that traditional space for masculine concerns, thus suppressing a symbolic female site of recreative power, resistance and rejuvenation. It also discusses how changes to the piscatory rapport between men and women affect Hébert's critical portrayal of heterosexual relations within patriarchy.

Chapter 4 offers a closer look at the patriarchal oppression of the Church through the behaviour of its chief representative, the Reverend, as husband and manipulator of the Word. Recognizing him as modernity's typical unreliable narrator and Hébert as a feminist writer working against the Tradition from within (using clichés to expose patriarchal thinking), this chapter examines the shift in the symbolic significance of aspects of the Reverend's behaviour towards his wife and her reactions in order to determine how his characterization as patriarch and parodic godhead is subdued and how in turn Christian patriarchy itself is ultimately portrayed in the film. This chapter then examines more specifically how he uses biblical text to oppress his wife, young female parishioners and his later maternal substitutes in the novel and film.

Chapter 5 discusses how Stevens' patriarchal rapport with women is transformed through the masculinization of the narrative structure and through certain substitutions in dramatic conflict, character and incident *within* the privileged male text. To uncover these latter changes, the chapter examines the film's modifications of Stevens' Oedipal rapport with father figures, his characterization as a Christ/Devil figure and his relationship with brother figures.

Following up on certain androcentric changes unmasked in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 goes on to detail more fully how Hébert outlines Stevens' increasingly uneasy rapport with the "modern woman" and the pre-feminist sisterhood and how this tense relationship leads to and finds its ultimate expression in his final crimes against Nora and Olivia. It then shows how Simoneau transforms and sidelines that rapport. This chapter closes with a brief review of how Simoneau responds to Hébert's critique of the justice system's ability to work in the broad

interests of women who are battered by patriarchy. The dissertation concludes with a summary of my findings, a sociohistorical reading of the film as an example of the 1980's backlash against feminism and suggestions for a feminist approach to film adaptation as raised by this case study.

It is hoped that this research will contribute, however modestly, to the broader political goal of improving the status of women in Canada and Québec. By detailing the process of expurgation and deformation, this study adds academic weight to the view, still underdocumented in Canadian letters, that feminist critique undergoes ideological unravelling in the transfer of feminist and profeminist texts to the commercial screen. By providing this additional scholarly evidence, this dissertation should encourage politically sympathetic adapters to create more profeminist adaptations. As Hoder-Salmon affirms, “[W]omen's literary heritage is worthy of a cinematic tradition” (8). So, more particularly, is Canadian and Québécois women's literature that critiques patriarchy.

¹ In this world of rapidly diversifying cultural technologies, new terms are being developed to describe adaptations across media. For instance, cultural theorists Bolter and Grusin coin the term remediation in their recent work *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Theorists and critics in Gaudreault's and Groensteen's recent collection *La Transécriture: Pour une théorie de l'adaptation, littérature, cinéma, bande dessinée, théâtre, clip* coin the terms such as “la transécriture”, “l'intermédialité”, la “transréférentialisation” and “l'exploration transmédiate.”

² See for instance, C. Anderson 97 and Andrew 98.

³ Calculations using Petaja's *Photoplay* list found that 74% of the identified English-language film adaptations based on texts by authors with obvious male and female names were based on female-authored source texts. Baskin and Hicken's 1993 edition of *Enser's Filmed Books and Plays: A List of Books and Plays from which Films Have Been Made 1928-1991*, which lists over 6,000 adaptations, only lists the authors by initial thus making calculations by sex difficult. However, Fenton's 1990 edition of *Women Writers from Page to Screen*, which identifies over 2,200 feature film and T.V. adaptations for the period 1913-1988, uses the Enser list as one of its many sources, which suggests that of Enser's 6,000 adaptations, less than half are based on female-authored source texts. States Holder-Salmon, apparently in reference to the Hollywood example, “The majority of adaptations... are of novels authored by men, guided into films by

men" (3). The Québec statistic was calculated from the list of film adaptations made between 1922 and 1996 based on literary sources with obvious female authors in Hu's and Gagnon's 1996 edition of *Adaptations filmiques au Québec*. See Brown on women's literary production in Québec in recent decades.

⁴ In the interests of consistency, this study uniformly capitalizes the title of the novel and film as *Les Fous de Bassan* regardless of how editions of the original texts and subsequent critical publications capitalize it.

⁵ See, for instance, Eidsvik 33; Anderson 103; Larsson 77 and 82 (footnote 12). For examples of individual cases of dilutions social critique in Canadian and Québécois film adaptations see articles by Alemany-Galway, Shek and Urquhart.

⁶ Originally the dissertation had envisioned the study of a wider set of examples but the number of comparative points proposed for study in the individual novels and the time-consuming effect of considering the cinematic construction of meaning to convey the source text's ideas necessitated a more modest corpus.

⁷ It is considered a commercial film because it was made with various government subsidies which foresaw the commercial distribution of the film. It also received assistance from La Société Radio-Canada, which aired it. Although Radio-Canada is state-funded, its television division depends on commercial revenue. Thus the influences of producing for a commercial market were implicit in the creation of this film.

⁸ One thinks, for example, of Volker Schlöndorff's adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (scripted by Harold Pinter) or Paul Newman's adaptation of Margaret Laurence's *A Jest of God* called *Rachel, Rachel*.

Additionally, although made-for television "movie" adaptations may have widened the scope of potential source texts, they were not considered as initial candidates in part because of the additional constraints posed on the precursor narrative when adapting it for a medium which must plan for the insertion of suspenseful pauses at regular intervals in order to allow for commercials.

⁹ Correspondence with the author October 25, 1996. Recall that Mary Jean Green's brief unpublished pre-screening commentary at the CIEF conference in 1988 sparked the later published academic debate between Slott and Pallister on the adaptation.

¹⁰ See Gaulin (1994); Pallister (1995); Ross (1993); Sanaker (1997); and Slott (1989/90). Gaulin, Ross and Sanaker use narratology, while Slott uses a Bazinian approach and Pallister a mythological approach to discuss general thematics. Véronneau's article is concerned with the critical reception of the film not a comparison between the novel and its adaptation.

¹¹ For instance, the first and useful short article by Slott is weakened by some erroneous references to the film's content, an outdated theoretical model, insufficient explication and an unstated ideological premise, which leaves it unable to broach the feminist issues of the adaptation. Gaulin and Ross note few changes in terms that concern this study as these scholars focus on formal or temporal issues and conventional readings of the novel. They also understand many changes as caused by requirements of the cinematic medium, reasoning Pallister often gives and which Slott also raises. Informed in part by a modernist perspective, Sanaker's paper on narrative voice misses feminist examples of film aesthetics pertinent to his topic.

¹² See for instance Stanley's and Wise's chapter "Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes" in the book which Stanley edited *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, 20-60.

¹³ The critics are divided on the feminism of the novel. Critics such as Lamy, Pallister, Randall and Saint-Martin contest it while others, such as Bishop, Gould, Slott, Smart, recognize aspects of it. However, I do not always read the feminism of the novel in the same way as these latter critics. For instance, in Bishop's case, I disagree with his essentialist interpretation of Hébert's vision of male desire as inherently bad and female desire as inherently good. Other differences will be raised as relevant in the dissertation.

¹⁴ This is just one point of interpretation on which critics disagree. While some recognize the end of Griffin Creek society in social or religious terms, others, such as Saint-Martin argue that men triumph at novel's end, 260.

¹⁵ See also Eagleton's "Conclusion: Political Criticism," in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 210-211.

¹⁶ See for instance Boyum's book *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film*, which discusses all these issues.

¹⁷ See Monaco's classic *How to Read A Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media* for a useful discussion of the use of metonymy and synecdoche in film, 135-141.

CHAPTER 1

TRANSFORMING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRIVATE SPHERE OF GRIFFIN CREEK

“Ma pauvre mère et ses contemporaines ont vraiment vécu l'étape la plus étouffante de l'aventure féminine.... Les femmes sacrifiées ne seront jamais si nombreuses qu'à son époque.”

— Claire Martin, *Dans un Gant de Fer*

This chapter will demonstrate how Yves Simoneau alters the social context of the private sphere of Griffin Creek in his film adaptation of Anne Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan*, transforming it from a social order of concern to feminists (the patriarchal order) to a social order of more generic concern to men (the paternal order). To explore this change, the chapter will first review how patriarchy is defined by feminists and then compare how Hébert and Simoneau begin to sketch it out in the private sphere.

Patriarchy manifests itself as a social order and as power structure based on gender. As a social order, it constitutes a society-wide phenomenon and as a power structure, it accords men the dominant position. Adrienne Rich defines it as:

the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system, in which men — by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male (1981 40).

As Rich's description suggests, male dominance may be found both in the public sphere (such as the law, politics, religion and the work force) and the private sphere (heterosexual relationships and the family). Hébert recognizes both spheres in her novel, focusing on three particular social sites. The public sphere is represented through the patriarchal Church (as symbolized by the Reverend) and the male-dominated legal system (as symbolized by the detectives and the judge), and the private sphere is represented by male-dominated heterosexual relationships, particularly in patriarchal familial arrangements. This chapter is concerned with her representation of patriarchal families, specifically the patriarchs as husbands and as fathers (to sons and daughters respectively), and with Simoneau's representation and transformation of that familial context.

The family is of particular concern to feminists as it is the unit where children are first introduced to their future roles within patriarchy; it is of particular interest to feminist writers as it also serves as a microcosm of the larger patriarchal society. Indeed, it can be argued, that in a society such as ours where the public manifestations of patriarchy have been strongly challenged (although certainly not all corrected), it is the private manifestations of this social order that perhaps most typically and most significantly still affect the lives of ordinary women. It is within that highly personal, yet paradoxically

collectively experienced, private sphere of heterosexual relationships that the patriarchal order still exacts its most insidious and devastating toll on women as a group. As such it merits particular attention in the comparison of the novel and its film adaptation.

The Patriarchs and Their Wives

In all, five married men with fatherhood roles emerge in the novel. Peter Jones, Felicity's husband, is the symbolic father of the village — the genealogical tree from which all descendants branch out (64). He is the father of Mathilda, Alice, and Nicolas Jones (the Reverend), and the grandfather of a host of legitimate and illegitimate children, including all the young people named in the novel. The Reverend, Nicolas Jones, husband to Irène, spends his life hoping to emulate his prolific father who had sired much of the community. Following figuratively in his father's footsteps, he, too, becomes the symbolic father of his community. He achieves this status by virtue of his clerical profession for he is unable to conceive a child with his wife. As a father *manqué*, he has to settle for becoming a surrogate father to his nieces Pam and Pat after his wife's suicide. The three other husband-father figures in the novel are regular village men: Philip Atkins (Mathilda's husband and Patrick's, Sidney's and Olivia's father); Ben Atkins (Alice's husband and Nora's father¹); John Brown (Beatrice's husband and Stevens', Perceval's, Pat's and Pam's father).

As the narratives of the various characters unfold in the novel, information accumulates on how many of these married men misuse their

position as head of the family to cruelly subjugate wife and children. The institution of the family is depicted as not only patriarchal but oppressively and abusively so. Not only do men hold the dominant positions in their marriages, at least at the beginning of the marriage, but they do so often at the expense of their wives' physical and mental health. The patriarch of the community, Peter Jones, serves as an emblematic example. He was clearly the head of his family when in his prime and in this by-gone role represents the generation of men who enjoyed a time when the local patriarchy functioned unchallenged. As the Reverend remembers, early in her marriage his mother, Felicity Jones, complies with her husband's demands, giving birth with "[n]i une larme ni un cri ... selon le bon vouloir de son mari" (34). Later, when she becomes hurt by her husband's late nights (36) and unfaithful antics (64) and begins seeking solace from wifely demands in auroral escapades, she shows signs of physical abuse, as the mark on her shoulder the colour of an old bruise suggests (35). One may speculate, based on this circumstantial evidence, that her husband is trying to control her rising resistance to him. Indeed, several critics have commented on the apparent abusiveness of husbands in the novel.²

Peter Jones' patriarchal example is perpetuated across the generations. In trying to pattern himself after his once prolific father, the Reverend obsessively tries to conceive a child. The repeated complaints of this religious leader about unsuccessfully obtaining sex and a son from his wife Irène underline that fact that in Griffin Creek society the wife's role is to fulfil her husband by having intercourse with him on command and providing him with a male heir. The Reverend seems to expect his wife to comply with him as his

own mother once did with his father. While the Reverend does not seem to physically assault his wife to have his way, his harsh, venatic sexual advances during his marriage reflect a possessive attitude and a form of emotional and sexual abuse. Moreover, his unloving recollections of his wife decades after her suicide bespeak his patriarchal frustration at having been unable to control her sexual and maternal desires and his concomitant failure in succeeding as a patriarch by producing a son. This in turn explains his own dabbling in adultery with an inexperienced and thus amenable minor.

Other village men, however, do go so far as to follow Peter's physically abusive example, as other critics also surmise. For instance, Philip Atkins (Olivia's father), apparently beats his wife (suggested by the bruises on her arms and shoulder), causing, it would seem, a miscarriage (suggested by her bloodied sheets, weakness and pallor) and her untimely death (208 and 209; see, for instance, Bishop 1993 201). It is unclear what type of power relationship exists in the other two marriages — i.e., those between John and Beatrice Brown and between Ben and Alice Atkins. However, the former seems marked by the wife's secondary position and fraught with maternal unhappiness and forced childbearing, as will be explicated further in the next chapter. Indeed, John appears as an all-powerful sorcerer in Nora's eyes, arrogant and unafraid of the rising tide, a symbol of maternal power (114). Evidence thus exists to suggest that at least three, and perhaps four, of the five husbands are not only traditional patriarchs but abuse the patriarchal power which they hold over their wives. Their oppression may be so great as to corrupt or kill any

maternal desires the wife may have had (as in the respective cases of Beatrice and Irène, discussed more fully in subsequent chapters).

By contrast, Simoneau offers no generational, let alone symbolic, portrait of abusive patriarchs in the private sphere. Peter Jones, the once leading patriarch, ever unfaithful and apparently violent in the exertion of his sexual prerogatives, is neither presented nor remembered. The Reverend, becomes the sole symbolic father of the community, but with none of his father's abusive characteristics. Although the Reverend evidently heads his wife (telling her what to do during and after the sermon, for example), he is a relatively benign patriarch. While he is as childless as he was in the novel, with no prolific father to emulate, he is less obsessive about proving his paternal powers. He does not repeatedly complain about unsuccessfully obtaining sex and a son from his wife Irène. Indeed, he does not even express a desperate need to have children, especially a son; rather, his wife says he cherishes this hope. Unlike in the novel, he accepts his wife's supposed infertility and does not seek to humiliate or criticize her because of it. The splotch of blood on the cloth covering Irène's head after her suicide is at best an indirect result of the "violence" to her because of her husband's sexual betrayal with Nora, which moreover, in the most negative reading of the film, is framed as inherently Irène's fault, perhaps even her idea. This dysfunctional marriage becomes the symbol of bad marriages in Griffin Creek in the film not because of the sterility of its patriarchal model as in the novel but because of Irène's literal or depression-caused frigidity. (Chapter 4 will explicate these and related transformations in more detail.)

In addition, Simoneau offers no indication that either of the two other minor family men he retains for the film (Stevens' and Olivia's fathers) ever engaged in violence against their wives or required them to bear children in an effort to synthesize the types of abuse that husbands inflicted on their wives in the novel. Although it is clear in the film that Stevens' father (called Timothée not John in the film)³ is the head of the family (he leads his wife and son, Perceval, home after the sermon while carrying the Bible), there is little to suggest that he abuses his patriarchal power over his wife. There is only one oblique piece of evidence indicating that Timothée dominates his wife and family to ensure his personal comfort. From the conversation in the film scene dramatizing the private meeting between Stevens and his mother, we surmise that Perceval has been shut up in his bedroom because he bothered his father while playing the disruptive harmonica that Stevens had given him. The mother seems to have deferred to her husband's need for peace and quiet by locking Perceval up or at least by accepting that Perceval be confined. There is no other evidence, especially in terms of physical violence (as a compression of other husbands' violence alluded to in the novel), to suggest Timothée's husbandly domination of his wife in the film. Notably, there is no indication of bruises on her body, or, for that matter, on the bodies of other married women, which in the novel had served as visual clues to such patriarchal abuse. As for Philip Atkins (Olivia's father), nothing about his relationship with his wife, which was among the most abusive in the novel, is even alluded to in the film. The film is constrained to the period after Mathilda's death and no explanation or even hint is given as to how she died. Thus the worst instances of abusive male

domination of women in the private sphere are omitted in the film version. Of the original five husbands in the novel, Simoneau retains only two who are in active relations with their wives (the Reverend and Stevens' father) and neither man grossly abuses his patriarchal powers over his wife. The only allusion to the cruelly venatic sexual rapport Griffin Creek husbands generally had with their wives in the novel (40) is made in a pared and toned down version in the Reverend's bedroom scene with his wife in the film, a scene explored more fully in Chapter 4. In short, in Simoneau's vision Griffin Creek is, as far as its marriages are concerned, a relatively benign patriarchy.

The Patriarchs and Their Sons

The behaviour of the married men or once married men retained for the film is not completely devoid of violent abuses of power. However, this abuse is directed solely at their sons. The problematic social order for Simoneau is not the patriarchal but the paternal order, and this as it concerns sons. This thematic interest is not without basis in the novel. To a degree, Hébert is also concerned with the father's ascendancy over the son. However, for her it is related to the brutal, traditional process of engendering, while for Simoneau it is related to the stubborn retention of paternal dominance.

In Hébert's vision, fathers are violent and harsh towards their sons because they are fiercely determined that their sons not identify with or become too attached to their mothers for fear that they learn so-called feminine behaviour. In the father's view, such feminization of the boys would compromise the future of the Griffin Creek patriarchy. This macho approach to

the engendering process is made especially clear in the case of Philip Atkins in the novel. He insists that his wife not hug or kiss her sons for fear of turning them into sissies (207). He succeeds in making them hardened men for as Olivia reports: “[s]es frères ... pos[ent] des fers à leurs semelles. Ils parlent fort. Jurent dès qu’ils se croient seuls” (208).

Stevens’ father, John Brown, resorts to heartless methods for ensuring and directing the masculine heterosexual identity of his sons. He repeatedly and savagely beats both Perceval and Stevens in an attempt to mould and control their sexual impulses and development. For example, in the highly sexualized scene in which Perceval runs sensuously, even androgynously, through the fog, his father vehemently hits him in a symbolic warning not to defy gender boundaries or to seek adulthood by engaging in androgynous desires. In his brumous run, Perceval, the Id figure, had been figuratively fleeing the parental yoke in a steamy, murky, joyous atmosphere. Not only did his misty environment suggest the mystery of sex (augmented by the strange sounds of foghorns) but it had blurred the gendered assignation of phallus (mast) and womb (boat) and had emphasized the penetration of this pubescent boy by the (female) liquid air (82-83).

The process of orienting the sexual desires of the son is further dramatized in the scene in which Stevens, as a small boy, needily, if not Oedipally, yells out his desire for his mother’s love and attention after the birth of her twins (87). In response, his father pulverizes him to teach him that he cannot have the real mother. The father is implicitly suggesting that Stevens must seek a mother substitute (a woman who is appropriate in terms of kinship

and age) and is implicitly indicating that Stevens must not display “feminine” traits of hysterical screaming. Later, his father stormily shakes the young Stevens after he gently responds to the young Olivia's desirous gaze. This disciplinary act is a brutal reminder that Stevens is still too young to act on his sexual desires (206) and a cruel reinforcement of this society's masculine methods of exercising social control. In the end, the adolescent Stevens will begin to imitate his father's violent ways. He will rise in his own defense, engage in a savage “bataille” with John Brown (93), and then flee across the free spaces of the American continent for five years, lingering along the sensually hot Florida shores (59), to become a man on his own terms (214).

It is this paternal oppression as it concerns sons which Simoneau selects for dramatization. As one film reviewer, François Bilodeau, notes: “[L]es moments les plus intenses du film... [sont] ceux où se fait sentir la terrible ascendance du père sur ses fils, Stevens et Perceval” (15). However, Simoneau alters the nature of that oppression. The traditional process of imparting the masculine heterosexual identity (a process which inherently downgrades or annihilates androgynous or so-called feminine traits) is no longer at issue, but rather the retention of paternal control vis-à-vis the rebellious son. This is made clear in the only scenes of physical paternal abuse of sons in the film. Indeed, the only overt, physical, on-screen evidence of such mistreatment retained in the film is the brutality and brusqueness of Stevens' father towards his son Perceval. However, this harsh discipline has nothing to do with curtailing Perceval's sexual development and androgyny (and its implicit challenge to a rigid patriarchy) as in the novel. Rather, this paternal violence

indirectly expresses the father's feelings regarding his other son, the returning Stevens.

The first example of this paternal wrath is loosely derived from the scene depicting Perceval's sensual run in the fog in the novel and occurs early in the film shortly after Stevens' arrival. However, instead of sensually running about in the mist, Perceval runs home in the bright sunlight to tell his father that Stevens has arrived; his father swats him, angered at his mention of Stevens' name. The scene no longer hints at sexual mystery and murky sexual identity but the clear conflict between father and returning son. Later, both at the end of the fishing expedition sequence involving Perceval and Stevens (a sequence created for the film) and during the storm scene (a scene altered in the film version), Stevens' father pulls Perceval abruptly away from Stevens. These acts of paternal control signify the father's displaced anger with the rising son, Stevens.

Thus, unlike in the novel, in which the father's brutality toward his sons expresses his desire to control their heterosexual and macho development (and thus ensure the continuation of the patriarchal order), in the film, the father's brutality towards one of his sons bespeak his fear of Stevens' raging rebellion (and thus fall of the old paternal order). Characterized by the Reverend as a mad dog who suddenly beat up his father so badly that a doctor had to be summoned from the mainland, Stevens, upon his return to his hometown, is presented as an oppressed son who, as an adolescent, was driven momentarily crazy by paternal tyranny.

This paternal subjugation of the filial protagonist is contextualized in the film by the actions of Philip Atkins. Notably, in a brief shot of Philip and his son Sidney during the fishing expedition sequence, the father assumes the taskmaster's role by impatiently grabbing a wooden mallet from his awkward son to show him how to caulk properly. He thus exhibits paternally controlling behaviour in order to impose a master's expert touch on manly work. However, as in the case of Stevens' father, Philip's paternal dominance vis-à-vis his sons does not clearly belong to an engendering process. Unlike in the novel, Philip does not control his sons' actions either in relation to their mother (she is conveniently dead by the time the film opens) or with another female (as a transformation of that engendering process) to ensure that they become "real men" who despise feminine qualities and oppress the maternal figure. In the caulking scene, created for the film, the father does not say to his son that he works like a woman. Indeed, his gentle face and quiet demeanour in the film belie the obnoxiously patriarchal man of the novel who stomps loudly around his home, asserting his masterly presence, apparently teaching his sons the same behaviour and upsetting his wife (208). His paternal dominance in the film is thus not clearly entwined with the patriarchal desire to raise patriarchal sons but merely exemplifies a domineering and impatient fatherly desire to get good work done by the son.

Simoneau reinforces the thematic concern of oppressive father-son relationships by embedding it formally in image composition and *mise-en-scène*. Fathers are often shot in the foreground, or ahead of other characters, or in physically dominant or superior positions. For instance, both the camera angle

and the *mise-en-scène* emphasize the lead of Stevens' father as he guides his wife and son Perceval along a meadow path after the film's sermon while he carries a Bible. Stevens' father is shot above Stevens in the post-sermon sequence and even higher in the dory lift sequence, as is the Reverend, the symbol of the omniscient Father. Simoneau contextualizes this paternal dominance of the Brown boys with similar, though less prominent, spatial arrangements between Philip Atkins and his sons. For example, Olivia's father stands slightly ahead of Patrick in the meadow during their conversation about the calm before the storm, the father sounding the wiser of the two. At the dinner table, it is Olivia, not the eldest son, who sits across from her father like an equal to the male head (she is replacing her deceased mother); her brothers sit (less importantly) on either side. Significantly the fathers are never shown descending from their dominant positions in relation to their sons, reiterating the theme of the fathers' clinging to power.

The extensive thematic and formal attention Simoneau accords the relationship between Stevens and his father, as well as the social contextualization he brings through the symbolic relationship between the Reverend and Stevens and the biological relationship between Philip Atkins and his sons together indicate that the main problematic social order in the film is the paternal order. As we shall see in later chapters, this oppressive, paternal social context will explain much of Stevens' behaviour in the film, whereas in the novel the reasons for his behaviour are more complex.

The Patriarchs and Their Daughters

With the relationship between fathers and sons occupying a major portion of the film, an important secondary set of the novel's paternal relationships — i.e., between fathers and daughters — is drastically reduced and almost entirely divested of its feminist critique in the film. In the novel, the daughters are subjugated within the system feminists term “paternalistic dominance.” Feminist historian Gerda Lerner defines this system as “an unwritten contract for exchange: economic support and protection given by the male for subordination in all matters, [as well as] sexual service [given by the wife] and unpaid domestic service given by the [wife or daughter]” (240). Several father-daughter relationships reveal aspects of the system of paternalistic dominance in the novel: the surrogate paternal relationship between the Reverend and his nieces Pat and Pam, and the biological paternal relationships between Ben Atkins and his daughter Nora, and between Philip Atkins (in conjunction with his sons) and his daughter Olivia.

The Reverend's surrogate paternal relationship with his nieces Pat and Pam, who in the novel assume the domestic work of the dead Irène, provides a symbolic and an initial example of paternalistic dominance between father and daughter figures in the novel. In fact, ironically, given the Reverend's revered social position, it is arguably the most oppressive and abusive instance of such dominance as it concerns daughter figures in the novel. To summarize the situation: in exchange for a place to sleep and eat, the twins must keep house for their uncle (140). As the Reverend states: “Rompues à l'obéissance par leurs parents, dès leur plus jeune âge, elles me servent, depuis bientôt

quarante-six ans. Leurs père et mère ayant désiré très tôt les perdre en forêt n'ont pas fait de manières pour me les céder, à l'âge de treize ans" (19).

Replacing the twins' parents and maintaining the parental — and more specifically paternal— position in relation to them all their lives, the Reverend repeatedly asserts his authority over them, as other critics note. For instance, when reprimanding them, he gloats, “[J]’en ai profité pour renforcer mon autorité. Je les appelle par leur nom et elles m’obéissent” (19). They live at his beck and call under the threat of beatings with “une trique de fer” (18), a symbol of both paternal and phallic domination. With Simoneau’s omission of both the old Reverend (amalgamating his character with that of old Stevens) and the twins, Pat and Pam, no scene depicting the Reverend’s tyranny over his housekeeper nieces can be shown. Simoneau does not even choose to allude to this relationship. Neither does he create a parallel one with remaining characters. He does not even give visual play to the abusive phallic iron rod in another heterosexual or father-daughter relationship in the film. The decision to eliminate this secondary example of paternalistic dominance of young women marks the beginning of Simoneau’s removal of the oppressive and abusive patriarchal social context in which daughters are caught in the source text.

Instead, Simoneau makes the Reverend the surrogate — or more accurately the symbolic — father of Stevens. Thus, rather than focus on the paternal oppression of daughters by the symbolic patriarch (representative of the age-old patriarchy of the Church), Simoneau focuses on the paternal dominance by the symbolic Father (representative of the ancient male hierarchy of the Church). This transformation is another indication of Simoneau’s concern

with the fate of the male — particularly the son — not the female — notably the daughter — within a domineering social order. It also suggests a reason for Simoneau making the Reverend less obsessive about having a son of his own in the film. Characterized, in part, by his role as Shepherd attempting to reign in this rebellious Christ (emphasized by the camera's move to recuperate Stevens over the Reverend's shoulder when the Reverend tells Stevens that he is welcome in the "Maison du Seigneur" in the post sermon scene), the Reverend's F(f)atherhood role in relation to a S(s)on is partly satisfied in the film. (The tensions in the relationship between the Reverend and Stevens are examined in more detail in Chapter 5.)

As symbolic father of the community, the Reverend also holds a figurative paternal function with his other nieces, Olivia and Nora, in the novel. As their pastor, he is supposed to be their spiritual and moral guide and guardian, and, as their uncle, he is supposed to be another male familial protector. Given the Reverend's dual paternal role as pastor (representative of the Father) and of uncle (representative of the father), he represents both the public and private institutions of the Church and the family. He abuses both these institutional paternal roles for sexual purposes in the novel, particularly with Nora. However, since the relationship between uncle and nieces is not one of paternalistic dominance per se (for Nora and Olivia do not work in exchange for their protection as Pat and Pam do), since the seriousness of his abuse is augmented by his clerical role and since Simoneau leans most heavily on this aspect of the Reverend's relationship with Olivia and Nora, it will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

Nora's father, Ben Atkins, represents another example of the paternal protector in the novel. Unlike the Reverend, however, he is honestly trying to safeguard his nubile daughter; indeed, he tries to shield her from the likes of the lecherous Reverend. Notably, after Nora, in her traditional role as female nurturer, brings food to the hunters, Ben sends her home, worried about the inappropriate sexual advances of both the venatic Reverend (who lewdly and possessively calls her "sa petite chatte", designating her genitalia as his prey [126]) and Sidney (who wilily offers her alcohol). Later (as recorded in Perceval's narrative), Ben looks aggressively for his daughter after she disappears, probably fearing the worst. He is ultimately thwarted in his protector's role for he loses his daughter to Stevens' murderous hands.⁴

Part of Ben's failure lies in his inability to deal forthrightly with his daughter's budding sexuality and the dangers it exposes her to in this patriarchal community of sexual hunters, and more particularly, his inability to address the latter problem by social action with the perpetrators. Rather, he focuses on his daughter, the potential victim, and deals with her sexual vulnerability in an individual and sexually repressive way. As Nora's narrative reveals, her nascent and increasingly expressive desire worries her protective father. However, rather than confronting his concerns directly, Ben sidesteps them. He simply begins to display an emotional reticence vis-à-vis his pubescent daughter, which, within the context of the narrative, suggests both his anxiety about the threats his society poses to her and his concomitant inability to explain them to her.⁵ As she grows up, he simply quits calling her "son trésor

des âmes pieuses" (132) and becomes unable to compliment her on her prettiness.

In this latter case, he is reacting to a photo of his mirthful daughter "assise sur un billot, au bord de la mer... les cheveux droits sur la tête" (134), which his wife wants him to compliment and which he refuses to do. Nora's father instinctively realizes that this medusan image of his laughing, sexually alive daughter sets her in an imperilled position. Her danger is signalled by the punning use of the word "billot", which Hébert plays on elsewhere in the novel. It signifies both "log" and "chopping block" and thus carries, with its secondary meaning, connotations of death and decapitation. Earlier Nora uses the expression "[I]a tête sur le billot, je jurerais que c'est moi qu'il [Stevens] regarde" (122), foreshadowing Stevens as her executioner. These connotations suggest that a menace lurks for Nora on the seashore. On a superficial level, her father's reaction to the photo reveals that he instinctively wants to discourage Nora's sense of femininity (vanity about her prettiness, as he says) because he thinks it makes her vulnerable not only to male interest but to male attack. Indeed, over the course of the summer, she becomes the target of several lecherous men in this seaside community of sexual hunters and fishers: the American eyes her like a predatory gannet; the town boys, such as Patrick, Stevens and Perceval, treat her with venatic disrespect, and the Reverend literally stalks her.

However, the play on the word "billot" also suggests more particularly the guillotine of the French Revolution, which offers another layer of meaning regarding Nora's danger. Recall that her July 14th birthday, which marked her

symbolic sexual awakening at age fifteen at the beginning of her narrative, is Bastille Day, the date popularly celebrated as the beginning of the French Revolution. This important date thus symbolically aligns Nora under the egalitarian banner of that social fight. As such, it also marks her as someone beginning her own egalitarian revolution: that of women's liberation, heralded by her Ibsenian name and her instinctive hopes for equality in sexual relations (127). When Nora's sexually assertive pose on the "billot" or chopping block is coupled with the sexual and egalitarian symbolism embedded in her birthday, her modernist name and her egalitarian hopes, it serves as a reminder that although the battle for Liberty, Equality and "Fraternity" for women had begun with Nora's sexual awakening, many heads (including Nora's) will roll before the feminist cause can be won, as happened in the French Revolution. This symbolic reading reveals that Nora faces figurative decapitation (she will be strangled) because she sits proudly as a symbol of assertiveness and sexual equality in heterosexual relations. Her father's reticence about encouraging Nora's sexual pride by complimenting her thus indicates his instinctive understanding that her bold sexuality caught in the photo also makes her a target of violence from patriarchal young men, who adhere to their dominant role as sexual hunter. Unfortunately, her father knows no way to protect her better than to ignore her sexuality in the hopes that that will dampen her nubile urges.

Although Nora's father is limited in his effectiveness as paternal protector, his honest efforts underscore Nora's vulnerable and unequal social position as a young woman. For all the sexism associated with the system of

paternalistic dominance (the patriarch protecting his female property), the presence and actions of Nora's father in the novel do underline Nora's danger as a woman in a patriarchal community. Indeed, on the issue of the sexism of Nora's community, her father's protective behaviour in the novel makes both a negative comment (since her father acted as possessive patriarchal protector) and a positive comment (since he was also the more generally concerned parental protector).

This well-meaning but ineffective paternal protector does not appear in the film. That he does not appear in a dramatic reenactment of his fatherly guardian role (in fact at all), not even in the film's hunting party sequence, signals a reduction in Nora's need of paternal protection against abusers of patriarchal power in the film. Indeed, in the film, she is the target of fewer lecherous, venatic threats than she was in the novel. There is no American, and Bob Allen, Patrick and Perceval do not make disrespectful or venatic sexual advances. Furthermore, the threats posed to her during the hunting sequence are somewhat tempered in the film version. Specifically, Sidney's advance on Nora disappears and the Reverend's comments are tamed. (While he addresses her predatorily, asking her if she would like to dress up like a small animal, he does not refer to her genitalia in a sexually possessive way, for he does not call her "sa petite chatte"; the venatic context of his comments is also somewhat mitigated as he is not dressed as a hunter in this sequence, unlike in the novel). With this reduction in the scope and dangers of the predatory patriarchal milieu, Simoneau reduces the need for Ben's protective physical presence in the film. Indeed, why emphasize Nora's danger when Stevens will

not be strangling her and when her designation as sexual prey will not be followed through on with her death? As the single homicide at the end of the film so jarringly shows, Simoneau deletes Nora's murder.

Nevertheless, Ben's protective paternal role is not completely erased in the film. It is obscurely suggested during a conversation between Irène and her husband in which Irène explains that Nora's father wants to prepare a hunting party to deal with the foxes (symbols of male desire), which have become too greedy. This symbolic conversation shows that Simoneau retains the more common paternal concern which Nora displays in the novel — i.e., the patriarch's concern about the sexual vulnerability of the nubile daughter. However, with no play on Nora's symbolic July 14th fifteenth birthday, no verbalization of her desire for equality in sexual relations, and no assertive expression of her sexuality before her father (in a photo or in "real life"), the film contains no hint that her father senses that Nora's sexual assertiveness and desire for equality in heterosexual relations are also dangers for her. The film thus contains no suggestion that her father instinctively wishes to protect this budding modern woman from the terrible end her retrograde and rigidly patriarchal society holds in store for her, only that he hopes to protect her virginity.

The family unit composed of Philip Atkins, his sons Patrick and Sidney, and his daughter Olivia constitutes the third example of paternalistic dominance in the novel. Once her mother is dead (and at her mother's deathbed wishes), Olivia provides domestic services for her father and brothers. That Olivia does this work implicitly in exchange for her sexual protection is suggested by the fact

that her brothers tacitly assume the tutelary role. As Stevens observes, the brothers act as “[les] gardiens de la vertu de leur soeur” (97, see also 80). When Stevens sexually attacks Olivia while she is seated on a rock, one of her brothers rises to fend him off. After her disappearance, Olivia’s brothers and father “[s]e reproch[e]nt les uns les autres de ne pas avoir mieux surveillé Olivia” (173).

Olivia, however, feels unduly confined in this protected domestic situation. She says of her brothers, “[ils s]e contentent de monter la garde autour de moi, afin que je sois prisonnière dans la maison” (210). Her feelings of oppression situate her within the theme of the ideologically imprisoned woman found in other Hébert works (Stratford 53-54). Her discontent with her situation is also obvious to others. Observes Nora, Olivia “est malheureuse et trop solonnelle, depuis qu’elle a fait voeu d’obéissance à sa mère mourante” (122). In this gloomy state, Olivia, represents those Griffin Creek women who are unhappy in their traditional family arrangements. Her liberation-seeking grandmother (who was once submissive in her wifely duties) also expresses disapproval of her granddaughter’s circumscribed and confined status. As she tells Stevens: “[T]rois hommes jaloux gardent Olivia dans une grande maison avec une galerie de bois ouvragé tout le tour. Depuis la mort de sa mère elle n’a jamais été moins libre, malgré ses dix-sept ans, un père et deux frères à nourrir, blanchir, repasser et repriser” (75). Her critical stance filters through Stevens’ narrative voice in her use of the descriptor “trois hommes jaloux” and her observation “elle n’a jamais été moins libre.” Perceval provides a fourth damning view of Olivia’s situation. He states: “Trop d’hommes pour une

seule fille ce n'est pas normal. Lui on fait prononcer un voeu" (174). In an allusion to the Bluebeard tale, Perceval refers to Patrick's "barbe bleue" (148) and imagines that Olivia is being held prisoner by her male kin in the basement beneath her kitchen (174). (Over the course of the novel, shadow beards become a recurring, ominous symbol of a cruel, dominant male order that seeks to subjugate women sexually and domestically.) Hébert thus embeds a critical stance on this system of paternalistic dominance within the novel, suggesting that its is both oppressive for and potentially abusive to the women it is supposed to protect.⁶

Indeed, this domestic role is symbolically associated with Olivia's literal demise, as the end of Nora's "book" suggests: "Olivia est déjà maîtresse de maison. Trois hommes dépendent d'elle pour le manger et le boire, le ménage et le blanchissage. Fin de l'été" (135). The girl's ascension to womanhood and the social roles attached to it can only result in her death, symbolized by the end of summer. Indeed, Olivia is murdered at summer's end by a man who wishes to confine her to her traditional female role. Recall that the close of summer (38, 88, 135) and the dying of gardens (134) are concepts about endings that, in the novel, become poetically fused with the cessation of girlhood not only through allusions to the loss of virginity (88, 248) and the beginning of menses (180), but through allusions to the assumption of the woman's restricted social role (135), and finally through the rape of Olivia and the murder of the girls, which together symbolically and with finality express their initiation into their inferior gender role as adult women (245-248).

In contrast, although Olivia is shown engaged in domestic tasks for her brothers and father in the film (serving a meal, ironing, hanging clothes out to dry), the notion of her subjugated status as conscripted, confined housekeeper is eliminated. Nora, who in the film assumes Felicity's role by telling Stevens that Olivia's mother is dead, conveys this information uncritically. She does not say or insinuate that Olivia is a virtual prisoner of her brothers and father. That Nora makes only a neutral, matter-of-fact comment about Olivia's domestic status reflects an ideological choice by Simoneau, for even though a character is removed in a film adaptation (in this case Felicity), her function as social critic need not be. As a further contrast between the novel and the film, although Olivia serves her brothers and father, she does so on her own terms. For instance, in the Atkins family meal scene, she removes Patrick's plate before he is finished eating to punish him for his impertinence.

Indeed, no criticism of Olivia's situation within the system of paternalistic dominance is articulated in any form in the film. Although her eventual demise is hinted at in the film narrative (beyond the flagrant opening rape and murder scene), her death is not symbolically linked to her assumption of domestic service within the family unit, as it was in the novel. This hint at her demise occurs with dramatic irony in the film when her father ruefully states in a pre-meal discussion with Patrick, "Elle [Olivia] aussi va finir par partir." With his use of "elle aussi", he suggests that Olivia will eventually leave the family fold as her mother did. Since her mother died, his statement foreshadows the possibility of Olivia's death, but since we do not know how her mother died, his remark contains no suggestion that it is her integration into another patriarchal family

that may “kill” her. If he simply means she will soon leave her own family to marry and assume domestic duties elsewhere, the suggestion is still not fraught with menace for, as we learn later, Olivia's dream in the film is not to stay on the island and become a wife and mother but to leave and study to become a teacher. Thus, unlike in the novel, the link in the film between the leaving of girlhood and the metaphoric death of Olivia is not made in relation to Olivia assuming full-time household management for her menfolk. The paternalistic dominance of daughters is thus not framed as holding a metaphorically lethal fate for this budding woman in the film.

Not only is Olivia not framed as metaphorically endangered by the confining and circumscribed nature of her traditional domestic role within her family in the film, but she is shown at ease, even taking pleasure, in her guarded domestic situation as the following analysis will show. Simoneau achieves this transformation by altering the nature of her metaphoric ownership by her male kin, the reasons for their protection and her response to their treatment. Olivia is no longer guarded by her paternalistic brothers and father but by an incestuous, fraternal suitor. Let us review how the two guarded states are developed in the novel and in the film.

In the novel, Olivia's ownership is described in conjunction with her domestic labour. Stevens, the budding patriarch, imagines Olivia thinking as she goes about her domestic duties: “Je ne m'appartiens pas.... Je leur appartiens à eux mes frères, à mon père aussi” (96). This ownership means that Olivia's male kin have not only the right to her domestic labour (as we have already seen), but the right to decide who will assume her ownership and the

concomitant access to her domestic and sexual services. Moreover, as her sexual protectors/owners, they have the obligation to guard her virginity in order to preserve her worth on the marriage market.

This right of the male familial owners to determine who will have access to the body and labour of the daughter/sister is played out in the novel in Stevens' version of the ironing scene. Stevens repeatedly asks Olivia to let him enter the kitchen of the Atkins' family home (symbol of the womb and domestic space) where Olivia dutifully irons, and Olivia repeatedly refuses to let him do so (78). Finally, it is her brother, the paternalistic protector, who invites Stevens in. In this patriarchal world, entrance to the female body (and concomitant access to her domestic labour) is controlled by the male protectorate, regardless of the woman's wishes. Note that Olivia is evidently unhappy with Stevens' eventual entrance. Realizing that she does not want him inside, Stevens records that Olivia says (or he imagines her saying), "Toi, mon cousin Stevens,... tu n'es pas bon et il ne fallait pas te laisser entrer" (79). Indeed, we realize that Stevens had hoped to circumvent dealing with the protective brother when going to visit Olivia because, prior to the visit, he chooses a time when Patrick, who has the significant work title of "garde-côte" (76), is fast asleep.

In the film, this sexual ownership of Olivia by her male protectorate becomes literal. No longer do Olivia's male kin guard access to her body, and more specifically her virginity, as part of their fraternal obligations, but one brother guards her body for personal sexual reasons as he claims her sexuality for himself. Simoneau thus transforms the traditional platonic⁷ and paternalistic brother-sister relationship into an uncommon, incestuous one.

Moreover, this transformed relationship becomes important as a subplot since Patrick's incestuous desire is frequently alluded to in the film. As the film's narrative unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that Patrick's authoritarian control of his sister (telling her to come home when she looks at Stevens after the sermon, for example) and his constant watchfulness (for instance in the church, in the fish drying scene and in the Reverend's house after Irène's suicide) express more than mere protective paternalism. His behaviour also suggests his incestuous designs on his sister. As he desirously tells his father in the scene preceding the Atkins family meal, he finds his sister "de plus en plus belle."

This sexual attraction is soon compounded with his jealousy over her apparent interest in Stevens. When he sees that Olivia's fancy is aroused when their brother Sidney mentions having talked to Stevens, Patrick, in a close-up, gives a firm, disconcerted glance in Olivia's direction. Later in the conversation, he insists that Stevens' claim of having gone to the States is only bragging in an attempt to make Stevens seem less appealing. When Olivia reacts in swift anger, removing the dinner plates, Patrick follows her into the kitchen. There he places his hand on her shoulder and reassures her that her reaction "C'est rien. C'est la fatigue", while kissing her on the neck in the gentle manner of a lover after a spat — a gesture suggesting his attempt to win her back to him. As he leaves her, her Mona Lisa-like smile, faint and enigmatic, bespeaks her pleasure. This pleasure stands in sharp contrast to Olivia's negative feelings about her male protectorate in the novel.

Soon Patrick will compete directly with Stevens for Olivia's favour. Near the end of the film's ironing scene, Patrick asks Stevens to join him in a drink. He hopes to show Olivia who is the more manly and thus sexually desirable of the two, as evidenced by his statement to Stevens that the strong alcohol is not for children after Stevens chokes on it. The two men then compete for Olivia's love interest by making counter-descriptions of trips on which they would take her. None of this dialogue is recorded in the novel. Its creation emphasizes Simoneau's interest in presenting Patrick mainly as a sexual rival to Stevens not as a platonic member of Olivia's male protectorate.

Indeed, in the film, unlike in the novel, there is no prolonged play on Stevens' request to enter the kitchen at the beginning of this scene, the ironing scene, and no symbolic invitation to enter from Patrick. These changes further dilute the role of the male protectorate as granters of access to the female body. In fact, in the film, Stevens asks the right to enter the kitchen only once, and upon learning from Olivia that her father and brother Sidney are at sea and that Patrick is sleeping, he boldly comes in, slapping the door wide open. Although Stevens does seem to be taking advantage of the fact that her male kin are temporarily away in order to enter, the fact that he learns of their absence only after his arrival at her door makes it unclear in the film that he had planned the visit with the prior knowledge of the absence of Olivia's male protectors, unlike in the novel. He thus seems less concerned with the possible presence of Olivia's "male guard." As a result, the power and importance of the male protectorate is diminished in the film. Indeed, the fact that he does not need to wait for Patrick's invitation to enter, but audaciously does so on his own, further

reduces the film's attention to an aspect of the novel's theme of paternalistic dominance, notably that the male protector determines access to female kin.

With Stevens confidently asserting his presence, the incestuous Patrick soon manifests his desire to protect his personal sexual "property" (not simply Olivia's "honour" and purity as in the novel). During the fox hunting sequence, Patrick acts out the Reverend's earlier contention in the sequence that one has the right to protect one's property by jealously shooting at Stevens who had been spying on Olivia. During the following clothesline scene,⁸ Patrick vigorously fights Stevens who had violently tried to woo Olivia. However, Patrick is not trying to protect Olivia for the sake of her "virtue" in this scene (as he was in the novel, 97) but for the sake of his own right to her body for he seems to harbour hopes of deflowering her himself. That these two men are indeed fighting over the right to break her hymen is symbolized by the fact that they become enwrapped in one of the white sheets behind which the virginal Olivia had hidden from Stevens moments earlier. (White sheets and clothing are repeated symbols of Olivia's virginity in the film.) Significantly, Patrick does not stand guard before one of these white sheets to prevent Stevens' attack, as one might expect in a translation of the idea of Patrick actually guarding Olivia's virginity. Patrick's sexual jealousy is repeated at the end of this scene when Stevens leaves and Patrick angrily questions Olivia whether she loves Stevens.

Patrick's jealousy will be reciprocated by Stevens at the barn dance. When Olivia and Patrick dance together, they become the obsessive focus of Stevens' jealous gaze, further underscoring the sexual rivalry between Patrick and Stevens. Six times the camera catches Olivia and her brother Patrick

dancing, three after Stevens notices them. Both the number of times we see Olivia and Patrick dancing together and the repeated takes on Stevens, especially the last two before the music stops, suggest his jealous obsession with Olivia in the arms of Patrick. Moreover, as Stevens gazes at the couple, the camera frame cants, and the shot dollies in on Stevens. This camera movement further emphasizes the intensification of Stevens' feelings. When the frenzied fiddle music stops as the jig ends, a stylized dream sequence of shots unfolds in slow motion to depict the continued workings of Stevens' tortured mind. A slow dolly-in-to-the crowd shot made from Stevens' point-of-view represents his piercing, controlling gaze. Under its power, couples on the dance floor and observers of the dance part to reveal Patrick and Olivia dancing together. Through this careful *mise-en-scène* and sequence of shots, Simoneau conveys the notion that Stevens focuses obsessively on Olivia because, as Patrick's dance partner, she is publicly claimed by Patrick as a symbolic, if not actual, sexual partner. This scene clinches the change Simoneau has been making in the form of Olivia's "ownership" by her brother — away from her ownership as a domestic worker onto her ownership as a potential, personal sexual partner. Notably, in the novel, there is no mention of Olivia dancing with her brothers at the barn dance. In fact it is Stevens who most notably does. Moreover, his only form of jealousy in the barn dance scene in the novel is, as other critics also note, more a form of envy with Olivia's sensual self abandonment and her implied sensual autonomy, which he destructively wants to possess.

Why does Simoneau create this sexual rivalry between Stevens and Patrick? It can be argued that this transformation is made to heighten the dramatic conflict between men by individualizing the players. In the novel, Stevens had been in conflict with the whole of Olivia's male protectorate: "Le père d'Olivia. Les frères d'Olivia.... leurs fusils de chasse. Moi en face d'eux, tout seul, forcené et joyeux" (80), as he patriarchally hoped to acquire their female property and the right to Olivia's domestic labour. By paring Stevens' conflict with the male protectorate down to one between Stevens and Patrick, Simoneau simplifies Stevens' struggle and thus intensifies it by focusing solely on the conflict between two men.

Why does Simoneau make Olivia's and Patrick's relationship incestuous? This transformation seems to be based on a sexualized reading of Felicity's reference to "[les] hommes jaloux" (75) and Stevens' reference to "[les] hommes ombrageux" (96) who oversee Olivia. Simoneau reads "jealous" as literally suggesting incestuous desires not as figuratively describing the aggressive, possessive determination of the male familial guard to protect the purity of the family's sexual goods (the sister's virginity) so that she will be "unspoiled" for a prospective suitor. He is opting for the love triangle, a dramatic conflict common in popular culture.

However, in making these changes, Simoneau removes the feminist critique of the male protectorate. Hébert had problematized the brother-sister relationship by showing that its confining form of paternalistic dominance had made Olivia unhappy and had troubled others. Simoneau's version of the brother-sister relationship is only problematic if incest lies outside the social and

ethical norms of the viewer for it does not make Olivia visibly unhappy. Even if the viewer is uncomfortable with the incestuous overtones (which is likely), Olivia is not. Indeed, after the fight in the clothesline scene in the film, Olivia quickly sides with Patrick, like the typical heroine of genre film, such as Westerns. Her supportive action suggests the *rightness* of Patrick's protective role in the film in spite of its incestuous overtones. Moreover, in the Atkins family meal sequence, Olivia accepts her brother's amorous kiss on the neck with pleasure and later, in the ironing sequence seems to revel in his incestuous rivalry (as he competes with Stevens' escapist travel fantasies). She is no longer a housemaid prisoner "jamais... moins libre" (75), as in the novel, but a young woman freely accepting sexual advances from her sibling.

This incestuous context in the film changes Stevens' motivations and feelings vis-à-vis the male protectorate from what they were in the novel. Whereas in Hébert's work he thrills at the idea of facing down Olivia's male kin (80) or of slithering past their guard (100) to conquer their protected and unattainable woman, in the film he yearns increasingly for Patrick's sexual possession. Perhaps, in spite of the conflict that existed between Stevens and Olivia's male protectorate in the novel, Simoneau judged that Stevens had an insufficient dramatic reason to be interested in Olivia unless he was directly fighting for her with a sexual rival. Perhaps Simoneau also sought to create more sympathy for Stevens by making Stevens the more "normal" of the two would-be owners of Olivia. When Stevens' feelings for Olivia in the film are read in conjunction with the evidence of her entrapment by an incestuous brother (accepting of that incestuous interest as she may be) and Stevens'

awareness of her brother's incestuous interest (since Patrick openly woos his sister in competition with Stevens in the post ironing scene), Stevens can be understood as the would-be protector of Olivia by the barn dance scene.

Rather than facing down the male/mate protectorate formed by Olivia's brethren as he imagines he does in the novel (80), in the film he stares down the incestuous couple and then imagines facing down Olivia and her paternally dominated community at the barn dance. In this new stance, he is trying to break into and save Olivia from this incestuous family and this dysfunctional community, headed by the hypocritical Reverend. In Stevens' eyes, at least, Olivia is the "damsel in distress" imperilled by the threat of incest.⁹ In the film, Stevens thus becomes a warped romantic hero seeking to rescue Olivia. In the earlier ironing and clothesline scenes, he had attempted to entice her away from this incestuous world. This subplot may embed a secondary subtext to Stevens' rape and murder of Olivia: having failed to "save" her, he will eventually "protect" her from incest by deflowering her himself at film's end and then taking her literally out of this world by (apparently) murdering her in the rape scene. Simoneau thus subtly recasts Stevens as a disturbing form of the traditional romantic hero seeking to extricate the chaste love object from an unsatisfactory family situation.

With these changes, Simoneau thus transforms Olivia's metaphoric sexual ownership by her father and brothers by virtue of her status as daughter and sister into literal sexual property fought over by an incestuous brother and a would-be saviour. The critique of the system of paternalistic dominance (which renders the woman unhappy) is replaced by a play on the ever-popular love

triangle, made bizarre in this version by the uncommonness not only of the incestuous brother-sister relationship but by the young woman's apparent ease with and pleasure in this relationship and by the father's apparent acceptance of it (for he neither interferes with it nor reacts negatively to his son's desirous comment about his daughter).

Setting

As a final comment, the setting Hébert and Simoneau each give Griffin Creek reflects two different perspectives on the familial social orders they outline in their respective texts. Although, in the novel, Griffin Creek is a secluded community, Hébert does not suggest that its patriarchal social structure is an aberration. Rather, its isolation creates laboratory conditions for patriarchy, revealing that left to perpetuate itself, it will degenerate, implode and die because of the inability of its men to treat women with equality and respect.

Although in the novel, Stevens sees his home community in terms of patriarchal territories, one of which bears his family name, in the film both the Reverend and Stevens refer to "l'île" or "mon île", emphasizing Griffin Creek's status as a single island entity, not as a coastal area sub-divided by familial, patriarchal territories. These references to the community as island frame it as atypical, as the seedbed of a peculiar, imploding, insular mentality. It is no longer presented, as in the novel, as a rural, coastal community, isolated but representative, part of a continuum of patriarchal villages strung along the shore, like the implicitly patriarchal Catholic one that establishes itself nearby at the beginning of the novel when the death of Protestant Griffin Creek is being

described by the symbolic patriarch, the Reverend (13). The film's island locale helps create and emphasize the claustrophobic atmosphere of oppressive familial relations on which Simoneau focuses through the filial protagonist — an atmosphere commonly echoed in the settings of the cinematic genre called the “family melodrama” (Elsaesser 300).

Conclusion

In her book *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, Rita Felski defines feminist literature broadly as “all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women’s subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category, however it is expressed” (14). In her article “Is There a Feminist Aesthetic?”, Marilyn French offers some specific pointers on how one could impart this “critical awareness.” She affirms: “There are two fundamental, related principles that mark a work of art as feminist: first, it approaches reality from a feminist perspective; second, it endorses female experience” (69). Her discussion suggests that one way to bring a feminist perspective to bear is to challenge patriarchal ideology by exposing and critiquing its social form: the male hierarchy designed to perpetuate itself from father to son. One way to portray female experience is in fact to portray men, “showing them as they impinge upon women” (71). As she acknowledges: “Since almost all modern worlds are patriarchal, feminist literature necessarily depicts patriarchy” (69). In outlining the social context of the private sphere of Griffin Creek, Hébert delineates patriarchy by showing how the patriarch perpetuates it by attempting

to raise patriarchal heterosexual men and by showing how family patriarchs impinge on women by confining their wives and daughters to their roles with abuse and paternalistic dominance. A denunciation of women's subordinate position within the private sphere is implied, in part, by the critical remarks made by female characters and Perceval regarding the status of women (notably Olivia), who are caught in this familial order.

However, whereas Hébert focuses on patriarchy as the problematic social order in the private sphere in her novel, Simoneau, in his film version, focuses on the paternal order as the problematic social order, a common concern in masculine literature. He thus shifts the critique of the new text away from women's subordinate position and the issue of gender. Simoneau achieves this transformation in two principal ways. First, he attenuates the representation of patriarchy in the private sphere itself and, second, he introduces a new form of paternal abuse of sons.

The first change involves several reductive acts. Firstly, he reduces the physical presence of patriarchy in the private sphere by cutting the number of patriarchal husbands and fathers. Secondly, he expurgates the patriarchal family's abusive, brutal and confining subjugation of women by expunging allusions to the husbands' violence and disrespect of their wives and by erasing instances of the fathers' severe paternalistic dominance of daughters. Thirdly, he confines Ben's role as Nora's paternal protector to that of the typical traditional father hoping to protect his virginal daughter from the greedy sexual intruder (the fox, Stevens), and at that, only in an obscure passing remark (by a third person at that) not in person. No effort is made to suggest that Ben

harbours any concern about the dangers his daughter faces as a young woman, who, in a patriarchal community, embraces the dream of equality in sexual relations.

Fourthly, Simoneau removes the novel's negative critique of Olivia's situation as domesticated daughter by suppressing any implication that her traditional role is suffocating and lethal to this budding woman and by changing Olivia's rapport with her paternalistic protectors. She is no longer guarded by her paternalistic brothers and father (whom she finds miserably overly confining in the novel) but by an incestuous fraternal suitor (whose amorous advances she accepts with apparent pleasure). This new situation in turn frames the rapist-murderer Stevens as a bizarre type of would-be protector, seeking to "save" the incest-imperilled love object, Olivia.

Fifthly, not only does Simoneau tenderize Olivia's attitude towards this transformed paternalistic fraternal protector, but he also rejects having other retained characters express the deleted critiques of those who had acted as social (and often unconsciously feminist) censors of the patriarchal family. These omissions leave the film without any voiced judgment of patriarchy as it concerns daughters and, by implication, women who are confined by paternalistic dominance.

In short, patriarchal dominance in the private sphere is not the central issue Simoneau problematizes. Rather, he paints an unfavourable picture of paternal dominance, but the paternal dominance of sons, not the paternalistic dominance of daughters (or wives). Fathers are violent to their sons, not husbands to their wives. Moreover, the fathers are violent to their sons for a

different reason than in the novel. They are not concerned with perpetuating patriarchy by molding macho men but with retaining their power over their sons.

Why does Simoneau makes these changes? The reason for which Simoneau cuts the number of fathers and husbands may be attributed to a cinematic one: the need for a more manageable roster of characters in a feature film. However, this argument is superficial since allusions to the existence of abusive, secondary patriarchal marital relations could have been made in dialogue rather than in dramatized scenes. In fact, brief references rather than full dramatization are often all that Hébert offers to suggest the larger social context of abusive patriarchal marriages in the novel.

As for the erasure of the patriarchal abuse of the retained husbands and fathers — these excisions bespeak the ideological standpoint from which Simoneau chooses to read the novel, in particular its more ambiguous passages on marital relations. For instance, the husbands' physical violence towards their wives is never directly stated in Hébert's text, but only implied by Felicity and Mathilda's bruises, as well by the lethal results of this hidden violence, suggested by the bringing on of Mathilda's apparent miscarriage and her subsequent untimely death. Although, as most critics who have mentioned the husband-wife rapport in the novel agree, the reasons for these physical hints of distress among the wives suggest patriarchal violence against women, the evidence nevertheless remain circumstantial. As Karen Gould says, "In this environment, sexual politics frequently operate as sexual warfare *en cachette*" (925). This ambiguity on the hidden nature of women's experience in the private sphere leaves the text open to a range of interpretations. This in turn

means that the ideological standpoint of the reader enters into play. As Diana Fuss argues, a reader may choose to read "like a feminist" (26). Simoneau's reading of marital relationships shows that he does not elect to read them along these ideological lines.¹⁰ He thus chooses not to acknowledge the signs of abuse in marital relations suggested, for instance, by the bruises, signs which feminist research on female experience in patriarchy indicate as problematic not only by their occurrence but by their frequency.

As for deleting concerns with paternalistic dominance of daughters, this reflects a disinterest in critiquing daughter-father relations, something typical of the masculine tradition. As for changing the reason for the father's violence towards his sons, this also bespeaks a reading from a new ideological standpoint. Simoneau is indifferent to the problem of the father violently perpetuating patriarchy by brutally controlling the heterosexual development of his son. Rather, as is common in masculine, heterosexual literature and film, Simoneau is concerned with the more generic difficulty the father has in relinquishing power and authority to his son. Rendering Patrick an incestuous fraternal protector is probably the most bizarre of the transformations Simoneau makes regarding the private sphere. Again it reflects an ideological disinclination to tackle the more usual problems of women caught within the confining experience of paternalistic dominance. It also reflects Simoneau's decision to depict this community as peculiar and oddly deranged rather than as representative and understandably imploding.

These decisions to reduce the patriarchal presence in the private sphere undoubtedly spare the spectator from an unrelentingly heavy-handed parade of

cruelly male-dominated marital and paternal relationships. However, these decisions also create a shift in social vision which clinches within an afeminist perspective all the other major changes of ideological significance that Simoneau makes and which I will be examining in more detail in subsequent chapters. Moreover, with the social context of patriarchy in the private sphere abrogated and with the island context emphasized, Stevens' behaviour in the film has been contextualized not as the imitative behaviour of a boy socialized in an entrenched local patriarchy unwilling to examine itself but the aberrant behaviour of an island people too long isolated from the mainland. In short, Simoneau shifts the ideological tenor of the precursor feminist text, reinserting it more exclusively within the Western tradition of the oppressed male.

¹ He is also father to five other children, including a young girl called Linda, 131 and 132.

² These critics include Bishop (1993), Gould, Slott and Smart (1988).

³ Although Simoneau may change this name to make all the names French-sounding, the transformation removes the irony of John Brown's name, which alluded to the maverick opposer of slavery in 19th century America. As Reid shows, the racial aspects of the American south figure symbolically in the novel.

⁴ Like Olivia's father and brothers, Ben is shown to be fallible in the protector's role. Thus Hébert suggests that the system of male protection is ultimately unreliable for the dependent woman.

⁵ Noble also notes some of Ben's uneasiness with the social implications of his daughter's prettiness but not the semantic significance of the use of "billot", 8 and 21.

⁶ Feminists, such as Brownmiller, see the "mate protectorate" or "male protection racket" as part of a patriarchal system meant to keep women subjugated. Brownmiller argues that historically the fear of rape has kept women in their place by legitimizing the need for familial or male/mate protection of women, protection that comes at the cost of domestic and often sexual subjugation, 17.

⁷ As Olivia says, her brothers "[é]vitent [même] de me parler et de me regarder", 210.

⁸ Simoneau creates this scene by combining the novel's non-violent clothesline scene with the novel's subsequent scene in which Stevens attacks Olivia as she sits contemplatively on a rock after exiting the maternal space of the sea.

⁹ Given the incestuous interest of Stevens' mother, explicated in Chapter 2, one wonders if incest begat Perceval. Is Sidney who, unlike in the novel, is also a simpleton, also a child of incest? These are enigmas the film narrative introduces but does not resolve.

¹⁰ Simoneau's work articulates a contradictory relationship with feminist concerns, from his ambiguously sympathetic stance in *Les Yeux Rouges* (1982), which he wrote and directed, to his unsympathetic stand in *Mother's Boys* (1993), which he directed.

CHAPTER 2

REPRESENTING MATERNAL RELATIONS: FROM RESISTANCE TO INCEST

“For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”
— Newton’s Third Law of Motion

“Il aurait été injuste, voire cruel, de s’en tenir strictement au comportement de la mère sans expliquer ce qui le motivait.”

— Elisabeth Badinter

L’Amour en plus: Histoire de l’amour maternel (XVIIe - XXe siècle)

“Women, both as characters and as people, must be allowed their imperfections.”

— Margaret Atwood, *Second Words*

“The mother-child relationship can be seen as the first relationship violated by patriarchy.”

— Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*

Not only is the social context of Anne Hébert’s novel *Les Fous de Bassan* created by the backdrop of a patriarchal social order but by a web of maternal relations subsumed within that order. Indeed, as with paternal roles, maternal relations constitute a central thematic interest in the novel. Because of the requirements for compression of content in film adaptation (fewer characters among other things), this maternal social context is vulnerable to reductive transformation in a film version of the narrative. However, the adaptor’s

ideological diffidence with the novelist's feminist concerns about maternal relations within patriarchy can also affect how those relations are depicted in a film adaptation. This chapter will review how Anne Hébert portrays and critiques the motherhood experience and then will explore how Yves Simoneau alters that treatment to recuperate the narrative to a more typical stance vis-à-vis mothers within the patriarchal cultural tradition.

Before examining the mother-child experience in the two works, it is necessary to address two controversial aspects of the representation of motherhood in the novel: the notion of matriarchy and the image of the "bad mother". Just as the feminist concept of patriarchy implicates a society, so does the parallel concept of matriarchy. Although most critics of the novel who have commented on the social structure of Griffin Creek have read it, at least implicitly, as patriarchal, some critics have made the opposite assessment. For instance, Christiane Charette describes Griffin Creek as "un monde de domination féminine" (168) and affirms that in this world "les hommes sont nettement moins importants que les femmes qui les ont formés et élevés" (174). The confusion arises for three reasons: maternal figures abound in Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan*; Felicity, the mother of the community, presents a formidably domineering figure in her elder years, especially in relation to her male kin; and the maternal space of the sea serves as a magnetic force for everyone as well as a sanctuary for women.

Yet these elements do not a matriarchy make. Readings to that effect fail to acknowledge that in a functioning matriarchy, members of that society "free[ly] consent to the authority of women"¹ (Rich 1981 43). In fact, no critics

suggest that the men of Griffin Creek actually acquiesce to women. Indeed, interpretations drawing on traditional psychoanalytical tenets see men as outright threatened by the so-called female mystery and apparent female power. Patricia Louette goes so far as to assert that “[on peut] envisager les hommes de Griffin Creek, dans leur rapport au féminin, comme autant de Petits Chaperons sur le point d’être dévorés” (322).² While I would contest Louette’s reading for failing to recognize Hébert’s exposure of the *reductio ad absurdum* of traditional love paradigms of sexual pursuit (i.e., female prey must be tracked down killed and consumed by the male hunter) and the male characters’ desire to maintain women in that animalistic role, I agree that the men of Griffin Creek are not at ease with their female counterparts.

In short, Hébert does not portray a female-dominated or female-run society. Rather, as we shall see, she depicts a reactive, incipiently feminist maternal world — a metaphoric sisterhood — where a few social prerogatives are only beginning to be accorded through the female line (from Felicity to her granddaughters Nora and Olivia). As we saw in the previous chapter, the women in Hébert’s Griffin Creek are subjugated under the male as wives and daughters. This oppression extends to their experience as both biological mothers, social mother figures and even mother “manquées”. It is within this motherhood role that the minor female characters most obviously oppose their socially-assigned secondary place, perhaps because it is their most socially consuming and influential function. Motherhood thus becomes a site of social resistance as women react to their mothering experience, disparately as

individuals but nevertheless *en masse*, sometimes to the detriment of their offspring.

However, because of the prescriptive expectations for positive role models raised by some feminist critics of the 1960's and 1970's and later popularly understood as characteristics of a feminist work, one of the criticisms of Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan* has been its negative depiction of women, especially the maternal figures. Recall that some early advocates of a feminist aesthetic tended to argue that feminist writers should create positive, strong female characters to counterbalance the female stereotypes that abound in the Western canon (Register). This approach has irked many a feminist writer, including Margaret Atwood, for its restrictive stance.³ Moreover, in the early years of the movement, some feminists also suggested that feminist art should present or at least incite a feminist solution to a problem of female subjugation.⁴ Female characters or at least their readers would not only realize their oppression but would begin to act on it politically. At the very least, as the likes of Erica Jong hoped, a renewed feminist literature would stop painting "women... as helpless victims" (Register 24).

In this vein, Suzanne Lamy (2) and Marilyn Randall (68) insinuate that the *Les Fous de Bassan* narrative is not feminist in part because it portrays bad mothers. Randall also inculcates the narrative for revealing the powerlessness of those maternal figures who wanted to be helpful but who were unable to save Olivia and Nora from their violent fate (67). Indeed, in an attempt to account for the unfeminist behaviour of the female characters in general, Randall strains to read each individual narrative of the novel as the product of Stevens' sexist pen

(74-79). She even offers Simoneau's use of Stevens as the ordering principle in the film adaptation as an added proof to her argument, while acknowledging Hébert's repudiation of the film's male focus (75-76). However, critics using narratological and stylistic analyses effectively counter Randall's analysis of Stevens as overriding narrator.⁵ Moreover, it seems to me that Randall is confusing the idea of Stevens as narrator with the concept of a "narrative world order" which mimics the patriarchal order in which all the characters are caught.

As for the critical view of the general lack of feminism among the mothers and the other female characters, I would add that while a feminist character acting successfully as a feminist may help create a feminist novel, the absence of such a character does not preclude the novel's feminist engagement with social issues. As Marilyn French argues, one of the three principles of a feminist literary aesthetic is conveying female experience. As she explains, "To endorse women's experience, feminist art must present it honestly, wholly" (70). This is a tack advocated by a number of critics concerned with developing a feminist aesthetic.⁶ According to French, this project involves delineating the common arena of women's domestic lives and "how it affects a woman's relation to her children, mates, lovers, friends" (70). Moreover, this enterprise entails creating female characters who are not necessarily "likable" (71), who are not necessarily liked by each other, and who may be embittered and dissatisfied with their domestic lot. French acknowledges that even feminists may be ambivalent about facing this reality in art: "Actual women, we ourselves, may walk around in a constant state of rage and yet reject heroines like us" (71).

Thus the depiction of “negative” mothers serves to raise questions about the social context of mothering.

Although it is dangerous to rely on author’s intentions, it is germane to recall here that Hébert, herself, affirms her concern with critiquing the motherhood role within a patriarchal society in her fiction:

Il faudrait ... s’interroger sur la fonction de la mère, de la religion, ce sont des problèmes essentiels du moins pour ce qui me concerne. Ainsi à une certaine époque, la mère a eu beaucoup d’importance au niveau familial précisément parce qu’elle n’en avait aucune ailleurs. Elle n’existait que parce qu’elle était mère, même pas épouse. Figée dans son rôle de mère, exclue de la société, elle a, en accord avec la morale figée de l’époque, trop souvent exercé un pouvoir destructeur sur les enfants, sur les futures femmes et sur elle-même (Vanasse 446).

While Simoneau chooses to abandon, for the most part, this more controversial constellation of relationships — i.e., the unhappy mother with her children — it does not make it any less important to grasp what Hébert offered her readers on the subject of motherhood in *Les Fous de Bassan*. Indeed, to understand what Hébert, as a feminist writer, conveys on this topic makes more evident how Simoneau bowdlerized this aspect of her feminist perspective.

In *Les Fous de Bassan* there are a number of maternal figures, and they serve to reveal Hébert’s underlying reprobation of the motherhood experience in patriarchy. Felicity, as the Reverend’s mother and as Nora’s, Olivia’s and Stevens’ grandmother, acts as the maternal focal point for all the main characters and assumes, in her elder years, the role of Griffin Creek’s emerging female leader. She is, as Marie-Dominique Boyce observes, “une mère originelle” (295), a common figure in Hébert’s work. The antics of her unfaithful husband eventually shape her attitudes in that role. Beatrice (Stevens’,

Perceval's, Pat's and Pam's mother), Mathilda (Patrick's, Sidney's and Olivia's mother), and Alice (Nora's mother) offer additional, disparate and often unhealthy responses to motherhood. Bea is the overwhelmed mother of twins who ultimately acts with complicity in her husband's brutality towards his children. Mathilda is the down-trodden, martyr-wife, who, as we saw earlier, eventually dies, apparently in part as a result of her reproductive obligations. However, before her death, she, like the more assertive Alice, is protective of and sexually repressive towards her daughter.

Irène is the mother-manquée, defined solely by her husband, who sees her in terms of *his* desire for her to be a mother of *his* son and *his* desire for a sexually available wife. Olivia and Nora are mothers in-waiting. Olivia, as we saw previously, is the unhappy replacement mother in her prescribed domestic role (122), while Nora, in reappropriating the Eve myth in an unconsciously feminist way,⁷ aspires to a maternal role that incorporates an active sexual life (118). The childless widow Maureen, who, as a sexually desiring woman, is an older version of Nora, is also a mother substitute, articulating a motherly attitude towards Stevens and a parental concern with her female cousins. Additional substitute mothers are the nameless nun who cares for the veterans, nursing one at her breast and, last but not least, Pat and Pam, who look after the Reverend and who set the novel's tone of maternal resistance by drawing the keynote subversive mural on women's history and abuse in Griffin Creek at the opening of the novel, counterpointing the Reverend's portraits of the male ancestral line.⁸ In all, there are eleven characters with maternal functions or aspirations in the novel compared with five with paternal functions.

Presumably constrained by the need to decrease the roster of characters (just as he was with the secondary male characters), Simoneau more than halves the number of mother figures to one biological mother (Beatrice), one obvious maternal substitute (Olivia), one obscure maternal figure (Maureen), and one mother manquée (Irène). He thus cuts these figures to a greater degree than the paternal figures, underlining once again his greater interest in paternal and masculine themes. The central and emerging womanist, Felicity, her concerned daughter, Alice, and her rebellious granddaughters Pat and Pam (as noted earlier) do not even receive the grace of a mention in the film. Mathilda, as we saw in the previous chapter, is long since dead, her death from apparent beatings, so key to evoking the degree of the wives' oppression in the novel, noted only in passing in the film, without any indication of its controversial cause.

While Simoneau retains Olivia as a maternal substitute, he nevertheless deletes references (critical or otherwise) to her having been consciously assigned and confined by her dying mother to a substitute mother/wife role (which locks her into the system of paternalistic dominance described in Chapter 1). In addition, Simoneau omits Nora's overt aspirations of becoming a mother, which were so key to Hébert's feminist enterprise of depicting women's sexual and maternal desires as compatible and co-existent.⁹ Simoneau reconstitutes Maureen's maternal rapport in her relations with Stevens and virtually removes it from her relations with her female cousins, as we shall see in more detail in the later sections of this chapter. With the reduction in the role and appearance of the other mother figures, Irène, as mother-manquée,

assumes greater significance than in the novel, her putative sterility, becoming the overriding maternal concern of the film — a complex transformation which will be discussed fully in Chapter 4.

These particular excisions, which either expunge the novel's suggestions of female resistance along the maternal line or remove allusions to the mother figures' entrapment in patriarchy, also have repercussions on how mother-child relations are represented in the film. In the novel, the biological mothers (and grandmother) relate to both their own male and female children (or grandchildren) as well as to the children of other family members. That is to say, Hébert shows the rapport of the actual mother figures with children of *both* sexes although the mothers relate to each sex differently. For the remainder of this chapter, I will examine these two sets of relationships separately, comparing each set between novel and film as I did for the study on fathers, focusing only on the principal mother-son and mother-daughter relationships to explore how important elements of these relationships have been ideologically altered or silenced.

The Mother and Son Relationship

There are three key biological mother-son type relationships in the novel: between Felicity and her son Nicolas (the Reverend), between Felicity and her grandson Stevens, and between Beatrice and her son Stevens; moreover, there is the symbolic mother-son relationship between Maureen and Stevens. In the film, the former three maternal relationships become subsumed under one between Stevens and his mother. In addition, some aspects of the latter

relationship (between Maureen and Stevens) —notably its incestuous undertones — also become incorporated into the Stevens-Beatrice relationship in the film. Although Simoneau eliminates Felicity as a character, he amalgamates old Stevens and the old Reverend, thus merging their feelings towards their mothers (which in the novel differ when they are old men).¹⁰ To understand the significance of this compression in the film, one must first understand the separate relationships between Felicity and her son, Felicity and her grandson, Beatrice and her son and Maureen and Stevens as depicted in their singularity in the novel.

Before beginning these specific discussions recall that much has been made of the negative attitudes and unloving actions some of the mothers, especially Felicity and Bea, seem to take regarding their male offspring in the novel. For instance, Randall refers to “la froideur maternelle de Bea et de Felicity” (67-68) as something which expresses “ni... la vertu ni... la moralité” (68).¹¹ However, while some of the critics who have commented on these mothers read their behaviour within a social context, arguing that it is shaped by their powerless position within the patriarchal family,¹² others, including feminist critics, are less understanding. Moreover, interpretations differ on the sons’ psychological response to this treatment.¹³ With the criticism at an impasse, an explicated discussion of the various mother-son relationships will help clarify the issues and thus allow us to determine whether a feminist critique of motherhood has in fact been ideologically transformed in the film’s central mother-son diad.

All the negative qualifications of the mothers’ conduct towards their sons and the resulting “irreparable” psychological filial damage hinge on the

interpretation of the actual and absolute rejection of the son by the mother or mother figure. The critics are categoric.¹⁴ In Felicity's case, she rejects her son (and her grandson) and prefers her granddaughters, because this is what the Reverend and Stevens say. Declares Stevens, "Ma grand-mère a toujours préféré les filles" (75). Although the Reverend notes that Felicity "adore ses petits-enfants et ses petits-enfants l'adorent", he goes on to affirm, "Je crois qu'elle a toujours préféré les filles" (37). Obsessively, he refers to "les petites-filles préférées de Felicity Jones" (38). Some critics even suggest that she exhibits misandry. Yet does she really and totally reject her male offspring without cause and with inevitable consequences? As Marianne Hirsch reminds us in *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, "[I]f we start our study of the subject with mothers rather than children, a different conception of subjectivity might emerge" (197).

Let us first look at the Reverend's situation. Several scholars read his mother's repeated refusal of his presence during her early morning natations when he was a child as her rejection of him, something which emotionally cripples him.¹⁵ As various critics observe, into old age he will remain Oedipally fixated on his mother, yearning her love as he did when, as a child in the warmth of his bed, he fell asleep to the sounds of her matinal chores, thinking "ma mère, mon amour" (36). Facing death he will muse, "Vais-je m'endormir dans la douceur du lait? Remonter aux sources tièdes du monde?" (34). However, a careful review of Felicity's interaction with her young son suggests a more nuanced perception of both her behaviour and his adult understanding of it.

When she rebuffs her son's company, she does not decline it in any strong sense of the word but "dit non doucement ainsi qu'au sortir d'un rêve" (35). When he reiterates his request, she nods no again and looks worried upon their return home. With motherly concern, she tells her son, "Va vite te coucher, tu vas prendre froid" (36) and with her back to him in "sa voix confuse de femme trompée", says, "Ton père est rentré à trois heures ce matin" (36). Nothing in the Reverend's telling suggests that his mother holds her husband's actions against her son. Rather the unfolding of the narrative suggests that she is hurt and does not want her son to see her face but feels the need to speak aloud (to make real to herself what her husband has done). She talks "comme si elle ne s'adressait à personne" (36).

Her refusal to include her son in her oceanic swims can thus be seen as her attempt to assert her right to a private space and a private time, a way for her to deal with the demeaning infidelities of her husband and her role.¹⁶ As the adult Reverend states, it was "[u]ne heure à peine de solitude (loin des tâches conjugales et domestiques)" (34). The sea in which she seeks solace and solitude acquires the symbolic significance of an exclusive healing space for women, a connotation which will be explored further in the next chapter. I thus agree with those critics who suggest (but do not explicate), that while the Reverend may remain fixated on his mother's love as an adult because, in his view, he did not receive enough of it as a youngster, the underlying reasons for this sad state of affairs lie with the unloving patriarchal husband and the demands of the patriarchal family on the mother. In addition, in showing himself capable of grasping the socio-familial reasons for his mother's behaviour, he

reveals himself able to take the next steps towards emotional maturity (acceptance, forgiveness and new understanding), if he so chose. He thus also bears some personal responsibility for his problems as an adult.

Moreover, he realizes that once his mother's oppressive relationship with her husband changed, her attitudes towards her young descendants could change. He remembers that as her husband disintegrated physically and as she had no more "à craindre d'affront de la part de son mari, Felicity abord[ait] l'âge d'être grand-mère comme quelqu'un qui commence à vivre" (36). Her teenage granddaughters, who are younger than Stevens, become part of that renewal process, and she has them join her in her pre-dawn swims. The eyes with which Felicity could not see and the ears with which she could not hear (to avoid facing, as a young wife, the pain of her husband's dalliances) become, in her elder years, attuned to the beauties of nature (36-37). Who is to say how she would have acted with her older grandchild (Stevens) if her husband had aged or capitulated sooner or with her own son if her husband had been loving? Recall, she does not reject all of her male offspring. She is compassionate with Perceval, consoling him at the barn dance.

The other supposed sign of Felicity's maternal neglect is her undemonstrativeness towards her son. At age twelve, when Nicolas tells her that he will become a reverend, "[e]lle ... [l]'embrasse pour la première fois" (25). He seems to have been dying for her affections: "Par quelle prière magique, quelle invention de l'amour fou pourrais-je délivrer le coeur de ma mère? J'en rêve comme d'une mission impossible. Tombe en extase si la main de Felicity effleure ma main" (25). However, we do not know *why* she has not been more

affectionate. Is it because she is taking out her frustrations regarding her husband on her son, as some critics interpret? A close reading indicates other reasons. A clue lies outside the natant scene.

As critics such as Patricia Smart and Peter Noble suggest, Hébert reveals the *father's* negative attitude regarding so-called feminine qualities to be a root problem in causing the unhealthy or premature separation of sons from their mothers, a problem which Simone de Beauvoir raises in her classic *Le deuxième sexe* (1: 289). While mothers would like to maintain a close relationship with their sons, the fathers disallow it, intent as they are on raising macho men, as we saw in the previous chapter. Only the daughter benefits, as de Beauvoir notes and as Olivia attests in the novel (207). However, all the son is going to notice, as a child, is the apparent rejection by or lack of affection from his mother.

Do the father's strictures on the mother's expression of love for her son also contribute to Felicity's unaffectionate interaction with her son until a socially acceptable reason for being proud and embracing him presents itself? We do not know for sure, but the clues are there. When she kisses her son for the first time after he tells her of his chosen clerical vocation, he feels "[l]a chaleur de sa vie [Felicity's] là-dessous qui bat... comme un oiseau captif" (25). Like Olivia with her mother, Nicolas wants to free his mother — "ouvrir la cage" (25). Indeed, the caged bird imagery connotes the male who holds the female (and her heart and emotions) captive as we learn when Stevens catches Olivia in his destructive gaze ("[s]on coeur bat plus vite tel un oiseau au creux d'un poing fermé", 97). The bird in the cage imagery thus indicates that Felicity is an

emotional captive, prevented by social stricture (patriarchal pressure) from a closer relationship with her son.¹⁷ The pins on her bodice that keep the young Nicolas from placing his head at his mother's breast (25) can therefore be read as the separative bars of the cage that contains the mother rather than the castrating sting of the medusa, as Yvette Francoli (141) and Patricia Louette (313) argue. Moreover, she is obviously moved in her affection and pride for her son when he tells her the news of his chosen vocation. "Une larme sur sa joue" (25) hints at a greater underlying tenderness than the constrictions which puritanical, patriarchal social mores allow her to display.

In any case, Felicity is not as constantly warm to her granddaughters as the envious comments of the Reverend and Stevens would have us believe. Observes Nora, "Il s'agit de l'aimer à l'aube, lorsqu'elle se fait plus douce et tendre, délivrée d'un enchantement" (113); after that Felicity again becomes "farouche et lointaine" (113). This information indicates that young Nicolas waited too long to approach his grandmother since, voyeur that he is, he goes to her only after she leaves the water when the magic hour has passed. Indeed, Felicity is not always particularly receptive to her female offspring either. When Nora brings a bouquet to her grandmother and tells her that "[le] foin mûr ... [est] prêt à être fauché", her grandmother responds "sans grand éclat apparent" (122), reflecting her inability to rejoice in the harvest which will signal the reaping/raping and killing/consumption of the ripened virgin.

As for Felicity's rejection of her grandson, Stevens, it is clearly related to her built-up anger with her husband, something she did not project onto her son Nicolas, but by the time her grandson is grown she can no longer contain.

When Stevens comes to see her, hoping for her blessing (61), she obviously has mixed feelings towards him: "elle a poussé une sorte de cri, plein de mots tendres et sauvages, s'entrechoquant les uns les autres" (74-75). She starts a grandmotherly listing of the relatives he resembles with obvious excitement: "Stevens! Mon petit, mon grand garçon, si grand mon petit-fils" (75). As her listing reveals, she sees him in the context of competing traits from the male and female side: "plus beau que son père... plus intelligent que sa mère... le nez de son grand-père, mes cheveux à moi, sa grand-mère" (75). In the end, she fears that he most resembles his grandfather (the head of the abusive and sexually promiscuous patriarchs). She ends her comparisons with a "profond soupir" (75) and a quiet declaration through clenched teeth: Stevens is no more "fiable que... [s]on grand-père et que tous les hommes sont des cochons" (75). Therefore, while she makes Stevens the scapegoat of her personal suffering,¹⁸ it is only after an internal struggle, which, although expressed with bitter bluntness, remains subdued in a sigh. Her statement thus does not suggest mere misandry.

Also with her designation of Stevens as "pig", she recognizes that he has not only become sexually greedy in his ascent to manhood, but has been successfully socialized (by a society that too long denies sons female love) as a woman eater, as a male who wants women in the all-nurturing position. This assignation carries ominous connotations for women. Recall the references to the famished Stevens excessively eating prior to his "taking" of the food-bearing Maureen after she had protectively greeted him with cutlery held like weapons (66, 67) and the description of him drinking like a pig when he hopes to take

Nora and Olivia out into the storm for domineering sexual initiation. In this esurient, predatory context, sex for Stevens becomes literally “la cochonnerie” (130), as Nora understands after several experiences as sexual prey with Stevens and other men (117, 123, 126, 128-129).

Unfortunately for the love-starved Stevens, his much anticipated visit to his grandmother is punctuated only by more matronly negativity, not any assuaging of his hunger for maternal love, and ends with her discontentedly telling him to wipe his feet the next time he comes. It is not surprising that he feels rejected by his grandmother and affirms that she always preferred “les filles” (75). However, as we have seen, underneath her apparent preference for her granddaughters are conflicting positive and negative feelings towards her grandson. Even the narrative from Stevens’ point-of-view can not hide that fact. Nevertheless, it is understandable that “pour ce qui est des filles de ses filles,... [le] contentement [de Felicity] n’a pas de borne” (37) for she has (apparently) no mixed feelings towards the female side of her family. Unfortunately, what overrides is her bitterness with her husband, which, after a lifetime of subjugation and sexual betrayal she then projects on all men, especially when she sees her husband’s traits regenerated in her male offspring. This is the tragedy of the sons; yet the root cause of this apparent maternal rejection does not lie primarily and inherently with their mothers, but with their mothers’ oppressive social situation as women, to which they react, as other critics also concur. The problem is that the mothers react acrimoniously not constructively.

Stevens’ mother, Beatrice, is another example of a mother in conflict with her role, whom critics (both feminist and otherwise) have uniformly, even

harshly, read as categorically unmotherly, particularly in her relationship with Stevens. For instance, Gould says Beatrice “echoes the patriarchal law of the father and shows complete disinterest in any maternal nurturing or demonstrative affection” (927).¹⁹ A close reading of Stevens’ description of the birth of her twins, in conjunction with other key maternal and female experiences in the novel, reveals a more nuanced understanding of her. In his juvenile fantasy of rejection, he interprets the chill of the birthing room (symbol of the womb) as emanating from his mother. However, the lack of warmth in the family home may alternatively be read as the inability of the father — or the house of patriarchy (a notion played on in the Reverend’s narrative) — to provide an environment, either inside or outside, that is propitious for parenting, especially mothering. Given the poverty of the family, the cold may be actually creeping in from outside. Recall that Hébert shows the difficulties mothers have in this harsh, demanding, male-dominated climate to be nurturing when they can hardly feed themselves. Their difficulty in providing for even the basic nutritive needs of their families symbolizes the difficulty they have in offering spiritual and emotional food. For instance, Olivia’s mother’s last earthly act is a desperate attempt to bring in the potatoes before winter in spite of her own ill-health and impending death, apparently caused, as we have seen, by the consequences of her gender role. Stevens alludes to his own mother being ill-fed when she carried him in pregnancy (230).

Moreover, Beatrice, herself, is cold for two reasons. Firstly, she suffers — literally — from a circulatory problem, as the doctor affirms which underscores the medical inadvisability of her having children. Secondly, like

“the cold fish” Irène, she has been chilled by patriarchy, her blood (life liquid) no longer able keep her warm. The libidinal and life sources that light the inexperienced, unmarried women (such as Nora, who is associated with sunlight and flames) has long since gone out is this woman worn out by mothering in patriarchy. Her physical coldness thus reflects her emotional state, as many critics concur. However, her lack of maternal warmth (suggested by Stevens’ childish, surreal view that her womb, the birthing room, is cold and that her breasts give cold milk) can be understood as representing not her inherently unmaternal personality, which the critics insist upon, but her reaction to a situation unfavourable to positive mothering. In this world, where women’s exclusive role is to nurture, she seems to have been drained and overwhelmed by the duties of motherhood. We must not forget that one of her children, Perceval, is mentally handicapped, given to fits of inconsolable screaming.²⁰ At the birth of her twins, she says quite understandably, “Deux d’un coup c’est trop” (86). She holds them shaking her head, repeating, “Je peux pas, je peux pas, je peux pas” (86), expressing her sense of being overwhelmed.

As Adrienne Rich shows in her classic *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, motherhood has been subject historically to an ideology which, among other things, renders revealing negative feelings about motherhood taboo (15, 18). The critics have certainly been moved to criticize Beatrice. Yet, as Rich demonstrates, it is normal for mothers to harbour negative feelings towards their children. It is a myth and a false expectation for the mother to love unconditionally all the time: “love and anger can exist concurrently; anger at the conditions of motherhood can become translated into

anger at the child” (36). Moreover, as we learn early in the novel, the newborn twins are also mentally handicapped. Perhaps, as in Perceval’s case, there are physical traits that reveal their mental disability, and perhaps with the twins these traces are visible even at birth. If so, the realization of the implications of the extra care required of such children would have added to the mother’s distress. What is uncontested is that there are two infants, literally representing the doubling of work and worry, regardless of the degree of extra care their compromised physical and mental abilities might also entail.²¹

The birth of these additional children will only separate Beatrice further from her older offspring. Indeed, Boyce argues that the recurring twinning motifs in the novel symbolize the child’s separation from the mother — the creation of two distinct bodies (301n2). To take this interpretation one step further, Beatrice, with the birth of the twins, has become separated not only literally from the newborns but symbolically from her older children and, most significantly, with the added care load, from herself.

Unfortunately for the young Stevens, his mother’s apparent rejection of her newborn children both terrifies and stimulates him. He associates her repulsion of the infants with the unmeeting of his own insatiable desire for a mother’s attention. Seeing the hungry babies crying at his mother’s breasts, he wails inwardly, with egotistical and libidinal connotations, “Et moi et moi et moi... C’est pas le lait tout cru qu’elle m’a donné, Beatrice ma mère, c’est la faim et la soif. Le désir” (87). When Stevens starts to scream his distress at his own neglect and, as some critics read, his unsatisfied Oedipal yearnings,²² he is, as noted earlier, savagely beaten by his father, who is apparently, among other

things, concerned about his son's incestuous desire: "Il le fait consciencieusement comme s'il s'agissait d'extirper du corps de l'enfant la racine même de la puissance mauvaise, lâchée dans toute la maison, depuis les premiers jours du monde" (87). As Stevens' father violently reenacts the "reality principle", brutally repressing Stevens' socially unacceptable incestuous cravings for his mother, Stevens' father is not only instilling violent, macho behaviour in his son (as observed previously), but is also increasing, by this forced and needlessly early separation with his mother, Stevens' insatiable and lethal desire for a mother substitute who will nurture him. He is creating what Smart terms: "[la] soif inaltérée [des fils]" (259).

This excessive desire may eventually cause the mother, herself, to become concerned about her son and may be an underlying, although misguided, reason for her apparent agreement with her husband to beat Stevens after he touches Olivia on the beach as a boy (206, 239). She may be realizing (as Felicity does when Stevens has grown up) that Stevens is becoming like his male ancestors — a lethal woman eater, who increasingly conceives of women as prey. Note that Stevens' hair is described in this beach scene in the same way as his father's is in other scenes and that this detail links them both to a predatory bird. Specifically, Stevens has "[d]es cheveux hérissés sur sa tête en épis drus" (205) when he gazes hungrily at Olivia and her sand pies. Later, when he wants to take his cousins out into the tempest to patriarchally deflower them, he is described as "[u]ne espèce de grand oiseau hérissé de pluie" (133). Then, when his father gazes at Nora's fish-eaten (preyed-upon) body, he has "[d]es cheveux en piquants drus sur sa tête on dirait

un martin-pêcheur, fasciné par sa proie" (187). The reference to the spiky-crested kingfisher, known for its sharp prominent beak, frames the father as another hungry male gannet (like the American [42] and the Reverend [39]) who fantasizes about preying upon and raping nubile women using the knife-like beak. This reference clarifies the connotations carried in the earlier descriptions of the spiky-haired Stevens. By the time Stevens has become a sexual predator, and has done his raping, his father (who later collusively burns the evidence of Nora's pink belt, a symbol of her devastated flesh) is again described with "les cheveux hérissés sur la tête" (159). In reaction, "[s]a mère [est] plus glacée que d'habitude" (159). Denied loving access to his mother as a child, Stevens has become like his father as an adult, and his mother is hardly pleased.

Stevens' violently curtailed desire for his mother finally explodes during rape when he refers to the symbols of female sexuality and maternity: "la lune brillante et toute la Voie lactée" (247). As indicated by Pat's and Pam's play on the verb "téter"²³ (scratched as "étéétéétéété..." [17] into the skirting board of their mural depicting female victims of male predatory violence), this inordinate craving for the mother figure and, more importantly, the concomitant, lethal designation of woman as total nurturer become two of the underlying factors in the crimes of men against women in this community. Patriarchy thus creates the conditions in which the son, denied the mother's love because of the father's mistreatment of either mother or son, becomes a dysfunctional, dangerously "hungry" man who preys exorbitantly on women.

In the end, Beatrice and her husband will be described by the Reverend as people who had never wanted children (21). This may indeed have always been a main underlying reason for Beatrice's disinterest in her children and, if it was, was always a legitimate feeling. It is this society's adherence to the Father's Law of reproduction (31) and its implicit requirement of women to have children in spite of medical problems that place these parents in the unwanted position of parenthood. In any case, whether Beatrice cannot be a loving mother or does not want to be a mother at all, her position in this patriarchal community must be acknowledged to give a fair assessment of her feelings and her behaviour towards her elder son. Either way, Hébert offers a critical view of this society that creates unpropitious environments for mothering and that makes unwanted mothers of women either medically unfit to bear children or undesirous of children.

Another reason for Beatrice's and John's disengagement from their children is a desire, again according to the Reverend, to be "[s]ans témoin" (21). However, this reason for being rid of the children seems to be mostly the father's since he is the one most actively engaged in destroying evidence of Nora's death. Significantly, "témoin" is in the singular, implying Perceval, who witnesses his parents' attempts to cover-up for Stevens, and who finding their duplicity intolerable, wants to scream the truth. Although both parents lie to protect Stevens ("Mes deux parents, évitant de se regarder, déclarent que Stevens est rentré vers neuf heures" [159]) and while the mother is an accomplice in the cover-up, it is the father who takes the most action and, apparently, the leadership role in this conspiracy. With his son Perceval as

witness, John gathers up and deliberately destroys evidence related to the crimes against Olivia and Nora. Thus the desire for no witnesses is a greater concern for the father than the mother. The simple wish not to be a parent (because of the overwhelming burden of caring for too many children too soon) seems to be a greater issue for the ailing mother (clearly dating back, at least, to the medically unadvised birth of her twins, which in turn meant the literal doubling of her work).

From these feminist readings of the Reverend's relationship with his mother and Stevens' relationships with his grandmother and mother, it becomes clear that a singularly critical and categorically harsh view of the mothers' supposed rejection of their sons is unfair, given the social context which Hébert meticulously suggests through a variety of clues. Still in our society, the idea that mothers could be cruel, angry, embittered, or even unmaternal, incites controversy and condemnation. Indeed, such portrayals are often attacked more vehemently than similar portrayals of abusive or unpaternal fathers. These attacks arise not only because of the prevailing social stereotype that tender motherly love should be an inherent and perpetual quality in all mothers, indeed in all women, but because of the social belief in the absolute necessity of a mother and of a mother's constant unconditional love for her child to ensure the child's well-being.

Simoneau shifts the film narrative away from this controversy by transforming the issue. Rather than showing that patriarchy is defective because it compromises both the motherhood experience and the possibility for positive mothering, especially of sons, he suggests that the *mother's love* of

sons is inherently defective, by insinuating that the mother is the perpetrator of the worst evil — incest. He effectively accomplishes this alteration by transforming Beatrice into a superficially tender but insidiously incestuous mother, who comforts Perceval after his father's swat, who tells her husband that Stevens "ne te mangera pas" (thus encouraging him to consider forgiving his son²⁴), but who also incestuously brush kisses Stevens for four seconds and gazes desirously into his eyes for another eleven (a lengthy time in commercial feature film). Here I construe the evidence differently from Kathryn Slott (1989/90) and Janis L. Pallister (1995), who characterize Simoneau's Beatrice as a kind and gentle woman only. Slott describes Beatrice's reunion with Stevens as "touching" (26). Pallister submits that Simoneau improved on Hébert by portraying one "good" mother rather than a number of "bad" ones (1995 194). These readings are simplistic, avoiding a nuanced study of the so-called bad mothers in the novel and ignoring the incestuous behaviour of Beatrice in the film.

Thus, according to my interpretation, Simoneau chooses to suggest one disturbing aspect of the maternal relationship, as opposed to several worrisome effects of patriarchy on mothering, as in the novel. Moreover, he decides to highlight an alarming aspect — incest — that, as far as the mother was concerned, was for the most part unapparent in the novel. Specifically, having focused on incest, he reverses the origins of that desire in the biological mother-child relationships, from one originating from the son (as part of the son's ongoing heterosexual development) to one originating from the mother. As we saw, the Oedipal feelings apparent in the Reverend's and Stevens' relationships

with their mothers reside in the love-starved, heterosexually inclined boys in the novel, not the mother.

Nevertheless, Simoneau opts not only to intimate but to enlarge the scope of incestuous attraction of mother figures for the son. Not only does he have Maureen, in her symbolic mother's role, indulge in incestuous activities with Stevens as in the novel (as we shall see in a moment), but (as we saw in the previous chapter) he has Olivia, in her substitute mother's role, indulge in incestuous activities with Patrick, unlike in the novel. Moreover, in the film's fish cleaning scene, Simoneau has Irène hint at the possibility of an incestuous liaison between the Reverend and Nora,²⁵ when in the novel Irène expresses her disapproval of such a liaison (45). These insidious suggestions of incest, perhaps only fully understood by the spectator who has read the novel (notably in the case of Irène's remark or Maureen's relationship with Stevens), nevertheless create a social context of incestuous mothers and foreshadow the more obvious incestuous behaviour of Beatrice towards her son Stevens in the film.

The only basis for Simoneau's foray into these allusions to maternal collusion with incest lies in the troubling ambiguities of Maureen's mother's/lover's role in the novel. In fact, her dual role is more evident in the novel for her explicitly maternal role is clearer. For instance, she does work that only other biological mothers do in the novel (such as knitting), underlining her status as mother figure. Moreover, in the novel Stevens makes a conscious choice to go to Maureen before finding his parents, underlining his assignment of her to a symbolic, surrogate parental role.

Indeed, his decision to visit Maureen in the novel becomes a trial run for his personal and doomed Oedipal quest (which will end disastrously after usurping various father figures with his forced and lethal union with the maternal substitute, Olivia). Shortly after his arrival in Griffin Creek in the novel, Stevens symbolically kills the father figure (with his contemplations of crushing his grandfather under his boot) and then symbolically marries the mother figure (by having sex with Maureen, who insists she perceives him as a youngster).²⁶ Significantly, as with the Reverend in the novel, the Oedipal yearnings for the mother figure originate within the "son", Stevens, in this scene. In fact, sexual conqueror that he is, Stevens manipulates and forcibly acts on them, carrying Maureen off to the bedroom in spite of her protests. Recall that in the novel Maureen's desire for Stevens is fraught with ambiguity: Stevens' reading of her sexual arousal contradicts her remark that she sees him as a child, ignores her protests against his initial sexual advances, and is undone by his reference to her too tight vagina.

In contrast, in the film, Simoneau uses Maureen's symbolic maternal role to quietly foreshadow the hint of actual incest between biological mother and son. While Simoneau underplays Stevens' perception of Maureen as a mother figure (since none of her domestic work in the film carries uniquely maternal connotations for him, unlike in the novel), her very age, figure and dress, as well as her domestic work and care, nevertheless intimate vague maternal connotations in the film.²⁷ However, it is not so much a son's Oedipal quest for a mother substitute that is being traced in the film with Stevens' liaison with Maureen but the unfolding of a form of mother-to-son incest. Since in the film,

Stevens makes no symbolic killing of a father figure prior to arriving at Maureen's, we do not understand that there is anything particularly related to his Oedipal development as a heterosexual in his having sex with her.

Furthermore, any idea that Stevens initiates the incestuous affair with her in the film is negated by his surprised look when she begins to remove his boot from his foot in her kitchen.²⁸ Indeed, that look will evolve into the defiant one he will give his seductive mother later in the film after her unexpected, incestuous brush kiss on his lips.

In short, by retaining obscure allusions to the maternal-filial incestuous element of the relationship between Maureen and Stevens and then extensively dramatizing the affair as one she started, Simoneau subtly but deliberately foreshadows the later more perturbing and more obvious suggestion of Beatrice's incestuous desires for her biological son. Simoneau thus lays the ground for the view that a hidden core problem of mother-son relations is the threat of maternal incest not the effects of a patriarchal society and family on mother-son relations. Unlike Hébert, Simoneau is not problematizing the motherhood experience, but is implying that maternal love, itself, is warped and perhaps an insidious etiology of filial madness.

Simoneau draws the other specific expression of the incestuous aspect of Stevens' relationship with his mother in the film from the Reverend's relationship with his mother in the novel, but again by reversing the origins of that desire. In the film, the reminiscing old Stevens utters a line referring to his own mother ("Moi, aussi, je t'aime") similar to a line spoken by the nostalgic, guilt-ridden old Reverend of the novel ("ma mère, mon amour", 36). However,

the context for these declarations differ. As we have seen, in the novel, the old Reverend is remembering how much he desperately loved his mother as he fell asleep in his boyhood bed after fruitlessly and voyeuristically following her to the seashore. His incestuous desire for her is not reciprocated by her. In the film, old Stevens declares his love for his mother in regretful tones as if he is sorry that he never told her that he loved her. He is responding to the memory (created exclusively for the film) of *her* relatively long labial brush kiss of *him* after his brief return to the family home. Perhaps in blubbering in his old age "Moi, aussi, je t'aime", he is also conveying an unresolved and heretofore unspoken reciprocal Oedipal desire on his part. However, his memory nevertheless mainly serves to reinforce the spectator's recollection of *Beatrice's* expression of an incestuous desire for *him*.

Whatever else it is, her attempted adult kiss of Stevens is certainly not of a congratulatory nature; thus it is not comparable to Felicity's only recorded show of affection for the Reverend as a twelve-year-old boy in the novel, a gesture that had marked the maternal transgression of patriarchal barriers to normal mother-son affection. In fact, contrastingly, Beatrice of the film wants to expose part of Stevens' body for her own pleasure by having him remove his hat. Her tone, word choice and emphasis hint at seduction: "T'es beau. Encore plus beau que j'imaginai.... J'aimerais bien te voir sans ton chapeau." In the novel, it is Stevens who, for sexist reasons, fantasizes about exposing the bodies of women to humiliate them for their sexual desire (82). Thus Simoneau's Beatrice subtly acquires some of the sexually exploitive characteristics of Hébert's Stevens.

Moreover, Beatrice's request for Stevens to remove his hat in the film also hints at castration since in the novel Stevens' hat signified, for him at least, his manhood, a connotation also visually suggested in the film by the phallic form of the rounded crown. Beatrice therefore becomes a subtle but dangerous medusa symbol in the same vein as some critics, using psychoanalytical approaches, have interpreted Felicity, Maureen and even Olivia and, more indirectly, Nora in the novel, but not Beatrice.²⁹ However, she emerges as a castrator in the film not because she is becoming a modern woman, who is either assuming or challenging male roles as these other women do in the novel (as we shall see in later chapters), but because she is a mother exhibiting an inherently menacing, stereotypical, insatiable sexual appetite which overflows transgressively towards the son.

It must be acknowledged that Beatrice's plea for Stevens to take off his hat is shot face-on from his point-of-view, underlining the fact that any negative interpretation of her intentions are governed by his perception (as are the supposed castrating powers of women in the novel).³⁰ However, a neutral camera angle shoots the actual kiss, suggesting that the mother-to-son desire is fact not perception: Simoneau's Stevens is the target of self-interested, incestuous and castrating maternal attention.³¹ Moreover, his removal of his hat at her request by a tight gesture (evidently orchestrated by the film director) leaves his hair noticeably spiked up, symbolizing her release of his contained passions through her advance. In the novel, as we have seen, his hair gets in this excited state not in reaction to his mother but during the rising storm of his own passions as they rage over the young Atkins' cousins whom he wishes to

violently initiate, implicitly like the crested kingfisher (133, 205). In short, in the film, Stevens' mother becomes the subtle sexual corrupter of her son in the reunion scene. In a subsequent scene, when Stevens attempts to help his father with his boat, his father's immediate rejection of his son underlines Stevens' pitiful Oedipal dilemma as the son who is incestuously desired by his mother and emotionally rejected by his (jealous?) father.

This theme of the corrupting and damaging effects of mother-to-son incest appears in Simoneau's later film adaptation of Bernard Taylor's *Mother's Boys* (1994), in which the mother who aggressively expresses this taboo desire is portrayed as an outright psychopath. She must be soundly and dramatically murdered at the film's end for family order to be restored and the tormented son to be saved. A variant on this theme also appears in his film *Dans le Ventre du Dragon* (1989), which he co-wrote with *Les Fous de Bassan*'s co-scripter Marcel Beaulieu. In this work the maleficent, mad, female scientist takes a sexual interest in one of her patients and wants to experiment on newborn babies. Thus, Simoneau's engagement with the taboo of maternal incest and, by extension, the incarnation of female depravity in *Les Fous de Bassan* recurs in his later choices of film projects. This pattern indicates that as much as the critique of patriarchal society is implicit in Hébert's work, the portrayal of the nefarious female, so prevalent in Western patriarchal culture, is central to Simoneau's.³²

Perhaps Simoneau's predilection for the Western tradition's motif of female evil explains why he deletes Felicity, the emerging womanist, and does not invest Beatrice with any of the characteristics Felicity displays in this role.

As the ascending, latent female leader, Felicity, in the novel, represented the rise of an unconscious feminism, which Simoneau shows no intention of portraying (as I will show more explicitly in the next section). On a more restricted note, Felicity's ambivalence towards her grandson because of her anger at her unfaithful abusive husband is not integrated into Beatrice's relationship with her son even though it is the only key remaining mother-son relationship in the film. Therefore the spectator receives no clue as to these reasons for dysfunction in the mother-son relationship. Indeed, in the film, no severe severing of the mother-son relationship by the biological father occurs.

Moreover, unlike Beatrice in the novel, Beatrice in the film does not seem taxed by the care of her children (of which she only has two, since Pat and Pam are eliminated as characters). She is protective and loving of Perceval. The controversial scenes suggesting her rejection of her newborn babies and her later seconder's agreement to her husband's beating of Stevens (239) do not appear nor are suggested in any way. In any case, without the social context of oppressive, uncaring male-dominated marital relationships (also eliminated as we have seen) such actions on Beatrice's part could not have been understood as reactions to a situation not conducive for mothering.

Thus the spectator receives no indication that the task of mothering in patriarchy may, at times, be overwhelming or alienating, or that the traditional role of wife may be humiliating and hurtful. Consequently, Beatrice acquires none of Felicity's need for solitude — for being momentarily away from the domestic care of both husband and children. She suffers from none of the worst types of subjugation of women, which the wives of brutal, unfaithful

husbands do in the novel, especially the beatings, as noted in Chapter 1. Although in one of old Stevens' reminiscing scenes Simoneau retains old Stevens' memory of his mother's icy hands at his own birth,³³ Beatrice's physical coldness is not contextualized in that memory as resulting from the difficulties of motherhood in patriarchy or more specifically from the draining effects of childbirth as it is in the novel with the birth of her twins.

In addition, even though in this memory scene, old Stevens does pull down his father's portrait, the significance of the gesture is ambiguous, especially as it concerns the effect that his father might have had on Beatrice's mothering. Since his father never directly interfered in Stevens' relationship with his mother in the film, it is unclear that Stevens is unhappy with him for that reason. Does Stevens' action mean he is rueful that his father was not present during the film's mother-son reunion scene (which is transformatively derived from the novel's parents-son scene of confrontation) and was therefore unable to intervene with his wife's incestuous behaviour or that he is sorrowful that his father could not love or forgive him and allow for better family relations? Or is old Stevens reliving a confused depression or even a latent anger at his mother for desiring him? That Stevens is even expressing displeasure with his father when he pulls down the paternal portrait is in doubt because he does not look at it directly before knocking it down and thus does not convey his definitive awareness of the painting's subject. It may only be coincidental that it is his father's portrait rather than his mother's, on the other side of him, that he hits to the ground. The spectator is left to speculate whether this gesture figuratively

accentuates the film's father-son conflict or hints at underlying familial tensions caused by mother-to-son incest.

In short, the film does not show that mothering in patriarchy may be hard on mothers, beyond the lesser strain of intervening when fathers are impatient with or unforgiving towards their sons.³⁴ The only suggestion in the film that women may not be happy in their traditional role of wife and mother is suggested in the streamer-making scene when the widowed Maureen tells Nora and Olivia that she does not want to remarry because she would rather do what she wants. This comment can hardly connote the range and degree of oppression which the women experience in their marriages in the novel.

In summary, in the novel, the mothers' lack of loving support for some of their sons and Beatrice's apparent maternal disinterest served to criticize the patriarchal organization of Griffin Creek society by suggesting that it deterred women from being loving mothers. If one accepts Pallister's and Slott's reading that Simoneau has made the only retained mother more loving than some of the mothers in the novel, one must realize that his decision to excise the mothers' lack of maternal love resituates the film narrative within a more positive portrayal of patriarchy. In this more benign version, mothers do not harm their children. If one accepts my reading that Simoneau, in fact, makes the one retained mother insidiously incestuous, one must recognize that Simoneau is subtly demonizing the mother, not critically examining her embittering social context. Either way, Simoneau erases the notion that abusive patriarchy constitutes the root cause of the unhealthy relationship between these mothers and sons (and grandmother and grandson). He therefore safely expunges those elements

which opened up the novel's troubled mother-son relationships to a feminist critique of the patriarchally caused reasons for the compromised mother-son and female-male relationships.

As a consequence, the psychological reasons for Stevens' criminal behaviour shifts. Some feminist critics of the novel assert that Stevens seeks to avenge himself on the castrating maternal figure by murdering Nora (Gould) or to reach the unattainable maternal figure through rape (Smart 1988). Others, such as Noble, claim that, troubled by maternal complicity with the abusive father/family head, he will in reaction perpetuate the cycle of male violence against women by wreaking vengeful violence against his female peers. Whatever the case, in the film, Stevens is no longer antagonized by the confusing and collusive acts of a mother overburdened by an unwanted motherhood role (enforced by a patriarchal society). Rather Stevens is covertly driven to madness (a concept Simoneau takes literally and which Perceval proclaims) in part by the corrupting attentions of an incestuous mother as Simoneau subtly introduces but does not resolve the narrative enigma of apparent mother-to-son incest.

The Mother and Daughter Relationship

Although Hébert problematizes the ability of women to be loving mothers, especially of their sons, she also shows that the mother figures assume their traditional role as protector of their children, in particular of their daughters, granddaughters or nieces.³⁵ In Griffin Creek society, where women are perceived as the sexual prey of the men, all the biological mothers and

grand/foremothers fear for their female offspring, indicating that the danger posed to the girls is a social and an extensive problem. The mother figures attempt to safeguard their female progeny either through verbal warnings and vestmental colour codes or in the maternal element of the sea. This section will discuss the treatment of the protective maternal behaviour and the next chapter will examine the transformation of the sea as symbolic locus for maternal relations with daughters and sons.

In the novel, Felicity acts a primary regulator of predatory male behaviour by verbally interceding when Perceval preys on Nora (117) and by reprimanding her son for stalking Nora (41).³⁶ Alice, Nora's mother, also perceives Nora as potential prey of the male hunter, protectively warning, "[M]a petite fille, attention aux chasseurs" (126) when Nora, with her red hair that flames like a deer's, sets off, like Little Red Riding Hood (a clitoral allusion in Cixousian analysis), into the forest to bring the carnivorous hunters their refreshments. Both Mathilda and Alice also repeatedly intervene to protect their daughters on the beach against the latently venatic disruptions of either Perceval or Stevens (115-116, 206). When the Atkins cousins leave Maureen's house on the fateful evening of August 31, 1936, Maureen "[les] met en garde contre toute mauvaise rencontre" (204). In fact, as Olivia attests when the drunken Stevens invites her and Nora to join him in the great storm, "Toutes mes voix de mère et de grand-mères prennent le timbre clair de ma tante Alice, déclarent que ce n'est pas un temps pour mettre un chien dehors" (222).

As Olivia's characterization of Alice's voice indicates, these living women incarnate the warning voices of the dead foremothers who inhabit Olivia's

dateless narrative — the great line of a centuries-old, reactive maternal line which seeks to protect its female descendants. Neil Bishop's excellent analysis of the presence of these foremothers' voices demonstrates that they articulate not only a feminine but a feminist voice. Of the voices of the foremothers Bishop says:

cette voix des femmes d'antan ne narre pas ce qui se passe, mais en lançant sans cesse à Olivia un avertissement — se méfier de Stevens Brown, de l'homme — cette voix rappelle implicitement ce qui *s'est passé* dans les rapports femmes-hommes depuis un temps immémorial (les agressions infligées à celles-là par ceux-ci). En plus, elle annonce (narre) implicitement ce qui *se passera*, cette nouvelle agression que sera le viol-meurtre d'Olivia et de Nora par Stevens Brown (1984 123).

As do the living maternal figures (mothers, grandmother and aunt), these voices of Olivia's foremothers warn, an act which Bishop argues is ideological:

énoncer un avertissement pareil, qui vise à protéger une femme (la femme) contre un homme (l'homme), et qui exhorte les femmes à rester entre elles, en une solidarité féminine, c'est énoncer un message relevant d'une *idéologie* de caractère féministe; entendons par là: qui valorise la femme (en outre dans ce roman, la femme constitue le bien, les personnages masculins représentent le mal) (1984 128).

However, the protective instinct of the mothers and the foremothers does not extend to a direct or radical challenge of the Griffin Creek patriarchy. It does not engage them in feminist action. It remains a survival technique for helping the daughters live and perhaps prevail in an environment where women, exclusively and to their detriment, are assigned the roles of nurturer and sexual prey. As such it is an intuitive reaction against the destructive position in which both society and literary tropes place women. That the mothers' protective actions remain limited, ultimately fruitless (because they are powerless to save

Nora and Olivia from violation and murder) does not negate the existence of a pre-feminist consciousness within the community of women. Indeed, this female solidarity parallels an actual, pre-feminist social movement of Québec women of the period (1932-1939) called “la Solidarité féminine” (Dumont *et al.* 343). This sociohistorical context allows us to nuance Bishop’s above interpretation of an essentialist feminism, in which women represent good and men evil in the novel, and to respond to Randall’s criticism that the whispering foremothers constitute a feeble, even non-existent, form of feminism (67).

As feminist historian Gerda Lerner states, the arrival at a feminist consciousness “takes place in distinct stages” (242). First there must be an “awareness of a wrong” and then “the development of a sense of sisterhood” before the final stages can be broached — i.e., “the autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition, and... the development of an alternate vision of the future” (242). By their warnings and solidarity, the women of Griffin Creek show that they have gone through the former two steps. That they have done so suggests the possibility of their future movement into the latter ones, which historically is what happens in Québec.

That their female solidarity is still devoid of constructive action for fundamental change also suggests to the reader the need for these village women to move, eventually, towards the final phases of feminist consciousness: to develop a more challenging and politically conscious stance so that the cycle of violence against women can finally be broken in their community. Hébert thus implies the usefulness of feminist action, not by depicting feminist action

per se but by showing the tragedy of what happens when a feminist consciousness has not quite matured to the stage of intervention.

Clearly then, these whispering voices are integral to conveying a feminist understanding of female resistance in this patriarchal community. A brief review of the textual presence of the foremothers' voices will recall for the reader the range of their presence (only partly noted by Bishop 1984) and thus the various scenic opportunities which Simoneau had for including them in the film. These foremothers, "une cohorte de femmes dans l'ombre et le vent" (215), who like Olivia were once "repasseuses, laveuses, cuisinières" (215), warn her, "Ne lève pas la tête de ton repassage, tant que ce mauvais garçon sera là dans la porte" (215). When she hangs sheets on the clothesline, "[m]es mère et grand-mères me chuchotent dans le vent dur de n'en rien faire et d'accorder toute mon attention aux draps mouillés qui pèsent si lourd au bout de mes bras" (216). At the barn dance "[s]es mère et grand-mères... [la] recommandent tout bas de ne pas lever les yeux vers lui" (219). Her dead mother becomes the newest of these warning foremothers: "Ma mère, parmi elles, la plus fraîche et la plus salée à la fois, me parle en secret ma douce langue natale et me dit de me méfier de Stevens" (217).

Ultimately the mothers and foremothers are attempting to warn Olivia against sexual relations with patriarchal men (like Stevens) because, in the current patriarchal paradigm of (venatic) sexual relations, the female will be devoured and, if not physically harmed, at least socially restricted, when saddled with the offspring resulting from this consumption/consummation ("consommation" in French). Influenced by these voices, Olivia thinks, "Cet

homme est mauvais. Il ne désire rien tant que de réveiller la plus profonde épouvante en moi pour s'en repaître comme d'une merveille. La plus profonde, ancienne épouvante qui n'est plus tout à fait la mienne, mais celle de ma mère enceinte de moi et de ma grand-mère qui..." (202). The foremothers fear the consequences that (sexual) self-abandonment poses for their female progeny, as self-abandonment (a common concern in Hébert's work) will entail throwing caution to the winds. The rise of passion will blind the girls to the dangers of becoming hunted, sexual prey.

However, for all the mother's good intentions, their worries about the possible results of relations between their daughters and the venatic, patriarchal young men of the community drive a wedge of silence between mother and daughter. The male-dominated society is thus shown to divide mothers from daughters. Nora tries to hide her sexual desire for young men from her mother (132). Although initially Nora wants to turn to her grandmother for comfort after Stevens' humiliating rejection in the huntress scene, she does not, too proud to hear her grandmother's censure of men, no doubt (127-128). Later the phantom Olivia apologizes to her foremothers for the libidinal energy that pulls her daily to the shore.

The mothers naively think that silence on sex will protect their daughters. Because of the mothers' anxiety about their daughters' welfare, sex becomes cloaked in mystery, as other critics note, relegated to the shadows and the whispering wind out of which the foremothers' warning voices rise. Olivia and Nora perceive their mothers as the holders of sexual secrets which the girls are too young to receive (115), but which, if they did, would make them equal at last

to their mothers and grandmothers (216). Paradoxically, the mothers' behaviour only increases their daughters' desire since the girls know their mothers are hiding a tantalizing part of life from them (115, 215). Olivia describes herself as a desiring "fille qui appelle dans une chambre fermée, alors que ses mère et grand-mères grondent tout alentour de la maison, affirm[ant]... que ce garçon est mauvais, soûl comme une bourrique, et qu'il ne faut pas l'écouter, sous peine de se perdre avec lui" (223). Indeed, Olivia reveals an impatience with her foremothers' warnings: "Ces femmes radotent et répètent toujours la même chose" (220).

Hébert shows the limitations of a female solidarity precisely because of the disastrous inability of both the protective silence of the mothers and the whispered warnings of the phantom foremothers to save Olivia and Nora from their terrible fate. Indeed, Hébert condemns such passive solidarity since, devoid of a feminist consciousness, it leads the elder maternal figures (Felicity, Maureen, Beatrice and Bob Allen's mother) to collude with the community's patriarchy during the police investigation. By implication, her narrative thus exposes the need for a feminist solidarity that actively seeks to challenge and reconstruct social conditions for the fates of the likes of Nora's and Olivia's to be prevented or denounced if they do occur.

In contrast, with the earlier noted removal of some of the key mothers, Simoneau creates a community devoid of mother-daughter relationships even though most of the mothers are mentioned in Stevens' letters on which Simoneau bases much of his adaptation. With the girls' guardian grandmother, Felicity, notably absent and the girls' mothers deleted, the young women

become maternal orphans, especially Nora, whose mother is not only not shown but not even mentioned. Although the previous existence of Olivia's deceased mother is noted in the film, unlike in the novel Olivia does not even have a connection with her mother through memory. Olivia does not contemplate her mother's mysterious fate or attempt any communion with her soul as she does in the novel. With this omission, Simoneau divides Olivia even from her mother's spirit, enacting, by his decision, the patriarchal will of Olivia's brothers, who by paternalistically recalling her to the family home in the novel, also sever Olivia from her mother's spiritual presence (211). In addition, Maureen acts only like a big sister towards Nora and Olivia in the film, making dance decorations with them in the streamer-making scene. She does not caution her nightbound nieces (or rather nightbound niece, since only Olivia is murdered in the film) against dangerous encounters as she did in the novel. She thus does not assume any of the tutelary role of Hébert's maternal figures.

With no figurative or biological mothers of daughters in the film, none of the maternal warnings can find expression — either through the voices of living mother figures or the whispers of dead ones. All that is left in the film to intimate these voices of female solicitude and solidarity is Nora's suggestion, "N'y va pas Olivia. N'y va pas" at the beginning and end of the film. However, as a young, inexperienced woman reduced in the film to assuming the mere role of sexual rival to Olivia, Nora alone cannot evoke the powerful presence of a concerned, let alone a subversive, intergenerational maternal line. Her one monition, key as it may be to creating suspense in the film, cannot and does not embody the novel's protective maternal chorus.

In fact, like most of the film script, her words are derived from Stevens' version of events, specifically from his description of the final encounter between him and the girls when Nora warns Olivia against him (244). Thus it is not even meant to represent all the warning voices of the resisting metaphoric sisterhood. In addition, if the mothers' fear for their daughters' sexual safety is implanted anywhere in the film, it is subsumed within the Reverend's repressive preaching on the dangers of the gaze and desire in the film's sermon scene. However, he does not represent a protective paternal figure, and certainly not a maternal one! Rather, he is part of the problem, acting as a sexual hunter (albeit a somewhat less threatening one than in the novel) towards Nora, who, in the film, is now unguarded by any maternal figures.

Because the film draws principally from Stevens' letters, none of the instances in which Olivia hears her whispering foremothers appear in the film³⁷ — not in kitchen scene, not in the clothesline scene, not in the barn dance scene — even though these voices could have been counterpointedly incorporated. For instance, in the novel, Olivia's version of the ironing scene is steeped with her awareness of "des voix de femmes patientes" (215), who warn her not to interact with Stevens. This wariness is suggested at the opening of this scene in the film version by Olivia hesitating momentarily with her ironing when she hears slight noises. However, there is nothing in the film version to suggest that her caution is associated with the ancestral warnings or with anything beyond her own personal sense of unease. Indeed, the depiction of her disconcertion goes no further than what is suggested by her actions as observed by Stevens in his version in the novel. However, Simoneau does not

omit the internally heard voices of the whispering foremothers because he shuns voice-over as a method for conveying internal action. For example, he makes use of this technique when Stevens whispers Olivia's and Nora's names in voice-over after leaving the barn dance in the film. In any case, a word of dialogue could have explained Olivia's belief that she hears her foremothers' voices in the wind.

Not only does Simoneau eliminate evidence of Olivia's inner struggle with her foremothers, but he dilutes what direct and indirect clues there were to her association with them. For instance, her link with her foremothers is enmeshed in her daily acts, as part of a woman's culture. In the ironing scene, her use of two irons alternately to ensure that one is always hot enough to work with and her bringing the iron to her cheek to test its heat are gestures linking her to "sa mère et sa grand-mère. La longue lignée des gestes de femme à Griffin Creek pour la lier à jamais" (215). In the comparable scene in the film, she uses but one iron. A comment in passing in dialogue in the film could have noted the significance of two irons.

Simoneau also deletes and transposes other colour-coded indications of intergenerational female solidarity. For instance, on Nora's fifteenth birthday (a symbolic day of sexual awakening in Hébert's work), Felicity offers her granddaughter a green dress, with "un petit col blanc en peau d'ange" (112). This gift symbolizes Felicity's attempt to mark her young granddaughter as still a child and therefore out of bounds, for green — as far as the young women are concerned — is associated with their sexual innocence or sexual inexperience in the novel (e.g. 180) and the white "peau d'ange" collar echoes other allusions

to the novel's clichéd innocence/angel (71), virginity/angel (248) and virginity/white (97)³⁸ motifs. Against his mother's wishes, the venatically attired Reverend tracks, rifle in hand, the green-robed, red-haired Nora (42-43). The latter image becomes a visual, symbolic dramatization of the traditional game of the hunter/lover pursuing the young virgin (green signifying Nora's virginity and childhood, red her awakening sexuality).³⁹

However, in the film, Nora never wears a green dress, let alone a dress of any colour that was presented as a gift carrying the connotations which Felicity's birthday present did in the novel. Rather it is Perceval, the innocent hunter, who wears a green plaid shirt in the minnow nabbing scene, a colour assignment Simoneau creates for the film. Moreover, not obviously red-headed in the film, Nora barely bears any other symbolic colour of desire that marks her as a sexual target of male hunters from whom adult women wish to shield her, although she is stalked by the Reverend. It is largely her sexual innocence that is under threat, as exemplified by the pale spray of flowers she carries in the hand which the Reverend grabs in the "almost slap" scene in the film. Nevertheless, the hint of maternal protection could have been encoded into the colours of the girls' dresses in the film to discreetly suggest the defensive efforts of mother figures (if the girls had had mothers). For instance, such information could have been integrated by as simple a line as Nora explaining that she had received a green dress from her grandmother on her birthday. Some contextualization about the grandmother's concerns for her granddaughter and Nora's wearing of the dress during the film's hunting or molestation sequences, in which she is sexually accosted by the Reverend, would have begun to lay out

the intentions of the maternal world without even introducing the grandmother as a physical character.

The use of vivifying hues in connection with maternal figures and their female offspring in the film would have been another way of cinematically suggesting the maternal line's collective stance against their stark, patriarchal, puritanical world. However, as Pallister documents, the film exhibits no vibrant colour (1995 190-193). Recall that it is precisely because the world of Griffin Creek is so austere and oppressive to women, that the female attachment to colour is significant in the novel, as expressed, for instance, by Felicity's red-tinged house coat and her latently pagan worship of the pink flush of dawn to which she introduces her granddaughters; Maureen's and Nora's love of red, yellow and orange flowers; and Pat's and Pam's multicoloured, subversive mural. As critics such as Smart and Gould show, Pat's and Pam's iridescent work in the novel symbolizes the collective resistance of the maternal order against the dreary Law of the Father and, moreover, their ability to find rebellious pleasure in this bleak, male-dominated world. The flamboyant colours to which the novel's women attach themselves voice either their rejuvenating or nascent vitality and desire, just as Nora's flaming red hair had symbolized her sexual awakening.

When the women, as individuals, do wear drab clothes or appear colourless in the novel, they are not merely hiding hidden passions because they live in a puritanical community but also because they instinctively wish to appear less alluring to the rapacious hunter/fisher/lover. This may be the latent context behind Felicity's "corsage noir" (25), and is more suggestively the

context behind Maureen and her “voix... blanche” (68), behind Olivia and her “robe... bleu délavé” (76) and her “robe blanche” (97), and behind Irène and her “peau blême” (44). In other words, the lack of colour for individual women is part of a collective, female resistance against the possession of their sexuality by the patriarchal and often unpleasantly venatic sexual male. Thus the women’s use of both colour and anti-colour expresses forms of opposition to their sexual situation as women in Griffin Creek, an opposition led instinctively by the universal mother, Felicity.

In removing many of the maternal figures as well as all of their associations with colour, Simoneau reduces Griffin Creek to a lackluster community in which practically all the tinges of passion are associated with male characters, notably Stevens (who wears a ruddy tie to visit his mother and to attend the barn dance and who burns a fire in the church stove), Perceval (who wears a red bow tie in several scenes and a pink plaid shirt in the cliff scene) and Olivia’s father (who wears the red and black checkered jacket in the hunting sequence that, in the novel, the Reverend devilishly wears). In Stevens’ case, Simoneau is recognizing Stevens’ hidden desire, expressed in the novel by his repeated mention of ripe-coloured fruit and flowers (such as oranges, strawberries, raspberries, and pink flowers). However, while Simoneau gives Stevens his libidinal symbols, he virtually erases the female attachment to hues of ardent pleasure, subduing them to Maureen’s orange-brown print dress and Nora’s almost imperceptible red plaid hat ribbon in the sermon scene and tempering any suggestion that even these female donnings of mild or scant hints of colour may be subversive. Indeed, in the film, women do not express

through the colour-non-colour motifs of their attire or physique their underlying conflict between joyfully expressing and protectively hiding desire, a conflict with which they obviously struggle in the novel, nor do they manifest anything like Felicity's quest for womanly rejuvenation through colour which then reverberates down the female line. Quite simply, women, who are severed from the novel's reactionary maternal world, are almost colourless in the film and Stevens, is less ominously characterized as the earthy, phallic man (symbolized by his tan clothing and ruddy tie), who kindles their desires.

Conclusion

Unlike Hébert, Simoneau exhibits no concern with the concept of an emergent/reemergent maternal line, protective of its female progeny and cagey towards its male offspring. Not only does he drastically reduce the extent of the maternal web of relations in the film, but he eliminates all mother-daughter relationships. He focuses, instead, on the troubled mother-son relationship, which in his interpretation, is tainted with incestuous desires originating from the maternal figure. Simoneau thus transforms Hébert's critique of the underlying patriarchal order that, in one way or another, severs mother-son love (creating emotionally deformed and dangerous sons) into an ambiguous but troubling question about the inherently corrupting and deviant nature of maternal love. He inserts the maternal theme of the film into the traditional Western motif of the seductive, treacherous and insidiously evil woman. The motherhood role in the film is not a site of latent female resistance and unhappiness but of maternal

sexual behaviour that is confusing for the son — behaviour that is superficially gentle and loving, but subtly seductive and perhaps latently alienating.

In making these alternations, Simoneau fails to tackle Hébert's notion that so-called bad mothers are products of a patriarchal system not conducive to positive mothering. In his reading, mothers are not caught like birds in the patriarchal cage nor are they cold to or neglectful of their children because of illness and overwork or an unwanted motherhood role. Problems of mothering and marriage become banalized by Maureen's hedonistic affirmation to Nora and Olivia that she will not remarry because she wishes to do what she wants.

Not only does Simoneau delete all real mother-daughter relationships but he either removes their symbolic manifestations or masculinizes them. In the process, he washes out the subversive palette of the maternal line in favour of occasional suggestions of emerging male sensuality. In eliminating the resisting, reactive maternal line devoted to keeping its daughters safe from venatic, patriarchal males, Simoneau obliterates the notion of a latent but rising feminist consciousness. He also expunges the less ideologically challenging but no less significant concept of a broad female solidarity or solicitous sisterhood.

In excising the mother-daughter theme, Simoneau neglects a constellation of relationships of central interest to feminist writers of the past twenty years. As feminist literary critic Cheri Register affirms, the "mother-daughter relationship... offers us a gynecentric focus, shifting our vision from reflections of subordination in patriarchy to ambivalent images of community and conflict, rebellion and reconciliation" (1980 277). In short, Simoneau's

erasure of the mother-daughter relationships while privileging one mother-son relationship, which is complicated by the enigmatic expression and effect of the mother's incestuous desires, is another marker of Simoneau's resituation of the source text within the androcentric even misogynic Western tradition. He is reenacting what Mary Daly has called in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*: the patriarchal stealing of daughters from their mothers and mothers from their daughters (149).

¹ As Rich also points out, a matriarchy is to be distinguished from a matrilineal society, in which kinship and property is transmitted through a mother's line, or a matrilocal society, in which the husband moves into the house or village of the wife's mother, 41. According to the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, a matriarch is "a woman that rules often autocratically and usually to the exclusion of male precedence over her immediate family or a larger group made up of her more remote descendants [or is] a woman that originates, rules over, or dominates a social group or an activity or a political entity." Felicity acquires the former status only over time. As I noted in Chapter 1, at the beginning of her marriage, she was subjugated by her husband. It is thus incorrect to assert that Griffin Creek is female-dominated. The only characteristic of a matriarch that Felicity displays early in the narrative is her status as one of the biological originators of the community as it existed during the period depicted in the novel. Her more formidable status as ruler of her extended family arrives only late in life, after the physical deterioration of her husband.

² Psychoanalytical readings drawing from traditional tenets insist on a negative understanding of matriarchy. For instance, Hillenaar states, "Dans l'univers d'Anne Hébert, la castration de l'homme constitue le privilège de la femme, qui est sans doute propre au matriarcat", 12. The use of traditional psychoanalytical methodologies to analyze the novel without the benefit of feminist insights (such as those offered by Cixous, cited by Hébert) are remarkable for their failure to recognize the many clues about the patriarchal structure and patriarchal ideology of the society in which Hébert's female characters live and to which they are reacting. Feminist readings with a psychoanalytical bent, such as those by Gould, Harlin, and Smart, reveal more complex and, at times, more ambiguous appraisals of the psychological drama in which the male and female characters of Griffin Creek are plunged.

³ For Atwood's critique of "one-dimensional" feminist analysis and her criticism of the requirement to create female role models in fiction see her book *Second Words*, 192.

⁴ One still encounters this expectation in recent criticism. For instance, see Rajan, 63. Nevertheless, feminist critics have generally argued that political analysis and solution-finding are not the concern of literature unless they arise naturally from the story and characters. Moreover, in the 1970's feminists soundly critiqued didactic feminist poetry. See Register, 23-24.

⁵ See Allard 8-11; Lee 375; Lintvelt 43; Merivale 68-82; O'Reilly 109-126; and Bishop (1993): 201-206. Indeed, all other critics read the novel as having individual narrators; note in particular

the studies by Gould, Noble, Slott and Smart, which acknowledge the gendered significance of the narrators.

⁶ Compare French's position with Holly's advocacy of a humanist aesthetic based on authenticity outlined in her article "Consciousness and Authenticity: Towards a Feminist Aesthetic" and Register's call for authentically rendering female experience (1989): 19. See Register for references to other feminist critics with the same position, 12.

⁷ See Bishop (1984): 125; (1984/85): 197; and Slott (1986): 162; (1987): 304, and compare to Kells.

⁸ See Smart (1988): 256 and Gould, 924, for additional comments on Pat's and Pam's mural.

⁹ Recall that Nora dreams both of sexual union and becoming a mother as she recuperates the Eve myth, 118.

¹⁰ The Reverend is nostalgic and guilt-ridden; Stevens is bitter and angry.

¹¹ Also see Lamy who criticizes Hébert for confining herself to the depiction of the "mauvaise mère", 2; Slott who notes that "the mothers of the community reinforce the brutality of their husbands' attitudes toward their children" (1987): 297, and Smart who observes the "[b]rutalité des pères dont les mères... se font trop volontiers les porte-parole" (1988): 259.

¹² For instance, Bishop points out that Bea assumes the seconder's role in the abuse of Stevens, indicative of her secondary (less powerful) role in the household (1993): 205. Gould also notes that the mothers echo patriarchal law, 927. Smart claims that "[t]yrannisées par des maris infidèles ou brutaux, les mères-épouses perpétuent le cercle vicieux de la culture en préférant leurs filles et en rejetant leurs fils" (1988): 259. See also Gould and Slott.

¹³ The more critical critics include Francoli, Lamy, Louette, Pallister, but even Gould is divided. Boyce, Gould, Reid, and Smart are among those critics who give different readings of the precise psychological dramas of the sons.

¹⁴ For instance, says Francoli: Felicity "n'a jamais aimé que ses filles et maintenant ses petite-filles", 137. As another example see also Noble, 61. Most critics who comment on the relationship concur.

¹⁵ For instance, see Francoli 137; Gould 927-928; Lee 376-379; and Slott (1986): 161; (1987): 303.

¹⁶ Here I agree with more cursory assessments by Gould, 927, and Slott (1986): 165.

¹⁷ These heart/captive bird images that serve as metaphors for the subjugated female person (and her oppressed emotions) recall Griffin's concern with the death of the heart (representative of the female) in her classic *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*. She asks: "But where is this heart in the pornographer's vision of ourselves? The heart is here, but she is held captive", 82. Compare with Hébert's imagery of the hot, carnal heart caught like a bird in her poem "Naissance du pain" in *Mystère de la parole*.

¹⁸ As the Reverend observes, Stevens becomes "le dépositaire de toute la malfaisance secrète de Griffin Creek, amassée au coeur des hommes et des femmes depuis deux siècles", 27.

¹⁹ See also Noble, 16-17; 24-25.

²⁰ Indeed, the community, which has less to do with him (except during the murder investigation) finds his screaming intolerable, 153. His screaming also often relates to his distress at or his attempt to expose situations that are ultimately harmful for women. Since he would have witnessed many such wrongs in Griffin Creek during his childhood, he would have been a difficult child to live with.

²¹ In addition, Badinter's work reminds us of the inaccuracy of assuming that all mothers are universally motherly given the right social circumstances. Her work raises the question whether an unmaternal mother, such as Beatrice, is necessarily bad as some critics of the novel suggest.

²² See, for instance, Boyce, 296.

²³ Boyce, 300.

²⁴ Does her conciliatory behaviour suggest a veiled incestuous goal of getting her son closer to her?

²⁵ While the Reverend's and Nora's kinship is more obscure in the film, it is at least symbolically a father-daughter relationship since the Reverend is a Father/father figure.

²⁶ Note in her initial reaction to him in the novel, she calls him a boy, saying, "Entre mon garçon que je te voye un peu mieux", 66, and later she insists that she wanted to bathe him as if he were a dirty child, 68.

²⁷ Recall that her maternal behaviour towards Stevens in the novel is also marked by her acts of meal serving, 67, bathing, 68, hair cutting, 92, and sock knitting, 100.

²⁸ Her gaze during the removal of his boots seems more seductive than maternal. Perhaps the sensuality of her gaze reflects Stevens' reading of it. After all the dramatization of her sexual advances is both part of old Stevens' flashback and, moreover, is shot from young Stevens' point-of-view. However, even if the shot of Maureen removing Stevens' boot expresses the reminiscing old Stevens' interpretation and not how she actually looks, it shows that old Stevens wishes us to understand him as the *innocent* target of the incestuous Maureen. He is taken by surprise; he is not, as in the novel, remembering himself as presiding over her with "un pouvoir... [qui la fait] glisser à [s]es pieds", 68.

²⁹ See Boyce, Harlin and Louette for discussions on the *vagina dentata*, medusa and scissor imagery in the novel.

³⁰ Recall that all the images alluding to women as castrators in the novel (scissors, medusa, *vagina dentata*) are in male narratives (either the Reverend's or Stevens'). Moreover, unlike in the classical Medusa tale, in which the men are turned to stone by the Medusa, it is the women who are turned to stone by abusive patriarchal men in the novel.

³¹ Since the whole film is framed by Stevens' subjectivity, the neutral camera in this scene is ambiguous since it may reflect old Stevens' perception. Thus the suggestion of castrating mother-to-son desire may indeed not be fact. However, if it is his perception, it is still an ideological transformation of the male view of women in the novel for it is a biological mother who is being demonized not the difficulties of her motherhood role.

³² This return to the tradition is most evident in Simoneau's later work. In contrast, in *Les Yeux Rouges* (1982), Simoneau shows a sympathy for the plight of women in patriarchal society by presenting a feminist understanding of the problem of violence against women. However, that film's ambiguous ending mitigates some of his sympathetic stance. For more on the general pattern of female evil in literature and popular film culture see Dijkstra.

³³ Old Stevens in the film states, "Mon corps se souvient de tes mains froides de la première fois que tu m'as touché après m'avoir mis au monde", which parallels his statement in the novel: "Ce froid vient d'ailleurs, des profondeurs confuses de la naissance, du premier attouchement des mains glacées de ma mère sur mon corps d'enfant", 86.

³⁴ Recall that Beatrice comforts Perceval after his father hits him and assures her husband that Stevens will not harm him.

³⁵ Although the novel's mother figures display a gender bias in their choice of offspring to protect (their female descendants), the mother figures are not completely indifferent to their male progeny's plight. Recall that when Stevens and his father fight, Beatrice "les supplie... de ne pas se battre", 94. As another example, Felicity consoles Perceval at the barn dance, 47.

³⁶ She rebukes her son's predacious sexual behaviour, expressed by his hunter's attire and venatic conduct towards his niece: "Tu la suis à la trace, cette petite. Tu ferais mieux d'aller te faire la barbe et changer de linge", 41.

³⁷ Slott also notes this excision, but does not explicate it or qualify it in ideological terms (1989/90): 27.

³⁸ Recall that, as Stevens records in his letter, Olivia wears the white dress on August 15th, the day on which the ascension of the Virgin Mary to heaven is traditionally celebrated. That date is commonly played upon in popular culture as a day associated with virgins.

³⁹ Nora is very conscious of her sexual energy symbolized by her "fourrure rousse, [s]es aisselles rousses, [s]on odeur rousse", 111. Perceval imagines her with her "cheveux couleur de feu, échevelés dans le vent.... Une flamme vive", 162. See Roy for more on red and desire in Hébert's work, 151-154, 179-180.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOME SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN PATRIARCHY AND THE FEMALE WORLD WITHIN NATURE

“The waves broke on her body and her body broke in the waves.
She became foam. She was the foam that is water and air,
that is not there and is there, that is all.”
— Ursula K. LeGuin, *Searoad*

“Nous sommes nous-mêmes mer, sables, coraux, algues, plages, marées,
nageuses, enfants, vagues.”
—Hélène Cixous, *Le Rire de la Méduse*

“La mer... une proie à posséder.”
— Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*

In Anne Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan* the conflict between the patriarchal order and the emerging solidarity of the female line outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 takes place figuratively in the natural world, notably in and around the mythological space of the sea, an entity traditionally associated with the maternal principle. This chapter will review how Hébert presents that drama emblematically and will demonstrate how Yves Simoneau, in resituating the core drama as a male one within the paternal order in his film adaptation, reappropriates that traditional space as a masculine site, as he shifts the central

thematic focus from both mother-child and heterosexual relations to father-son relations. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the film's modifications and suppressions, the chapter will first examine the novel's symbolic treatment of these thematic concerns and then discuss the film's actual treatment of them, including transpositions and omissions.

The Women's Relationship with the Sea in the Novel

In the novel, the protective instinct of the mother figures towards their daughters and granddaughters reaches beyond the proffering of warnings and extends to the provision of an exclusive and initiatory space for the girls outside the patriarchal reaches of Griffin Creek. That sanctuary is the sea, to which the characters ascribe maternal and female sexual traits. Lapping within the bosom of the mammary capes¹, the salty waters shimmer and beckon within Griffin Creek's uterine cove. As a consolidated review of the critical literature reveals, this harbour constitutes: the site of refuge and rejuvenation for the principal maternal figure, as we saw in the previous chapter; the locus of female solidarity in a sacred, privileged female space; a retreat for the tacit exchange of the female secrets of sensuality, passed on from grandmother to granddaughter; and the basin of surging and ebbing sexual female desire.²

Specifically, not only does Felicity, in her younger years, find moments of respite from her obligations as wife and mother in the sea, as we saw earlier, but years later, once freed from her husband's cruel infidelities, she revitalizes within its gentle, briny embrace (37), while she introduces her granddaughters to the pleasures of the senses during her all-female, pre-dawn swims.³ This

solidarity is perpetuated down the female line. For instance, the teenage Olivia perplexed by her mother's injuries (apparently inflicted by Olivia's father) fantasizes about bringing her mother far out to sea, instinctively seeking to protect her: "Au fond des océans peut-être, là où il y a des palais de coquillages, des fleurs étranges, des poissons multicolores, des rues où l'on respire l'eau calmement comme l'air. Nous vivrons ensemble sans bruit et sans effort" (208). Reciprocally, once dead, Olivia's sea-dwelling mother will attempt to guard her daughter against Stevens (217), joining the chorus of warning foremothers — the "grandes femmes liquides" (221) — who inhabit the sea.

However, the sea is not only a haven for living and dead women, but it represents the mother of all creation (Boyce 294; Lord 140; Roy 120). As Kathryn Slott says, "The homophonic link between *mère* / 'mother' and *mer* / 'sea' [in Olivia's narrative] underscores the powerful female energy of the sea, a maternal space *par excellence*" (1987 305)⁴. Olivia perceives the sea "se gonfler, se distendre comme le ventre d'une femme sous la poussée de son fruit" (204). As Nora and Olivia are aware, the sea symbolizes the intrauterine waters out of which they were born (Boyce 294; Stephan 121). Proclaims Nora, "Ce n'est pas pour rien que je joue si souvent au bord de la mer. J'y suis née" (116). "[J]'ai été roulée et pétrie par une eau saumâtre" (118). Stevens observes that Olivia, when swimming, occupies "son eau natale" (97). Felicity, their grandmother, who is twice compared to a dolphin (a word associated with the Greek word for womb),⁵ incarnates that maternal element. She is, as Antoine Sirois observes, a Tethys figure (1985 181), who has spawned the sea nymphs Nora and Olivia. Reciprocally, for the teenage Olivia, the sea

incarnates her deceased mother, “Cette frange d’écume à ses pieds est-ce la robe de sa mère?” (211).⁶

Associated with one of the vital liquids of life, like milk and blood whose images recur in the novel (Stephan 120), the sea undulates as an immense life force. Its tides and swells mark the pulse of the maternal heart (96, 121), driving the hidden rhythms of corporal desire,⁷ both of the living (121, 211) and the dead, most notably, the desiring Olivia (221). As she visualizes her mother’s presence in the sea and scrutinizes “le mystère de l’eau... [e]lle perçoit dans tout son corps la rumeur de l’eau en marche vers elle” (211). As a phantom, she claims, “[C]’est la marée qui m’emporte, chaque jour sur la grève de Griffin Creek.... [C]’est le désir qui me tire et m’amène, chaque jour, sur la grève” (220-221).⁸ Her foremothers are not only sea mothers but tidal mothers — voices of desire. Her ghost rhapsodizes: “Mes grand-mères d’équinoxe, mes hautes mères, mes basses mères, mes embellies et mes bonaces, mes mers d’étiage et de sel” (218). As Patricia Smart indicates, the voices of these sea-dwelling foremothers represent:

toutes celles du passé qui ont été tuées par la culture, immobilisées dans la camisole de force du rôle de mère et d’épouse tel que défini par leurs ‘maîtres’. Longtemps une plainte sourde... cette voix des ‘mère[s] et grandmères’... devient revendication lorsqu’elle se mêle au désir d’Olivia, désir d’être ‘une femme à part entière’ (1988 263).⁹

Thus for the young virginal female characters, the sea represents not only a maternal asylum and a baptismal oasis for initiating them to their sensuality and their procreative powers, but a site, once entered in spirit, from which the voice

of female desire can (finally in safety) make its siren call and from which the voice of women's resistance can rise.

Given Olivia's attention to the pull of the tides, the moon, as tidal regulator, acquires connotations of the presence and oscillations of female desire to which men and women react differently. It constitutes a lunacy symbol for men beyond the generic emblem of insanity observed by Peter Noble (11) and Gregory Reid (124). Specifically, it represents the "madness" of the immature, would-be patriarch Stevens who, simultaneously afraid of and drawn to female libido, is unable to accept the natural fluctuations or the blossoming of female sexuality. He finally transmits his fears to Perceval, who expresses confusion and disconsolation about Nora's and Olivia's menses (152, 180). The orange harvest moon that glows in the period preceding Stevens' final crimes represents the ripe sexual fruit that he both wants to reap/rape but also misogynously dreads: "un fruit mûr, plein de... maléfices" (106). However, the moon also constitutes a benign fertility symbol for women, notably Nora, who has not yet fully integrated the sexist or masculine or at least nonfeminist connotations of objects in her society. She does not qualify its light negatively like Stevens, denoting it simply as "orange" or "laiteux" (135). Women, whose repeatedly alluded to menstrual cycles¹⁰ mirror the cycles of nature so prevalent in the novel (the turn of the tides, the phases of the moon, and the change of the seasons) not only relish but embody the creative rhythms of life.

In the end, the sea's resurgent tidal power, like the encroaching forest, eventually symbolizes the maternal world's persistent and reactive attempt to reclaim its oppressed and natural territory. Old and threatened, the Reverend

observes: “Du côté de la mer ... [l']avancement victorieux, en larges lampées de sel de d'écume sur le sable” (33). Salt and foam evoke the novel's central female characters and, in particular, the spirit of female desire that has refused death at the hands of patriarchy. In an allusion to Hans Christian Andersen's tale “The Little Mermaid”, Olivia's desiring spirit becomes “écume sur la mer” (197; see also 213), a play on the frothy birth of Venus. Salt recalls Felicity and her granddaughters Olivia and Nora,¹¹ who also, at one time or another, all cry (Felicity or Nora) or incarnate (salty) tears (the phantom Olivia). Historically, salt has been associated with purification, rebirth, blood, brine and the womb (B. Walker 520-521). As a flavour enhancer and as a preservative, it symbolizes both the spice of life (sex and desire) and the conservation of the essence of life (spirit and love). Recall that salt is also a medieval symbol for the soul, which makes the association of Olivia's ghost with salt particularly *à propos*. Salt signifies the pure energy — desire — that in her death Olivia becomes.¹²

In addition, the women — both real and ghostly — are associated with the mist, the spray and the scent of the sea that eventually prevail on Griffin Creek's shores after the murders of the girls, reminding the guilty male parties of their part in various crimes against women. For instance, the living Felicity has “[un] visage salé comme l'embrun” (25). The dead foremothers become “changée[s] en souffle et buée” (217), and the phantom Olivia resembles “un souffle d'eau” (199), “un pur esprit d'eau, une brume légère, une buée sur la mer” (194). As another example, Maureen breathes in the sea air deeply, “s'imprégnant d'iode et de varech, comme si c'était sa seule raison d'être” (65). Just prior to her death, Olivia exudes an “odeur d'iode” (244), foreshadowing her

life in the sea. Once a phantom, “[sa] senteur forte de fruit de mer pénètre partout” (199), and Stevens writhes with his murderous memories as he imagines “[l’]odeur saline à mourir lâchée en rafales” (240).

Flying with the sea breezes, Olivia’s ghost haunts the dying Griffin Creek, especially the guilt-ridden Reverend¹³, who contemplates suicide and feels the approach of death.¹⁴ Like the resistant women who, in Cixousian fashion, enter the gaps of patriarchal language, Olivia’s spirit wisps its way in through the cracks — “les interstices des fenêtres vermoulues” (199) — of the Reverend’s rotting house, symbol of the dying patriarchal order, to encourage the resistance of Pam and Pat. “Ces filles... hantées” (17), “[qui] dorment à poings fermés” (29), tell the Reverend that his house is being eaten by termites and draw the disturbing, subversive sea mural.

As Marie-Dominique Boyce explicates:

La mère/mer s’infiltré dans toutes les maisons, les existences des hommes de Griffin Creek; elle les pourrit et les anéantit. Elle remporte la victoire sur la domination patriarcale des habitants de Griffin Creek, sous la coupe du pasteur, en le laissant sans progéniture et abandonné par sa congrégation qui s’est dispersée dans les villages papistes environnants (299-300).¹⁵

The sea thus constitutes not only a maternal sanctuary but the powerful site of mounting female insurgency against the Griffin Creek patriarchy, an uprising that, eventually, will prevail. As Boyce concludes: “la mère..., offensée, revêt les pouvoirs divins et profère le châtement de l’humanité. [Ceci]... exprime le vœu de l’écrivain de voir un rapide changement dans les rapports entre hommes et femmes avant que ceux-ci ne s’exterminent” (300).

Consequently, the sea's most destructive, stormy powers can be viewed as creative because, for there to be renewal, often there must be death, a concept some critics have missed. As Hébert suggests by her repeated allusions to the Old Testament flood in the novel (as well as to the French Revolution),¹⁶ the dying out of a corrupt order must occur before a better world can be born. The avenging maternal sea therefore constitutes part of a future reconstruction of Griffin Creek society. As she stated in a 1982 interview, "la violence dans [son]... oeuvre... est certainement une volonté de ne pas accepter le monde tel qu'il est. [De v]ouloir le refaire" (Vanasse 445). In *Les Fous de Bassan*, Hébert is affirming that women are attempting to make something positive out of and by way of the powers of both a symbolic and a real, natural, liquid body perceived enviously, fearfully or domineeringly by men.¹⁷

The Men's Relationship with the Sea in the Novel

And what about the male characters' perception of the sea? Although Hébert suggests that the ocean plays a central role in the lives of the men of Griffin Creek, it does so in a paradoxically alienating, utilitarian, and violent fashion. Both bound to and estranged from this aquatic life force, the men forge a relationship with the sea that parallels their torn relationships with their own mothers and their domineering relationship with women as a group. As noted earlier, the principal male characters are excluded from this maternal element by the emergent womanist, Felicity, who spends her early morning swims alone or with her granddaughters, often greedily spied upon by her male offspring. The men thus develop a pathological fixation on the sea, symbolizing their

troubled and excessive craving for their own mothers or a maternal substitute, while they manifest a hunger for the sea mother's (Felicity's) "edible" female progeny — "ses fruits de mer".¹⁸ As an expression of their mixed feelings of exclusion from, qualms about and obsession with the maternal element and her resources, the Reverend and Stevens frequently walk beside the sea, staying on the perpetual threshold of desire.¹⁹ During these seaside walks, both men crush, in frustration, the swollen nodes of seaweed that serve as fertility symbols cast up upon the beach (39, 70).

Frustrated with his relationship with his distant mother, the Reverend seeks, as a boy, to master the sea using the Word of the Father: "J'apprends les psaumes de David par coeur. Je les récite, debout sur un rocher dominant la mer. Je m'adresse à l'eau, désirant parler plus fort qu'elle, la convaincre de ma force et de ma puissance" (25). Similarly, Stevens, as a young man, spends much of the three-day storm dementedly screaming from a phallic rock, taking sexual pleasure in the fuming sea in a desperate and futile assertion of male sexual dominance over the raging maternal element (102).²⁰ Unlike Nora and Olivia, who with their grandmother (whose name means bliss) attain a quiet contentment as they gaze from a boulder over the tranquil waters of an auroral sea (113), Stevens achieves a berserk fury as he roars from his rock over the turbulent waters of a boiling sea: "[J]e suis... jouissant de la fureur de la mer" (102).

Stevens' drenching in the storm further emphasizes his struggle with the maternal element. He is doused by the rain and the sea spray as he howls from his phallic perch (102), tempted by siren calls (223).²¹ Both the spray and the

rain may be female symbols, which by their soaking almost overwhelm him. Alternatively, the misty sea spray may symbolize the sexual female while the thundering rain may symbolize male virility: semen. This latter connotation for torrential rain²² is suggested elsewhere in the novel as well as in mythological tradition (B. Walker 348-349). For example, in Nora's description of this same storm, the virginal girl stares out the hymenal window safe from the pelting seminal rain as she watches Stevens' silhouette rising and falling phallicly against the fiery sky (132). Stevens' sousing by the rain and the sea spray in the three-day storm thus suggests that he is overwhelmed by the natural union of these male and female elements which is taking place on his body, a union which he both desires and struggles against as he seeks "l'expression de [s]a vie, de [s]a violence la plus secrète" (102).²³

Stevens' equivocal battle with the maternal element is again suggested in the rape and murder scene in which equinoctial tides surge in his imagination. Recall that at the equinox, day (a traditional male symbol) and night (a traditional female symbol) are of equal length. The equinoctial tides represent, therefore, the titanic struggle between equally competing forces: the times in the year when the male and the female are at their peaks, demanding their place as equals, surging forth in great releases of power. For Stevens, these great tides serve either as a symbol (247) or a symbolic cause of his destructive sexist impulses (245). They represent the tensions between men and women that have plagued him since childhood and which culminate when Nora, who has been asserting herself as a woman with equal rights to proclaim her desire for a partner, claims that the contemptuous Stevens is not a man. Stevens

responds with the rape and murders. Significantly, it is only for the beleaguered, would-be patriarch Stevens that the tides acquire connotations of a male-female struggle or more precisely the connotations of *the results* of such a struggle (destructive tides). For female characters, notably Olivia and her foremothers, the tides bespeak the natural sexual and reproductive urges of women (218, 220-221).

While the tides carry disparate connotations depending on the gender of the perceiving character, storms are associated with both female and male characters by both male and female characters. Specifically, both angry female and angry male characters are characterized by storm images by female and male narrators. For instance, thunder or wind storms are used to describe Stevens' father, John (87 206) and the adolescents' grandmother, Felicity (117). This dual-gendered association with storms means that the thrashing sea that rises wildly in Stevens' mind in the rape scene carries ambiguous connotations beyond the representation of his personal ire. Is this internal writhing sea a symbol of the fury of the *Mère/Mer* with Stevens — the fuming maternal abyss that engulfs Stevens and his female prey? Or, is this seething sea a symbol of the male's (i.e., Stevens') wrath as he lashes out in a typhonic tantrum of towering waves and flying spray at the female irritant (Nora and Olivia)? Or does the tempestuous sea carry connotations of both the irate protective female and the incensed, domineering male? Whatever else, the imagined frenzy of the sea represents the anger in which Stevens is submerged as he discharges his own patriarchal rage on his female victims.

As these scenes of the would-be reverend Nicolas preaching over the sea and of the would-be patriarch Stevens roaring at the sea suggest, the alienated sons seek to exert their dominance vis-à-vis this symbol of the maternal body that they crave and desperately want to possess. Fittingly, as a reflection of the patriarchal desires of the novel's male characters, the typical occupation of the men in the novel is *on* the sea, either in boats as harbour pilots (112) or as coast guards (76) regulating the affairs of men, or as fishers harvesting the ocean's resources.²⁴ Significantly, although men may be master swimmers, as in Patrick's case, they are never actually shown *in* it, swimming, whereas the girls are. The men venture no farther than to wade along the shore in the sea's icy grip (71). With these spatial designations, Hébert carefully draws a gender distinction between the subaqueous world of the women and the surface or, more frequently, the land-based working world of the men (Slott 1986 168). Recall, that even the fisher Reverend seems to engage in his bloody salmon poaching from the shore (40, 159).

Heterosexual Relations and the Piscatory Rapport in the Novel

Thus while Hébert claims the sea as a privileged female space and reserves its saline depths for women's almost exclusive use (in keeping with mythological and literary tradition),²⁵ she also acknowledges that even this site is a threatened place for women because it is fished by domineering men. Women are sea creatures, most at home in the water, and the hungry, predatory men seek to bring them out of their maternal element for lethal

consumption. For instance, Nora, the granddaughter of the ultimate medusan sea-woman (35) and the quintessential delphine swimmer, claims that in another life she could long stay submerged, intimating both a pre-natal and a piscine association between herself and the primal creatures of the deep:

Dans une autre vie j'ai pu séjourner longtemps dans la mer, sans avoir besoin de respirer, les poumons pas encore dépliés, semblable à quelqu'un qui bloque sa respiration terrienne et se laisse aller aux délices de l'existence sous-marine.... La divine aisance sous l'eau, mon corps, plein de mémoire, l'éprouve encore en rêve (116).

Olivia, too, is like a fish at home in the sea, her native waters (97). She swims agilely with the rhythms of the waves, achieving a paradoxically autonomous and fetal state of bliss (96).

These nubile nymphs are espied by the fisher-men, who, like the American, gaze on them with the gannet's eye (42) or who, like Stevens, captivate them in the "eye" of the fisher's net (216) as the men fantasize about rape (evoked by the gannet's knife-like plunge for piscatory prey when the Reverend spies on the girls sea-splashing with their grandmother [39]). When Stevens observes Olivia in her "eau natale", it is within the context of fishing: his brother, Perceval, is catching minnows and gannets fly above the sea. When Stevens finally nabs Olivia after she exits the sea, she struggles "comme un poisson fraîchement pêché" (97). Indeed, repeatedly in this patriarchal paradigm of sexual pursuit, the men are associated with the piscivorous gannets²⁶ and the young women with caught fish;²⁷ the latter is an apt designation since, in pre-Christian mythologies, the "fish was a female genital symbol" (B. Walker 347). The fishermen's trade thus serves as a symbolic

subtext for the destructive, male-dominated heterosexual relations in the novel, just as hunting does.

In fact, thrice the novel's two young female victims of male violence are described as piscatory prey: either as caught fish or as fish or as an eel out of water (97, 117, 202). In the end, Nora's devastated body is partially devoured by predatory fish, a fate which Stevens' act of murder precipitates and an act which he replicates metaphorically on Olivia's body during the rape. Stevens calls himself a "chien de mer" (a dogfish) during the rape (246), casting himself as the shark/hunter vis-à-vis Olivia as he consumes her body which he calls "cette conque marine et poissonneuse" (248). Thus, although male characters are also occasionally designated as fish, in contrast to the women the men are predatory fish; they are never caught as fish or fished out of their element. Stevens feels like a fish *in water* — in his element — when he lives the Rimbaudian, carefree life of the vagabond, free of the social restrictions of his hometown (62). The elder Reverend makes "des grimaces avec [s]a bouche, pareil à un poisson rouge qui lâche des bulles" (34) when he remembers his mother, in a display of infantile oral yearning for her.

In the end, Stevens uses fisher's tools (a dory and salmon nets and weights) to dispose of his slaughtered female prey. Nora's pink dress, which she was wearing when she was murdered, evokes the flesh of the salmon and the coveted virgin. Stevens' violent piscatory act against the young women is underscored by Pat and Pam, who in their surreal sea mural portray Irene, Nora and Olivia, Griffin Creek's three main female victims, caught in the fish nets (of patriarchy). Later, on land, the violated wombs of the dead girls are evoked in

Stevens' memories as barren shells (241, 243), for, in slaughtering them, he has emptied them of their reproductive powers. Relatedly, the phantom Olivia refers to her past self as a nameless "coquille vide" (212), in symbolic recognition of her loss of procreative abilities as well as her loss of identity as a daughter caught in the system of paternalistic dominance.

However, once freed from the brutal and oppressive patriarchal world, the young women recover their piscatory powers in spirit, safe within the aquamarine maternal element. Perceval imagines the souls of his nubile cousins as silvery fish, leaping in the blue air, bursting like argentine bubbles (195).²⁸ Olivia's blue bracelet, symbol of both her desiring spirit ever returning from the sea and her connection with the maternal world (connoted in the novel by her blue shirt when a child on the beach, blue dress in the ironing scene, and blue dress at death), reminds Perceval of "un poisson vivant et brillant" (178), as it physically returns to haunt his family (179) and then the elder Stevens in memory (240). Additionally, other physical characteristics that had marked the young women's bond with the maternal aspects of the water during the girls' lifetime through the colour blue return to reassert the eternal and powerful presence of their spirits after their murders, again through the same hue. For instance, both Nora and Olivia had blue eyes (155), with Nora's described as "yeux... couleur de mer" (72).²⁹ After the cousins go missing, Perceval imagines their eyes everywhere: "Dans tous les jardins. [Dans tous] les arbres... parmi les fruits bleus... Sur la grève mêlés aux agates dans le sable. Des gouttes d'eau devenues solides, des pierres d'eau" (155). Blue thus symbolizes their connection with the protective, sea-dwelling foremothers and, in the case of

Olivia, foreshadows her eventual return to them in “la coloration bleue... des océans majeurs” (217). The phantom Olivia also associates herself with other oceanic life, such as the sea anemone (218) (which in turn relates to the flower and the colour red as well as other warm colours, such as orange, often associated, as we saw in the previous chapter, with emerging female sexual desire in the novel). Finally, as a ghostly mermaid, the phantom Olivia incarnates a female, piscine affinity with the maternal sea, while her assumption of the metaphorical fish tail protects her body from further violent male invasion.

As form of poetic justice, Stevens who had gutted fish in his seashore travels in a symbolic preparation of his “career” as a rapist (the women keeping safely away, smelling the scent of danger on his hands), is, in his old age, gutted by his own memories. The gannets that had once set their wild predatory eyes and rape-like dives on the maternal and piscatory nymphal elements now turn their cries on him, as he is consumed by guilt (230, 247). Eaten up by the perfidy of his predacious deeds, this patriarchal predator is reduced to contemplating suicide to escape the haunting/hunting of his own venatic/piscatory crimes. He is like Actaeon,³⁰ transformed into prey for spying on the nude Artemis (Diana) and pursued to death by his own hounds (of conscience). Thus while the *reductio ad absurdum* of romance clichés leads to the real killing of the beloved, guilt over that act results in the emotionally carnivorous self-destruction of the once dominant hunter/fisher-lover. In Hébert's critical vision, the venatic/piscatory paradigm of sexual pursuit idealized in love poetry and by popular culture destroys all who are caught it. It engenders the death dance of romance. This community is destroyed by the

men's excessive preying: the obsessive, lethal consumption of the maternal and female body.

As this discussion suggests, it must be acknowledged that the sea as a site for the union with, protection both of and by, and revenge by the maternal principle is not without problems from a feminist point-of-view. While the sea can be seen as a positive female symbolic site where mother and daughter reunite and in which maternal and female sexual desires are accorded protective space, it is also, paradoxically, a safe place attained permanently only after a woman has been victimized by a patriarchal man, as both Olivia and her mother were. As Scott Lee points out, "Grâce à la violence de Stevens, Olivia finit bien par réaliser sa quête, par rejoindre sa mère" (391). Moreover, it is a space ever threatened by the domineering, piscatory male. As such, when considered from a feminist perspective, the sea is a problematic symbol of female safety. It is a "wild zone"³¹ — a separate, rejuvenating world for women. However, it is also a ghettoized subaqueous world, to which women are relegated by aggressive, patriarchal, venatic men, and it is a threatened zone, fished to depletion,³² setting off a new cycle of hunting and rapine/raping elsewhere. The men, like famished migratory birds (24, 169), move metaphorically from cap Sec (where they have consumed women to the bone) to cap Sauvagine (where as hungry "gannets" they fish more female prey). In revenge, real maternal figures as well as their sea-dwelling spirits will attempt to protect their own; their oceanic powers will wreak havoc on the patriarchal world above, while their scents, breaths and movements of desire will remind the surface male world of their refusal to die. In this paradigm, the mythic cycle of

life and death, marked by the struggle between “man” and nature³³ and between male surface and female subaqueous worlds, comes to symbolize the social struggle between the dominant patriarchy and a rising tide of maternally-led female rebellion.

The Symbolic Treatment of the Sea in the Film

This section will examine how Simoneau reconstructs this symbolic struggle between the patriarchal and seditious female orders, particularly through his masculinization of familial relationships of the characters around the sea and his disengagement with oceanic symbolism related to the spirit of women. It will also briefly look at how he presents the male fisher of the nubile woman as a comment on domineering heterosexual relations.

Firstly, drawing from the novel's peripheral mention of men's marine occupations, Simoneau recenters much of the narrative around male rather than around female activity on and along the sea. In bringing the male vocation of fisher to the fore as a fraternal occupation (and only latently as a trope for sexual relations), the sea becomes the center of men's work and adventure, a generator of male industry and prosperity as evidenced by the various scenes of men working around their boats near or on the shore. These orderly and busy scenes suggest a well-functioning society, fraught only with tensions between father and son. In this community of fishermen, the mood of the sea commands the men's attention, shapes their decisions, and incites their reactions. Throughout the film, the opportunities that the sea provides for fishing — the livelihood of the men— molds their conversations and dictates relationships

between father and son and between brothers. For example, after the sermon, Sydney informs Patrick, as the two stand by the church that faces the sea, that he is off to prepare for fishing. In a later scene, Patrick and his father contemplate the peaceful sea before the storm (a storm that will symbolize filial rage against the father). These father-son and fraternal sea-side scenes contextualize and flesh-out the masculine relationships Stevens forges in and by the sea. He will first meet Perceval near the seashore and will tell “les boys” about his travels by the sea. Most significantly, all confrontations between Stevens and his father will occur on or around the seashore, unlike in the novel in which the pivotal confrontation occurs in the domestic space of the paternal home (although an earlier childhood one does take place by the sea).

In fact, from the film's outset, the sea is presented as the great divide across which Stevens must travel to attempt reunion with his father: a journey *across* the calm sea heralds the voyage of attempted reconciliation with the paternal figure by the son as well as attempted reconciliation with the self by the filial protagonist. As we have seen, in the novel jaunts *to* and swims *in* the calm sea had constituted either voyages of self-renewal for the maternal figure, Felicity, or voyages of sensual discovery for daughter figures through the awakening of their suggestively genital senses in the frigid waters of the bay.³⁴ In a further erasure of maternal themes, this opening sequence shows that Griffin Creek is no longer cradled in the bosom of two mammary capes, as some critics read it in the novel, but is now perched on a rock-faced island, the church steeple emphasizing the community's phallic presence in the sea.³⁵

(The Christian symbolism of this opening sequence is discussed further in Chapter 5.)

This sea will become the great robber of father from son. When Stevens comes to visit his parents, his father is not present because he is still “sur la mer”. His father’s sea-induced absence transformatively echoes Felicity’s sea escapades in the novel. However, it is now the father’s not the universal mother’s time at sea that is psychologically significant for the male protagonist, leaving him prey, as discussed in the previous chapter, to the mother’s incestuous desire. In the subsequent seaside scene, Stevens (unsuccessfully) attempts reconciliation with his father who is heaving up his dory on the seashore. As these scenes suggest, Simoneau not only constructs the sea as a place that divides father from son, but the seashore as a hopelessly alienating space for father-son relationships. Indeed, Stevens’ first tense encounters with both his father and the Reverend (representative of the Father) take place just above the seashore (post-sermon sequence), the image of the sea buttressing Stevens in the background as the natural man.

In the end, Stevens will take his conflict with his oppressive father right into a tempestuous sea, any struggles he had with maternal or female figures in the film subsumed under this greater masculine tug-a-war. Since the film never suggests that the sea or rain carry female connotations, as they did in the novel, Stevens’ screaming at the sea and his soaking by the rain cannot be understood as even partly reflecting his conflict with the archetypal mother or her aquatic derivatives. In addition, the novel’s female symbol of sea spray is not even present in this scene nor is Stevens silhouetted rising phallicly against

a fiery sky above the churning waters (as he was in the novel) as an alternative allusion to the male-female struggle. Therefore, unlike in the novel, this storm scene reflects no battle between maternal and filial elements, which the persistent, domineering son vainly but violently seeks to win.

Rather, the film's version of this storm firmly reconstitutes the sea as a site where the son relates hostilely to the paternal rather than the maternal principle. The rough sea in the film carries connotations of both an angry, divisive father and filial rage. Just prior to the onslaught of the great storm in the film, the sea had left Stevens' dory dashed on the shore, the board bearing Perceval's name smashed off; the violent sea thus personifies an earlier attempt by Stevens' father to break up Stevens' relationship with his brother. During the storm, Stevens fails to coerce Perceval, controlled by his father, to join him in the tempest. In reaction, Stevens, who in the novel had roared at the sea from a phallic rock in the three-day storm (in a desperate and futile assertion of male sexual dominance over the maternal body), wades wildly through the sea's turbulent waters in the film's storm scene (in a mad rage at his father) in a complete masculinization of the novel's symbolic parental-filial tensions.

Similarly, in an earlier scene in the film, the Reverend defiantly addresses God, the Christian male deity, on the seashore facing the sea in an insubmissive crucifixion pose that suggests he was sacrificed by God's sexually repressive law, made the prey of lust symbolized by the swirling (presumably) hungry gannets. This image, which may be partially inspired by his metaphorical comment in the novel of no longer wanting to be "debout à la frontière de la terre de l'eau comme une croix du chemin" (41) nevertheless

contrasts sharply with his attempt to dominate the maternal sea using the Word of God, as he did as a boy in the novel.

The film's final image further underscores the replacement of the mother-son struggle with the father-son struggle as the sea continues to be masculinized. The shot of the young Stevens seated on the seaside rock at the end of the film facing the rising sun with his brother places Stevens in the position of the overseer if not the mild conqueror of the paternal space of the sea. While the image of Stevens on the rock echoes the images of Stevens and the Reverend asserting their masculinity from the dominant position of the rock in the novel (25, 60, 62, 102), in those cases they were exerting it over a maternal or female symbol, generally the sea, not over a paternal one.³⁶

Moreover, this closing pre-dawn scene of Stevens and his brother on the rock also eclipses a similar but female-friendly one in the novel of Felicity and her granddaughters, Olivia and Nora. In Nora's narrative, the (pagan) female trio sits on a seaside boulder awaiting the sunrise (113). Indeed, the image of the women on a shoreline rock is the only such image involving anyone on a rock at daybreak in the novel. For the women, their collective act of sitting on the rock awaiting the auroral light in the novel expressed their right to security and peace and their tacit dream for a new and natural world, even the embryonic and instinctive birth of feminism. In having Stevens assume this same pose with his brother in the film, Simoneau has Stevens claim for himself the calming presence of the sea and the rising hope for a happier world outside Christian institutional space. Thus, by the end of the film, the sea has become a site for according the male (Stevens) peace of mind for his crimes, just as the

bath had been a watery place for Stevens to take refuge from his swirling emotions before going to the barn dance earlier in the film. Simoneau therefore accomplishes a complete gender reversal of the symbolism of the sea as a site for the emerging womanist's and her female progenies' rejuvenating refuge from the patriarchal world.

With this image Simoneau also seals Stevens' bonds with his brother, bonds he had sought to forge earlier on the sea against his father's will. In a previous scene, completely created for the film, the brothers had pushed the fraternal dory against a resistant paternal wind and sea, in a mythic and invigorating quest for male adventure. (Along with the image of Stevens wading in the raging sea, this is the only other image in the film involving characters *in* the water, in another masculinization of the rapport that characters have with the sea.) Indeed, the related shot of Stevens rowing Perceval on the baby blue ocean, the gannets swirling freely overhead against an azure sky, suggests a brotherhood mystically forged on the sea. This fraternal scene reappropriates for the masculine tale the joyous image in the novel of the safe sisterly bonding of Nora and Olivia with the maternal principle as they cavorted in the morning light and the matinal waters with their grandmother. Moreover, it appropriates for Stevens a mythical bond with the spirit of the sea. Relishing the memory of bringing his brother out to sea, old Stevens, reminisces in rich tones, "S'envoler avec lui [Perceval] sur la mer." It is now Stevens' spirit which (in memory) flies, united with the liberating powers of the sea, not, as in the novel, Olivia's spirit which (after death) wings above the sea.

In fact, in the film women are never shown to be concerned with or enjoying a special relationship with the sea, a relationship that was so evident and central to the pre-feminist consciousness of the women in the novel. Rarely are they ever shown alone or with other women on or near the shore and, when they are, it is in situations that are either anchored by the male gaze or directly related to their death. In the film, the women's relationship with the ocean is never shown independent of a male presence or with the women's unawareness of the male voyeur (as it is in Nora's narrative in the novel), or as an escape from patriarchal men (as it is in the Reverend's narrative in the novel).

For instance, early in the film Simoneau momentarily shows Nora and Olivia shivering and drying themselves on the rocky shore after, presumably, having finished swimming. Significantly, we never see them actually swimming, an activity which in the novel clearly establishes the oneness these young women feel with the maternal sea. We do not even see them and the sea in this shot. Nor are they shown by (let alone in) the sea with any mother figure, even though maternal substitutes for their grandmother and mothers could have been included once their actual mothers and grandmother were omitted as characters.

Not surprisingly, with the sea bared of the activities of the rising maternal figure who initiates and protects her female progeny, the film's seaside scene depicting Nora and Olivia is brief. It is quickly followed by a longer shot of Perceval spying on the girls. The narrative then moves inexorably on into Stevens' encounter with his brother and subsequent shots of the Reverend

spying on Stevens' arrival and Stevens spying on his father. This swift change in voyeur themes to all-male concerns and visual targets minimizes if not nullifies any male sense of exclusion from the specifically maternal or solidaristic world of women insinuated in the novel. All that is retained in this scene is the repressed desire of the Id figure, evoked by the sound of the hungry gannets as Perceval gazes down upon the girls.

No other symbolic associations are made between women and the sea. Although both Olivia (in the ironing scene) and Nora (in the barn dance and molestation scenes) wear blue dresses, that colour carries no connotations of the maternal sea in the film, since the sea is designated as a male site and a paternal force. Indeed, blue carries broader meanings of parental authority and adulthood. At times both Stevens' mother and father wear blue or partially blue clothing as does Patrick, Olivia's watchful, sexually possessive brother, and the mildly maternal Maureen. Maureen's kitchen is also blue although it is green in the novel (175), a colour that had linked her to the central maternal figure Felicity during her second spring (122). In the film's post-ironing scene, Patrick describes riding in the superintendent's big, blue Buick, an idealized symbol of adulthood, status and male authority.

That Olivia aspires to adulthood is suggested, in part, by her gradually assuming the colour blue. For instance, she wears blue trimmed or blue striped clothing in various scenes (such as the scene in which she serves her brothers and father). In the streamer-making scene, she takes a seat on Maureen's turquoise chair to discuss the options of adulthood (marriage and career) after she and Maureen have torn into strips a white sheet and one of her white,

girlhood dresses, symbols of Olivia's virginity and innocence. After her death, her white-wrapped corpse will lie in the murky blue light of predawn. Blue has marked her ascension to adulthood, but not to a maternal or exclusively female, spiritual adult world, as in the novel. Similarly, blue suggests Stevens' quest for adulthood, as he both heads toward the paternal symbols of Griffin Creek in the murky blue of the film's opening sequence and faces the paternal sea under a largely pale blue sky of a breaking day at film's end.

In addition, while transforming the symbolic significance of blue, Simoneau does not explore the fluid, colourful and living underwater maternal world of the sea, with its shells, fish, and floating weeds, nor does he film the swells that had marked the surge and pulse of the maternal heart in the novel. The only visual, physical link between a female character and salt water in the film is the single tear on Nora's cheek that flows after Stevens rejects her in the post-barn dance scene. This tear denotes only Nora's momentary heartbreak; it is not the symbol of a haunting, desiring soul ready to reunite with the oceanic maternal principle, as was the teardrop of Olivia's soul in the novel (212, 224).³⁷ Nora's tear thus can not be understood as one of the drops from the vast and crying maternal heart of the sea.

Moreover, since women do not symbolically show their kinship with the sea by vigorously breathing in its air or by revealingly emitting its iodine scent (which could have been referred to in dialogue), the film leaves even these subtle associations between women and the sea undeveloped. Furthermore, the women and, more specifically, their desire are not associated with the tides. Indeed, changes in water height that would indicate tidal movement are not

obvious in the film's seaside scenes although, as we saw, such changes are noted several times in the novel, especially in relation to women. With the tides unevident and with women's menstrual cycles unmentioned in the film, the moon's significance as a tidal regulator related to the female sexual cycle that in turns "maddens" the desirous but fearful male is lost in the film. The moon is restricted to a simple lunacy symbol of the rejected son/alienated suitor. It is also only white, never the yellow of the harvestable, sexual female fruit that Stevens apprehensively and domineeringly wants to gobble in the novel.

The women's dissociation from the sea is also emphasized in the film by Simoneau according Irène, who has no clear relationship with the sea in the novel, an ambiguous and ultimately negative one in the film' suicide scene. She looks seaward at the opening of the moment-of-truth scene between herself and her husband and later glances seaward just before her suicide.³⁸ The direction of her gaze suggests that the sea may represent a place of freedom or peace for her. However, ultimately, it is a freedom Irène never really attains since she jumps to her death off a cliff onto rocks not into the sea. Her death is brutally hard. She remains on land, as do Olivia and Stevens during Olivia's rape and murder. Irène's seaside death only reinforces the negative symbolism of the seaside setting of Olivia's rape. The seashore thus represents, in the film, only a place for the destruction of women, not also a place for women's creation and women's renewal, as it does in Nora's and Olivia's narratives in the novel. Besides their vivifying near-shore swims with their grandmother, one recalls in particular the girls' creative activity in making sand bread (115) and sand pies (205) by the sea as children under their mothers' watchful presence. Indeed,

Nora's description of making sand bread from clay and water in the novel carries connotations of her vision of male and female equality. Her description immediately precedes her proclamation of being a new Eve who is equal to Adam, made from clay as he was, not from one of his ribs. Salt water (the female uterine symbol) and sand (the male seminal symbol) form the clay from which man and woman are created as equals. By extension, the seashore becomes, for Nora, associated with the forging of equality between men and women (115-116).

With none of the latent female desire for sexual equality or creativity contained in the film's seaside scenes, the location of the rape in the film merely reemphasizes the seashore — "la grève" — as an ultimately male-dominated site.³⁹ As in Hébert's work, Olivia's rape takes place beside the sea near the land where in the novel patriarchal power is wielded.⁴⁰ Simoneau does suggest this land/sexism rapport by setting Bob Allen's question to Stevens about undressing women with knives on the seashore, a reference that does make the pernicious association between Stevens and rape that we saw in the novel. However, since the maternal world of the sea to which the victimized women can escape and in which their souls can thrive has not been alluded to, Simoneau chooses not to counterbalance this ominous connotation. Conversely, there is no maternal aquatic home for women to which the sexist male will attempt to return them (to put them back in their place) and which the spirit of the women will then transform by according value on their own terms.⁴¹ The seashore, in the film, is thus no longer a tense border between the patriarchal world of the community on land and the maternal world of the sea.

Indeed, in the logic of the film narrative, this safe maternal space is less required because the male fisher is less threatening, a reflection of the general attenuation of the Griffin Creek patriarchy as seen in its familial context in Chapter 1. The Reverend is never shown to be the bloody, out-of-season fisher that he is in the novel, sanguinarily reeling in his prey for two hours (40, 159); he is merely an angler for sex with Nora in the boathouse scene, in an only partial illustration of Hébert's concern with venatically-tainted heterosexual relations of this community. Stevens is a one-time fish filleter in the film but does not carry a knife (unlike in the novel) and when he gesticulates his filleting story in "les boys" scene, does so with a cigarette, tempering his dangerous pose as a potential rapist. Furthermore, since it is Bob Allen who makes the actual link between fish filleting and rape in the film, Stevens is presented as something of an innocent being initiated to this idea, unlike in the novel, in which the relationship between fish filleting and rape is embedded covertly by him into his own epistolary account of his manhood quest (58, 84, 249).

Moreover, Stevens never captures Olivia in the "eye" of a fishing net in the film, as he does in the novel, although the opportunity for setting up such a shot certainly existed in the film. Indeed, the frame of the dory lift, which looks like a gallows in the sequence depicting Stevens' return and which could have been used as an alternative ominous image to the fishnet, momentarily appears in the shot of Stevens and Perceval on their way to the paternal home under the eye of the Reverend, never in conjunction with Nora or Olivia under the eye of a venatic or piscatory male. Relatedly, neither the Reverend nor Stevens squelch the bulbous algae beneath their feet as a symbolic expression of their piscatory

frustration with the unattainability of the fertile female, as they did in the novel. Finally, Stevens does not weigh down Olivia's body in fishing nets after he kills her, so the film offers no symbolic underscoring of his venatic, domineering ways. Nor does he associate her devastated body with barren shells, an image that could easily have been rendered by him picking up or holding an empty shell at film's end. None of the film's paintings incorporate the theme of the fishnetted women as a silent comment on their fate within this male-dominated society. In a final irony of transfer, the pink of the dress that had marked Nora as piscatory prey at her murder in the novel becomes, to the right of screen, the rose flush of hope on the eastern edge of Stevens' dawning sky as he sits on the rock at film's end.

As for the symbolic rapport of male-fisher with piscivorous gannets, this relationship also undergoes a certain palliation in the film. The Reverend, Stevens and Perceval are all associated with the presumably hungry cries of the gannets in scenes with women (for instance, Perceval is associated with their cries in the seashore scene with the girls; the Reverend is associated with their cries in the boathouse scene with Nora, and Stevens is associated with their cries in the ironing scene with Olivia). However, these yearnings are normalized as the desire for mating not raping in other sexually charged scenes by shots of gannets pursuing gannets (as in the bedroom scene between the Reverend and his wife) or by shots of gannets preening gannets (as in the ironing scene between Olivia and Stevens). Never is the gannet shown actually diving (in a knife-like plunge) for fish, in a covert symbol of rape and domineering predation, as it was in the novel. Moreover, the images and screeches of gannets are

associated just as much, if not more frequently, with Stevens in his conflict with his oppressive father or other male characters (such as in the sequences depicting Stevens' arrival, the fishing expedition, the hunting party, and the breaking of the storm). The gannet thus serves as an important symbol both of his feelings of (mad) oppression and his desire for freedom. Perhaps for this reason he is not, in the film, figuratively consumed by the screams of gannets like a filleted Prometheus haunted by his crimes against women, as he was as an old man in the novel.

As for the teenage girls, they are covertly related to caught fish in the film, in a quiet nod to the novel, most notably in the editing of Perceval's fish nabbing scene in which he hands over a dead minnow to the Reverend who, after flicking it away, holds its spirit in his preying/praying hands before the scene cuts to Olivia singing. However, there is something innocent about this emblematic relationship since it is only Perceval, the gentlest and least threatening of the male characters, who is actually shown fishing in the film. Moreover, this subtle assignation of nubile women as lively (though small) fish is not taken up after Olivia's death, as it was in the novel. No sprightly silvery fish leap at film's end in a symbolic expression of the young girl's desire and defiance of death (let alone her defiance of death at the hands of patriarchy) as they did in Perceval's imagination in the novel. (Irene's association with cold fish will be explored in Chapter 4.)

Indeed, in the film there is no symbolic evidence of the indomitable spirit of either the maternal sea or its "progeny" Olivia, the film's one female murder victim. Specifically, in the film, unlike in the novel, there is no evidence after

Olivia's death that sea breezes infiltrate desolate homes, or that sea spray flies invasively through the gusty air, or that sea mist invades the coast in a suggestion of the prevailing presence of her spirit. No tides swell triumphantly up the tidal flats, hinting at the revenge of the maternal principle: the displacement of the patriarchal world by the maternal flood. No foam froths along the stretches of shore; no salt cakes abandoned homes; no sea anemone waves brightly and warmly in the sea; no blue pebbles glisten as a permanent reminder of the dead girl's once desiring and unconquerable eyes; no tree bears blue fruit in symbolic attestation of her still fertile soul; no blue bracelet (or similar personal accessory) laps ever up in the wavelets on the beach in a shining and piscine testament to her forever-returning spirit. Similarly, no forest overtakes the dead community of old Stevens. Quite simply, the desiring soul of woman/women and the indomitable spirit of the maternal principle are all visually shut out of the film's final statements about the fate of Griffin Creek society. No renewal under the powers of the insurgent maternal world or under the creative desires of women is suggested.

Conclusion

Simoneau deconstructs the sea as maternal principle around which the struggle between the dominant patriarchal order and the emerging female line occurs, reconstructing it instead as paternal entity around which father-son and fraternal relations are acted out and male-dominance merely underscored. Women are robbed of their "wild zone" in which and along which they engaged in solidarious, creative activities, some of which alluded to their desires for

heterosexual equality. While Simoneau shows that the men are fishers and (more covertly) that the young women are fish, the fraternal aspects of this trade is emphasized, and the sexual trope of piscatory sexual pursuit, in which male dominates female, is somewhat less ominously rendered, underplaying the narrative's concern with a pernicious patriarchy. The symbolic relationships between women and the sea's attributes are either erased or reconstituted for the inter-male story. Ultimately the efforts of Mother Nature to push away the degenerate patriarchy so that a better social order can one day be built, as suggested in the novel, are replaced by raging conflict between paternal and filial forces.

In making these changes, Simoneau deletes and transforms several of Hébert's most important feminist symbolic strategies: her effort to portray and problematize mother-child relationships in patriarchy through the various characters' symbolic relationships with the sea; her decision to accord material space to the protective, pre-feminist instinct of mothers towards their daughters; and her desire to comment on the problematic aspects of the patriarchal paradigm of sexual pursuit as expressed by the trope of fishing.

There are no cinematic or technological reasons for these changes in the sea and related symbolism in the film. Nor does this lack of engagement with Hébert's symbolism lie with any problem of metaphoric language. All the relationships made between women and the sea and its attributes are both metonymical and visual in nature and as such highly transferable to a film narrative. A review of the wealth of textual details suggests that Hébert's figurative commentary could easily have been expressed either by suggestive

snippets of dialogue, simple gesture, or symbolic physical activity of characters in or around certain objects or entities. The changes thus reflect the adapter's ideological disinterest in Hébert's feminist concerns.

Indeed, Simoneau masculinizes an entity that has traditionally been associated with the female principle not to liberate women from a stereotyped assignation as nature, sea and tidal power, but to give full reign to the ubiquitous father-son struggle that we will examine in more detail in Chapter 5. In accordance with the patriarchal tradition, Simoneau unseats the archetypal mother: Poseidon usurps Posidæja, Oceanus displaces Tethys, God replaces the goddess, much like the early patriarchal translators of the Bible did when masculinizing deities and priestesses, as recorded by feminists such as Merlin Stone.

¹ Boyce, 294. The capes could alternatively be understood to be sheer, rocky cliffs, rising phallic-like, indicating that the community is hemmed in by patriarchal law. Since Hébert's prose is suggestive not descriptive of this geographical landmark, as it is with much of the external world sketched in her novel, the actual appearance of this landscape remains open to interpretation.

² Scholars have discussed various aspects of the sea's significance in the novel. See, for instance, see Bishop (1984): 124-125, 127; (1984/85): 192-193; Boyce 294-300; Francoli 141; Gould 928-929; Harlin 131-132; Lord 139-145; Noble 13-14; Poulin 16; Reid 123-124; Slott (1986): 164-165; (1987): 303-305; Smart (1988): 263; and Stephan 115-122.

³ Boyce also notes the baptismal symbolism of these dawn swims, when the girls "apprennent le bonheur d'être femmes, et la méfiance vis-à-vis du masculin", 296-297.

⁴ Referring to Smart's work, Gould makes a similar observation: "Long a privileged theme in Hébert's poetry, the watery depths have become a collective and organically pulsating feminine space in Olivia's writing", 928. See Smart (1980): 63. Also see Boyce 294-297.

⁵ Both Nora and Perceval affirm that their "grand-mère est un dauphin", 71, 115. The dolphin was also "a totem of Demeter in her role as Mistress of the Sea", B. Walker 372.

⁶ For her the sea holds a clue to the truth about her mother. Contemplating the sea, the young Olivia thinks, "Le mystère de la vie et de la mort de ma mère n'aura plus de secret pour moi. Peut-être même verrai-je son visage dans le miroir de l'eau et son bruit d'orage", 211. Pat and Pam also evoke that archetypal sea mother in their sea mural on female origins, 16. The transformation of this mural is discussed in Chapter 4.

⁷ Boyce 294; Bishop (1984/85): 192; Slott (1987): 305.

⁸ See also Bishop (1984/85): 192-193.

⁹ See Boyce on her interpretation of the significance of the foremothers' siren calls, 299.

¹⁰ The menstrual cycles are alluded to both at the beginning and end of their manifestation in the female reproductive cycle, 17, 37, 152, 180.

¹¹ Felicity becomes "plus vive que le sel", 37. "[L]es os [d'Olivia] dissous comme le sel", 224; also see 200. Nora says, "[M]es joues [sont] pleines de sel", 117.

¹² Note also the novel's opening biblical epigraph, drawn from the Sermon on the Mount, during which Christ reminds us that the salt of the earth are the good people who will inherit the earth: "Vous êtes le sel de la terre. Si le sel s'affadit, avec quoi le salera-t-on?", Matthew 5:13. Since over the course of her novel Hébert associates salt with the "spice" and "essence" of life, emitted particularly by sexually desiring women, Hébert playfully asks with this epigraph: without salt — i.e., without desiring women: the spice of life — how can we enjoy life?

¹³ "Transparente et fluide comme un souffle d'eau" (199) "[ou comme une] goutte de rosée" (218), Olivia "[é]pouse... le vent" (207) and haunts the shores of Griffin Creek. In this ethereal state of water and air, the phantom Olivia becomes omnipresent like "l'esprit de Dieu, [qui] planait au-dessus des eaux" (14), the eternal God whose final judgment the Reverend fears.

¹⁴ This is indicated by the Reverend's allusion to Hamlet's suicide soliloquy as well as his frequent references to the encroaching cold, frost and drafts, 22.

¹⁵ Compare with Pallister's discussion of Hébert's subversion of the Demeter-Persephone myth (1993): 548-554, to which Senécal also refers but more literally, 150-151.

¹⁶ For instance, Hébert alludes three times to the biblical flood and Noah's ark, 43, 131, 238. Not only does she allude to famous symbols of the French Revolution with Nora's birthday on Bastille Day and Nora's puns on the word "billot", the chopping block, as we saw in Chapter 1, but as she does in her work *Héloïse*, Hébert plays on the word "grève", the famous place of executions in Paris; the girls are "executed" on the "grève", metaphorically losing their heads through strangulation. The knitting mothers on the "grève" also evoke the famous knitters at execution sites, foreshadowing the danger of the seashore for the girls.

¹⁷ See Harlin for another interpretation on how Hébert creates a new mythology of the sea to "critique... the oppression of women in Griffin Creek", 131.

¹⁸ Indeed, Olivia specifically refers to her own "senteur forte de fruit de mer", 199.

¹⁹ Recall Stevens' journeys, walks and runs along the shore (57, 70, 105, 206) and the Reverend's day-time (39) and night-time ambles (159). Reid reads Stevens' fixation on the sea as a pathological dependence on women for his identity, 124-125).

²⁰ See Bishop (1984/85): 186, Gould 925, Slott (1987): 301-302.

²¹ Recall Olivia's reference to the sirens (218) and her claim that "[Stevens a] dit que toute la nuit il s'est senti appelé", 223.

²² The rain carries a female connotation in the novel when in its gentle, non-destructive form: as rains drops, not blasting pelts of water. The foremothers are "[g]outtes de pluie à la surface des eaux" (220) that integrate themselves into the ocean depths.

²³ Recall that Griffin Creek is set along the Saint Lawrence River, where fresh and salt water meet. This sea/river is thus a symbolic site for the intermixing of male and female elements in water. In Hébert's vision, fresh water in the form of violent rain signifies men (132) and salt water in the form of sea spray, sea mist and the sea, itself, represents women on which or through which the rain pelts. Salt is the differentiating element that constitutes *la différence sexuelle*. The meeting of these male and female elements in a world where the male element seeks to dominate the female one results in an explosive tempest.

²⁴ Recall that Patrick as "garde-côte", 76, seizes the booty of bootleggers, 79. See also Slott's comments on men as fishers (1986): 165.

²⁵ See Bachelard; Croutier 13-33; B. Walker 351-352; for more on that general mythological and literary tradition.

²⁶ For references to the men and gannets see Stephan 118 and Belcher 163. Also note that two male characters have yellow crowns like the gannets. Stevens is blond and his name means crown; the old Reverend has a yellow-white spot at the back of his old head, 15. While men are almost exclusively associated with piscivorous birds, such as gannets, women are associated with herbivorous or omnivorous birds, such as blackbirds, thrush and sea gulls, 111, 152. In her love fantasies, Nora associates herself with the dove, 118, symbol of Venus and God's spirit of love, Matthew 3:16. She hopes for a different, less savage world, where she is wooed by a swan

prince; swans are exclusively herbivorous. However, her hope carries an ominous and ambiguous allusion to Greek myth: Zeus "visits" Leda in the form of the swan, to "take her" in an ambiguous rape/seduction. In the novel men are also occasionally associated with geese, which migrate in phallic V formation, 24, 124, and feed on grass, symbol of the ripe virgin, 122.

²⁷ Several examples are also noted by Dufault, whose paper was indexed after this chapter was written.

²⁸ In the novel, silver is the colour of pure sexual energy: the ubiquitous shining waters and frothy peaks of the agitated ocean, 28 166; the flash of the gannets in the foaming sea, 166; the silver in Maureen's luxurious hair, 67-68; the white light of the moon, 139; the moonlit water, 204, 207; the frosty crust of sea salt on impassioned breasts, 26, 125.

²⁹ Also the Reverend describes the girls with "[d]es yeux de violette et d'outremer", 37.

³⁰ Hébert alludes to Actaeon doubly, not only by alluding directly to the classical tale but indirectly through with her allusion to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare refers to Actaeon at the beginning of the play foreshadowing his concern with the conceits of sexual pursuit, *TN* 1.1.22-24. Hébert alludes to Shakespeare's comedy with her similar play on the venatic conceits of sexual pursuit, Olivia's name and the themes of twinning. However, while Shakespeare plays comically on the conceits of sexual pursuit, Hébert plays darkly.

³¹ For more discussion of this concept see Showalter, 262-26.

³² When Griffin Creek finally disperses, "la chasse et la pêche [sont] tout juste bonnes pour les vacances", 52. The houses (womb symbols) stand abandoned like the gannets' nests, 232.

³³ Smart 1988 257.

³⁴ Notably, Nora attests that her dawn sea swims give her "[t]out juste le plaisir de me sentir exister, au plus vif de moi, au centre glacé des choses qui émergent de la nuit", 111. She continues, "C'est comme si je me cherchais moi-même dans le sable et l'eau", 116.

³⁵ Simoneau ensures that we realize that the film is set on an island through the repetitive references of the characters. For instance, Stevens refers to "mon île" and the Reverend recalls the need for bringing in a doctor from the mainland after Stevens beat up his father. This decision to relocate the community serves to emphasize its isolation, so crucial in the novel, but also removes the maternal elements suggested by the community's geography (harbour and mammary capes), something which was eminently visual.

³⁶ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the village as a female symbol over which Stevens lords from a rock.

³⁷ Relatedly, in the novel Olivia describes her soul as a dewdrop, 218, and as the more poetic "night drop", 225, neither of which finds expression in the film. In addition, the dead foremothers are raindrops, 220.

³⁸ One wonders: are these glances meant to be reminiscent of her distant look in the novel: "son regard déteint fixé au loin", 46? See page 47 for another similar description.

³⁹ See the earlier footnote on references to the French Revolution for more on "la grève" and its allusions to the execution site by the same name in Paris.

⁴⁰ Slott also notes this land-based rapport in the novel (1986): 165, 168.

⁴¹ For more, see Slott (1986): 166 and 168; (1987): 303-304, 306; and Gould 928-930. Also see Green on Hébert's subversion of "The Little Mermaid" in *Les Fous de Bassan*, 137.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMING THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PATRIARCHAL CHURCH

“Man made God in his own image.”
— Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*

Over the past 150 years the Christian Church and the Bible have undergone vigorous critique from feminists. The first wave of Western feminism was influenced by such works as Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (1895) and the second wave by such classics as Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (1973). Contemporary feminist writers have recognized the importance of both engaging critically with the Bible as one of the founding texts of Western civilization (N. Walker 15-44) and of exposing the effects that the institutionalized patriarchy of the Church has had on women (N. Walker 144-170). Québec literature has been marked by these concerns through the work of Louky Bersianik and Denise Boucher among others (Andersen; Saint-Martin). Before writing *Les Fous de Bassan*, Anne Hébert had also added her voice to these contemporary feminist projects with poetic critiques of the Eve myth (Kells) and subversive treatments of

Catholicism in *Les Enfants du Sabbat* (Couillard and Dumouchel). She continued to explore some of these interests in later work, notably *Le Premier Jardin*.

Although several critics have examined some aspects of Hébert's extensive interplay with the Bible in *Les Fous de Bassan*, critical attention to her feminist subversion of this founding text has been limited to her most obvious engagements with the Eve myth.¹ In all this analysis, little attention has been paid to the symbolic significance of the Reverend's marriage to Irène, although the Reverend stands as a representative of the Judeo-Christian tradition and Irène's marital experience offers a comment on female tribulations under the patriarchal Church. Because the territory is vast, given the enormity of Hébert's use of the Bible in the novel, this chapter offers only a selection of possible sites of study and comparison. The first section is limited to a comparison of Hébert's and Simoneau's representation of the Reverend's patriarchal desires as they taint his treatment of his wife. The second section compares several instances of the Reverend's actual use of the Bible to oppress women in the novel with their presentation in the film.

The Reverend — from Parodic Godhead to Simply Desiring Husband

By virtue of his clerical position and his frequent citations from the Old and New Testaments, the Reverend Nicolas Jones represents and articulates the patriarchal Judeo-Christian heritage of Griffin Creek and thus a patriarchal mode of thinking. Among the patriarchal assumptions that he manifests include

two which Marilyn French describes in her article “Is There a Feminist Aesthetic?” She states:

[in patriarchy] males have individual destinies; they are promised domination, a surrogate godhead, transcendence over the natural world through power in heroism, sainthood, or some form of transcendent paternity — founding a dynasty, an institution, a religion, or a state, or creating an enduring work of art or technology.... the form taken by patriarchy is hierarchy, a structure designed to maintain and transmit power from spiritual father to spiritual son (69).

The Reverend subscribes to the notion of establishing a “transcendent paternity” as described by French, as evidenced by his desideration to found a personal dynasty through a male heir and, when that fails, through the “enduring work” of making portraits of his forefathers. His desire for a son also reflects a need to maintain the patriarchal hierarchy, the dysfunctionality of which Hébert insinuates by showing it descending from Lord God to “roi fou” (14) to impotent man to non-existent son.

Let us examine in more depth this almost biblical mania to beget in order to found a personal dynasty. Having children is an indirect way of ensuring one’s immortality, and this wish consumes the Reverend. Obsessed with thoughts of dying, the final judgment and even suicide,² he undertakes his portrait project “afin d’affirmer la pérennité de ...[s]on sang” (14). However, he does not simply want to perpetuate his line, by siring a child, and later, failing that, by artistically evoking his ancestors. As a young husband, he wanted a *son* and as an old man he regrets, more than anything it seems, not having had one. He then seeks to father his male ancestors, leaving Pat and Pam, “[d’]accouch[er] des mères jusqu’en 1782” (16).

His preference for a boy and the male line is one indicator of his sexism. For a patriarch, having sons is an indirect and at least symbolic way of both guaranteeing the continuance of male dominance and of asserting masculine identity. Moreover, showing a male child to his mother would not only have been an infantile way for the Reverend to impress her³ but a macho way to reassert himself as a man before this emerging womanist who, in his eyes, favours her female offspring. Threatened by the flourishing female line that extends both backwards (in the “lignée de femmes obscures” [37], depicted in Pat’s and Pam’s mural) and forwards (in his mother’s favourite grandchildren, Nora and Olivia), he wanted a son who could quickly usurp “les petites Atkins dans le coeur de Felicity en [s]on nom et à [s]a place” (32).

Undoubtedly, the Reverend feels a loss of masculine identity because his family’s male lineage will die out with him, something other critics also note. He languishes, “[l] manque un maillon à la chaîne des hommes. Après moi le gouffre abrupt. Le vide. Rien. Le fils que je n’ai pas eu” (19-20). He thus becomes obsessed with re-establishing a male line backwards because he could not accomplish it by going forwards with his own offspring:⁴

J’engendre mon père à mon image et à ma ressemblance qui, lui, engendre mon grand-père à son image et à sa ressemblance et ainsi de suite jusqu’à la première image et première ressemblance.... Moi qui n’ai pas eu de fils j’engendre mes pères jusqu’à la dixième génération. Moi qui suis sans descendance j’ai plaisir à remettre au monde mes ascendants (15).

Simultaneously androcentric and theistic, he assumes God’s position. Rather than being created in God’s image, he gives birth to his ancestors in *his* image.⁵ He becomes the parody of the godhead to which French refers.⁶ He turns the

Old Testament's obligations of a man "to beget sons" (French 1985 519) upside down ("compte à rebours," 15).⁷ His portrait project thus symbolizes both his desperate need to procreate and the ultimate futility of that reproductive desire in a patriarchal male, for all he can produce are wooden — lifeless — renditions of deformed men, symbols of the degenerate patriarchal ideology that casts back into the mists of time.⁸

However, not only has the Reverend been unable to father real sons in God's image, he has been unable to procreate at all. He has thus left unfulfilled the Judeo-Christian male duty he preached to his own flock in his younger years: "Les fils d'Israël fructifièrent et foisonnèrent, ils se multiplièrent beaucoup, si bien que le pays en fut rempli" (31). He has failed in his dual male obligations as mandated by the Bible as he understands it — to produce a son and to reproduce. Moreover, he stands as a failure as a man within his own community, contrasting dramatically with his own father who sired extravagantly (63-64). In fact, in his elder years the Reverend presides over the dying of his community, for which he knows he is in part to blame.⁹

Rather than overseeing and contributing to the growth of his community, the Reverend has witnessed its decline. In the face of all this failure, it is inconceivable for him even to consider that he may be the reason for his and his wife's childlessness. However, in spite of the Reverend's insistence on his wife's barrenness, Hébert suggests that it is the Reverend who is infertile. For one thing, she makes paunchiness a symbol of azoospermia. For instance, she playfully rhymes "grosse bedaine, plus de graines" (64) when referring to the Reverend's father in his elder years. This reference sheds connotative

significance upon Hébert's repeated allusions to the middle-aged Reverend's "corpulence" (128).¹⁰ Nevertheless, without even a second thought and no indication of proof, the Reverend labels his wife as sterile (23). In so doing, he articulates the common sexist practice of naming the woman as the source of a couple's infertility simply because she is the one who bears the children.

However, even as the Reverend depicts his wife as both frigid and infecund, he reveals how his attitude towards her would cause her to withdraw sexually from him. For all his efforts to denigrate her sexual appetite, and therefore cast her as the implied cause of his seeking sexual satisfaction from his nieces (especially Nora), it is clear that the Reverend approached Irène in a way that would dampen her libido. He, himself, states, "[J]e n'en finis pas... d'être l'un d'eux,... mes frères sauvages et durs" — i.e., husbands he had only just finished describing as hunters "[qui de] retour de la chasse... prennent leur femme dans le noir, sans enlever leurs bottes" (40). Indeed, he becomes a representative example of these married men who, as brutish sexual trackers, "ont toujours l'air de vouloir tuer quelque créature vivante" (40). Early in his book, the Reverend's establishes the dual denotation of "créature" as both "animal" and "woman."¹¹ As we have already seen in previous chapters, this hunting motif will be echoed throughout the novel as a pernicious analogy for heterosexual relations within the Griffin Creek patriarchy (an analogy critiqued in the larger culture by feminists from Andrea Dworkin to Margaret Atwood)¹² and will find its ultimate and lethal expression in the novel's final murder scene. The Reverend's treatment of his wife is the first concrete example of this domineering, disrespectful and ultimately deadly rapport.

He sees Irène as prey and in terms of his own needs and pleasure and not in terms of mutual ones. He refers to “son odeur poissonneuse lorsque je m’obstine à chercher, entre ses cuisses, l’enfant et le plaisir” (24). The first person pronoun “me” reflects his want; “obstine” implies his stubbornness to proceed (probably repeatedly) regardless of his wife’s wishes; “ses cuisses” relegates her to an object. The reference to fish establishes her as sexual prey, a status to which all the desired women are relegated by the carnivorous men (126) in the novel, a cultural cliché that is lethally exploded in Stevens’ repeated attacks on nubile women whom he views as piscatory prey, especially in his final sharklike consumption of Olivia’s “fishy” womb in the rape-murder scene, as noted in the preceding chapter. Read within the gendered context of the novel’s piscatory images, the Reverend’s reference to Irène’s fishy vaginal scent reveals that he views his wife’s genitalia as something to prey on, that his view of coitus constitutes rape not a consensual act.¹³ In addition, since the Reverend then expresses a few pages later his singular desire that his wife produce a son to impress Felicity, he reveals that he sees Irène only as an object of sexual consumption by which he hopes to prove his virility and fertility to his mother (32).¹⁴ Irène is thus reduced to the status of prey, receptacle and baby maker, who would serve only to bear sons “en témoignage de [l]a puissance [du pasteur]” (32).

If the childlessness of the Reverend’s marriage is the result of no or insufficient sexual contact, as the Reverend suggests, Irène’s refusal to respond to his sexual advances is more than understandable. Her cold attitude is hardly surprising based on what the Reverend chooses to reveal about his utilitarian,

predatory and uncaring attitude towards her. Not only do his needy reasons for having children reflect a troubling and unappetizing infantility, but his unloving insistence on holding the mystery of infertility against her, categorically labelling her “une créature inutile” (23), is hardly erogenous.

Moreover, as the textual evidence suggests, it is a matter of self defense for her to shun being brutally overpowered and devoured by her hunter-husband — that sanctimonious “pêcheur d’homme” (25) and blood-thirsty fisherman (40) — who not only considers fishing out of season (159), but figuratively does so, as he adulterously and incestuously feasts on his nieces at the barn dance. In fact, his marital and extramarital preying leaves his wife looking dead — like a hunter’s trophy, an owl, nailed to the wall.¹⁵ Indeed, Irène is not simply occasional game, as are the two teenage girls Olivia and Nora, but the regular target of the Reverend’s selfish, unloving, and obstinate sexual preying, for she is bound to him by Church law. No wonder Irène acts like a dead fish in bed (23) for is it not safer for the prey to play dead — “joue[r] au poisson mort” (98) — than to show signs of life and risk being (violently, excessively, and lethally) consumed? Hébert thus explodes another common, superficial sexual cliché. She destabilizes the simple equation of cold fish and frigid woman by providing clues as to how her predatory, patriarchal marital partner has placed the wife in this unhappy state. In this context, Irène’s sexual rejection of her husband would be her only way of wielding power within a traditional Christian marriage in which divorce is not an option. As a final caveat, even the Reverend’s insistence on his wife’s lack of activity in bed is suspect, as he does not seem to be aware of her presence at crucial times. For instance, the night his wife

commits suicide, he does not even notice until morning that she is no longer in bed (49).

Thus, although most critics tend to take literally the Reverend's assessment of Irène,¹⁶ in spite of his guilty conscience and his strong desire to deflect responsibility from himself,¹⁷ I would argue that Irène's passionless state is reactive and not inherent. Indeed, the Reverend, for all his insistence on her lackluster temperance, undermines his own certainty on this point. For instance, he states, "elle... fait semblant de vivre depuis toujours, semble-t-il" (44). The concluding phrase "semble-t-il" casts doubt on the continuity of her lifelessness. To him, who has (apparently) long gone without sex, it seems that she has lived without carnality forever, but in fact that may not be the case. Although others in the novel also perceive Irène as lacking sensuality,¹⁸ some of their observations also suggest that Irène has not always been this way. Nora also vaguely remembers a time when her aunt was otherwise,¹⁹ and Stevens' idiomatic expression that Irène *plays* at being a dead fish (98) suggests that her sensuousness is feigned or, put another way, that she has passion but chooses to hide it.

As for the Reverend, as the only one who feels responsible for causing Irène's unhappiness,²⁰ his ambiguous affirmations about her personality betray more about his desperate desire to hide the truth than about the truth itself. Indeed, even if his negative portrayal were true, his very need to immortalize the denigrated memory of his dead wife in his "book" is a highly uncharitable act for a man of the cloth and thus raises questions about his motives. His harsh recollections of her supposed sexual deficiencies indicate that he never forgave

her for them. Indeed, his loveless ruminations suggest that if he speaks ill of her years after her death, he could not have treated her well when she was alive and has not reconciled himself with his own contribution to her sexual withdrawal and slide towards suicide.

Indeed, his evasive narrative reveals his attempts to delude himself about Irène's knowledge of his budding attraction for, and eventual fondling of, his niece (Slott 1987 299). During the couple's suppertime tête-à-tête after the adulterous encounter, Irène obliquely alludes to the incestuous nature of the "seduction" when she states, "Tout le monde sait bien que les deux plus roux de Griffin Creek se ressemblent, comme père et fille; bien qu'ils ne soient que l'oncle et la nièce" (45). Hébert then immediately shifts to the couple's nighttime bed where the Reverend lies beside his (apparently) sleeping wife, guiltily recalling his molestation of Nora. He tries to make himself believe that his wife "n'a sans doute rien compris [de son geste]" while her earlier comment and her current physical withdrawal from him in bed suggests just the opposite: "La voici qui se rencogne encore plus près du mur, jusqu'à heurter avec ses genoux pliés la cloison de bois" (46). At the following barn dance scene she does not gaze on her husband dancing with his young nieces not because she is sensuously disconnected, as he would have us believe, but because she evidently already knows what is going on and chooses to avert her eyes not be further hurt by her husband's transgressions.

In fact, Hébert unequivocally shows that a woman's voluptuousness dies because of an unloving husband's patriarchal mistreatment and infidelity. Irène's lack of sensuality and seemingly unseeing gaze parallel that of another

unhappily married woman in the novel, namely the ironically named Felicity. As we noted earlier, until the latter's philandering husband became physically incapacitated, she had no eyes to see with nor ears to hear with (36). Then, once freed from his infidelities and abuses by his increasing age, her senses awakened to the visual pleasures of colour (the red and gold of flower and field) and the kinetic delights of motion (the gentle rocking of the bracing sea). Her gaze is then liberated (122). Similarly, one understands that Irène's ash-coloured eyes are the deathly residue of the Reverend's flaming patriarchal banner ("[son] oriflamme", 45), which he uses to attract minors. Thus, by implication, Hébert suggests that sexually experienced, married women (as represented by Irène) are not sexually/sensually uninterested because they are inherently frigid, as the Reverend would have us believe. Rather, by creating parallels between Felicity's and Irène's experiences as wives, Hébert implies that Irène's sensual deadness has been created by her marriage to a sexist, uncaring man whose sexual immaturity, deceit, and disdain rob her of her sensuality,²¹ a depiction that coincides with feminist analyses of the fate of female sexuality in oppressive, patriarchally brutish societies like Griffin Creek.²² One also notes the repeated references in the novel to women being chilled or turned to stone by domineering, unloving, even murderous men, which again explains Irène's stony demeanour (44). Most ominously among the married women, Mathilda, the apparent victim of a miscarriage and a spousal beating, dies and becomes "une petite figure d'ivoire glacée" (209). After their murderous initiation into patriarchy, Nora and Olivia are compared to "de grandes pierres couchées" (258).

The type of furniture from which Irène chooses to commit suicide lends further weight to the reading that she was not inherently lifeless but reactively so. To be more specific, one notes the irony of Irène using a milking stool from which to hang herself²³ — i.e., of employing the support used to facilitate the procurement of a maternal, life-sustaining liquid to expedite her own death. This irony reminds the reader that Irène was, in part, driven to killing herself by having her worth as a woman and as a person defined constantly in terms of her willingness to and success in conceiving a child — in becoming a mother, a nurturer, or, more crassly, a lactating body. As such, her suicide suggests her rejection of the maternal role to which the infantile, patriarchal men of her community in general want to relegate women. Recall that women are repeatedly remembered or referred to by the Reverend or Stevens in their maternal role, often when producing milk or giving the breast, and at times through animalistic allusions or references to a cow (e.g. 107) or other bovine creatures (245).

Although we do not know for sure the reasons for her suicide since, as the Reverend states, she leaves no suicide note (and the critics themselves disagree),²⁴ we do know that the Reverend's whole narrative stands as an apology for his unloving treatment of his wife, and we can reasonably surmise that she sensed her husband's blame for their childlessness and his concomitant contempt. Thus her suicide — deliberately planned as it is (49) — makes a rebellious statement. By stepping off the milking stool into death, Irène is, in effect, saying, "No more." Among other things, her act serves as a brutal rejection both of her husband's continued confinement of his wife to the

motherhood role and of his perpetual chastisement of her for not fulfilling that role “correctly”. Like Mary Alemany-Galway’s readings of the suicides in Yves Thériault’s “Le Dernier Havre” and *Ashini*, Irène’s suicide, although tragic and a negative expression of female agency, can be read as “un acte de protestation, l’ultime affirmation d’indépendance” (78).

Some might argue that she is simply (or in part) despondent because she could not become a mother or because she could not fulfil her husband’s dreams for a child as she may dutifully have wanted, but the clues that suggest that she would have in fact been oppressed because of her gendered maternal role, to which she finally rebelled, are there in the experience of other women to eclipse this reading. After her death, for instance, the Reverend treats his subsequent mother substitutes, Pat and Pam (who are brought in expressly to replace Irène), with patriarchal contempt even as they serve him his coveted maternal comfort food (his “bol [du lait] fumant” [33]). Specifically, when one of the two serves his midnight milk and then collapses in an exhausted heap by his chair, he admits to his domineering desire to push her with his feet. In subversive response to this type of treatment, this now elderly woman, to whom he disparagingly refers as “[u]ne quelconque chose — créature — végétale” (33), will engage in various subversive acts with her sister to undermine his dominion (17, 19, 29). In any event, even the Reverend covertly perceives his excessive, infantile desire for maternal replacements as immature and absurd, describing himself as “Cet homme... vieux, grotesque, trop gros, [qui] ouvre et referme la bouche comme s’il tétait” (34).

In addition, within the context of the novel, both Irène's hanging and her decision not to leave a suicide note act as metaphors for the squelching of her voice. Irène's almost total muteness in the novel represents the social gagging of the wife, especially the pastor's wife, in her particular patriarchal community. Repeatedly, the Reverend notes that his wife's discrete personality made her the perfect "femme de pasteur (32, 48-49), yet he also reveals that his very clerical authority keeps women silent. His mother substitutes, Pat and Pam, serve him "[a]ttentive à ne pas [l]e contrairer" (53), suppressing all expression of emotion: "Si les jumelles s'enchantent du bruit rythmé de la pluie tambourinant dans la cuvette, ont envie de battre des mains et de danser tout autour, elles n'en laissent rien voir" (53). Indeed the very first names of the Reverend and his wife suggest that the dynamics of silencer/silenced characterize their marriage. Nicolas means "victorious among the people" and Irène means "peace", which, given the patriarchal context, suggests that she is keeping peace with the dictator.

Since her stifling situation as a married woman is suffocating and silencing her, only through the narratives of others in the novel, and in particular her husband's, can we even infer an inkling of Irène's subjective state and what could be the real cause of her descent into despair. Her suicide thus carries a constellation of connotations. The hanging comments on the deathly state of her status as muzzled woman; her jump from the milking stool conveys her rejection of the enforced motherhood role, and the timing of the suicide (after her realization of her husband's incestuous adultery) bespeaks her refusal to be associated with a man who engages in such behaviour.

Given the Reverend's destructively patriarchal treatment of his wife, which turns her away from him and given the symbolic signs of the domineering Reverend's *own* infertility, the resulting childlessness of his marriage can be read as a symbol of the sterility of both the patriarchal paradigm of marital relations and of the Christian patriarchy itself. Quite simply, the elderly childless Reverend not only foreshadows the destruction of his local patriarchy because, sonless, he represents the death of the male line (as other critics have noted), but he also represents patriarchy's self-destruction because his failure to fulfil the male's procreative duties is ultimately his own fault (caused by his own sexist attitudes towards his wife who sexually rejects him) and because he is now suicidal (as a result of his own procreative failure and guilt over his mistreatment of his wife). Indeed, since in "the majority of biblical writings, children were the supreme example of divine favour" (McAfee 690), his childlessness reflects his failure to heed God's warnings against sin, which Hébert frames as crimes against women.²⁵ The text implies that his seed has been corrupted by a wrathful God who had threatened the same fate for the sanctimonious priests mentioned in the book of the Reverend's favourite Old Testament prophet Malachi (165). All that is left for this dying representative of a waning social order to do is bask in the male line's past glory of imperfect beings: "Yeux ronds, nez de travers, naïfs et terribles. Mains mal équarries" (15), the result of two centuries of this patriarchal community's coercive in-breeding.

How does Simoneau engage with the notion of transcendent paternity manifested in the Reverend's driven, patriarchal desire for a son and a male

lineage and his concomitant need to prove his virility and fertility, which Hébert then subverts with his parodic portrait project and failed “semence”? How does Simoneau present the Reverend’s sexist assessment and nasty berating of Irène’s sensuality and fertility, his predatory and domineering sexual treatment of her, and the symbolic significance of their childless marriage?

The first change Simoneau makes is to temper the obsessive quality of the Reverend’s paternity quest. Firstly, his longing for a boy is mentioned only once and flatly by Irène (in the fish cleaning scene), whereas it is mentioned at least twice and more fervently by the Reverend in the novel (32, 44). By filtering the Reverend’s wish for a son through his wife, we are distanced from his subjectivity on this point, which in the novel was bitterly and patriarchally overlaid with his desire to displace his mother’s female progeny. Indeed, we cannot even be sure that *he* really wants a son. From a feminist perspective, therefore, the Reverend’s desire for a son in the film can be viewed, at worst, as only mildly sexist since the once-removed quality and the single and patriarchally decontextualized mention of his hope, indeed its very uncertainty, attenuates his patriarchal biblical mania to beget and perpetuate the male line that he personally articulates (in his “book” and in his paintings) in the novel.

On the latter point, in the film, the Reverend’s ambition to father a male line (not simply a son) is never expressed pictorially. It is not to his paintings that the film narrative repeatedly returns, but, to anonymously created ones, perhaps those of old Stevens. Although what concerns me here is the ideological significance of excising the Reverend’s association with the portraits depicted in the film, I must expand the discussion of Simoneau’s use of the

works to include his treatment of Stevens' and Pat's and Pam's artistic activities since Simoneau synthesizes elements of them. A review of how the synthesis of the meaning and content of the paintings takes place will expose the ideological significance of the transformation.

As Pallister observes, the content of the paintings in the film can be seen as a truncated composite of the content both of the Reverend's individual portraits of his forefathers and of Pat's and Pam's group mural of their foremothers since the film's portraits are of key male and female figures from Stevens' youth (1995 186-187). The very presence of the paintings in the adaptation can be understood to reflect Simoneau's synthesis of the artistic urges of the old Reverend, his twin nieces and old Stevens. More precisely, the painterly interests of the former three characters become subsumed under (presumably) the latter character's.

Since, as Pallister argues, Simoneau's painting scenes combine elements from all the paintings/painters in the novel, one can concede that Simoneau's synthesis incorporates preexisting elements from the novel and that his fusion of narrative material on the paintings is thus as valid in terms of general fidelity as any other might have been. Nevertheless, one must simultaneously acknowledge that Simoneau's decision to merge these distinct painterly activities in the manner that he does erases the ideological significance of their very separateness in the novel, something which Pallister ignores. Recall that it is for ideologically gendered reasons that the Reverend paints his forefathers, that Pat and Pam paint their foremothers, and that Stevens paints

poisonous flowers. None paint both male and female figures which is the subject (and gendered amalgamation) of the paintings in the film.

As I demonstrated earlier, the Reverend's urge to depict the male line backwards in deformed wooden portraits of his forefathers symbolizes the futility of the sexist male's virility/fertility quest, the sterility of the desire to perpetuate the patriarchal hierarchy, and the distortive effect of patriarchal ideology on male development. That the Reverend had to turn to his nieces to depict the female line in the novel underlines his unwillingness or inability to depict female history and his disinclination to face the terrible part he had to play in that history. That his nieces accomplished their task with such colourful glee reflects their delight in subverting patriarchal history as well as their (unconscious and anachronistic) participation in the joyous Cixousian project of "l'écriture féminine" while they give voice to herstory.²⁶ That Stevens derives pleasure in the novel from painting "des sortes de fleurs vénéneuses, toutes plates sur la toile, sans odeur et sans éclat" (235) reflects not only his paradoxical state of desensualized maliciousness, but his loathing of female sexuality. Remember that for Stevens, the flower represents the vulva as he made abundantly clear in the rape scene when he described his violent penetration as "[s]e fourre[r] là-dedans comme un bourdon au coeur d'une pivoine" (246).

Thus in amalgamating various elements related to painting in the novel, Simoneau creates a new message, erasing all the former ones. However the portraits may have materialized in the film (for their authorship is unclear), they become tools for the demented old Stevens (now merged with the novel's old Reverend) to come to terms with his youthful past. They are no longer the

symbolic expression of a sexist pastor's futile and dynastic inscription of his male line, or the subversive feminine discourse of Pat and Pam, or the figurative expression of Stevens' desensualized misogyny. The portraits of deformed figures from Stevens' recent (rather than ancestral) past become, in the film, expressions of old Stevens' personal madness and twisted regret not the depictions (as in the old Reverend's case in the novel) of the genetic, genealogical disintegration of a male line symbolizing the degenerative, generational social madness of a community governed by patriarchal tenets.

Moreover, with their authorship and original reason for being created unassociated with the Reverend's (or even the old Stevens') regret at not having procreated and with the subject of the paintings no longer exclusively male, the inclusion of the paintings in the film does not serve to parody the male godhead who seeks to reproduce in his own image as did the Reverend's paintings in the novel. Indeed, besides Irène's one mention of his wanting a son, there is no indication in the film of the Reverend's consuming need to establish the paternal line either forward or parodically backwards. He never preaches on the biblical male duty of procreation, nor engages in any genealogical activity, nor mentions the "roi fou", who in according these Loyalists their land two centuries ago represents the folly of male succession rights. In addition, since Simoneau neither introduces the old Reverend's obsession with the demise of his male line into the characterization of old Stevens in the film nor the old Reverend's concern with death and thoughts of suicide because of his failure to sire a son, the few paintings that are of men in the film cannot be read as a last ditch

attempt at a Christian patriarch's perpetuation of the dying patriarchy before it (and perhaps he) suicidally self-destruct, as it can in the novel.

As a further transformation, the actual sadness of being childless is displaced from the Reverend onto his wife in the film. Indeed, Simoneau creates a scene to underline Irène's sensitivity about being a "mother manquée": the scene in the post-sermon sequence in which Stevens' father ungraciously asks the Reverend what he knows about children when he has none; Irène is the one shown to react to the barb. Her facial expression betrays her inner pain. In contrast, in the novel, the couple's inability to have children is clearly the source of *the Reverend's* unhappiness only; the source of his wife's is unexpressed, but apparently distinct from her husband's, to be inferred from what the Reverend's demeaning references about her reveal about *his* unloving and stereotyped conception of and relegation of her to her gender role.

In addition, the distress with Irène's supposed infertility is also displaced from the Reverend onto his wife in the film. By having *Irène* — not the Reverend — repeatedly say that she is infertile (in the fish cleaning and the bedroom scenes), Simoneau has Irène appropriate from the novel the Reverend's (sexist) assessment of her condition and his obsessive reaction to it (a reaction that ultimately Irène rejected in the novel through the symbolic gesture of committing suicide from a milking stool). This appropriation by a woman of a sexist male's assessment of herself is just one example of the non-feminist if not anti-feminist transpositions that occurs in the film in which the women in the film assume the negative, often misogynic, voice or behaviour of men in the novel.

Moreover, it is Irène's unhappiness about her sterility (a state which, furthermore, is in no way undermined or suggested to be the Reverend's condition as it was in the novel) that serves as (at least part of) the underlying logic for her lack of sensuality and sexual desire in the film, not her reaction to an uncaring husband, who oppresses her with his patriarchally predatory and utilitarian attitude. For instance, although in the film's marital bedroom scene Irène at first rejects having sex with her husband because, as she states, her husband only wants it to conceive a child, her reason seems to be a pretext (a reflection on her not him) since, when pressed, she admits to feeling unlovable because she is barren, as their in-bed dialogue reveals:

Reverend: Irène, j'ai encore du désir pour toi.

Irène: C'est un enfant que tu désires.

Reverend: J'ai aussi envie de toi.

Irène: Mon ventre est sec. Je ne ressens plus aucun plaisir à être aimée.

Indeed, that the Reverend accepts her in spite of her infertility, was already established in the earlier fish cleaning scene when Simoneau casts the Reverend as the good husband who will do the laudable thing and accept his wife's sterility. "Dieu t'a choisie pour être ma femme.... Je resterai toujours ton époux," he tells Irène after she comments on both her inability to produce a son and her barrenness. In fact, he never disparages her because of her infertility. In no scene does he categorize her as "stérile" or "une créature inutile" as he does in the novel.

Nevertheless, the view that the Reverend held in the novel that his wife is a passionless "poisson mort" is incorporated into the film, however not by any statement on his part but rather by neutral visuals that associate Irène with dead

or cold fish. Irène progresses from working with dead fish, to acting like a dead fish, to assuming the state of the dead fish. For instance, in the fish cleaning scene, she eviscerates dead fish; in dinner scene she eats, with a singular lack of gusto, what seems to be the last of the fish on her plate; in the bedroom she lies coldly (like a dead fish, one may think); after her suicide, her remains lie on the rocky shore where gannets circle (perhaps) for piscatory food. Once the mourning scene arrives, in which the Reverend inserts himself in her lifeless embrace, the spectator realizes that the only other cadavers in the film have so far been fish, which suggests the final association between Irène and dead fish.

This metaphoric reading of Irène as (cold/dead) fish offers another example of Simoneau's afeminist transposition of narrative point-of-view, an ideological change that Marie-Josée Ross, who also briefly notes the cold fish association, ignores (50-51). In the novel, sexist men (the Reverend and Stevens) perceive Irène as a cold or dead fish — as unsensuous — but, as demonstrated earlier, their shared perception is undermined by internal contradictions in their statements. In contrast, in Simoneau's fish cleaning scene, the neutral camera eye straightforwardly records Irène's handling of the cold fish. Neither ambiguity, contradiction, nor irony is embedded in the shot, and, most importantly, no particular character's point-of-view (especially a patriarchal male character's) is suggested.²⁷ As such, it can be read as simply a descriptive metaphor: Irène equals cold fish (because she handles it). Worse the image is then self-destructive, for if woman is fish and the woman is disemboweling it, she is then symbolically hysterectomizing herself. She is

either self-mutilatively removing the womb that is already sterile (as an expression of self-loathing) or is brutally destroying her own maternal powers.

Alternatively, Irène's fish cleaning can be understood as her active attempt to ward off sexual advances (either because she is truly frigid or for other reasons). By the time she is working with fish in the parsonage kitchen scene, fish have assumed the status of amulets that protect against unwelcome sexual attentions. In the earlier "les boys" scene, Stevens told Bob Allen and two other townsmen that with the smell of fish on his hands "les femmes étaient obligées de me laisser tranquille. Le poisson, c'est comme la religion, ça protège", a comment derived almost word for word from his first letter in the novel (58). That fish protects one from sex is also intimated later in the film in the scene (created for the film) in which the Reverend, so desirous of sexual relations with his wife, contemplatively rubs his hands with sand after Perceval places a minnow in it which the Reverend throws away. Within the symbolic context proposed here, the Reverend's gesture suggests that he thinks he should rub off the smell to ensure that nothing on his person will dissuade female attentions, while paradoxically (as noted in the previous chapter), his prayerful clasping of where the minnow once lay represents his yearning for young women.

Thus, later, when his wife handles fish after she reveals her lack of love for her husband, her actions may imply that she is not simply frigid but that she wishes, in turn, to ward off her adulterous husband's increasingly unwanted sexual advances, to which later in the film she will simply not respond. Irène's apparent desire to appropriate the fish's smell offers a gender-reversal on the

effects of fishy odour in the novel and thus diverges from Hébert's bleak comment on the fisher/fish sexual paradigm as it concerns heterosexual relations. In the novel, a piscine scent does not repel brutishly lusting (indeed raping) men (24, 248), but rather draws them to women. However, that same stench on men repulses desiring women, implicitly suggesting their fear of brutal male predation (58).

As a further reversal, it is Irène who, in the film, takes on one of the fisher's more violent duties — that of fish evisceration — which is associated exclusively with men in the novel, notably Stevens (58, 247), who wields the knife literally or figuratively (84, 194, 249). Indeed, while Stevens' previous fish cleaning experiences are mentioned in the film, Irène is the only main character actually shown undertaking the gruesome task of cleaning fish. (The only other is the anonymous fisherman preparing to gut, not actually gutting, his catch, seen momentarily in a pan over the shore just before Stevens and Perceval arrive from their fishing expedition.) That she is a woman performing the evisceration blurs the link between sexist male violence and fish gutting and recuperates, for a new set of figurative concerns (notably female depression over infertility and perhaps marital infidelity), the allusion to rape that was contained in Stevens' earlier tale in "les boys" scene of "politely" disemboweling fish and Bob Allen's reactive comment about undressing women with knives.

As this discussion has already begun to suggest, although Simoneau does acknowledge Hébert's play on the fishing trope of sexual pursuit in the Reverend's marriage, Simoneau does not, as Hébert does, use it to expose, as Hébert did, a dangerous and domineering form of masculine desire which then

points to an underlying reason for Irène's rejection of her husband's sexual advances. Notably, Simoneau associates the Reverend's quest for sex with his wife with the act of fishing by inserting the marital bedroom scene within the sequence of Stevens' and Perceval's fishing expedition, but undermines the suggestion that this quest for sex is a form of disrespectful preying. Let us examine the interplay of the scenes.

The marital bedroom scene in the film is both framed and intercut with shots of the brothers' expedition. Consequently, the Reverend's attempt to approach his wife in bed and to convince her of his desire for her figuratively represents his angling for sexual fulfilment. Simoneau thus subtly suggests that the Reverend is the fisher and his wife is the fish. However, any predatory quality that might be interpreted in the Reverend's move in on his wife is only mildly suggested in his approach and the camera movement documenting it and, moreover, not once he is in bed. Furthermore, the cruelty which was suggested in the novel's venatic marital relations (40) is not suggested at all.

To recap, after the Reverend climbs the dark stairs with a lamp to seek out his wife in the conjugal bed (like a hunter/fisher who hopes to lure his prey with light?), the camera dollies up the hallway towards the open bedroom door and the bed. Similar to the dolly shot in the earlier bathtub-sex scene involving Stevens and Maureen, this dolly shot towards the door opening mimics penetration and thus male sexual yearning. It does not suggest rape (as had the play between the Reverend's interest in Irène's fishy smell and Stevens' sharklike rape of Olivia's fishy womb in the novel). Indeed, although the camera movement in the marital bedroom scene illustrates the desirous advance of the

would-be lover, it only ambiguously suggests the slow stalking of the predator for no image of a predator is cut in, only the shot of a gannet fluttering after another gannet, not after fish. This encounter is about the natural male desire to couple not the patriarchal need to possess the female through sexual annihilation. Also, because the Reverend comes to his wife for coitus only this once in the film and does not force himself on her or otherwise behave like the venatic, boot-clad husbands of the novel, neither his obstinacy, brutishness nor disregard for her sexual desire is conveyed as they were suggested in the novel, nor are her self-protective reasons for playing dead thus implied.

Indeed, the normalcy of the Reverend's sexual pursuit is supported by its parallel association with the brothers' fishing expedition with which it is intertwined in the film. Although Stevens may have disobeyed his father in taking Perceval out to sea, Stevens' wish to fraternize with his brother and his desire to go fishing is essentially a good rather than bad youthful male activity. It is not the young men but their father who is in the wrong because of his oppressive disagreement with his sons' escapade. Their fishing expedition is merely an illicit, adventurous exercise in male-bonding not a metaphor for the cruel netting of women. The brothers are not shown delighting in the reeling in of their piscatory prey while the sea reddens with blood, as the Reverend was in the novel (40), as a compressed way to express the sanguinary desire that Reverend manifested in his "book". Indeed, they are not even shown actually fishing, but rather enjoying their time at sea as they metaphorically fly across its waters in old Stevens' memory.

In fact, the fishing expedition and the marital bedroom scenes act more as foils to one another than as parallels. Stevens' and Perceval's fruitful fishing expedition is contrasted with the Reverend's unproductive sexual quest. While Perceval is successful in hooking his fish, the Reverend is not. The bounty of the sea — represented by Perceval's proud catch and the bustling piscatory activity on shore — contrasts with Irène's sterility. The (poor) Reverend is simply after the wrong prey: a frigid, infertile woman — a cold, sterile fish. Thus while Simoneau may be framing Irène as a prey of sorts, there is little to suggest that her husband is a deadly, consumptive fisher-predator, who delights in the prolonged, tortuous and bloody piscatory act, as he was in the novel. If her unresponsiveness is self-protective, it is because, as we have seen, she feels unlovable because of her infertility (and perhaps her husband's infidelity) and cannot bear being touched, not because she is at figurative risk of being "consumed" by her predatory (and uncaring, unfeeling) husband.

Indeed, if Irène finds anything oppressive in her marriage, it is her union with a man who accepts and desires her, but whom she cannot love because of her own inability to accept her biological failing. The possibility of her feeling this way is suggested at the end of the earlier-mentioned fish cleaning scene. In response to her husband's claim of accepting her sterility, Irène states that she has no love for him. He acknowledges this affirmation, but says nothing to suggest that he sees it as a reason to change their situation. He leaves her alone in the too-large and sparsely furnished kitchen, a space that suggests her empty womb. When she takes the dead fish she had been slitting at the beginning of the scene and vigorously begins eviscerating them, chopping their

heads off with a clatter on the plate, the brusqueness of her gestures suggests that the Reverend's pious acceptance of her condition may be a form of marital control that frustrates her. This is the extent of her oppression.

And what of Irène's reaction to her infertility as Simoneau decides to interpret it? Although, as we have seen, he chooses to have her claim that her lack of passion results from her sense of being unlovable due to her infertility (an interpretation textually unsupported by the novel), nowhere does he introduce a hint of how patriarchally inculcated gender roles could explain this reaction as a way to retain this new interpretation under the banner of a feminist exposure/critique of patriarchy. We cannot infer, for instance, that Irène's self-loathing is patriarchally-induced, as from Church teachings on the traditional duty of women to become mothers, for no such clues are given.²⁸ The Reverend makes no suggestion that he expects his wife to bear children nor, as mentioned earlier, that she is a useless creature for not doing so.

In fact, one can even read that, in the film, Irène, apparently consumed by her concern with the consequences of her sterility, goes so far as to obliquely suggest that her husband consider Nora as a possible mother for the son he has always wanted, a suggestion that she does not make in the novel. Irène seems to insinuate this possibility in the film's fish cleaning scene in response to her husband's worried confession that he has just almost slapped Nora (in the previous scene) and that "C'est la première fois qu'[il a eu]... envie de frapper un enfant." Irène counters, "Ce n'est plus un enfant, Nora. C'est une femme. Elle pourra même te donner le fils que tu as toujours attendu de moi." That Irène immediately uses her husband's admission to address the Reverend's

(supposed) paternity desire and by implication her sadness at not being able to fulfil it, reveals how significant these problems are for *her* in the film. Moreover, the rapidity of her response also reveals that her suggestion regarding Nora is an idea that she has been mulling over, waiting for a logical moment to articulate.

In addition, Irène's statement in the film constitutes the complete stifling of her original voice in the novel because it can be read as twisting and thus effectively erasing the only thing that she really says in the novel. Recall that during the novel's momentary dinner scene in the Reverend's narrative (from which the fish cleaning film scene is in part vaguely derived), Irène not only obliquely warns her husband that she is aware of his dalliance with Nora, but that it amounts to incest: "Tout le monde sait bien que les deux plus roux de Griffin Creek se ressemblent, comme père et fille; bien qu'ils ne soit que l'oncle et la nièce" (45). With these words in the novel, Irène underscores Nora's status both as a child and close kin not the fact that Nora is entering her childbearing years, let alone that she could actually bear the child her husband has always wanted.

One could argue, based on the source text, that it remains ambiguous in the film whether Irène's observation about Nora being a woman able to bear the Reverend's son is a suggestion or a warning. Perhaps her statement reveals her growing awareness of her husband's adulterous desire for Nora? Perhaps she is in fact pointing out that Nora is no longer a child and reminding her husband that he should watch his sexual behaviour around her? Perhaps she is cautioning him that Nora, now old enough to bear children, may be one of the

devils of temptation to which he alluded in his sermon? Alternatively, perhaps she is suggesting that he consider Nora as the future mother of his son while the Reverend and Irène are still married? If so, she would be expecting her husband to assume extramarital relations and would thus be covertly recommending adultery with a minor (although it would be unclear whether she is also condoning incest since the Reverend's familial relationship with Nora remains obscure in the film). Or is she, as I originally suggested, hinting that he consider Nora as the future mother of his son in a legitimate union — i.e., after the dissolution of their own loveless marriage?

That her husband responds that God chose Irène to be his wife (a comment that reminds her that he will accept her through thick and thin) suggests that he understands the latter interpretation — that he takes her statement as an indirect attempt to encourage him to consider the cessation of their marriage so that he can marry a fertile woman and that he wants both to remind her and to reassure her of the inviolability of their union. Although the meaning and motivations of the conversation remain equivocal, I would posit that it is an indirect exchange on the possibility of divorce. Because the film must stand on its own with no help from the source text and because Irène's tone is not admonishing but flat and neutral, I would argue that she is matter-of-factly suggesting that Nora could indeed make a possible mother for her husband's children;²⁹ however, it is unclear whether she means during or after their marriage.

However one interprets the timing of Irène's suggestion of Nora becoming the mother to her husband's children (either during or after the

marriage), one soon realizes, if one accepts either of these readings, that Simoneau has framed Irène as an accomplice, perhaps a conniving one, perhaps an unwitting one, but an accomplice nevertheless, to the Reverend's later "seduction" of Nora, a role Irène does not play in Hébert's work. Whether or not Irène's statement in the film indicates that she was prepared to accept her husband's siring of a child through extramarital fathering, she has nevertheless sanctioned Nora as the mother of the Reverend's future children. If she is a conniving accomplice to that adulterous coupling, she hopes to send her husband astray at any price, even that of adultery with a minor, so that he will leave her alone (a complete break with her only statement in the novel). If she is an unwitting accomplice, she has given her already tempted husband the unintended but very real message that he can continue turning to the nubile Other Woman with the warped belief that he has his wife's veiled blessing to pursue another relationship with the goal of conceiving a child. From his point-of-view, he has already given his wife "fair" warning of the possibility of his extramarital interests by affirming in public in the sermon scene that not even his clerical vestments spare him from temptation. Having mentioned Nora as a possible mother, she now, in the Reverend's eyes, bears some of the responsibility for "sanctioning" that temptation. With Irène's ambiguously intentioned line, "Elle pourrait même te donner le fils que tu as toujours attendu de moi," Simoneau thus absolves the Reverend of some of his guilt he will later feel over his future molestation of Nora.

This attenuated guilt is revealed in how the Reverend reacts after Irène's suicide in the film. Although the Reverend will express his awareness at having

sinned in his later sea-side statement, there is no hint in the film that later in life he will become suicidal so haunted by Irène and the consequences of his wrong-doing will he be, as he was in the novel.³⁰ He is not confronted by the disturbing spectre of her “image tenace” (48). Indeed, even as he acknowledges his sin in his sea-side statement to God, he remains defiant. Rather than being depicted as feeling diminished by guilt over his wife's suicide (as he is repeatedly in the novel), the Reverend is shown to be insubmissive and confrontational before his God, whom he seems to blame for the consequences of repressed desire. The Reverend stands in a crucifixion-like stance with his arms apart, a defiant Christ, addressing the Almighty in insistent tones. His hard voice and the lengthy, low angle semi-circling dolly shot (which makes the Reverend's square, uplifted chin prominent) together emphasize his desire to dominant the tragedy, not assimilate it. In contrast, in the passage from which this scene is partially derived, the Reverend not only reveals his own compunction (“ma faute sera sur ma face comme une ombre”, 48) but his concern with the eternal and social consequences of Stevens' crime which the Reverend's prior predatory behaviour had precipitated.³¹ In short, Irène's rebellious suicide causes part of the undoing of the once dominant representative of the Father — the symbolic undermining of patriarchy. It does not in the film.

Another significant transformation from novel to film is the method of Irène's suicide. Why Simoneau has her dive off a cliff rather than hang herself, as she does in the novel, is uncertain. In an interview with Léo Bonneville during the making of the film, Simoneau states simply that he did not find “la

pendaison très cinématographique" (1986 45). Perhaps Simoneau seeks to emphasize the hard, violent reality — the finality — of her act. Certainly shooting her dive from her point-of-view and ending it with a thud and a blackout achieves that effect. Perhaps he seeks to associate her emotional state metaphorically with the agitation of the gannets we see wildly circling whenever passions are high or confused in the film. Simoneau does aurally accompany her dive with the haunting cries of a gannet and what seems to be the rush of wings and, after the blackout, shows us dozens of gannets circling and nesting in the cliffs, before the camera pans down to Irène's corpse. Perhaps, in having her final moments assume the subjective quality of an aborted gannet's dive — i.e., of a dive onto rock not into life-giving waters — Simoneau hopes to emphasize the hopelessness — the dead-endedness — of Irene's search for liberty. Certainly, before diving, he has her look once seaward, suggesting her quest for freedom in a far away place, and Simoneau's inclusion of the final thud following her leap punctuates the failure of that quest. Perhaps Simoneau wants us to see her dive as the release of pent-up sexual passions, since the sounds of gannets and rushing wings which accompany her dive echo those of other scenes where sexual emotions ominously churn, such as during Stevens' solitary bathtub scene before the dance. Perhaps in this context, her dive constitutes a strange form of sexual release. These possibilities are all hermeneutically valid, suggested by the contents and editing of the images and their relationships to other scenes. Indeed, all the readings could exist concurrently in a polysemous play of meaning.

What is disconcerting from a feminist point-of-view about the suicide scene is the use of phallic imagery in a manner uncritical of patriarchy at the expense of the source scene's lactational icons which, in the novel, had suggested one of the underlying ideological reasons for Irène's suicide. In the film, she leaps from a phallic rock projection while in the novel she leaps from a milking stool, partly in reaction to the Reverend's sexist and absolute assignment of her to the motherhood role. Recall that in the novel he is puerilely seeking maternal love as his fixation on milk, breasts and suckling indicates and is selfishly driven to proving his virility through the reproductive capacities of his wife. Irène can neither fulfil his neediness for a mother substitute nor concede to his immature paternity quest nor accept her relegation to a confining gender role.

However, the Reverend's infantile obsession for all things maternal is omitted from the film: no suckling/sucking on pipes, no references to the mother's bosom, no allusions to the mother's warm milk. Not even his interest in Nora in the film betrays an attraction to her breasts, which, as critics of the novel noted, reveals his fixation on the mother substitute's bosom.³² In the film, he seems "normal", merely desiring his "sexual due" as a husband (as first suggested in the film's marital dinner scene), and when he cannot get it, fishing for sex elsewhere, as any man would do. As the "normal" husband, all that drives him in the film is his natural libido, and, when that is unfulfilled, his understandable sexual dissatisfaction.

Rather than conveying the Reverend's pathological interest in maternal symbols and Irène's reaction, Simoneau suggests the Reverend's relationship

with virility icons and Irène's response by inserting iconography that focuses on male sexuality into the suicide scene. This transformation suggests that what Irène is rejecting in the film is male sexual desire not her husband's patriarchal and demeaning confinement of her to the motherhood role. Indeed, on the surface, she simply seems to be rejecting adulterous male yearnings since shortly after Perceval conveys to her the coitus he has just witnessed between her husband and Nora by pointing to his own genital area, we see Irène leaping off the phallic rock projection. This filmic reading by Simoneau would constitute a recognition of Irène's building frustration with the Reverend's adulterous desires and behaviour as suggested by the narrative order of certain events in the novel (45-49), one of the most common interpretations given by critics of the novel.

However, by removing the milking stool from the suicide scene (as well as any indication elsewhere of the other maternal imagery on which the Reverend was fixated in the novel), the iconography and narrative content of the film's suicide scene restrict the reason for Irène's suicide to simple marital betrayal. They do not suggest her final rejection of the sexist husband's underlying insistence that his wife act as *his* mother *and* become the mother of his child. They do not bespeak the tragic consequences of a sexist husband's obsessive drive to prove his virility by fathering a child (indeed a son) via his unhappy, gender-role confined wife.

Worse, the suicide scene's use of phallic imagery may also insinuate the wife's actual sexual dysfunction, already hinted at by the camera's literal assignation of Irène as a cold fish in the fish cleaning scene. By leaping off and

away from the “overactive” phallus, Irène may be subtly expressing her inability to deal with its engorged energy. Indeed, that Irène is trying to escape pursuant (male) desire is suggested by the sound of the gannet cries and wings that follow her down the dive (reminiscent of the gannet that flies away from the second one in the film's marital bedroom scene). Thus the dive itself does not signify that she is a fish trying to escape predation, but a bird escaping its mate. That she should, in fact, be read as a fleeing gannet is suggested during the moment-of-truth scene between her and her husband seconds before when she was linked, by a cut-in, with a heavenward-looking gannet contemplating flight and freedom. Only after her body lies on the rock, may she be finally associated with a fish to be preyed upon by the swirling (hungry?) gannets. However, dead — as a lifeless fish — she would no longer be wanted by these particular piscivorous birds that prey on living creatures. Thus her connotative metamorphosis from diving gannet into dead fish only underscores her continued refusal of normal male desire. While in the novel she had played dead to escape a pathological and cruelly predatory degree and type of male craving, in the film, she becomes “actually dead” by escaping a more natural male yearning. This transformation subtly emphasizes *her* sexual dysfunction.

In addition, Irène's incarnation of a gannet dive is the only hint of the gannet's plunge in the film. Like her wielding of the knife in the fish cleaning scene, her avian dive recuperates a symbol that was associated with rape in the novel (the gannet's lacerating rapelike dive 39) for a new set of connotations related (at least in part) to female sexual dysfunction, while erasing any clear

relationship of the gannet's dive with other meanings that allude to a patriarchal form of heterosexual intercourse.

This play of connotations undermines if not undoes the more progressive possibility of reading Irène's dive as a leap away from phallocentrism (as freeing herself from patriarchy) even though the Reverend was associated with very prominent phallic Church imagery earlier in the film, notably while he stands at the altar in the sermon scene while the camera moves penetratively up the aisle. Indeed, since the sermon scene's phallic imagery is placed, by the content and delivery of the sermon itself, within the context of transgressive sexual desire not the male domination of women, the use of phallic imagery does not make the Reverend a symbol of the oppressive, patriarchal Church. It only emphasizes his hypocrisy as an adulterous pastor.

Furthermore, as another bizarre twist to the suicide scene, Irène looks relatively peaceful in the moment-of-truth scene with her husband just prior to her suicide and even betrays a faint smile. She seems serene before she makes her fatal dive. These physical signs make for an equivocal portrayal of a woman despondent over her husband's sexual betrayal. Why the smile? Why the beatific look before her plunge if she is actually in suicidal despair over her husband's recent transgression? Is this filmic Irène in fact happy that her husband has finally "found" Nora (as she ambiguously suggested he do in the fish cleaning scene) and that she is now free to leave this earth knowing her husband (who apparently and piously would never have divorced her) can finally father a child that she cannot give him? Does this explain her lack of negative emotion in the moment-of-truth scene? How could she be depressed about an

encounter she in fact had hoped for? Or is she simply quietly rejoicing that she now has a “reason” to “leave” a loveless marriage and an adulterous husband?

Since she says nothing in either the moment-of-truth scene or before her suicide, we do not know for sure all the reasons motivating her, just as in the novel. However, the film introduces a new set of enigmatic possibilities, some quite different from novel, which, moreover, are disturbing in their paradoxical suggestion of her (at least partial) acquiescence to the Reverend's inappropriate advances towards young Nora. Which brings us to a final point, since the method of suicide is not by hanging in the film, the suicide itself can no longer signify Irène's silencing as a woman. We cannot understand that she feels suffocated since her suicide no longer mirrors her stifling situation as a woman and as a pastor's wife.

And what do others have to say about her suicide? Near the end of the film, Nora declares that Irène “a été faite pour le malheur” as if to say that Irène's sad end was fated, a line which Nora also delivers in the novel. However, Simoneau de-emphasizes some of the patriarchal context in which this fatalistic statement is made in the novel and thereby attenuates the feminist critique embedded in that context. Recall, in Hébert's scene, Nora states, “Ma tante Irène était faite pour le malheur et elle est morte” (131). This statement immediately follows Nora's realization that the Reverend has sinned by fondling her, someone who is too young for relations with him. Specifically, after recollecting that the Reverend had stimulated her nipples with his “doigts consacrés” (131), she states, “Mon Dieu quel péché est-ce là! Mon Dieu donnez-moi bien vite un garçon de mon âge qui ne soit pas marié ni pasteur.

Pour le fun de tout mon corps” (131).³³ Her allusion to their age difference underscores the troubling power imbalance in their relations (something which cannot be ignored in spite of the attempts of critics, such as Marilyn Randall, to focus on the separate issue of Nora’s revenge-tainted desire). Because the Reverend, the adult, also tried to censure Nora for his conduct, Nora’s statement suggests that only unhappiness could be Irène’s lot, married to an adulterous, lecherous husband, who not only served hypocritically as the community’s pastor, but blamed women (notably his wife and his young niece, 23-24, 31-32, 44-47, 129) for his own sexual misconduct and indulgence with a minor over whom he has authority by virtue of age and station.

The inevitability of Irène’s death is suggested in the novel by Nora’s use of the coordinating conjunction “and” in her statement. However, since Hébert places Irène’s misery within the context of a patriarchal marriage in which the husband berates and devalues the wife and holds women responsible for *his* unseemly and domineering or manipulative sexual behaviour, the net of patriarchy is subtly condemned or at least evoked. A bad marriage to a sexist man created the inevitability of Irène’s death, not Irène’s supposedly lifeless spirit as the Reverend would have us believe. One infers from his wife’s demise in the novel that it is patriarchy that destroys women who become gender-bound within it through matrimony.

In the film, Nora’s remark about Irène comes several scenes after the molestation in which age difference is visible but never commented on. Since, in the film, Nora makes no explicit reference to the molestation when she says Irène was made for “le malheur” nor proclaims her preference for relations with

a boy of her own age, Nora's latent concerns with the Reverend's patriarchal exploitation of their age difference are not made overt as they were in the novel. On a positive note, Simoneau does have Olivia respond to Nora's query as to whether Irène was destined for misfortune, with the comment, "Oui. Peut-être qu'elle est enfin libérée". This statement suggests that by her suicide, Irène has succeeded in escaping something. The question is: what? Since in the film we see only the Reverend's sanctimonious adulterous behaviour as a pastor never the overt and damaging patriarchal behaviour he displayed to his wife and other women in the novel, Olivia's statement only resuggests that Irène has freed herself from her husband's clerical hypocrisy and perhaps his tendency to adultery and pedophilia, but not his disparaging, sexist treatment of her as wife and potential mother. Thus this near final scene only reinforces the limited outsider's view that Irène has had the fatalistic misadventure of being caught in an adulterous marriage.

And what do all these transformations suggest about the symbolic significance of the Reverend's childless marriage in the film? With hints about the Reverend's own infertility gone³⁴ and with his patriarchally unerogenous behaviour towards his wife all but erased, the resulting childlessness of his marriage cannot be read as a symbol of the sterility of either the patriarchal paradigm of marital relations or of the Christian patriarchy, itself. The issueless marriage simply underscores the aridity of a loveless union. The film offers two alternative possibilities for that lack of love, neither of which exposes or critiques patriarchy.

According to the simplest reading of the film, Simoneau may be suggesting that marital problems reside in a single cause arising from female reproductive failure and reactive, or perhaps simply inherent, female sexual dysfunction. In this scenario, the sex-deprived Reverend is only responding to his wife's despondent and frigid behaviour not causing it. This interpretation (particularly of the wife's *actual* sterility and *actual* frigidity) is based on a conventional and literal reading of the Reverend's claims in the novel. By unequivocally laying the originating cause for the marital breakdown on Irène's shoulders and attenuating, if not erasing, the Reverend's patriarchal behaviour towards his wife, this reading means that Simoneau is deflecting responsibility for Irène's unhappiness away from the Reverend and the patriarchal Church he symbolizes. *Her* fertility makes *her* so unhappy that she feels unlovable, refuses sex with her husband, and eventually stoops to hinting (if only ambiguously) that he seek sexual gratification and fatherhood with a pubescent girl. Thus, according to this new symbolic paradigm that Simoneau constructs by simplification and omission of content, any problems that may exist in marriage are the result of an actually frigid or a maternally depressed wife who drives even a loving preacher to lusting after his young flock during his sermons.

Alternatively, a more complex reading could find that the Reverend may be part of the root cause of the marriage's problems. Perhaps he is by nature a philanderer and perhaps his adulterous lusting predates the film. Perhaps then Irène reactively loses love for him as well as interest in life and sex, obliquely warns the Reverend to watch his behaviour around Nora, makes herself more unappealing to her adulterous husband by handling fish, claims to be both

infertile and then reactively depressed over that fact to keep her hurtfully unfaithful husband at bay, and finally commits suicide to escape his incorrigible extramarital desires? Perhaps a combination of the two readings are possible. In any case, what is clear is that in Simoneau's vision this is a marriage marked by the effects of adultery and the wife's actual barrenness and her actual or maternally despondent frigidity, not by the demeaning patriarchal behaviour of the husband. The latter is the significant omission. At best "loveless marriage" not "patriarchal marriage" is indicted, at worst the sterile woman, not sterile patriarchy is inculpated.

In addition, by exposing the troubles in the Reverend's marriage only, to the detriment of other marriages, Simoneau transforms it into *the* unhappy marriage of Griffin Creek. He solidifies this reemphasis by having the disintegrating relationship become the film's major subplot, threading its way chronologically through the whole adaptation, and by dramatizing several scenes depicting the figurative and literal infecundity of this union, to the omission of references to other conflictive conjugal relationships. This tack contrasts with Hébert's approach of according the Reverend's marital life detailed attention in the novel's early pages only and of depicting several troubled marriages. By then downplaying the patriarchal abuse within this larger web of marriages, as we saw in the first chapter, and by then omitting key signs of the Reverend's oppression of his wife, Simoneau achieves the coup de grace: the expurgation of any significant feminist critique of patriarchal marriage within Christendom.

The Reverend as Patriarchal Manipulator of the Bible

As noted in the first section, by virtue of his clerical position, the Reverend represents the patriarchal Judeo-Christian heritage of Griffin Creek. Hébert shows unequivocally that, within this role accorded to him by the patriarchal God,³⁵ the Reverend uses the Bible to oppress women. He cites from it to keep Pat and Pam afraid and subservient, to attract the sexually awakening Nora and Olivia for his own selfish ends, to criticize Nora for his own decision to molest her and to indirectly censure Irène's lack of sexual interest in him and thus justify his extramarital lusting. His manipulation of biblical textual authority lends credence to Stevens' remark, "Il n'y a que mon oncle Nicolas pour ... calmer [les femmes] et leur faire entendre raison. Au nom de Dieu et de la loi de l'Eglise qui sait remettre les femmes à leur place" (88). Let us examine these examples in more detail and review what Simoneau chooses to do with them.

In the novel, the Reverend uses not only the paternal ruler's iron rod (as we saw in the first chapter) but his deep preacher's voice and his clerically selected tales from the Bible to control his housemaid nieces:

Sans jamais les toucher, rien qu'avec ma voix de basse caverneuse, je les retourne comme des feuilles légères dans le vent. Pour elles seules je débite mes plus beaux sermons. Tous les anges du ciel et les démons de l'enfer surgissent de la Bible, à mon appel, se pressent la nuit au chevet des jumelles endormies. Nourries de l'Écriture, par les prophètes et les rois, les jumelles ont des rêves féroces et glorieux. Maître de leurs songes j'exerce un ministère dérisoire, de peu d'envergure, mais d'autorité absolue (18).³⁶

Since Pat and Pam are not included as characters in the film, the Reverend cannot be shown engaging in such behaviour with them.³⁷ However, neither is

this behaviour synthesized into his characterization. He uses none of these clerical and biblical control tactics with any of the young women or his wife in the film.

Another example of the Reverend's patriarchal use of biblical text occurs after his fondling of Nora. According to her account in the novel, the Reverend ends his molestation with the suggestion that she is the temptress Eve who is causing his, and by extension Griffin Creek's, fall from grace. Once his pawing of Nora's breasts is caught in Perceval's gaze of conscience, the Reverend leaps up, and, as Nora attests, "dit qu[']elle est]... mauvaise. Il serre les poings. Il a l'air de vouloir [la]... battre. Il dit que c'est par [elle]... que le péché est entré à Griffin Creek" (129). Using the patriarchal interpretation of the Eve myth, he, the adult male perpetrator of sexual assault, shifts responsibility for his actions onto Nora, the underage female victim. This blaming is a key element in developing the feminist perspective on the scene in the novel. For one, it shows that the Reverend is reenacting the sexist act of projecting his culpability onto the female Other (Slott 1986 164). He is "casting ... [evil] into the distorted mold of the myth of feminine evil", an age-old practice of patriarchal Christian theologians that Mary Daly describes in her classic *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (47). For another, his deflection of personal guilt onto Nora using the traditional interpretation of the Eve myth is shown to affect her negatively. As critics observe, she internalizes this censure, a process that Daly delineates for women as a group in her influential feminist treatise on women's experience within Christianity (44-68).

In contrast, Nora, true to her egalitarian name, had proclaimed herself, prior to the molestation, a new Eve in a celebratory affirmation of her equality with Adam, born not of his rib but of the same clay (116), a statement that critics such as Neil B. Bishop (1984) and Kathryn Slott (1987) observe to be key to Nora's challenge to the Law of the Father, a feminist challenge echoed in other Hébert work that treats the Eve theme (Kells). As this dynamic in the novel shows, Nora (as representative of the modern woman) instinctively attempts to appropriate the Eve myth positively while the Reverend (as representative of the retrograde patriarchal law) attempts to reinsert her into its traditional and negative version.

Conversely, in the film's molestation scene, the Reverend neither accuses Nora of being like Eve nor even becomes angry with her, actions which in the novel served to inculcate her in a indirect bid at male control over her sexuality. By omitting any indication of the Reverend's equation of Nora with Eve, Simoneau expurgates a symbolic act key to contextualizing Nicolas Jones' behaviour within the workings of dominant patriarchal ideology. Indeed, the Reverend's only direct laying of blame for his conduct occurs much later in the film narrative and is directed towards God, Himself, rather than towards Nora, a shift that underscores Simoneau's core interest in inter-male (Father/Son) conflict not male domination and heterosexual conflict. Further, by deleting all of the Reverend's displaced ire and by expunging almost all of Nora's reactive sense of guilt in the molestation scene,³⁸ Simoneau removes emotions central to the gender dynamics of sexual assault in patriarchy.

Simoneau thus reinserts the scene within the romance tradition of seduction. Devoid of sexist overtones, the molestation becomes decontextualized and thus somewhat normalized as a pathetic, inappropriate, mildly coercive seduction of a young girl by an older man hungrily angling for sexual contact (as suggested by the gannet cries early in the scene and the dried fish and nets in the background). In short, Simoneau chooses to hint at a mild version of the sexual-fishing trope (indirectly suggested in Nora's and the Reverend's accounts in the novel by the mention of the boathouse setting [45, 128] and in which we learn from the Reverend's "book" that fishing gear is stored out of season [40]), while evacuating the problematic treatment of female sexuality under Christian patriarchy. In a very selective illustration of Nora's account, Simoneau focuses notably on the paragraph in the novel in which the Reverend wheedlingly tells Nora, "[I]l ne faut détester personne" (128). That this encounter is chiefly sexual and not exploitative as in the novel is further underscored by the fact that Perceval, the novel's eye of intuitive morality, does not begin screaming when he witnesses this scene in the film, but only manifests long and teary-eyed pleasure.

Furthermore, Nora's proclamation as the new, egalitarian Eve finds no mention in the film, further underscoring Simoneau's complete disengagement with the dramatic tensions of playing out alternate visions of the Eve theme between representatives of the modern woman and the patriarchal Church. The only opposition Nora offers the Reverend in the film is in the brief scene in which she accidentally runs into him. When he warns her to be careful where she treads, she insolently responds, "Je mets les pieds où je veux." While this

is a more direct challenge to the representative of the Father than any comments she makes about Eve in the novel (for she voices her resistance directly to him, does not merely think it as in the novel), it is nevertheless less significant in terms of an ideological confrontation than her thoughts in the novel, since it does not critically engage with the Eve myth or voice her interest in sexual equality.

Turning to another point, much has been made of the sexually repressive Christian regime of Griffin Creek by scholars such as Karen Gould and Antoine Sirois. Critics note that Stevens claims, “[L]es filles d’ici sont intouchables jusqu’au mariage. C’est le pasteur mon oncle qui l’a dit” (242). However, these readers ignore the fact that, while the Reverend may indeed be a sexually repressive force, Hébert barely shows him working actively in that role with his parishioners and certainly not in his sermons. Rather, she depicts the Reverend using the Bible not to repress sexual energy among young girls but to harness it for himself. Indeed, his abuse of his office and his manipulation of the Bible represent the unscrupulous attempt by patriarchal men to mold female sexual desire for their own benefit. As Rosalind Coward argues, within a patriarchal society:

female desire is stimulated, mobilised, and tied to structures which ultimately oppress us (28)... [O]ur most crucial sense of ourselves, our desire and our pleasure, has been caught up and mobilised, has been made central in discourses which constantly sustain male power and privilege... and female subordination (1985b 29).

In the only sermon scene in the novel, the Reverend pruriently preaches from *The Song of Songs*. He openly attempts to use the one sexually

celebratory section in the Bible to charm his nubile prey: “Je les prépare comme de jeunes fiancées, attentives au chant de l’amour en marche vers elles.... Je module. J’articule chaque son, chaque syllabe, je fais passer le souffle de la terre dans le Verbe de Dieu” (28). He does not sermonically expound on the temptations of lust or the sins of premarital or extramarital sex but openly and unabashedly enacts them, while, in the patriarchal tradition of Eve-blaming, he casts female physical charms as the sinful temptation — the evil — which leads him astray. In internal monologue, he blames the gaze of the silent, inexperienced girls for his transgressive actions and feelings: “Leurs yeux de violette de d’outremer se lèvent vers moi pour ma damnation” (28).³⁹

At the same time, he casts his own physical charms in the lighter lustful tradition of *The Song of Songs*: where a single wisp of his hair smites — not “damns” or leads into damnation — the woman’s heart. Notably he imagines Olivia thinking, “Tu m’as blessée, mon ami, avec un seul cheveu de ta nuque” (28). Here he creates a significant gender reversal of sexual roles. In the classic du Fossé French translation of *The Song of Songs* (which Hébert seems to use), it is the man who says that “[s]on épouse” smites him with her gaze and a lock of hair (*Cantique des cantiques* IV:9, du Fossé translation).⁴⁰ In the Reverend’s memory of the play of gazes and the characters’ appropriation of lines from the sermon, the woman is metaphorically smitten and set alight by the lock of male hair. In this reassignment of gender roles, the Reverend reveals both his personal and the dominant patriarchal paradigm of female/male sexuality, which frames female physical charms (the gaze) as maleficent and male charms (hair) as perhaps evocatively painful or pain-invoking (potentially

heart-breaking) but not evil. Thus while the traditional translation of *The Song of Songs* had allowed for the desiring man to view the desirable woman not as an evil or sinfully tempting Eve figure but as merely (and perhaps paradoxically painfully) desirable, the Reverend manipulatively buries that less treacherous male view of female desirability, while simultaneously reappropriating it to fantasize about his own desirability as a man in the eyes of a woman.

Once the Reverend has actively and publicly encouraged the girls' sexual interest in him using *The Song of Songs*, he, as the typical possessive patriarch, then becomes flustered with jealousy when another man, Stevens, invades his exclusive space for the inveiglement of women. Through the play of the gaze, the interior of the Church becomes the site for a competitive male tussle over female favour. Only after the Reverend has been threatened by the presence of Stevens, a young man of at least an appropriate age for Nora and Olivia, does the Reverend begin preaching, in a later scene, to Nora and Olivia about "le séducteur couvert de peaux de brebis" (50). As this narrative order reveals, he chooses the topics of his sermons not on the basis of how best to convey the Church's teachings on sexual conduct to his flock, but on the basis of either what he hopes to gain sexually from the young women or how he hopes to control them sexually. As he says, "Depuis quelque temps je choisis avec encore plus de soin les psaumes et les hymnes du dimanche en pensant aux petites Atkins" (28). Quite simply, his sermonic use of the Bible, particularly *The Song of Songs*, constitutes a form of sexual manipulation for personal gain.

There is another level of gendered irony embedded in the Reverend's use of *The Song of Songs*. As a carnal hymn between heterosexual lovers, it

has become emblematic in Western culture of the mutual expression of passion. However, the Reverend's behaviour towards women in general repeatedly reveals that he does not personally subscribe to this concept of mutuality. He either inhibits, condemns, or manipulates the female characters' expression of their own desire. For instance, his utilitarian attitude towards his wife as sexual object/prey at his command shows him unable to nurture mutuality in his one real relationship — his marriage — which leaves him looking manipulatively and illicitly for fulfilment elsewhere using the biblical Song of Songs. Furthermore, he defiles the concept of mutuality by extramaritally awakening the sexual interest of young women who are not his equals in social standing or age and who thus are not ethically, psychologically, emotionally or socially in a position to enjoy a mutual sexual relationship with him. Finally, when Nora eventually, in a later scene, does visibly respond to his inappropriate attentions, her stimulated nipples momentarily betraying anatomical arousal during the molestation (suggesting a brief mutual state of attraction), he condemns her as the temptress Eve. Not only can he not accept the unethical consequences of his own extramarital lusting, but he rejects mutuality when he does arouse a woman. As the earlier discussion of his attitude towards his wife showed, he does not want to share in the pleasures of the body but seeks to *take* pleasure from the female body.

What does Simoneau make of Hébert's demonstration of the Reverend's manipulation of the Bible's one sexual text? Firstly, he removes the Reverend's use of The Song of Songs. Thus the notion that the Reverend exploits this erotic biblical text for his own sexual and manipulatively patriarchal ends is

sidelined. Simoneau conflates the intent of the Reverend's openly lustful sermon in the novel (delivered before Irène's suicide) with his later private sanctimonious warnings to Olivia and Nora about the "séducteur couvert de peau de brebis" (50) (given after Irène's suicide), and the mothers' and foremothers' intermittent warnings against sex (which in the novel were made in an effort to protect their female offspring from predatory males). This conflation results in the Reverend's lecherous delivery (before Irène's suicide) of a traditional but sexually-evocative sermon on the demonic temptations of desire, especially the temptations of the gaze and of the senses in general, as he ogles at Nora pharisaically preaching lines such as, "Il faut se méfier de nos regards. C'est par nos yeux que pénètrent toutes nos tentations. Il faut se méfier de notre esprit, du plaisir de nos sens, de nos bouches et de nos mains."

This scene can superficially be read as a succinct and effective drawing together of various related narrative strands of the novel into one scene. However, this particular amalgamation shifts the film away from Hébert's concerns with the patriarchal clergyman's open manipulation of erotically evocative passages of the Bible to sexually control women. Instead, it brings to the fore Hébert's more generic comment on clerical hypocrisy as it portrays the clergyman sanctimoniously speaking from the pulpit against lust while evidently overcome with desire for a female minor. In short, the Reverend no longer manipulates the pure expression of carnality in *The Song of Songs* while abusing its portrayal of the mutual expression of love for his own purposes. Rather, in the Calvinist-Jansenist tradition he is very conventionally preaching personal and especially sexual restraint, using Matthew as a starting point. We

see only the irony of the Reverend as a Tartuffe figure, leering at Olivia and Nora while preaching against the temptation of the gaze and affirming that "Chacun ici peut être le démon de quelqu'un d'autre."

As this last line indicates, no longer is the temptation of the look gender coded. No longer is the man blaming his transgressions on the damning gaze of the woman (something that could have been evoked verbally in the actual sermon or elsewhere in dialogue). If anything, the Reverend actively owns the gaze in this scene in the film, making the girls, especially Nora, uncomfortable, in a classic demonstration of Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze. While this shift in emphasis on the controlling male gaze (rather than the seductive female one) frames the Reverend more clearly in the film than in the novel as consciously holding the upper hand in the play of looks and thus more consciously responsible for his own downfall, it removes his sexist attitude of casting the female as evil tempter and thus decontextualizes the allusions to patriarchal ways of thinking that Hébert was exposing in her novel.

Moreover, not only does the Reverend not cite *The Song of Songs* during the sermon, but there is no other scene or line of dialogue that indicates that he will be carefully and deliberately selecting sexual passages from the Bible especially for the girls' ears and his personal benefit. Indeed, no scene shows him carefully selecting anything for his sermons to sexually control the girls. As depicted, he seems merely to be overcome by his feelings during the sermon, not manipulatively planning to give these feelings expression in a public forum. Nevertheless, Simoneau does retain the Reverend's abuse of clerical power to a degree. The Reverend still uses the Church interior and his clerical office as a

place and position from which to express his lusting and to consolidate the sway he holds over at least one young woman, Nora .

However, while Simoneau retains one element of the complex play of irony that Hébert embeds in the Reverend's sermon scene in the novel, namely the Reverend's hypocritical use of his office, even that irony is underplayed in the film. Simoneau has the Reverend attenuate the degree of his own sanctimoniousness by having him publicly recognize his own capacity for weakness. By stating that even his clerical vestments cannot protect him from temptation and by not implicitly blaming his transgression on the evil of female temptation, such as the girls' blue eyes, he frames himself (perhaps self-defensively) as merely human, not sexist. In short, Simoneau suppresses the portrayal of the Reverend as sexist manipulator of the Bible. In a simplification of the moral dilemma, he becomes simply a frail sinner, driven to hypocrisy by sexual deprivation. Indeed, like any mortal, he is merely tempted by "the devil".

This latter point brings us to another area of the novel's play on theological convention which Simoneau squarely returns to the tradition. As with other aspects of the novel in which Simoneau opts for the superficial interpretation of Hébert's critical, ironic or subversive play on cultural clichés, Simoneau resorts to conventional interpretations of the devil, lust and sin. In keeping with a non-feminist and shallow reading of *Les Fous de Bassan*, he situates the community's moral code within the Pauline/Augustine tradition in which lusting is sinful and extramarital sexual desire is equated with acts of the devil only. In this paradigm, extramarital sexual desire is a form of temptation personified by the devil. While this reading is not incorrect, it is incomplete

since Hébert constructs her text to make associations not only between Satan and extramarital sexual desire (from the Reverend's point-of-view), but between Satan and sexism (from the reader's point-of-view).

The Reverend's self-serving citations from and allusions to certain passages from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians offer not only additional evidence of Nicolas Jones' sexism but make subtextual associations between the devil and that sexism. As this discussion will show, he attempts to use biblical authority to frame his wife's supposed frigidity as the cause of his sexual misconduct so that he can excuse his own dishonourable and dishonouring behaviour towards her. His manipulation of Paul's text becomes an apology for his own patriarchal behaviour.

In the chapter from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians from which the Reverend frequently cites (Chapter 7), Paul states that if marital partners do not readily provide for each other's sexual needs, passion may become overwhelming for the unsatisfied partner, who may then be tempted by Satan. Specifically, Paul suggests that Satan may take advantage of the dissatisfied partner's erotic desires, enticing her or him to look outside the marriage for satisfaction. The Reverend evidently wants (us) to believe that this is his situation. Citing Paul (1 Cor 7:2, which almost immediately precedes Paul's warning about the devil in marital affairs), the Reverend implies that he married to prevent his engagement in fornication and that, woe to him, once he married the expressionless woman, Irène, who seemed "[f]aite pour devenir femme de pasteur" (32), he discovered that her reserve extended to her libido (23 and 24). Between selected passages from Paul, the Reverend states that while he lies

beside his cold fish of a sleeping wife, he resorts to fantasies about the Atkins cousins (24). The Reverend evidently clings to the ideas contained in 1Cor 7:5 which suggest that sexual desire itself is not maleficent but rather the nebulous figure of Satan, who will incite you do wicked deeds (to commit adultery for sexual satisfaction) if your marital partner does not provide you with sex.

However, in reading the Reverend's text from a feminist perspective, one understands that if extramarital lusting is an act of the devil, Satan nevertheless also personifies, at least in part, sexism. The passages that associate the male characters with evil or the devil are often found in contexts in which they display contempt for women. In the case of the Reverend, his behaviour at the barn dance provides a compelling example. When Felicity explains to Perceval that his uncle has been tempted by the devil and that that is why he is "devouring" his nieces hands (47), the immediate implication to the reader is that the Reverend is out-of-control because of unsatisfied sexual needs since he has already included passages that imply that his sexually wayward thoughts are caused by his wife's frigidity. However, in the Reverend's own description of the barn dance scene, he spends more text focusing on his wife's apparent lack of sensual interest and behaviour than on his nieces' desirability or his feelings for them, revealing an underlying interest in his wife's reactions. He is consciously (and one might add contemptuously and flagrantly) flaunting his attentions on his nieces in front of his apparently unseeing but very present wife. Why? Is he focusing on her disinterest to excuse or explain his extramarital flirtations? Is he trying to make her jealous? Is he trying prove to himself that she is really so disconnected from his world that she does not see nor understand his

incestuous, adulterous advances towards his nieces? Or is he (also) doing something even more ominous?

A comparison between what the Reverend chooses to retain from his preferred biblical authority on marital relations, Paul, and what he chooses to ignore reveals that the Reverend's underlying sexism drives his demeaning behaviour towards his wife, which is finally publicly manifested at the dance. While his construction of his tale of sexual unfulfillment suggests that he explains his philandering by leaning on Paul's explication of extramarital temptation in sexless marriages, the Reverend's account shows, in addition, that he ignores Paul's treatise on mutuality, which is also contained in that famous chapter seven from which the Reverend repeatedly cites. His story becomes a complex act of self-deception through biblical selection.

To be specific, nowhere does the Reverend display any of the qualities of love or respect that Paul's chapter advocates. Although we would never know it from the Reverend's narrative, Paul endorses the mutual expression of physical and emotional love — that is just as the wife aims to please her spouse (not only sexually, but in all things) so must the husband (1 Cor. 7:3 and especially 1Cor 7:33 and 34). The Reverend displays no such desire to satisfy his wife. Rather, his behaviour towards her and his descriptions of her indicate that he holds her in complete disesteem.

In the Reverend's words, Irène is a "créature inutile" (23) because she has failed to produce the son he so desperately wants. He claims that under the older Judaic law he could have divorced her "au vu et au su de tous" (23), but under Christianity (as Paul tells us in Chapter 7) he cannot. The Reverend's

sexism has him perceive his childless — sonless — wife as unworthy of his respect. Although his adherence to Christianity (ironically a religion which proclaims love, charity and forgiveness) prevents him from legally renouncing his wife, he does so all the same — and in public — at the barn dance.

Whatever else his intentions, it becomes clear that his conduct at the dance is a cruel display of public disrespect for his wife that serves to repudiate her for her (apparent) lack of sensual interests. His actions constitute a symbolic divorce as he pointedly ignores her and re-pairs with other female partners. Thus the figurative devil that tempts the Reverend to publicly lavish inappropriate attentions on his nieces in front of his wife represents less his extramarital lust and more his sexist disdain for and patriarchal will to disavow his attendant spouse. That is why he pays more textual attention to her (re)actions rather than to his yearning for his nieces: it is a scene primarily between him and his wife. The devil, in short, is as much or more the Reverend's sexism, as it is the external, nebulous tempter of unfulfilled passion that he wants us to believe.⁴¹

Any such correlation between sexism, the devil and the Reverend is difficult to make in the film. The Reverend's sermon derives straightforwardly from the Pauline/Augustine tradition in which sexual desire, not even extramarital desire, is a form of temptation, which is personified by the devil. There is no ironic interplay between a biblical treatise on marital relations, extramarital lust and sexism since the Reverend in the film does not quote selectively from Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. The Reverend's concupiscence is only that, not a smokescreen for more covert, patriarchal attitudes and practices. The devil that plagues him is not (at least in part) his

sexist need to repudiate and publicly humiliate the non-sensually compliant wife but merely carnal temptation.

Notably, at the barn dance in the film, we do not see Irène from the Reverend's point-of-view, even momentarily. Unlike in the novel, he does not seem to be concerned with the fact that she sits alone at a table with a plate of food in front of her that she does not touch. Nor does he seem especially intent on dancing with Nora and Olivia or anyone, while pointedly taking note that his wife does not notice. Although he does dance twice with Nora, these acts are barely visible. Rather, he dances most prominently with an adult woman, Maureen, to whom he displays respect but no veiled hope that his wife will notice. He manifests no public and (supposedly) compensative devouring of nubile or otherwise female hands in front of his wife that could be labelled by a Christian on-looker as the work of the lustful devil, or by a sympathetic female, if not feminist, spectator as the flaunting of disrespect for his attendant wife. In short, there is no clear indication that the Reverend is using the dance as a public place to renounce his insensate wife. He is simply enjoying himself while she is not; the incidents at barn dance merely illustrate their two opposing personalities.

The Reverend not only uses the Bible to oppress women but also quotes from it in recognition of his own patriarchal contribution to the apocalyptic dispersion of Griffin Creek, something he does not do in the film. One example occurs in the novel's slap scene. In that scene, the Reverend stalks Nora, and when he sees her flirting with the American, he possessively and jealously strikes her with all his might to express his male ownership and censure. He

then cites Genesis 6:11: "La terre se corrompt à la face de Dieu et la terre est pleine de violence" (43). This quotation reminds the reader of the moment when God, upon seeing the brutality and corruption of men, decides to flood the earth and wipe it clean. As the guilt-ridden, reminiscing Reverend realizes, his blow marked the beginning of unacceptable levels of patriarchal violence that led inexorably to the downfall of his own community.

In contrast, in the film he only nearly hits Nora and this merely because she accidentally runs into him after fleeing Stevens' derision and then insolently contests the Reverend's admonishments. Unlike in the novel, in which the Reverend had long and lecherously spied on her when she was alone and then with another man before smacking her, the Reverend in the film had not seen her coming nor that she had been coyly approaching Stevens moments before. The Reverend in the film is thus not possessively (patriarchally) jealous as he was in the novel but merely surprised with her sudden arrival and then disconcerted with her impertinence. Moreover, he feels so guilty about his brush with the sinful use of force that he immediately confesses to his wife. He does no such thing in the novel. In addition, and most significant to this discussion, Simoneau find no way to incorporate into the film the biblical quotation which the Reverend makes about his whack in the novel. In excising this reference, Simoneau removes the added indication that the Reverend's paternal and clerical mistreatment of women augurs the destruction of the village — that God will witness his tyranny and command the obliteration of his world. Indeed, why would God order such an end if the Reverend is behaving less badly?.

In fact, as we have already seen, Simoneau is constantly attenuating the behaviour of patriarchs. In according the Reverend in the slap scene in the novel the dual symbolic paternal role of abusive, sexually covetous father/Father, Hébert had underscored both the private (familial) and institutional (clerical) oppression of women. In according the Reverend the more singular role of the Father (for his avuncular-paternal status is much less clear in the film) who is surprised into committing a near but minor assault to which he immediately owns up, Simoneau underscores the Reverend's human frailty and inherent integrity. The "almost" slap scene in the film thus does not carry the same elements of feminist critique as the actual slap scene in the novel. This lessening of the type and level of aggression in the film tempers the irony that Hébert had embedded into the tainted nature of his pastoral and avuncular relationship with Nora in the novel. This whitewashing of the attack also lessens its seriousness and makes it more pitiful and excusable, just as we saw in the earlier discussion about the molestation scene. Most importantly it removes the ominous quality of this first example of clerical violence against a young woman, who in the novel, more clearly represented the modern sexual woman.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated once again that Simoneau did not choose to read *Les Fous de Bassan* like a feminist as he continues to palliate, erase or transpose onto women signs of patriarchal conduct that Hébert was unsympathetically laying bare in her novel. Specifically, he avoids the whole

issue of the mistreatment of women by the male-dominated Christian Church both by conventionally reading the difficulties of the Reverend's and Irène's marriage as ones related to individual female infertility, female depression and male infidelity rather than as problems related to patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving and by expurgating the Reverend's complex manipulation of the Bible to control women.

Notably, Simoneau reconstructs various manifestations of the Reverend's patriarchal obsession with establishing a transcendent paternity, either by attenuating it or by displacing it onto his wife, and cleanses his marriage of strong evidence of venatic sexual abuse. Numerous examples of his oppression of women via the Word are either erased or recuperated for the more simplified and traditional reading of life under a sexually regulatory Church. Symbolic references to rape (marital and otherwise) through the knife and the gannet's dive are recuperated and safely blurred under symbols with new gender associations linked to the dysfunctional wife. Iconographic allusions to marital oppression of women and methods of escaping are also ambiguously but negatively transfigured, again in ways that variously frame the wife as sexually impaired, even collusively suggestive of the husband's adultery with a minor. Hébert's comment on the sterility of patriarchal marriage, indeed the sterility and self-destructiveness of the Christian Church and patriarchy itself, is bowdlerized. Together these transformations suppress Hébert's sometimes covert but always reprobatory portrayal of the fateful end that an abusive Christian patriarchy brings to wife and husband, to women and men, and to community.

None of these changes were necessitated by the technological or narrative constraints of cinematic adaptation. All were the result of either subtle transmutations in or deletions of dialogue, gesture, biblical quotations and visual symbols. Hébert's original and ironic stance could thus have been embedded in the film through the use of more faithful gestures; less ambiguous and more critically revealing dialogue and action; targeted delivery of the original biblical texts in the sermon interplaying more ironically with images of male control of female sexuality; and judicious editorial juxtaposition of scenes containing interactions between characters and single actions of characters that more forcefully reveal women's oppression by either the Church itself or by its clerical and husbandly representative.

¹ See LeBlanc; Mésavage; Senécal; Sirois; Slott (1987) on the former topic and M. Anderson; Bishop (1984); Mésavage; Slott (1987); Smart (1988) on the latter topic.

² For instance, he contemplates, "ma fin en marche", 27, and affirms, "Je me désagrège à petit feu dans une demeure vermoulue", 27. He frequently notes the approaching cold, frosts, chills and drafts of winter. He repeatedly refers to God's judgment and Judgment Day. He alludes to Hamlet's suicide soliloquy with his citation "That is the question", 22, and wishes he could be abruptly put out of his misery "et mourir sous l'éclair de la Parole", 27.

³ For instance, Slott reads the Reverend's "insecurity with respect to his mother" as his reason for wanting a son (1986): 161.

⁴ Like the scripters of the Bible, he is obsessed with lineage.

⁵ See LeBlanc for intertextual comparisons between the Reverend's comments and the Bible, 297.

⁶ Relatedly, with reference to other passages, critics, such as Mésavage and Sirois, also note that the Reverend is a parody of Christ.

⁷ In an alternative feminist interpretation using a psychoanalytical model, Gould argues that with the contrast between the mural by the twins and the portraits by the Reverend, "Hébert ironically opposes the 'simple' phallic truth of the unified self — in this case the pastor and his uniform portraits — with the infinite plurality of female sexuality and desire through the plural focus and material fluidity found in the inventive murals of the two old sister-spinsters", 924.

⁸ See LeBlanc for an alternative reading on Hébert's play on traditional Christian iconography, 300-303. Smart reads the portraits as reminiscent of "les portraits d'ancêtres du roman de la terre" (1988): 256.

⁹ He states, "Non, ce n'est pas Stevens qui a manqué le premier", 27; "Dieu seul pourra me laver de l'ombre de ma faute et tout Griffin Creek avec moi que je traîne dans l'ombre de ma faute", 48.

¹⁰ For other examples, see also 46, 118, 129, 131. In addition, through intertextual reference to Faulkner's *Light in August*, Reid argues that the Reverend is impotent with an adult woman, a pedophile who must turn to children for sexual gratification, 119. As for his middle-age, he is thirty-five years old, middle-aged for that time period.

¹¹ The female denotation is established in the first pages of the novel when Pat and Pam draw their version of the creation of Griffin Creek as they cast back through their foremothers to "la première créature enjuponnée", 16.

¹² See for instance Dworkin's article "Power" on hunting and pornography and Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman*. Some aspects of the hunting motif are noted in passing by Bishop (1984-85): 188; Noble 63; Rea 172-173, and are elaborated on somewhat by Dufault 186-187.

¹³ Recall that he also views young Nora's genitalia in this way, as revealed by his possessive and vulval reference to "sa petite chatte" in the hunting scene, 126.

¹⁴ His obsession with proving his virility adds doubt to his actual fertility. If he truly believed he were a virile male he would have nothing to prove. His obsession suggests his sexual insecurity.

¹⁵ Olivia ambiguously describes Irène with "son air de chouette clouée au mur", 220. While "chouette" denotes owl, Hébert's use of the noun also plays with its opposing meanings. Equivocally, its meaning comprises the disparaging connotation of "une vieille chouette" and the positive connotation of beauty signified by the complimentary use of the adjective "chouette." With the insulting connotation, Olivia may be expressing an internalized negative view of older women in Griffin Creek society. The suggestion that Irène is an owl pinned to the wall echoes the references to the hunters' homes decorated with beheaded game, game associated with the female: "créature", 40.

¹⁶ Indeed, Pallister goes so far as to see Irène, and by extension all Griffin Creek women, as associated with death (1995): 194-195. Although this generalization recognizes that several women die in the novel, it ignores the fact that women are directly or indirectly the victims of male violence and that sexually-inexperienced women, represented by Olivia and Nora, are primarily associated with light and life prior to their intimate contact with sexist men. Women become cold and deathlike or actually die only after negative, patriarchal heterosexual experiences.

¹⁷ See Bishop's (1984) and Slott's (1987) excellent analyses of Nicolas Jones' obsessive desire to repress facts about his incest. Côté and Mitchell have also observed that the Reverend may have witnessed the rape and murders, 87. Covering up for Stevens would be the worst crime of all.

¹⁸ In the most time-encompassing description, Stevens says Irène is "incolore, inodore et sans saveur, déjà morte depuis sa naissance", 101. This remark may reveal more about Stevens' sexist insensitivity than about Irène's sensual state. Indeed, it is suspect for he has not really known her all her life, being much younger than her.

¹⁹ Nora says, "Depuis si longtemps ma tante Irène dort comme une morte", 129. Her use of "depuis" suggests that there was a before time when Irène was sensually alive. The description casts Irène in the role of "La Belle au bois dormant", awaiting the awakening kiss of prince charming, a kiss she never receives since her husband, "une brute", 119, seems incapable of tender expressions of love.

²⁰ As his predilection for the Old Testament prophet Malachi suggests, the Reverend is anguished by God's knowledge of his betrayal of his wife. See in particular Malachi 2:14.

²¹ Hébert is clear in another passage that losing one's taste for something that one once savoured not only literally indicates but also symbolizes that person's greater preoccupation with something else. For instance, Bob Allen's mother tempts a police officer with the smells of her delicious cake, the first piece of which he eats with relish. However, the second piece he consumes only perfunctorily, "sans goûter semble-t-il, tout occupé à ruminer dans sa tête le rapport qu'il va faire", 169. With Hébert showing how it is normal for people in engrossing situations to lose their gusto, the reader can infer that Irène and the younger Felicity were also not inherently without taste for the sensual (and the sexual) but were too preoccupied with other feelings (indeed their own dramas as oppressed, married women) to partake of those pleasures.

²² See for instance Nancy Cott's article "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850" in which she argues that "'passionlessness' was a norm that

Victorian women adopted [among other things to] free themselves from the inconsiderate, if not brutal, sexual passions of men", Kern 422. Ewing has commented on the "Victorian morality" that governs family relationships in Griffin Creek, 106.

²³ Pallister also notes this irony but does not discuss or explain it (1995): 525n56

²⁴ Merler argues for looking beyond the interpretation that several critics had given up to her review of the literature that Irène had committed suicide because of jealousy or distress over her husband's relationship with Nora, 40. Séjor suggests that Irène feels helpless before Nicolas' inexorable march towards sin, 247. Alternatively, one may ask, because she is unable to fulfil the restricted and restrictive motherhood role selfishly assigned by her husband, does she assume the guilt and shame for "causing" her husband's exploitive incestuous relations with his young niece as he desperately seeks to prove his virility by any means? Or, does she simply despondently reject continued association with her sinful husband?

²⁵ For instance, the Reverend remembers God's warning to Cain just before he kills Abel (Gen. 4:7) when he imagines Lady Macbeth's unwashable spot of blood, symbol of his crimes against women, 17. See Senécal for more on the biblical downfall of Griffin Creek and the Reverend's contribution to it.

²⁶ I concur with Collie's, Gould's, Slott's (1987) and Smart's (1988) readings of the twins' paintings in the novel, not with Pallister's. Unlike the other critics, she argues that Pat's and Pam's mural does "not constitute important feminine 'rapports' [with Griffin Creek history?]" (1995 187). She then suggests, in the only article dealing with this mural in the film, that, therefore, the transformation of this mural into the paintings we see in the film does not constitute a feminist erasure. As for the notion that the paintings express a form of writing from the body, exemplary of "l'écriture féminine", various images beyond the depictions of the women themselves and "feminine accessories" (such as the lace and ribbons), suggest women and the female body. For instance, the explosive quality of the images and colours as well as the fluid quality of the undersea world can be read as orgasmic; the pea images can be read as clitoral and the flowers as vulval. The sea itself is the archetypal mother that spawns the female line and nurtures the female victims of patriarchy.

²⁷ Are we to understand this shot as an expression of old Stevens' point-of-view since he is the reminiscing narrator of the film? Can he be expected to "remember" a scene in which he was not present and could not have known anything about?

²⁸ Recall that in the novel the Reverend preached on the procreative duty of men, suggesting that it was their Christian duty to sire children. This preaching helped explain the Reverend's sense of inadequacy at not having produced any children. Simoneau could have introduced similar preaching directed at women to explain Irène's feelings of inadequacy.

²⁹ Alternatively she could simply be speaking unemotionally simply because she is acting like the dispassionate woman that the Reverend saw her as in the novel.

³⁰ Recall that as an old man he alludes to Hamlet's suicide soliloquy while sensing the guilty, out-of-body beating of his heart like the murderer in Edgar Allan Poe's famous story "The Tell-Tale Heart", 22.

³¹ Indeed, since no other scene deals with the Reverend's guilty conscience, this scene is also significant because it does not convey any suggestion that the Reverend feels contrition about lying about witnessing the rape and murders, 46, 50. Also see Côté and Mitchell, 87.

³² For examples in the novel see Boyce and Lee. In contrast, in the film, the tight framing on Nora's breasts outlined in her snug dress in the "almost slap scene" between the Reverend and Nora is shown by the neutral camera eye not from the Reverend's point-of-view. Indeed, it is shown before the Reverend even sees her. In addition, the Reverend never looks at Nora's bosom in the film's molestation scene, unlike in the novel.

³³ A certain ambiguity lies in this statement since it is not clear to what specifically "est-ce là" refers. The passage implies that the act of being stimulated by a married man of the cloth was a sin, but for whom? Nora or the Reverend? Randall has read the passage as revealing Nora's realization of her *own* sense of guilt, 71. However, it is just as valid to interpret that Nora immediately prays for a man her own age because she realizes that *the Reverend* has sinned by virtue of his age and position (suggested in no uncertain terms by "doigts sacrés") and that she does not want to be involved in relations marked by power imbalances, something she

affirms earlier, 127. While, as Randall states, Nora is conscious of her own vengeful reasons for engaging in relations with the Reverend, it must be acknowledged that these reasons do not erase the Reverend's responsibility, as an adult, for his own behaviour.

³⁴ Although he is stout, the film includes no statement to link symbolically either this characteristic or any other to his sterility, unlike in the novel.

³⁵ Affirms the Reverend: "J'ai été choisi. Désigné, appelé... pour accomplir l'oeuvre du Seigneur", 24. Referring to himself, he adds, "Maître des saintes Ecritures, je leur parle au nom de Dieu", 28. Says Nora, "Nicolas, [est le] représentant de Dieu à Griffin Creek", 118.

³⁶ Canclon also notes that the Reverend uses "la parole pastorale" to dominate women, 26.

³⁷ See Slott for additional comments on the removal of Pat and Pam (1989/90): 27.

³⁸ Perhaps Nora's look of shock as she kneels beside Irène's corpse and her later statement that "Irène a été faite pour le malheur" vaguely imply her sense of guilt in the film. However, the fact that the Reverend cowardly inculcated that sense of guilt using the traditional patriarchal interpretation of the Fall is not shown.

³⁹ His anger at Pat and Pam for leaving a blond hair on the table reiterates his view that female physicality and sexuality are forms of temptation into evil and bespeaks his guilt about the consequences of his extramarital lusting over Olivia's blond hair in the sermon scene.

⁴⁰ A similar line is not contained in the English translations of *The Song of Songs* I consulted, which explains the difficulty critics of the novel have had in locating this line.

⁴¹ Similarly, just prior to the molestation, Nora says, "Le démon tente [le révérend] comme Jésus sur la montagne", 128. On the surface, this passage can be interpreted to mean that the Reverend is tempted by extramarital lust or, even more ominously, by the devil of female sexuality. However, the line which follows, "Il a bien vu que j'étais en colère et pas dans mon état normal", 218 reveals the consciously manipulative nature of his act, which he corroborates, "[J]'en ai profité", 45. Thus the tempting devil is not merely lust, but also the Reverend's tendency to take advantage of situations for his own gain, including his patriarchal tendency to take advantage of power differences (created by station, age, and emotional composure) for his own sexual fulfilment.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSFORMING THE NARRATOR, THE PATERNAL-FILIAL RAPPORT AND FRATERNAL RELATIONS

“L’homme dit que l’homme vaut absolument. Bien forcé de dire aussi que sa
parole prévaut.”

— Annie Leclerc, *Parole de femme*

There is debate among the academic critics about the significance of the masculine vision of Yves Simoneau’s film adaptation of Anne Hébert’s novel *Les Fous de Bassan* as it concerns the choice of a male protagonist and his point-of-view, one of the most obvious and commonly noted changes the film makes to the source text. Notably, although Kathryn Slott and Janis L. Pallister both recognize that Simoneau privileges Stevens’ point-of-view, they disagree on whether this focus on the male protagonist and his standpoint is truly at odds with Hébert’s vision. Neither article broaches these points in any depth nor clearly qualifies that vision, and the issues raised by Simoneau’s choice of a masculine narrator or narrative vehicle are only superficially and even inaccurately dealt with. Indeed, Pallister outright dismisses the debate around “the novel-versus-film, male-voice-versus-female-voice [as]... useless” (1995

195). I disagree. As Christine Gledhill affirms: "A crucial issue for feminist film criticism is the argument that 'women as women' are not represented in the cinema, that they do not have a voice, that the female point of view is not heard" (18).

Other critics have been more forthright in acknowledging the ideological significance of Simoneau's choice of male narrator/protagonists, but sparse on explanation. For instance, Pierre Véronneau's recent article "Anne Hébert adaptée au cinéma: une relation mal reçue?", which focuses mainly on the adaptation of *Kamouraska*, notes in passing the ideological implication of privileging "[les] drames des hommes" (453) in the adaptation of *Les Fous de Bassan* but offers no textual explication. Indeed, his reading of the novel as set on a metaphoric island which he qualifies as "mangeuse d'hommes" (453) raises questions about the tenor of the undefined ideological transformation he observes. Given the generally confused state of the debate, he is quite correct in concluding that this adaptation requires more study.

This chapter will consider two facets of the issue of the masculinization of the source text. It will examine the construction of the film's androcentric focus around a male narrator/protagonist in more detail and with more attention to feminist theory and to the feminist reasons for being concerned about the suppression of the female narrative voices than previously done. It will also explore how this disengagement with female narrative visions/voices is accompanied by further substitutions of ideological import in dramatic conflict, character and incident *within* the privileged male text. Among other things, these changes shift the focus of Stevens' narrative from a feminist exposure of

the problematic Oedipal quest for identification with the patriarchal father to a masculine engagement with the anti-Oedipal struggle with the paternal oppressor. Not previously noted or explicated by the critics, this shift results in the transformation of issues of concern to feminists into issues of more generic concern to oppressed sons, a shift first observed in the first chapter. To examine these aspects of the masculinization of Hébert's text, this chapter will compare the following topics in the novel and the film: narrative voice and subjectivity, Stevens' Oedipal rapport with father figures, Stevens' characterization as a Christ/Devil figure, and Stevens' relationship with brother figures.

Narrative Voice and Subjectivity: From Multiplicity and Two Genders to Androcentricity

While the woman-centered narrative and the female protagonist do not, in and of themselves, a feminist text make, a common feature of the feminist text is, nevertheless, the centrality and exploration of female subjectivity and female experience through a female protagonist (Felski 14). In seeming contradiction with this feminist interest, male subjectivity dominates the novel *Les Fous de Bassan*. Specifically, the novel unfolds by way of three male narrators, whose four distinct narratives total 182 pages, and two female narrators, whose separate narratives total 56 pages. The female-narrated texts thus constitute less than a quarter of the entire novel. As critics such as Slott (1986 166) observe, the preponderance of the male narratives in the novel mimetically represents the male-dominated society of Griffin Creek.

Moreover, the placement and length of the male and female narratives in the novel reflect the respective social power of men and women in this community. The content of the narratives also reveals the level of maturity or the maturation quests of the narrators. Let us consider the male narratives first. The Reverend's narrative, replete with biblical citations and references to the creation, by Loyalists, of the now dying village, opens the novel. As suggested in the previous chapter, the narrative placement and religious content of his "livre" symbolize both the leadership and founding positions that the Word of the male Christian hierarchy once held and still tenuously holds in Griffin Creek society. The guilt-ridden musings of an elderly, sonless and impotent patriarch, the Reverend's narrative also represents the voice of the incomplete male — the male who failed to provide corporal expression, through coitus and offspring, of his manhood.

The letters of the twenty-year-old Stevens follow, to be concluded at the end of the novel (after the three intervening narratives of Nora, Perceval and Olivia) with a final confessional letter by the emotionally shattered, suicidal, sixty-six-year-old Stevens, who remains obsessed with the crimes of his youth and his failure to become a man. The thematic interest accorded to the story of the young male in quest of his manhood in Western literature is mirrored by the fact that these two sets of correspondence together make up almost a third of the novel. The narrative of the fifteen-year-old, simple-minded Perceval constitutes the third male narrative. Bearing fragmented witness to the night of the girls' murders and the subsequent police investigation, it represents the confused voice of the pre-Oedipal male both drawn to and afraid of the sexual

desires and activities of the adult male. In particular, it expresses the fearful Id figure's fascination and bewilderment with the violent fallout of sexual initiation in the disintegrating patriarchy of Griffin Creek. Perceval's narrative is combined with the minor presence of the non-gender marked voices of the villagers whom Hébert calls "[les] quelques autres" (251) in the title of Perceval's narrative. Intent on covering up Stevens' crimes, these voices, which may include those of co-opted women, reflect the voice of a protective patriarchy intent on preserving the status quo.

The female narratives of the adolescents Nora and Olivia provide the female version of sexual desire and the quest for adulthood in this patriarchal community. That their respective narratives are shorter than each of the respective male narratives underscores the secondary social status of the young women. That Nora's ends abruptly at the end of summer symbolizes the silencing and the lack of place for the female voice of desire and challenge in patriarchy and the inability of the modern girl to blossom freely into womanhood. (Recall her name and egalitarian aspirations in sexual relations are reminiscent of Ibsen's modern Nora.) That Olivia's narrative, which also gives voice to female desire and which remembers her initiatory gaze (Smart 1988 259), is other-worldly suggests that there is no safe place for the female body in this male-dominated world (Gould 929). However, that their voices are present at all reveals that a new generation of women is emerging and that these women are attempting to give personal voice to their own journeys towards womanhood in this version of patriarchy (Slott 1987). As Hébert said in a 1982 interview, "Maintenant, la femme parle pour elle-même, en son nom propre.... Il est très

important qu'on entende cette voix. Une voix qui soit audible et perceptible, une voix qui rende un son juste et vrai. Pendant si longtemps cette voix a été étouffée, camouflée" (Royer 21).

Indeed, that these narrative sections bear the girls' names, just as the sections narrated by the male characters bear the men's names, underscores the fact that Hébert is according these girls a certain degree of narrative "authority" — the right to write like a male. However, that these two brief female-narrated sections are separated from each other by longer male texts that are often marked by sexist content, reflects the separation and isolation that these women will ultimately experience in their patriarchal world. A sub-theme of the novel, after all, is the divisive effect that the coveted Stevens has on the sisterly relationship of the teenage girls, Nora and Olivia (121, 221). Concomitantly, the presence of these female voices among the dominant patriarchal texts also fragments the patriarchal vision, thus shattering its unity and challenging its authority.¹ Significantly, these separated female narratives are buttressed by the warning whispers of the foremothers to which Olivia's narrative repeatedly refers, as we saw in the second chapter. They serve as a subversive counterpoint to the nameless village voices that seek to protect the local patriarchy in Perceval's narrative.

In this plethora of narrators and narrative voices, no clear protagonist or controlling narrator emerges. Marilyn Randall argues for Stevens (75) and Jacques Allard for Olivia (11). I, however, concur with Neil B. Bishop who reads Stevens, Nora and Olivia as the three main narrating characters (1984/85 179). The novel does not have one protagonist but a conflict of protagonists whose

colliding maturation stories are contextualized by musings of the incomplete patriarch the Reverend (representative of the deformed Word and the dying patriarchy) and the observations of the “idiot” Perceval (representative of the unformed and unformable man). As Patricia Smart states, Hébert is telling the conflict between “[l’]histoire à lui... et [l’]histoire à elle” as it unfolds in the patriarchy of a particular time and place (1988 258).²

In the film version, Simoneau simplifies the novel’s multiple narrative structure by privileging one narrator, Stevens,³ and by absorbing accounts of additional events that are related by other narrators in the novel into one main narrative line controlled by old Stevens’ flashbacks in the film. Thus, instead of the novel’s five narrators who each review the incidents of the summer of 1936, one of whom (Stevens) recounts his memories once while a youth and once while an old man, the film has only one reminiscing narrator: old Stevens Brown. His recurring, remembering presence frames the film narrative around the psychic struggles of young Stevens during that long ago summer. One narrator, one protagonist, and one male-centered narrative are the result of this transformation. This change thus focuses the film on an individual hero, a common practice in film adaptation.

Of concern to a feminist analysis, Simoneau has chosen to silence the female narrative voices, divesting them of all the separate narrative authority that Hébert had accorded them. Gone is a film version of the truncated Bildungsroman of Nora’s sexual awakening which documented — from her perspective — her doomed, although assertive, quest for sexual relations predicated on a conscious expression of equality and gender role reversal (116,

126-129). Gone is Olivia's much admired other-worldly hymn to female desire, which implicitly ruptures the ending of the patriarchal master plot as its ghostly "singer" waits in and above the fluid, intrauterine space of the maternal sea (beyond the gender assignments of the sun and the moon [225]) for a time when her spirit could return without fear of sexual domination.⁴ With separate narrators for these female voices omitted, Simoneau removes the possibility of symbolically presenting the conflict between "l'histoire à lui et l'histoire à elle" through the film's narrative construction.

Moreover, while eliminating the separate narrative vehicles for the female voices, Simoneau has given double weight to the novel's male narratives through the process of character synthezation. Old Stevens in the film is an amalgamation of old Stevens and old Nicolas Jones (the old Reverend) in the novel.⁵ While there is some basis for the synthesis of these two male characters, since in the novel they engage in activities that mark them as doubles,⁶ Simoneau's decision to incorporate elements of the old Reverend's narrative into the speech and activities of a male narrator underscores not only his general androcentric bias but his androcentric interest in giving active, corporal expression — a form of narrative authority through incorporation — to this second male voice. This Simoneau does not do for the novel's female narrators. While some incidents they describe are incorporated into the film story (for instance, Olivia's desire to meet Stevens in the novel's storm scene is dramatized as her actual approach during the film's rape scene), the film version has no female narrator that speaks, incorporates or absorbs the girls' version of events.⁷

Simoneau indicates that his reason for choosing Stevens as the governing narrative figure was narrative expediency. In commenting, during the film's production, on the changes he was making to the novel, Simoneau immediately notes his focus on Stevens as the central character. "Il y a moins de personnages. Nous avons essayé de synthétiser. Celui qui se souvient, c'est Stevens. Son imaginaire met tout en place."⁸ The latter part of Simoneau's statement is revealing. It could suggest that Simoneau reads Stevens' letters as the principle narrative of the novel (i.e., as containing most if not all the main and essential elements of the story) and that therefore, by default, Stevens' mind should become the ordering principle of the film, or Simoneau's affirmation could suggest that regardless of the importance he may ascribe to the other narrators in the novel, he consciously chose Stevens' remembering mind as the ordering narrative principle of the film. Whatever the case, in Simoneau's opinion Stevens' point-of-view is sufficient for telling the film's story. The choice accords Simoneau the narrative space to develop and create sympathy for this character and, as Slott observes, to thus rationalize his behaviour through his subjective experience (1989/90 24).

For a novel in which the separate male and female narratives represent the gendered social positions, perceptions and experiences of the characters, Simoneau's decision to eliminate the two female narrators in preference for a sole male one displays an androcentric, indeed an afeminist, approach, whether or not he was aware of the ideological implications of his decision. In his adaptation, the male mind contains and orders the story. The male becomes the center of the filmic universe, while his narrative subsumes the female

version of events.⁹ As Hébert observed when asked about the “singularly masculine focus” of the film narrative: “Le metteur en scène étant un homme a vu le film d’après sa vision d’homme” (Slott 1989/90 24). Indeed, Simoneau’s decision embraces the common androcentric approach of Western cultural tradition, a perspective that dominates classic narrative cinema (Hayward 315).

Indeed, one critic, Michèle Garneau, implies in a non-scholarly article on adaptations of Québécois novels that the elimination of *Les Fous de Bassan*’s multiple narrators, notably the separate female narrative voices, is anti-feminist.¹⁰ Pallister vigorously disagrees, citing Randall to suggest that the almost total lack of ardent and conscious feminism in the female characters and whispering foremothers in the novel makes the removal of their role as narrators or voice-over presences in the film no great loss in terms of feminist ideology (1995 184-185). Nevertheless, I concur with Garneau. The male and female narrative voices in the novel have been almost universally recognized by the critics as central to Hébert’s narrative construction, and, as critics such as Smart qualify, to her feminist concern with the tragic conflict of male and female maturation stories within patriarchy. Further, as I argued in Chapter 2, a female character need not be feminist in order to be worthy of feminist support, interest or inclusion in art. The feminist consciousness of a female character is not the critical issue but the writer’s engagement with feminist concerns with the lives of women.

In Hébert’s case, she is particularly concerned with the impediments that modern young women (both Nora and Olivia) face in blossoming into womanhood in a male-dominated, venatic society as well as the difficulty that

these heterosexual young women (notably Olivia, but also Nora with her fantasies) have in realizing their eternal hope of one day being able to engage safely and pleasurably in heterosexual activity. Hébert problematizes their experience with the depiction of the harsh reality of their sexual initiation into patriarchy and then suggests the wrongness of the women's lethal fate by the disintegration of the perpetrator and his community. To erase the female narrative voices of Nora and Olivia in the film is thus not only to eradicate narrative spaces for female authority, subjectivity and desire but to deproblematize the female experience — as told by women — of maturation in patriarchy and to suppress the effect that their emerging narrative voices have in destabilizing or undoing the dominant text of patriarchy.

Were alternatives to the single male film narrator and concomitant male protagonist cinematically possible? Marie-Josée Ross, who uses a narratological analysis and who acknowledges Garneau's suggestion that the novel's feminism is compromised in the film version with the removal of separate female narrative constructs, states, "La réduction des voix narratives multiples du roman, à une seule dans le film, nous apparaît comme la manifestation formelle de la réduction nécessaire imposée à l'oeuvre, lors du passage du littéraire au filmique" (2). However, Ross's position is debatable. For instance, Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and more recently Wayne Wang's *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) demonstrate otherwise; both stand as successful adaptations of multi-narrator literary texts (a short story and a novel, respectively) into multi-narrator films. Moreover, Québécois feminist film

director Mireille Dansereau affirms that had she adapted Hébert's novel, she would have kept the multiple narrative voices (Slott 1989/90 24).

Furthermore, should the multi-narrator approach have been cumbersome, centering the film around a single female narrator and narrative was certainly a possibility. Significantly, in the original script for the film adaptation written by Hébert (and rejected by the film project's original film director Francis Mankiewicz), Hébert had the film unfold from Olivia's point-of-view (Suchet 54). Recall that in her interview with Jean Royer, Hébert attests to the great significance she accords Olivia's female voice: "[L]'écriture des femmes explore des mémoires qui sont souterraines parce qu'elles ont été enfouies assez longtemps. Olivia est très sensible, justement à toutes ces voix de femmes qui l'ont précédée, ces mères et ces grand-mères" (Royer 21). Her statement echoes Hélène Cixous' influential feminist project outlined in "Le Rire de la Méduse."

Pallister's insistence on the impossibility of a satisfactory cinematic solution to Olivia's other worldly voice (1995 206) ignores the imaginative possibilities offered by examples from film history. Indeed, her assertion overlooks Simoneau's own proven ability to render inner and thus invisible states visually (as exemplified, for instance by the audio-visual depiction of Stevens' mad jealousy in the barn dance scene) which suggest that he could have found a cinematic way to translate Olivia's phantom state at least in relation to reacting characters. To paraphrase and expand on Charles Eidsvik's argument in "Toward a 'Politique des Adaptations'", one of the great benefits of finding cinematic answers to problems posed by literary narrative devices is that

it pushes the boundaries of cinema (especially its adherence to visual realism) and thus opens the possibility for new approaches to cinema. To find a cinematic solution to Olivia's phantom voice of female desire speaking beyond one of the typical endings of the master plot (beyond the death of the woman) arguably offered a worthwhile project for expanding feminist concerns and techniques in the Québécois and Canadian narrative film corpora.

Indeed, using the simple technique of voice-over to express Olivia's other-worldly voice would have incorporated a technique used extensively by both avant-garde and commercial feminist filmmakers in Canada, Québec and abroad for conveying the marginalized female voice (Pérusse 35-36; Marchessault 34; Silverman 314-315). Moreover, it would have given audio embodiment to the "space-off" presence of the female, or more particularly to an "elsewhere" space in which female identity is safely created — "spaces" which feminist cinematic theorist Teresa de Lauretis suggests in her influential article "The Technology of Gender" would characterize a feminist cinema (1987 24-26). Offering "[les techniques] de dé-référentialisation" used by French modernist filmmakers (Resnais and Duras) as examples, John Kristian Sanaker also makes a compelling argument for using voice-over to convey Olivia's ghostly voice (1997a). Certainly, Olivia's after death presence could at least have been symbolically suggested by sea breezes, mist or other eternal, natural forces or elements with which she is associated in the novel (as discussed in Chapter 3). Indeed, the pregnant rabbit, which Simoneau creates for the film and which survives Stevens' attempt at slaughter, could have been further exploited and more clearly linked to the film's eventual victim at film's end to

symbolically suggest the survival of female sexual energy and reproductive power beyond death (an energy that will outlive patriarchy). It is insufficient to claim, as does Pallister, that, as the film stands, “[o]ne could almost hear Olivia speak from the high sea if one strained one’s ear at [the close of the film]” (1995 206).

Another possibility, unexplored by critics, would have been to counterpoint Olivia’s phantom voice, speaking from “elsewhere”, with the earth-bound old Stevens’ voice speaking from the patriarchal space of the Church. This type of alternating male-female narrative construction would have synthesized the counterpointing positions of the multiple masculine and feminine voices of the novel and would have even more directly given cinematic expression to what de Lauretis terms “the subject of feminism”, i.e.:

[the] movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable.. .[i.e.,] those [female/feminist] spaces ... that exist,... [which] feminist practices have (re)constructed ..., in the margins... of hegemonic discourses” (1987 26).

Another alternative, entirely ignored by the critics, would have been to center the film around Nora as narrator and protagonist. Such a narrative construction would have provided a female voice more anchored in film realism, for hers is the voice of a living, desiring woman, a voice that speaks in and of the flesh, until the evening of her murder when her inexperienced and angry voice of equality is silenced as she is initiated into patriarchy. To give narrative reign to such a voice and centrality to such a character who is then brutally quashed by a would-be patriarch (who in turn self-destructs along with

his community) would have underscored the tragedy of the budding modern woman in patriarchy and patriarchy's resulting downfall.

To focus on Nora as narrator/protagonist would also have encouraged a more direct, imaginative and formal engagement with Nora's "écriture féminine" beyond the visuals of Nora's sexual assertiveness, which as portrayed in the film, tend to confine her to the role of temptress and jealous sexual rival well within the stereotyping male gaze within which she is caught in the novel. The film is devoid of any image of Nora revelling in her senses, especially as an autonomous woman, unlike in the novel. Whereas Olivia's narrative in the novel expressed a female voice of desire beyond the body — a sensuality embraced through the remembering spirit now safe from the corporal violence of patriarchal men — Nora's narrative expresses a female language via the living body (a body language felt and voiced through senses and movement). Her descriptions of her awakening sensuality, including her self-comparison to the sensual cat (e.g., 111-112), her frequent, revolutionary Cixousian laughter (Collie 290), her habit of walking barefoot as well as her association with sun and moonlight and natural and harmonious energies (Bishop 1984/85 180), not to mention her declaration that she is "faite pour vivre" (131), all offer possibilities for symbolic audio and visual expressions of her language of desire. None of these are made use of by Simoneau, even via Stevens, who, in the novel, becomes aware of the sounds of nature in Nora's presence (90).

Here I must interject my disagreement with Sanaker's suggestion of conveying Nora's narrative voice through voice-over as a method that would allow her to escape the male gaze of the camera and Stevens' remembering

mind. While such a strategy would indeed extricate her from the reductive and dominant male gaze, as he argues, it would also divest her of the very essence of her subjective position in the novel: her corporality. Her disruptive force resides within her embodiment of her body, if one can use such a term. It is her embracing of her sensuality as something natural “ni belle, ni bonne, mais nécessaire dans le flamboiement de l’été” (119) and the subsequent corrupting of that sense of pure good energy by venatic patriarchal forces (as noted by critics such as Bishop and Slott) that require rendition — through a translation of Nora’s changing relationship with her *physical, sensual corporality* — in a film version.

Although, as Sanaker observes, Nora is caught in the stereotypical male gaze in the novel (1997a 60-61), this occurs largely in the male narratives, themselves. In her own narrative, she also describes times when she is outside the male gaze, for instance, when she is safe in her bedroom on the dawn following her symbolic passage to womanhood (her fifteenth birthday), enjoying her awakening sensuality, as the cock crows, the birds peep and the blue spruce winks in at the window. Her problem is that, by virtue of her desire, she becomes caught in the destructive male gaze (as we saw with her pun on the term “chopping block” when she claims Stevens looks at her 122). This problematic — as the reality of women in patriarchy — needs to be rendered in a film version not suppressed by removing Nora’s voice from its corporal base. Rather than ousting Nora from her body, as Sanaker suggests, one could oust the male gaze. For instance, one could de-anchor Nora’s body from the gaze by destabilizing the (male) camera eye using Laura Mulvey’s technique of the

continuous 360° pan or some derivation of it. This strategy would disallow Nora's "capture" when she privately celebrates her senses.

Alternatively one could find a way to "engender" the camera gaze as female during the times when Nora's narrative voice or voice from the body speaks, for instance through the use of mirror imagery. Indeed, Olivia's narrative suggests the possibility of imaginatively exploiting such imagery when she hopes she will find the face of her mother "dans le miroir de l'eau" (211). An interplay of the gazes of the far-seeing mothers/grandmother and the girls, all reflected in the the sea, could have been used to create a female gaze, for example. This feminization of the gaze would have married with the formal efforts of feminist filmmakers like Sally Potter.

A counterpointing of Nora as narrator with a male narrator could also be envisaged as a way to synthesize the conflictive male and female narrating voices in the novel. One thinks, in particular of Nora, as representative of the modern woman, and the Reverend, as representative of the defeated patriarchy. Michele E. Anderson's article "Puritanism as Mask of Violence in *Les Fous de Bassan*" offers some useful examples of the tension between these two characters. Indeed, the Reverend is particularly aware of Nora's unmasking of his true nature. For instance, within his narrative, he imagines Nora thinking, "[J]e n'entends plus la parole de Dieu dans la voix de l'oncle Nicolas" (30). Nora, herself, also thinks about her uncle's hypocrisy while he speaks (118). These narrative tensions as well as Nora's narrative intrusion into the Reverend's "book" support the approach of creating a dual narrative structure between these two characters.

Another possibility would have been to center the film around a secondary female character, such as Irène (as mother manquée), or Felicity (as subversive Mother of the disintegrating patriarchy), or the around the voices or presence of the whispering foremothers (a challenging but worthwhile cinematic project). Each of these possibilities would have called for considerable creative licence since these characters, ghosts and imagined figures do not speak for themselves in the novel. Such a choice would have made the film adaptation a feminist project of giving voice to the female voiceless, reminiscent of Jean Rhys' work. (Recall in *Wide Sargasso Sea* she tells the story of the silent mad wife made famous in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.) Certainly such a tack would have refocused the original maturation narrative around a secondary theme in the novel: that of the fate and (re)actions of married women in patriarchy. However, each possibility would also have offered a gynecocentric focus, while retaining Hébert's more general concern with women's subjective experience of their sexuality and reproductive life within a male-dominated society. One can imagine other variations of counterpointing secondary male and female narrators, although increasingly these options enter the realm of the experimental.

The point is none of the possibilities that would have given space to a female narrative voice — the woman as a narrative vehicle — which grapples with the subjective problematics of female sexual experience within patriarchy were incorporated into Simoneau's film version. While the rendering of some of these female voices would have been cinematically challenging, they were not impossible, and Hébert had offered a possible approach in her original script.

Moreover, the very “non-cinematic” solution of voice-over for “elsewhere” women underlines the marginality of these voices, while linking them to the formal techniques of challenge offered by feminist film aesthetics. Simoneau’s adherence to mainstream aesthetics and androcentric thematics not the problem of cinematic solutions are what silences the voices of the female narrators in this film adaptation.

Relatedly, Simoneau chooses a linear narrative structure rather than a fragmented one (Sanaker 1997b). In so doing, he imitates the temporal order of Stevens’ narrative in the novel since Stevens’ letters record his return to Griffin Creek in chronological order.¹¹ Simoneau thus ignores not only the fluidity of the female texts but those stylistic aspects of the male narratives, found notably in the Reverend’s “book” but also in Stevens’ final letter, that convey the eventual degeneration of the patriarchal character and the patriarchy of Griffin Creek.¹² Narrative fragmentation and temporal disorder are two devices that would most readily have transferred to a film narrative. In retaining linearity, Simoneau holds firm to the narrative portrayal of male Logos and disregards Hébert’s methods for deconstructing, as Gould terms it, the monolithic “phallic truth of the unified self” (924) using techniques and motifs of plurality and fluidity.

The only disruptive force in the film’s narrative structure is Stevens himself, with a number of flashback incursions into the main narrative line of his own story. However, his insertion does not serve to disrupt the story line but merely to reveal his current engagement with and feelings about past events. His recollection of the past does not reflect or cause his own degeneration as in

the novel. His reminiscing is presented as a project in revisional reconstitution of self not confessional disintegration. As old Stevens says in the film, “[l]’image déformée de moi-même... [est] à revoir”.

In addition, old Stevens in the film seems a somewhat more reliable narrator than old Stevens of the novel, for he does not appear as an escapee of a hospital for deranged war veterans, indiscriminately popping pills to maintain, in vain, his lost “puissance” (236) as he recalls his crimes against women and comments on the “fast” women of Sainte-Catherine Street, who represent the threatening disintegration of traditional gender roles. Rather, he appears as a regretful, perhaps slightly deranged figure, obsessed mainly with the fallout of his filial experience, who sadly wanders around the rubble of the once dominant Church recalling the events that led to the disintegration of the old paternal order. He is the disoriented son/Son who, now occupying the Father’s internal space, has not yet found a way to rebuild it. He is not, as we saw earlier, psychologically eaten by the screams of gannets that in the novel served as a trope for the mental felling of the would-be male sexual hunter now consumed and crazed by his own predatory and domineering impulses against women. (In the novel, this once ascendant woman-hunter/tracker goes “off track”; note his pun on the word “détraqué” 231.) In the film, he is merely an aged filial narrator who, in the quiet rubble of Church that once oppressed him, tries to make sense of past events while finding a way to reconstitute himself. Thus neither the style of Stevens’ film narrative nor his characterization as controlling narrator in the film suggest, let alone formally reinforce, the degeneration of this would-be patriarch as it did in the novel.

The Paternal-filial Rapport — From Oedipal to anti-Oedipal

Not only does Simoneau privilege Stevens as narrator and protagonist and the “male” linearity (although not the actual chronology) of Stevens’ early letters, but he privileges the masculine content of his narrative. Notably, he develops more fully the masculine interfamily relationships Stevens mentions in his letters in the novel, underpinning the film with a heightened version of Stevens’ tensions with his father and a more extensive relationship with his brother. As first mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3, Simoneau thus makes the core conflict of the film one between men, contrasting sharply with Hébert who had focused, primarily, on the conflict between men who dominate and women who resist. In so doing, he thus decentralizes the issues surrounding gender conflict, realigning them under the father-son struggle.

Moreover, not only does Simoneau center the underlying drama around the father-son relationship, so universal in the Western cultural tradition (Baym 78, Sheldon 13) but he alters the tenor of that rapport as it existed in the novel. It is no longer primarily an Oedipal story (in which Stevens attempts to identify with the patriarchal father to become a man) but an anti-Oedipal story (in which Stevens rises against the oppressive father to become a man by default), a distinction ignored by the critics. In embracing the anti-Oedipal trajectory, Simoneau resets the narrative within a particularly pervasive version of the father-son theme as found in the Western Tradition (Sheldon 13). Moreover, he deflects the narrative away from Hébert’s feminist concerns with the traditional manhood quest, a process which perpetuates patriarchy by keeping women

subordinated intergenerationally, and replaces it by one in which women will simply become instruments or collaborators in the son's rebellion against the old order. Another aspect of the implicit critique of the patriarchal engendering process contained in Hébert's narrative will thus be sidelined. A more detailed review of these trajectories will demonstrate these contentions.

In the novel Stevens' quest for assuming his adult male identity begins immediately upon his arrival in his hometown. With territorial, patriarchal pride, he sits beside the stream bearing his surname, admiring the signpost designating both his fatherland and his father's identity. He is not only preparing to assume the identity of the father while shedding the child inside (60-61), he is preparing to become a patriarch, a man who dominates woman. His pleasure at seeing his surname "à l'entrée du village" (60) symbolizes his desire to identify with the paternal principle before he enters the community, an entity which he feminizes with such stereotypical nouns as "petitesse" and "fragilité", such sexually connotative verbs as "posséder", and such spatial qualifiers as "en bas" (61, 63). Specifically, like the male sky god,¹³ he looks down on his hometown from his phallic position on the rock on the hill-top beside the seminal stream, making the feminized, underfoot village appear and disappear beneath his boot: "Je pose mon pied sur le village que je fais disparaître, puis je le découvre à nouveau, dans sa petitesse et sa fragilité. Je joue à posséder le village et à le perdre à volonté" (63).¹⁴

His game of dominating his whole hometown eventually focuses on his grandfather. Continuing the boot ritual, he contemplates not only symbolically usurping him but symbolically killing him, a first step in the Oedipal quest;

however, with a dismissive arrogance, Stevens decides to leave the patriarch be:

Sous ma botte je m'imagine sa petite vie de vieux, il a bien soixante-dix ans. Je pourrais l'écraser comme une coquerelle. Mais je le laisse dormir et rêver, sous ma semelle (63)... J'ai le pouvoir de faire exister mon grand-père, au bout de mon pied, ou de l'abandonner au silence d'un sommeil opaque. J'opte pour cette dernière solution (64).

This will be his first affirmation of his desire to displace a family patriarch so that he, Stevens, can assume the father's position. That this desire is part of a larger, patriarchal, heterosexual yearning to couple with an adult woman (a substitute mother) is further suggested by Stevens' mention, in this letter, of his grandfather's prolific siring with Stevens' grandmother and his grandfather's mistresses.

In the film, there is also an early clue of Stevens' interest in the father figure, but it is devoid of concomitant domineering interest in the substitute mother figure. This thematic concern with the father is visually foreshadowed in the film sequence recounting Stevens' return to the island village by boat. The phallic bow of his dory slowly approaches the phallic church steeple in the distance seen over his looming shoulder, symbolically suggesting that the story about to unfold is focused on male experience only. However, in contrast to the boat scene in the novel, the image composition of Stevens' arrival does not suggest that he has any desire to supplant this distant paternal symbol since no part of his body obliterates the far-off steeple; nor does the image composition or the editing suggest his filial desire for identification for there is no merging or superimposition of images. Rather, the gentle drift of the bow of his boat

towards the island's steeple merely bespeaks the son's quietly determined attempt to draw near the father.

Simultaneously, the images suggest the Christian hierarchy: the pull of the Father high above in the sky (steeple) on Christ below on the water. These images quickly establish the Father's ascendance over the Son. As such, they present a reversal of the spatial rapport that was embedded early in the novel by the image of the young booted Stevens seated high above his grandfather, a spatial rapport that bespoke the son's desire to displace the father figure through the assumption of his dominant position. This spatial placement of the symbols of the Father and the Son early in the film forebodes the spatial dominance which both Stevens' father and the Reverend, representative of the Father, will continue to assume later in the film with Stevens, the son/Son, notably in the post-sermon sequence and the dory lift sequence. This power imbalance will constitute a root source of conflict in the film.

That the Son does not immediately seek to symbolically overthrow the Father in the film by blotting out His visual symbol (the steeple) indicates the Son's initial desire to seek reconciliation with the Father. Indeed, as the film narrative unfolds, it will become clear that at the onset of his journey home Stevens had, indeed, distinguished between the clerical representative of the old order Father and his own father. As the dispossessed son, he would rather have the recognition and forgiveness of his biological father than overthrow him. This desire is hinted at in the spatial imagery in his initial meeting with his actual father¹⁵ and more forcefully suggested in his later attempt to help his father raise his dory. Unfortunately, the barrier to this reconciliation will be the

hierarchical and repressive values of the old religious paternal order, as represented by the Reverend, to which Stevens' father unwaveringly adheres (as his prominent carrying of the Bible in the post-sermon sequence underlines). In utter and early frustration with the old order and his father's replication of it, Stevens will soon consciously identify with Christ and begin to rebel against it, disbelieving that he will ever be accepted as "l'enfant prodigue" to whom the Reverend refers. As he will explain to the clergyman, he has returned to his hometown to relieve himself of the "fureur du vent" — to free himself of the rising filial anger incited by the oppression and repressiveness of the representatives of the old order.

In keeping with the film's shift away from the son's desire to identify with the patriarchal father (bespeaking Stevens' desire to *act* like the patriarch in the novel), Stevens does not see his surname on a signpost during the arrival sequence (or indeed anywhere in the film), nor seek to identify in any way with his father's name or surname. Indeed, in the arrival scene, the boat prow of the dory he manoeuvres does not continue to move directly towards the steeple (which could in the long run have been read as a desire for identification), but begins to glide sideways and away, towards the wharf (suggesting a move away from direct identification) to a spot off-side from which Stevens will try to ascend to meet/greet the father/Father.

This arrival scene contains another difference between Stevens' quest in the novel and in the film. The Son's fixation on the steeple, emblem of the Father, during his arrival in the film replaces Stevens' pre-arrival fixation on the sea, emblem of the female body to be sexually mastered as it lies, as he

describes in the novel, “étendue sur le dos, follement vivante, agitée par le flux et le reflux de son sang énorme” (60). In the film, Stevens no longer hungrily skirts this undulating, sexualized, feminine entity as he travels homewards on his patriarchal, heterosexual journey on foot as he did in the novel. Rather, he travels upon the sea, looking over and beyond its steely, still surface, now a symbol of the underlying stern and rigid paternal order, towards the ascendant icon of the Father, as he floats homewards on his filial journey.

Moreover, the visual depiction of Stevens’ pull towards the phallic steeple, in the film, ignores the fact that, in the novel, Hébert had incorporated into Stevens’ description of his desire to enter his village both Stevens’ heterosexual desire to penetrate the female and Stevens’ patriarchal desire to dominate her. In contrast, this boat scene in the film sets up Stevens’ return as a tale governed exclusively by the relationship between father and son as framed by the Christian paternal order. With female symbolism absent from this framing iconography, women’s relationships with men are silently announced as secondary. Consequently, the rape in the film’s opening sequence and old Stevens’ wanderings in the ruined church in the film’s second sequence, are visually explained by this third sequence (depicting Stevens’ arrival by boat) as the fallout of a relationship between father/Father and son/Son. Simoneau is symbolically announcing that he will be centering the whole film around filial control by the Christian Church (leaning on Stevens’ one self-justifying reference to the Reverend’s repressive sexual regulation near the end of the novel [242]) while drawing from Stevens’ repeated mention of the difficulties he had with his own violent father in the novel.

While in the novel Stevens seeks to identify with the patriarchal father, he will nevertheless put off meeting his parents until he feels man enough to face his father (92) — until he has had practice acting like a patriarch. From his position on the phallic hilltop, he states: “Surtout ne pas commencer par la maison des parents, remettre à plus tard la salutation et la confrontation avec les auteurs de mes jours” (61). He must first build up his sense of paternal power by figuratively squelching his grandfather in the play of his boot. He then must build up his sense of patriarchal power by symbolically marrying the mother figure (Maureen) in domineering sex (69), by deliberately returning the desiring Maureen (69, 90) and Nora (91) to their secondary gender roles, and by identifying the appropriate mother substitute for himself— the metaphorically imprisoned, traditional Olivia.

Further, he must dress like a man of his father’s sexual experience. When he decides he is ready to confront his father, he has not only begun to deal patriarchally with women, but he consciously decides to don the uniform of a man (the clothes of Maureen’s dead husband — the patriarchal Stevens symbolically displaces in assuming relations with her) in order to assert his new paramountcy vis-à-vis his father and to remind his parents that he is no longer a child:

Endimanché comme je suis, avec un costume d’homme et un chapeau d’homme, je ne suis pas pour me découvrir devant mes parents pareil à un enfant tout nu qui penche la tête et attend sa punition. Je les domine à présent de toute ma taille d’homme, de tous mes habits d’homme, de tout mon chapeau d’homme, de toutes mes bottes d’homme, et il faut qu’ils le sachent. La visite que je leur fais, ce soir, est une visite officielle, en costume officiel, mon costume d’homme officiel (92).

In this get-up, he identifies with both a military officer and a clergyman, symbols of the paternal order and, in the latter case, of the patriarchal order (92).

Not only must he dress like a man in order to meet his father, but he must look like a man by having his long hair cut by the traditional mother figure, Maureen. The hair cut also symbolizes that he now thinks like a traditional man. Specifically, the cut makes “une drôle de ligne blanche sur [son] cou, entre [s]es cheveux et [s]a peau hâlée” (92), representing the severing of Stevens’ mind (a male entity) from his body (a female entity). He is now exclusively in a male “head space”. So prepared, Stevens goes to meet his parents and succeeds in taking his father’s place.

Faced with Stevens’ onslaught of overbearing male confidence¹⁶ and his successful ingratiation of his brother and sisters, Stevens’ father abnegates: “John Brown me sert de nouveau à boire. Sa main tremble. J’ai vingt ans et je suis le plus fort” (94). Just prior to his father’s concession, Stevens had recalled the original fight that he had had with his father five years previous, which had resulted in Stevens’ self-imposed exile: “Le père a usé de son droit de correction et le fils s’est défendu. Ni vainqueur ni vaincu. Les deux protagonistes sont d’égale force” (94). Now Stevens has returned to Griffin Creek and has usurped his father not by physical force but by assuming and acting out his father’s domineering patriarchal and paternal values. Stevens’ successful and youthful identification with and imitation of his father’s ways allows Stevens to ascend his father’s social position and thus displace him. Stevens is now the dominant male — the father figure — of the family. He

assumes this position two-thirds of the way through his narrative, three weeks before the rape and murders.

In contrast, in the film, it is Stevens' father who puts off meeting Stevens, more than Stevens who puts off meeting his father. It is the insecurity of the old paternal order with the upstart son rather than the insecurity of the son with his manhood that creates the diffidence in precipitating a father-son encounter in the film. Notably, Stevens' father exhibits considerable reluctance about meeting Stevens after the sermon, at which Stevens briefly appeared but spoke to no one. After the sermon, the Reverend unsuccessfully encourages Stevens' father to believe that all can be forgiven and Stevens' mother attempts to reassure her husband about Stevens' motivations. The ensuing conversations between the Reverend and Stevens' father and later between Stevens and the Reverend quickly establish that Stevens severely beat up his father five years ago and suggest that his father has not yet forgiven him for this mad behaviour. Significantly, in the film, it is the father and Father figures who are consumed by the memory of the old fight between father and son, not Stevens who brings the memory to mind, as in the novel. This paternal worry is exemplified in the film by the Reverend who recalls how savagely Stevens had injured his father, angrily admonishing Stevens that he should not have done it.

These exchanges on the father-son fight explain why an encounter with his son is so unwelcome by Stevens' father. Moreover, this information elucidates the reason for his anger at hearing his returning son's name earlier in the film. This mysterious and negative reaction had occurred in the brief early scene in which Perceval runs home with the news that Stevens has returned.

Stevens had accompanied him, but hides before arriving. Their father, who wears a cap, whacks Perceval, ired by the mention of Stevens' name and Perceval's insistence that Stevens has come, and then looks suspiciously beyond his yard. Stevens, who has been spying on this scene, realizes that he is unwelcome and goes elsewhere. His decision not to greet his father at this point is more a reaction against his father's evident and continued ill-will against him than any overriding insecurity about his own unproven manhood, a feeling he harbored in the novel. Indeed, that Simoneau is not concerned with Stevens' desire to usurp and displace the father in the same manner as in the novel is suggested in the visuals of the latter shot. Stevens rises hatless beside the distant paternal home in which his father has entered, suggesting Stevens' initial desire to rise along side the father and then, when he realizes he is unwanted, he walks thoughtfully, hat in hand, across the screen, "crossing" the symbol of the father in the distance, suggesting his latent desire to begin rebelling.

This return sequence also sets up the first clue to Stevens' adversarial relationship with the paternal order of the Church since the long shot of Stevens' upward amble towards the paternal home with Perceval is overseen by the Reverend. This shot shifts the point-of-view of events into a foregrounded space from which the Reverend, representative of the omniscient religious paternal order, spies concernedly through a triangular peep hole on Stevens' return up the slope to the paternal home. This shot reveals that the Father is concerned about the rising Son's return, just as Stevens' father was moments before. The shot also dramatizes a completely different type of spying from the predacious spying in which the Reverend engages on his nubile nieces in the

novel (38-39). This transformation again underscores the shift Simoneau is making in the narrative's central concern — i.e., from the operations of a patriarchal order that seeks to possess nubile women through the gaze (and in other ways) to the wariness of a paternal order that keeps tabs on the dangerous ascending son.

The end of the sequence documenting Stevens' return is punctuated by a single close-up of the church bell, not ringing but rocking creakily in the belfry. Symbol of the voice of the Father, the bell reminds the viewer that the representative of the Father will soon be calling his flock to order in the place of God. However, the bell's squeakiness hints at the aged quality of the voice of the paternal order, implicitly suggesting the generational gap that typically characterizes father-son conflict stories, and the bell's lack of movement suggests the lack of ardent activity under this paternal order against which Stevens, who is associated with the free flying gannets from the arrival scene on, will react. The insertion of this shot of the bell after the sequence depicting the unwelcoming attitude of Stevens' father and the spying of the Reverend, frames the sudden cut to Stevens eating in Maureen's kitchen as the beginning of his reaction against the paternal order. His appearance at Maureen's in the film does not, therefore, signify (as partially noted in Chapter 2) his deliberate choice to seek out and marry a mother figure as he travels experimentally along his Oedipal trajectory, as it does in the novel when prior to going to her home he gazes down at the village trying to decide which house (womb) he will enter (61-62; 64). Rather, as we see here, his sudden arrival at her place in the film marks the beginning of his growing rebellion against the omniscient and

sexually repressive paternal order for not only does it lead to his having intercourse with her, but that sex scene is then intercut into the beginning of the following sermon scene in which the Reverend preaches against the sins of desire. Her incestuous desires, explicated in the earlier chapter, become enmeshed with his insurgent feelings.

Thus while in the novel Maureen serves, in Stevens' eyes, primarily as a substitute for the traditional mother on whom he can practice domineering sex that will allow him to rehearse the traditional father's patriarchal sexual/social position, in the film she serves, at least initially, as the first person with whom Stevens can enact his defiance of the Father's Law. Indeed, the timing of the sex scene in relation to Stevens' appearance at church is not clear in the novel. No one in the novel suggests that this sexual encounter occurs on a Sunday, a sermon day. In fact, Stevens records it on July 1st, which in 1936 was a Wednesday. Through simplification and synthesis of the plot, Simoneau has, however, chosen to align the Maureen-Stevens encounter under the banner of a Father-Son conflict in order to highlight this latter theme.

Caught within this transformed narrative reason for Stevens' behaviour, Maureen, in the film, has more, at least at first, to do with his move towards becoming an anti-Oedipus and less to do with Stevens' identity formation as a patriarchal Oedipus.¹⁷ This transformed role at the beginning of their relationship may partly explain the enigma of her post-coital smile in the film following her initial, but minor resistance to Stevens' quick and overbearing sex. Her apparent pleasure may be derived not from the sex itself but from the fact that Stevens, albeit his domineering ways as a lover, is allowing her to defy the

repressive Law of the Father. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that following the anti-desire sermon, Maureen lies to the Reverend about her knowledge of Stevens' arrival, bespeaking his seditious influence on her. Again in a later scene, she will share in Stevens' joke about dressing up the scarecrow in her vegetable garden as the Reverend as a way of frightening the hungry birds, symbols of sexual appetite which the Church seeks to contain. She obviously enjoys the thought of mocking the repressive Law of the Father and will collaborate with Stevens in his efforts to do so. However, while Maureen's desire to conspire with Stevens may explain her later behaviour, it does not satisfactorily account for her initial incestuous desires for him, which were discussed in the motherhood chapter. They remain troubling, ambiguous and cryptic.

Nonetheless, this socio-religious context does guard against reading her post-coital afterglow in this film scene as a mere reflection of stereotypical sexual female masochism. This latter interpretation would have taken at face value Stevens' questionable subjective belief in the novel that "cette femme est heureuse de nourrir un homme et d'être commandée par lui" (66). That she may have experienced any pleasure in this sexual encounter in the novel is soundly countered by Stevens' unwitting revelation of her lack of arousal when he complains that she remained "étroite comme un trou de souris" (69) during copulation. Moreover, with his use of the mousehole metaphor, he had reminded us that he had perceived her in her inferior female role as nurturing prey to be sexually consumed. (Elsewhere he describes himself as a predatory cat 77.) Stevens' animalistic grunts during the film's sex scene, which are

unaccompanied by Stevens' clear designation as a hunter elsewhere in the film,¹⁸ and which are intercut with the girls singing hymns in Church, underline less Stevens' designation as the traditional sexual hunter (taking his first step in his Oedipal journey of becoming a domineering male, as in the novel) and more his designation as the natural man pitted against the institutional order of the Church. This shift means that Simoneau is no longer concerned with exposing the problematical issues that the masculinity script poses women (as was Hébert), but is suggesting an alternate theme: the implicit collaboration of (insidiously incestuous) women with the raw and brutish sexual liberator against the paternal order.

Since Maureen's initial narrative function in the film is no longer to help Stevens identify with and act like a patriarch (as she was in his view in the novel), she does not later help him prepare to look and dress like a man (with the hair cut and the clothes she gives him in the novel) so that he can assume the patriarch's identity before meeting his father. She neither gives Stevens the symbolic hair cut nor clearly offers him her husband's clothes, which in the novel serve as his manhood costume. He merely goes rummaging for the latter on his own, with unclear intentions. Indeed, this later, momentary shot of Stevens sifting through a trunk full of clothes is fraught with ambiguity. We surmise only after the fact that he wants to dress up to visit his parents' home. His particular interest in finding a tie suggests the wish he had in the novel to don a man's garb. However, the reasons for this implicit desire in the film remain vague.

Unlike in the novel, no clues point specifically to any lack of confidence in his male identity or to his *conscious* ambition to wear men's clothing to

announce his adulthood to his father in particular. In fact, in the film, unlike in the novel, he does not even encounter his father during his visit to his parents' home. Indeed, he wants to leave before his father returns, which erases the possibility of interpreting his motivations for the visit as a need to prove his manhood to his father. It seems he has put on good clothes out of respect for his mother and perhaps to proclaim his sexual manhood before her, as symbolized by the phallic tie. However, he does not seek to assert a domineering masculine sexuality, since when she seductively asks him to remove his hat, he meekly does so, his acquiescence contrasting sharply with the macho attitude he displays in the novel when he refuses to appear before his parents bared of his virility head apparel (92). Indeed, in the novel, he hopes to enrage them by keeping it on (93).

As we saw in the motherhood chapter, this scene is fraught with the equivocal and problematic suggestion of the mother's sexual interest in her son. Given Stevens' underlying rejection of his father, a question arises about interpreting her (only) as the inherently incestuous and thus insidiously evil mother suggested in the earlier chapter. Is she, as Maureen may be, simply drawn to this natural rebel against the sexually repressive Law of the Father? Does she want to collaborate in his revolt? Is she, as otherwise obedient wife, really bothered by the Reverend's anti-desire sermon and her husband's containment of Perceval, the libidinal symbol? The portrait of her reading what seems to be the Bible in one of the reminiscing scenes underlines her firm adherence to the established order. The spectator can only wonder what causes her to sexually accost her son: Stevens' subversive rise to manhood or

her own latent perversions? Another enigma is introduced as one turns the interpretative lens on this relationship, showing that to the incestuous maternal trajectory, described previously, Simoneau grafts the son's seditious filial one.

Whatever else it is was meant to do or mean as far as Beatrice was concerned, her incestuous acceptance of his manhood seems to raise Stevens' hopes that his father, too, will accept him as an equal. After he leaves his home, he rushes, still attired in his Sunday best, to help his father haul up his boat. His willingness to sully his formal, manly clothes in aid of his domineering father reveals his desire to win his father's esteem through collaborative not overbearing acts. However, throughout this scene his father stands on an even higher plane than Stevens, refusing to relinquish his top position, even symbolically by accepting help. Stevens' momentary hope of establishing a filial relationship based on mutual aid — let alone recognition as an equal — is shattered as his father rejects his son's assistance in severe tones reminiscent of the Reverend's stern tone in the post "les boys" scene of the post-sermon sequence. Hurt, Stevens lets the boat go, muttering, "Je te hais." With the sudden release of pressure, his father loses control of the winch, and the boat comes crashing down the launch ramp, and Stevens flees the scene like a naughty child.

This incident suggests that without help or input from the son, the pitiless old paternal order will come crashing down. With this scene, Simoneau embeds his critique of the unforgiving father and explains the ruinous state of the frequently intercut interior of the abandoned church. This implicit explanation contrasts sharply with Hébert's suggestion that the Fall of the House of the

Father in the novel occurs because of women's subversive voices. Recall that they were in part imparted visually by way of the seditious women's "plainte" that Pat and Pam inscribe on the inner wall of the Father's House when they repeatedly scratch 1936, the date of the onset of the downfall of the Griffin Creek patriarchy, into the "plinthe" or skirting board (symbol of the House's buttressing structures) of the Reverend's rotting inner sanctuary.

To return to Stevens where we left him in the film, although he has shown his rebellion by letting go of the boat, for now the father's/Father's dominance remains intact. His continued ascendant position is reiterated with the subsequent close-up of Stevens' austere-looking father still atop the cliff and the subsequent hierarchical climb through images of the father to representative of the Father (the Reverend) to the symbolic space of the Father (church interior), which together emphasize Stevens' lowly position below as rejected son/Son.¹⁹ Nothing has changed. The father/Father is more unattainable than ever and the drama of the filial-paternal conflict continues. The next scene involving Stevens shows him surprising Olivia with insistent sexual advances when she is on her way to the Reverend's with his clothes that she has cleaned. As this narrative order suggests, just as with his initial sexual encounter with Maureen, Stevens pursues Olivia, in part, as a direct reaction to his father's rejection and as an indirect snub at the Reverend's overriding governance of communal activity.

Thus while in the novel, Stevens builds up his traditional manhood identity in part by acting like a patriarch (by mistreating Maureen and Nora who desire him as an equal) in order to prepare for his encounter with his father, in

the film, an opposite chain reaction occurs. Some of his domineering or violent sexual encounters with women in the film occur immediately after he is rejected by his father or the paternally controlled community. As noted, he has sex with Maureen in instinctive defiance of the Law of the Father after he realizes that he is unwanted in the paternal home. He becomes sexually over-insistent with Olivia on her way to the representative of the Father in the night path scene after being rejected by his father in the previous dory lift scene. He violently insists on taking Olivia away in the clotheslines scene after being shot at, in the previous scene, by her brother (a representative of the incestuously corrupt old paternal order). He spurns Nora's sexual advance after his imagined refusal by Olivia and the larger community at the barn dance, where Olivia had danced with her brother to then be flanked by the hypocritical Reverend and his flock in Stevens' rejection fantasy.

Therefore, in contrast to the novel, in which Stevens mistreats women to develop, maintain and consolidate his patriarchal sense of manhood so that he can eventually (he hopes) assume his father's patriarchal identity and position and thus displace him, in the film Stevens' discontent with his rejections by his father or with rejections governed by the representative of the Father or by the Law of the Father leads, in part, to Stevens' dismissive and violent behaviour towards women in the film. This narrative logic foreshadows the reasons for his eventual rape and murder of Olivia in the film, which in Simoneau's film version of events, follows on the heels of his father's final effort to control Perceval against Stevens. (This change as it is embedded in the rape scene itself will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.) By transforming the underlying

reasons for some of Stevens' abuse of women in the film, Simoneau alters the direction of social redress that was implicitly suggested by the novel to the feminist reader. With the film's focus on Stevens' conflict with his unforgiving father, a spectator would be led to speculate that one of the principal means of reducing violence against women would be to find methods for attenuating the father's need to dominate the son rather than to find ways to "rewrite" or rethink the masculinity script so that it is not predicated on filial identification with the patriarchal father and the implicit requirement to subjugate women.

Stevens as Christ and Devil: From Violent Sexist to Rebel Force

With the unrelenting oppression of the father/Father foregrounded in the film, Stevens becomes more prominently the "fils déchu", as François Bilodeau calls him in a brief film review. In this role, he is presented more as a defiant, tragic Christ and less as the parodic, demonic Christ that critics see him as in the novel,²⁰ a modification that draws Stevens more sympathetically for much of the film. Moreover, in making the change, Simoneau shifts the focus of Stevens' overt association with Christ and the devil away from a characterization that comments on his patriarchal relationship with women (ignored by critics) to one that emphasizes his rebellious rapport with the Father figure.

Let us briefly compare his direct assignations as Christ by Hébert and Simoneau. In the novel, after Stevens contemplates the eventual passage to sexual and reproductive adulthood of the virginal Nora and Olivia and the Reverend's putting of women into their place, he muses, "[S]i quelqu'un ressemble au Christ dans ce village, c'est bien moi, Stevens Brown... à cause

de mon état de passage à Griffin Creek. Encore un peu de temps et je disparaîtrai comme je suis venu" (89). As the juxtaposition of these notions in the same letter suggests, Stevens will not be leaving, in his view, because *he* is sacrificed but because he intends to sacrifice the virginity of his young cousins and thereby engender them into their inferior social/sexual role. That done, he anticipates being on his way. In the end, he will literally immolate the virgins,²¹ be arrested and removed from his community, never to return.

In contrast, in the film, Stevens does not present himself as a Christ figure while implicitly considering sexually initiating women to their gendered position but while insubmissively talking to the Reverend. Specifically, in the film's post-sermon sequence, Stevens defiantly responds to the Reverend's suggestion that he may be "l'enfant prodigue" by yelling: "Je peux ressembler au Christ aussi." His tone and pitch bespeak insubordination before this representative of the oppressive paternal hierarchy who is shot above him by the looming, omnipresent church. By this time in the film, Stevens holds little hope that he will be forgiven by his own father. He is thus beginning to define himself as a rebel Christ, as one who stands against the harsh old paternal order. This contextual change in his self-designation as Christ in the film version foregrounds his role as resister to the unforgiving old order father (in the manner of Christ with His vision of a forgiving God) and thus reiterates that anything Stevens will eventually do to women in the film is subsumed under that Christlike rebellion with an Old Testament type of Father not part of an implicit patriarchal collaboration with the representative of the Father who seeks to keep women oppressed, as in the novel.

This contrast in the two visions of Stevens as Christ is again apparent in the manner Stevens appears in storm scenes in the novel and in the film. In the novel, when Stevens drunkenly and menacingly seeks out his female cousins during the three-day storm, he says that “[il] marche sur les eaux” (103) in an obvious but parodic allusion to Christ. Should this reference be lost on readers, it is underscored in Perceval’s narrative, in which he reminds us that the story of “Jésus marchant sur les eaux” (140) is one of the marvels that the Reverend recounts on Sundays at church. In contrast, in the film’s storm scene, Stevens angrily slices through the writhing sea, now a paternal space as we saw previously, railing at his father. He is no longer a parodic Christ figure who figuratively performs miracles on water as he goes in search of the girls he hopes to “make women” through sexual violence but an alienated Christ who struggles with the angry old order Father in Poseidon’s element.

Just as his ironic affiliation with Christ as sacrificer not sacrificee comments negatively on Stevens’ destructively domineering relationship with desiring women in Hébert’s work, so does his ominous and recurrent association with the devil, demonic symbols and nefarious descriptions.²² He is not simply a fiend of temptation or a man bedevilled by lust, as a conventional reading of the novel would suggest. Rather, Hébert places the relationship between Stevens, evil and the devil within patriarchal contexts, solidifying the connections between Satan and sexism that, as we saw in the previous chapter, she also makes with the Reverend. For instance, when Stevens refuses to treat Nora as an equal in the huntress scene (turning her into a frightened hare), she calls him a “maudit Christ” (91), an allusion to the anti-Christ. When he feels his

sudden urge to injure the sexually autonomous Olivia at the barn dance (99), he is dancing with legs “endiablées” (47). When he describes his sadistic pleasure in Olivia’s fear of him, he mentions his “coeur mauvais” (80). When he terrifies her with his peekaboo game at the hymenal screen door in the ironing scene, the foremothers whisper he is a “mauvais garçon” (215). When he enters the barn dance, where he will contemptuously ignore Maureen and fantasize about sexually harming Olivia, he slithers among the dancers like an eel, connoting the snake (98). In the hours leading up to his rape and murders, he describes himself as “un diable d’homme” (106). When Irène commits suicide as a result of her husband’s (sexist) betrayal, Stevens shows no sympathy, boycotting her funeral “comme un diable [qui évite] l’eau bénite” (130).²³

In contrast, although Stevens is associated with the devil early in the film and although he does display sexually overbearing and contemptuous attitudes towards Maureen, Nora and Olivia at various times later in the film (broad examples of “devilish behaviour” according to Pallister [1995 200]), a strong relationship between sexism and Satan is considerably attenuated in Simoneau’s adaptation since Stevens’ characterization as the devil and his patriarchal behaviour are never overtly linked in any one scene, unlike in the novel. Instead, what is clearly drawn is a rapport between Stevens’ chthonic status and his revolt against the Law of the Father. A brief review will illustrate how Simoneau cinematically constructs this transmutation.

The designation of Stevens as devil is first alluded to in the film immediately after the opening rape scene, when old Stevens wanders about the abandoned church in a reflective mood. At the end of that reminiscing scene,

he is shown looking back on or exchanging looks with his younger self through a series of three alternating close-ups. Two close-ups of the young Stevens' face lit in red (as if by flames), his hair blowing in the wind (which the old Stevens would have us believe uniquely represents lust²⁴) are separated with one close-up of the old Stevens with actual flames flickering behind his head in a space that ironically appears to be the church doorway. The flames evoke hell-fire. The red lighting suggests that he is "le démon" and that whatever he did in the film's opening scene on that calm, dark shore with the young woman (when they were precipitated into "la fureur du monde") is the result of burning, sinful lust and thus the work of the devil (a connection that the Reverend makes in his sermon a few scenes later in the film).

However, as the viewpoints of these shots reveal, Stevens is being framed as the devil from the standpoint of the old paternal order since old Stevens, in this early sequence of shots, is in fact examining his younger self from the former, sacred position of the Reverend (the church door) with the metaphorical flames of the expiring old order behind him. He thus sees himself as the Reverend once saw him, as a luciferian rebel force. Moreover, as old Stevens states, this clerical perspective gives a distorted view of himself, something he wants to revisit in order to see himself for what he really was.

The wind in young Stevens' hair in these two memory shots also gives a false lead. It seems to connote lust since during this sequence in the dilapidated church in the film old Stevens partially cites a comment made by the old Reverend in the novel which refers to clothing flapping in the omnipresent breeze against hidden, nude bodies. However, in the film the wind soon

becomes a more general symbol of Stevens' anger with his father, with sound references to wind increasingly incorporated into scenes in which Stevens is in or has just been in conflict with his father or representatives of the oppressive paternal hierarchy, such as late in his arrival sequence, as well as in the clothesline scene, in the fraternal dory launch scene, and the storm scene.

A little later in the film, a more direct link is made between Stevens and the devil, this time by the actual Reverend during his sanctimonious sermon on desire, temptation and the devil. This association, as played out in the scene, will further underscore Stevens' rebellious relationship with the old paternal order not his patriarchal relationship with women as the core reason for his demonic designation in the adaptation. When the Reverend is well into his sermon, Stevens appears momentarily at the open church door. Upon seeing him, the Reverend raises his voice for all to hear and says, "Laissez pas la tentation vous écarter du droit chemin." He thus suggests that Stevens represents the devil of temptation, to which he has been referring. Shots of Stevens standing menacingly in the doorway alternate with shots of the Reverend at the altar and on-looking parishioners gazing back at the young man. This visual alteration underlines the Son's oppositional position vis-à-vis the sexually repressive laws of the Reverend and the community over which he presides.

Contrastingly, in the novel's sermon scene, the judgmental gaze of the clergyman and the parishioners is less obviously related to the conventionally repressive Law of the Father, since the Reverend was not exhorting against the sins of lustful desire, as in the film, but was "performing" adulterous desire by

pruriently preaching from the Song of Songs (28). Stevens' rebellious stance against the repressive Word of the Father is, of course, further underlined in this scene in the film by the fact that the anti-desire sermon was preceded and partially intercut by the previous illicit sex scene between Stevens and Maureen, as noted earlier. Through the accumulation of this visual information, Simoneau thus clearly presents Stevens as the devil/tempter who fornicates against the Law of the Father as a way to rebel against the repressive old order.

While Stevens' seditious position as "devil" vis-à-vis that order is highlighted in the film, his patriarchal position as "devil" vis-à-vis women is diluted. Only once is Stevens connected with the hadean figure by or in relation to a woman in the film although he is repeatedly so designated in the novel. This single assignation occurs in the sermon scene just after the Reverend suggests that Stevens is the tempter. Nora, who has felt uncomfortable under the lustful gaze of the hypocritical Reverend, makes light of his demonic insinuations regarding her cousin. Referring to Stevens, she amusedly whispers to Olivia, "C'est le démon" and Olivia shares her mirth. The girls titter in the adolescent pleasure that this man may be *their* seducer. As a result, Nora's nomenclature carries none of the connotations of Stevens as patriarchal abuser of women that his designation as devil does when made by or in relation to desiring women in the novel. Notably, her comment in the film bears no rapport with the time when she, herself, alludes to Stevens as the anti-Christ in the novel: the time when he refuses to treat *her* as an equal in sexual relations during the novel's huntress scene (91, 127). Her remark only impregnates the film's sermon scene with dramatic irony since Stevens will eventually "act like a

devil" and kill Olivia. However, since Nora is blissfully unaware of any sexism Stevens may harbour when she makes the comment in the film, the context evacuates any allusion to the tension between the would-be patriarch and the blossoming modern woman that existed when she views him in satanic terms in the novel.

Moreover, Simoneau shows that Stevens' fall into the realm of the devil in relation to women is gradual and reactionary. He does not cut a shadow-loving figure in his early, pre-rape, explosive interactions with them. Both his attack on Maureen in the rabbit strangling scene and on Olivia in the clothesline scene occur during the day and are rationalized as the frustrated reactions to their behaviour. As the rejections from his father, community, Maureen, and Olivia accumulate, his violent-tinged encounters with women begin to occur under the cover of darkness (as in the night path scene with Olivia, the pushing scene with Nora, and the rape scene). In the novel, Stevens also evolves from a Christ figure "nimbé de lumière" (205) as a young boy with Olivia on the beach to the dark underworld figure (106) who smiles implicitly like a werewolf ("[s]es lèvres se retroussant sur ses dents en un sourire étrange" 224) by the light of the moon as he plunges into "l'enfer" (243) on the night of the sexual assault. However, into the daylight scenes in the novel Hébert also incorporates other signs which, when married with the information that he seeks to dominate women through fear and inferior social designations, help keep the devil-sexism rapport foregrounded throughout Stevens' narrative. For instance, in the ironing scene, in which he conceives of Olivia as prey and takes pleasure in frightening her, he describes his derisive laugh as a snake on her shoe (77).

Contrastingly, in those scenes in the film in which Stevens is abusive towards women, Simoneau either dispenses with using additional cinematic methods (such as symbolic visuals beyond light changes or symbolic sounds) to reinforce the notion that Stevens' domineering sexual behaviour is a sign of the devil or links those cinematic connotations to the underlying father-son conflict. For instance, Stevens is frequently dressed fully or partially in brown, the colour of the natural man, only more prominently assuming black clothing when seeking acceptance from his parents and when once rejected by his father and the paternal order. In the novel, Pat and Pam are the ones who subversively appropriate clerical black to inscribe the death warrant of the old order into the lettering of the names of patriarchy's female victims in their mural. The red and black mackinaw that the devilish Reverend wears in the novel's hunting party sequence when he preys on Nora is relegated to the innocuous Philip Atkins not to Stevens in the film. The film's recurrent violin theme bespeaks Stevens' love rejections (Slott 1989/90 22) not "devilish" patriarchal behaviour. Only in the barn dance scene do the violins sound "endiablés". However, in this scene Stevens is consumed more by jealousy because Olivia is dancing with Patrick than with the domineering desire to possess her "par ruse ou par violence" (99) because she dances in utter sensual abandonment as if "libre et seule" (99), in a threatening expression of her sexual autonomy, as in the novel. Even the serpentine sibilants of Stevens' name are not played on in the film.

The film's ironing scene offers perhaps the most clear example of Simoneau's ambivalence about underlining Stevens' association with a devil who wants to relegate women to their inferior and consumable sexual-social

position. This scene is set up to frame Stevens' entrance as a predator of women, but that setup is then partially undone in the scene itself. The scene follows two others that designate women as the victim/prey of men and men as butcher/predator of women. These scenes begin with the rabbit-strangling scene in which editing connects Maureen with the rabbit that Stevens strangles. From a shot of this wobbling creature, the film cuts to the minnow that Perceval fishes, which he gives to the Reverend, who after flicking it away desiringly holds its memory in his praying/preying hands as the strains of Olivia humming is cut in. The film then cuts to her at work, the sounds of (implicitly hungry?) gannets, and Stevens' arrival at and entrance into the kitchen. This editing of images and sounds presents Olivia as prey and Stevens as predator. In Stevens' version of the novel's ironing scene, he also perceives Olivia in this way (he as the cat, she as the bird 77), with Hébert underscoring the devilish destructiveness of this rigid and implicitly patriarchal sexual paradigm (where man only consumes and woman only is consumed) through Stevens' reference to the snake.

In the film, Simoneau shies away from this final conflation of male predator-devil-dominator assignments. Olivia is humming the hymn "Fairest Lord Jesus", which suggests that she is waiting for her saviour-lover. While in the long run, Stevens' association with Christ by the juxtaposition of his appearance and her tune is ironic, since he eventually kills her, in this scene his intentions seem pure, and almost devoid of predatory or domineering desires, unlike in the novel. The two gannets cut into this scene are gorgeously preening each other's necks not plunging/preying/scouring implicitly for nubile

fish as they are elsewhere in the novel (39, 42). Olivia's designation as fish is only obliquely suggested by Stevens' comment that he had been attracted to her when he saw her standing wet the other day on the beach. In fact, since we never actually saw her in the water, his reference to "wetness" is more sexual than piscatory, unlike in the novel. Indeed, all else suggests that their sexual appetites are natural and mutual, not overlaid with Stevens' desire to strike fear into or brutally consume her, as in the novel. No allusion to his association with the devil, snake or otherwise, is made in this (or any other) scene, unlike in the novel, although a grass snake slithering away from the door, for instance, would have been an easy, unobtrusive and metonymical way to embed a mephistophelian allusion.

In short, the assignation of Stevens as patriarchal devil seeking to relegate women to their inferior sexual-social place (especially as consumable prey) is less dramatically and clearly signified than his designation as rebel-Christ/seditious devil in relation to the repressive Father figure. This connotative transmutation is perhaps most clearly expressed in his wearing of his hat, which Pallister argues is not just a symbol of manhood but a sign of Satan (1995 200). Stevens does not strategically or mockingly manipulate or wear it when he attacks women in the film although he does in scenes in which he expresses patriarchal desires in the novel (77, 98, 107) and although doing so would have been one way to underline the "devilishness" of his domineering ways with women, if one agrees with Pallister's reading of the hat symbol. In contrast, it takes on notable symbolic significance in his struggle with the old religious paternal order in the film. For example, in the sequence of shots depicting his

symbolic run-in with the Reverend in the post-sermon scene, Stevens goes from being hatless in the shot when he yells defiantly, “Je pourrais ressembler au Christ”, to donning the hat in the next reaction shot, to then, in a third reaction shot, removing his hat in ironic respect and rising recalcitrance, as he turns in his old age to reply angrily across time to the clergyman’s question on why he returned to Griffin Creek.

In summary, if Stevens becomes a devil in the film, it is for understandable and perhaps inevitable reasons in reaction to an oppressive paternal order. He is simultaneously the rebel Christ seeking a more natural and loving world to replace an unforgiving, wrathful Old Testament-like paternal hierarchy and the unfortunate devil with whom we can sympathize because he is reacting against a corrupt and sexually repressive religious order. When, at film’s end Olivia’s eyes widen in horror, caught in the gaze of this (inevitable) demon the Reverend warned about, she is sacrificed by Stevens to undo the old order. Thus, although Stevens does eventually become an ironic Christ, a sacrificer not sacrificee, as in the novel, it is to defy the old paternal order not to retain or give expression to a patriarchal one, unlike in the novel.

Significantly, then, unlike in the novel, darkness no longer reigns once the sacrifice is made in the film. The birth of a new order is symbolized by the resurrectional dawn at film’s end. Stevens has left the satanic realm by immolating the woman. Contrastingly, at novel’s end, he languishes in the blackness of night, after having brought the “le démon ” onto his notebook (234) by describing his private suicide-inducing hell: his crimes against women. Thus men evolve from light to darkness in the novel, while they cycle from light to

dark to light in the film. While Hébert's devil is undone by his own patriarchal devilry, Simoneau's is reborn through his luciferian stand. Through this reworking of religious symbolism, Hébert again reveals the pernicious effects of patriarchy on its own perpetuators, while Simoneau intimates the hope begot of filial uprising.

Transforming and Embracing the Brotherhood

Simoneau's androcentric privileging of Stevens' male familial relationships continues with his focus on the brotherhood theme. Rather than developing beyond what is portrayed in the novel the sister-like relationship between Nora and Olivia (that in the novel was very close before Stevens' return [121]), Simoneau develops beyond what is portrayed in the novel the brotherly relationship between Stevens and Perceval, as we began to see in Chapter 3. Simoneau achieves this development through scenes transposed from Stevens' letters, as well as through new scenes that show not only that this brotherhood exists but that Stevens seeks a closer fraternal relationship to compensate for his problems with the paternal order. While Simoneau does visually depict Nora's and Olivia's sisterly relationship with repeated shots and several scenes of them together, he does little to imagine and explore either its history (especially prior to Stevens' arrival) or its rupturing, and it remains secondary to Perceval's and Stevens' relationship in terms of the film's core dramatic conflict, plot evolution and climax. This interest in his brother underscores Stevens' latent desire for an alternate masculine order based on

equality between men (i.e., based on horizontal not vertical relations between men).

In keeping with this androcentric, fraternal focus, Simoneau also omits Stevens' twin sisters, Pam and Pat, as already mentioned. In the novel, they not only served as a secondary symbol of resisting sisterhood, irritatingly bucking the elder Reverend's authority with their subversive mural on the history of the women of Griffin Creek and their tricks about their identities, but, of import to this discussion, had also served as a secondary sisterhood on whom Stevens could project *his* patriarchal attitudes towards women, as we shall see in this section.

Simoneau's interest in the fraternal theme is not without basis in the novel. Stevens writes to Michael Hotchkiss, whom he repeatedly calls brother, and also observes, thinks about and does things with his blood brother, Perceval. However, the fraternal relationship which Simoneau chooses to present in the film either erases or alters those aspects of these relationships that symbolized parts of the process of a would-be patriarch's identity formation or the would-be patriarch's degrading view of women. In the novel, Stevens' relationships with these "brothers" reflected on the process by which patriarchy perpetuates itself. In the film, they do not. Moreover, an increased focus on the positive aspects of the biological fraternal relationship highlights the evident omission of key negative incidents involving Stevens and the young women he sought to contain or dominate in the novel. A review of the presence and absence of these various relationships and their concomitant effect on symbolism in the film will explain these contentions.

Stevens and Michael

In the first place, Michael Hotchkiss, affectionately called “brother” or “old Mic”, in the novel is completely dispensed with in the film. He is neither shown nor referred to. He had been Stevens’ fraternal addressee in the novel. Through Stevens’ letters to his old Florida buddy, Stevens had unconsciously attempted to tell the tale of his own ascension to manhood: to the sexual position of the traditional father. Stevens recalls in his first letter to Michael how in the sexually connotative Florida heat they had played at the search for the Ideal Woman (whom Stevens later calls “la Beauté” [82]). As insecure men, they had feasted their eyes on the symbolically female “Gulf View” vista through the torn hymenal screen doors of Michael’s home (59) and then had hungrily run after real women, at whom they had laughed in cocky derision (239). Stevens’ letters go on to record the news of his various symbolic and real usurpations of father figures and his various real and attempted sexual conquests of women as he follows the engendering process of a patriarchal Oedipus.

Stevens writes seventeen letters to Michael as a young man and one confessional letter in his old age, never expecting an answer. These fraternal letters can be qualified as pornographic according to Gloria Steinem’s definition of pornography (31) since Stevens implicitly hopes to share — through the act of writing to another man — his pleasures in sexually humiliating, raping and murdering women. However, they also reveal Stevens’ mental breakdown. By his final confession, which he hopes will be cathartic, he is going mad

remembering and describing what he has done to Nora and Olivia (231, see also Paterson 1985 168-173). Already, as a young man he had complained of his impression of writing before a mirror that does not reflect back to him a whole and understandable self image but rather “[d]es pattes de mouches inversées, illisibles” (82). Thus the pleasure of the pornographic act is undermined by the fact that it drives the pornographer insane. In this way, Hébert deflates the pornographer's power.

Simoneau does not engage with this feminist critique of the pornographic brotherhood of would-be young patriarchs. Not only does Simoneau not even allude to this earlier fraternal friendship in the film, but he eliminates Stevens' act of letter writing as a narrative vehicle in which Stevens can reveal his tortured past. Although a literary conceit, the act of corresponding by letter (or e-mail in contemporary films) has been successfully used in cinematic works. Furthermore, the paintings in the ruined church in the adaptation, which may or may not have been done by Stevens and which may be an implicit record of his mental degeneration, do not substitute for these letters for they do not record any of his sexually degrading memories of women. The suggested characterization of Stevens as a type of tormented pornographer is thus erased in the film version.

Moreover, the idea that remembering events that include physically and sexually assaulting women would unhinge the reminiscer is not suggested in the image composition or visual portrayal of those memories. As old Stevens looks back in the film, the images do not become fractured, broken, confused or reversed as a visual translation of the upside down mirror images evoked by his

pornographic letter-writing to his fraternal correspondent in the novel. His review of his past in the film is a lucid attempt at reconstituting himself for the better, at seeing more clearly his past not a foray into final lunacy. Furthermore, Simoneau's adaptation does not incorporate into the fraternal relationship which he does retain for Stevens in the film — that is, the one between Stevens and his blood brother Perceval — any of the sinister elements of Stevens' fraternal relationship with Michael discussed here.

Stevens and Perceval

What does Simoneau make of the brotherhood of Perceval and Stevens? Perceval, as the Id figure, as the fearful child-man whom Stevens calls “cet autre moi-même” (249) and to whom Stevens is boyishly attracted (82), serves as symbolic projection of Stevens' own sexual fears and unstable emotional maturity in the novel. As with Michael, Perceval is a receiver of Stevens' fraternal and insidious allusions to ways of maintaining not only male-dominance in sexual relations but a very savage form of such control. This allusion is contained in Stevens' sharing of his interest in knives with Perceval. However, Simoneau eliminates that more ominous aspect of this blood brotherhood, just as he erased the conceit of the pornographic letters to Michael.

This transformation is evident in the film's post-sermon scene when Stevens gives Perceval a match box. To grasp the implication of this gift one must first review from what it is derived in the novel. In Hébert's work, Stevens comforts Perceval after he is brutally struck by their father by telling Perceval

that he will not feel the hurt “le jour de [s]es nocés” (84) and by showing him a switchblade that he carries in a leather case on his belt. Stevens explains that he used the knife to skin rattlesnakes in Florida. However, it also carries menacing connotations regarding women. For instance, later, when Stevens is arrested as “un assassin” (194), the images of snakes and knives will haunt Perceval, who knows what Stevens has done. Even later, after the rape and murders, the sensation of the knife blade will pierce Stevens, surprised at his own sexual ferocity (249).

These later images associate the knife with male violence against woman, in particular sexual violence, a designation well documented in popular culture.²⁵ (As we have seen, this figurative relationship was first established in the novel when the Reverend spies predaciously on his nubile swimming nieces while the gannets plunge, their sharp beaks and pointed tails like knives, after their piscatory prey [39]). Thus, the seemingly comforting expression that Stevens uses to suggest that Perceval's happiness on his wedding day will outshine any past pain becomes twisted when expressed within this context. Stevens' apparently kindly fraternal placation in the novel constitutes the coded sharing of a violently patriarchal method of becoming a man: by raping the new wife. Stevens is insinuating that Perceval will finally find contentment when he has become a “man” (like his father) — when he has stepped out of the subjugated child's position vis-à-vis his own father into the patriarchal position of sexual subjugator of an adult woman.

Simoneau could not be further from this dark, patriarchal subtext of sexual initiation and engendering in Stevens' relationship with his brother. In

the film, Simoneau evacuates the thanatotic knife imagery from their fraternal exchanges. Notably, in the post-sermon scene Simoneau has Stevens give Perceval a sliding matchbox (symbol of coitus) rather than show him a switchblade (symbol of the rape “weapon”). Stevens kindly explains to Perceval, “Tu peux mettre ce que tu veux là-dedans.” Although the statement is vaguely copulative, it does not evoke the deadly sexual violence of the novel’s knife imagery. We also learn from Stevens’ mother that Stevens gives his brother a harmonica, which he constantly plays. Aligned with contemplation, pleasure, and sexual desire in both the novel and the film, the harmonica, never constitutes a gift to Perceval from Stevens in the novel. That it does in the film further shifts the film narrative away from the symbolism of rape that underpinned the diversions Stevens offers his brother in the novel.

Indeed, in the film, the harmonica acquires new connotations of fraternal connection. By playing it, Perceval often gives voice to both Stevens’ swirling emotions as well as his own, such as in the barn dance and hunting scenes. For instance, it bespeaks their mutual despair at being separated in the film’s final sequence when Perceval sits wildly playing it while locked up in his room after Stevens unsuccessfully invites him into the storm. Simultaneously, it also replaces and gives less minatory voice to Perceval’s demented screaming in the novel, screaming that he only really begins in earnest in the novel after the older, predatory men begin their attacks on women, screaming which the frustrated would-be patriarch Stevens imitates.

In addition, Simoneau replaces the lacerating images of rape and death with verdant visual symbols of life to link the brothers, appropriating images that

Hébert had used to relate Nora and Olivia to notions of sisterhood, innocence and burgeoning procreative power. Notably, in the film's hunting sequence, Perceval and Stevens are interconnected through fern imagery. While the "real" men hunt, the more gentle and woodsman-like Stevens gathers berries and holds his hat full of ferns. Perceval also picks the abundant fronds and, as he does so, shouts Stevens' name as if they remind him of his brother. Indeed, he calls Stevens both moments before and after he is shot at by Patrick, suggesting a telepathic, solicitous fraternal relationship in which Perceval seeks either to warn Stevens against danger or to assure himself of Stevens' safety. The ferns that they both collect and touch, coupled with Perceval's concern, underscore the young men's strong brotherly bond.

In contrast, in the novel, red autumn ferns remind Perceval of green, spring ferns which he associates with Olivia and Nora, not his brother. The green plants symbolize the girls' virginal innocence, the red ones their coming menses and reproductive ability, which Stevens yearns so much to vanquish (a need which in turn leads to him causing their death at their peak of maturity, like the fall ferns). Simoneau thus eclipses not only the positive connotations that ferns carried regarding women which Hébert makes through Perceval's memories in the novel (152, 155, 180), but also any suggestion that Stevens apprehends these female states (180). In the film, ferns bespeak only his love of and closeness to both nature and his brother.

As a way to emphasize further the importance of Stevens' and Perceval's brotherhood, Simoneau creates for the film a mini scenario in which Stevens names the dory which Maureen gives him after Perceval. This is a rather

unusual decision since, traditionally, boats tend to be named after women in the family in reverential but patriarchal displays of male ownership of the female vessel or womb. Neither Maureen's gift of the boat nor Stevens' christening of it occur in the novel. His appellation in the film reveals a desire to honour his own brother, and, more subtly, to honour kinship *between* men rather than *with* or *over* women.

Indeed, three shots of Stevens and Perceval with this dory, suggest a forging of a mystical brotherhood not only on the sea (as indicated in Chapter 3), but in and around the fraternal vessel against all parental and natural odds. These shots include the two brothers hiding like children from the maternal Maureen by the dory, the pair contesting the wild elements to launch the dory, as well as the duo rowing on the aquamarine ocean. This all-male, specifically fraternal, sea-going outing not only eclipses, as noted in the earlier chapter, the positive scene of female bonding evoked by Felicity and her granddaughters splashing about in the auroral bay, but also evacuates Stevens' parodic and patriarchally-contextualized dream of assuming the saviour-father's position with not only his brother but his own sisters. Notably the film's fraternal excursion transforms the fatherhood fantasy Stevens cherishes in the novel of running the great spaces of America down to the free, hot shores of Florida in a red fire-truck, sirens blaring, with not only his brother Perceval aboard but his twin sisters, Pat and Pam, as well. The truck's bright red hue, its clamorous advance and Stevens' paternalistic reference to his siblings as "ma famille" (85) together proclaim the intensity of Stevens' paternal desires. Moreover, his reference, immediately prior to this vision, to his sisters' instinctive assumption of their

female roles as care-givers, nurturers, and supporters of the male conveys Stevens' hope to constitute a family with women well contained in their traditional gender roles. (Recall in particular Stevens' description: "[Pat et Pam] viennent de surgir de chaque côté de Perceval pour l'encadrer et le défendre.... [Elles] mouchent Perceval et lui essuient les yeux avec un torchon de *cuisine*," emphasis added (85)).

The fraternal sea-going visuals also eclipse the murderous image evoked in the novel of the lone Stevens rowing his dead female cousins offshore to dispose of their bodies. In essence, Simoneau transforms a male voyage of female subjugation into one of fraternal bonding. "Harvested" virginal piscatory prey (Nora and Olivia) are no longer returned like bait to the sea, weighed down with fishing gear, after their vicious engendering, as in the novel; rather fisher brothers commune in the male world of adventure against the wishes of the father.²⁶ A quest for an idealized brotherhood replaces patriarchal cover-up. In addition, in this fishing sequence, Perceval becomes a projection or a double of Stevens, but of a different sort than he was in relation to Stevens in the novel. In this sequence, the rebellious Stevens acknowledges that Perceval is like himself, a freedom-loving man, unwilling to do what he does not want to do.

In Simoneau's vision, the threat to this mystical, liberty-loving brotherhood is the divisive, controlling father — the oppressive old paternal order. That the father in fact seeks to divide the brothers is forecast when the father angrily thrusts a knife into a rickety filleting table when he sees his sons returning from their fishing trip in the fishing sequence. This use of the knife recuperates the film's only earlier allusion to knife imagery as symbolism for

rape (suggested, not shown, by Bob Allen's question to Stevens in the "les boys scene" about undressing women with knives) as a powerful symbol of paternal severance of fraternal ties. Symbolism of concern to feminists is thus partially reconstituted as symbolism of concern to sons and brothers. This paternal use of the knife further diverts the connotations of the blade away from allusions to sexual assault, a transformation already begun in the film by Irène's despondent wielding of the filleting knife, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Once the boys beach their dory, Stevens' father completes the partition of the fraternal relationship by immediately disciplining Perceval, scolding him and dragging him along the shore. Stevens calls desperately after his brother, "Reste avec moi." Perceval, his hair wet and eyes sad in a close-up, looks helpless. He staggers back, picks up his dead fish that had fallen to the ground because of the father's rough handling and staggers away, leaving Stevens alone by the sea. Olivia, a witness to Stevens' abandonment and resulting emotional neediness, turns away. His father's admonishment only leaves her more disinterested in Stevens. An obedient servant to the old paternal order, she rejects the rebel who struggles against it, further alienating him and again hinting at the reasons for her eventual demise at his hands in the film. A final high angle shot of Stevens standing alone as a single wave laps at his feet emphasizes his desertion by his loved ones. In notable contrast to the novel, his father has not directly interfered with Stevens' search for love with the substitute mother figure (Olivia), something the father does most violently when Stevens is a boy (206) and which is never otherwise shown in the film. Rather, his father has successfully impeded Stevens' search for a loving relationship

with the fraternal figure (something that does not occur in the novel), and has only by default also curtailed the interest of Stevens' love object in Stevens.

In contrast, in the novel, it was the patriarchal Stevens' own inability to adapt to and then couple with the "fast" women of the post-war generation (232) that leaves him unable to be a part of a brotherhood, specifically to ascend to the brotherhood of adult or married men. His final letter complaining about these women to the "absent" brother Mic, who Stevens realizes has probably long since married (233), written as the elderly, unmarried Stevens languishes in a bachelor apartment, underscores Stevens' instinctive realization that he is now in fact alone — brotherless — outside the adult male "brotherhood" of married men to which "old " Mic has ascended. Recall that in Stevens' letters, "brother" had constituted a Catholic play on the celibate and therefore virginal and symbolically pre-Oedipal state of the religious brother.²⁷ Stevens had repeatedly addressed Mic as brother, reiterating his latent and futile hope that Mic had remained boyish and thus outside marriage — that their adolescent homosocial relationship, during which they had shared in the humiliation of women, remains intact. Moreover, the young Stevens had affirmed his pre-Oedipal attachment to that celibate state (reflecting his unreadiness for heterosexual relations) when he had stated in his first letter that the smell of fish on his hands protects him from desiring women: "Le poisson, c'est comme si on entrait en religion, ça protège" (58).²⁸ Confronted with the modern woman in his youth and adulthood, which will be examined further in the next chapter, Stevens remains unable to advance beyond that adolescent stage in any permanent way, having been socialized into a retrograde loathing of equality in

sexual relations. As a result, he stands alone and outside the brotherhood of adult heterosexual men by novel's end.

Within the context of paternal denial of the brotherhood in the film, the rough sea, which becomes tempestuous soon after the father's sundering of the brotherhood, acquires connotations of a wrathful, punitive father. As noted in Chapter 3, just prior to the onslaught of the film's storm, the sea externalizes the earlier attempt by Stevens' actual father to rupture Stevens' relationship with his brother on the beach by leaving Stevens' dory dashed on the shore, the board bearing Perceval's name smashed off. To suggest Stevens' search for release from his frustrations with this oppressive paternal figure, Simoneau has Stevens hurl this board in a bitter rage, cutting the image with a flying gannet, symbol of the free and natural man he wants to be, using an on-action edit. Unwilling to leave the repressive island because his fraternal vessel has been destroyed,²⁹ Stevens then seeks the next best thing — to share psychic release from paternal repression with his brother in the mounting gale. This act bespeaks an attempt to save his brother from this repressive order by reintegrating him into the wildness of the natural elements to which Perceval is already akin (witness his love of sunlight on his breast in the post-sermon sequence and his later masturbatory interest in the moon, a dramatization of a short scene in the novel.) Through this narrative transformation, Simoneau tries to free the libidinal Perceval, whom Hébert leaves not only trapped but has incarcerated by patriarchy because he wants to yell the truth about the crimes against women.

Moreover, in having Stevens implore Perceval to join him in the storm, Simoneau transforms the fact that he begs Nora and Olivia to do so in the

novel. This substitution of the girls by the fraternal figure in the film marks another important shift away from Hébert's concern with the destructive desires of a budding patriarch. In the novel, Stevens' sudden impulse to bring his female cousins into "la grande fête folle de l'orage" (104) after repeatedly changing into manhood clothes before the churning sea had signified his desire to become a man by consummating his rising sexual excitement, mirrored and aroused by the writhing female entity (Bishop 1984/85 186). He affirms, "[Il est] jouissant de la fureur de la mer" (102). In wanting to share his abandonment to cosmic forces with the teenage girls, he had expressed the hope to have a symbolic coital experience with the budding women — to take them from the parental home into the core of passion: into chaos, darkness and mystery where he can initiate them into their subordinate gender role through his sexual domination (suggested by his attempt to dominate the sea by screaming from his phallic rock during the storm). His invitation is thwarted by Nora's parents, especially her mother (222), and the warning voices of the whispering foremothers (222-223), as well as by Nora (104).

It is thus an androcentric and fraternal trajectory that characterizes Stevens' attempt to reconstitute the brotherhood with Perceval by calling him into the tempest in the film. As in his earlier effort to bond with his brother, Stevens' attempt is again impeded by the omnipresent father, not mothers or foremothers. Moreover, his brother becomes the mouthpiece of the judgmental father/Father. Flanked and then pulled back by his father's arms like a puppet, illuminated by the supernatural flash of white, other-worldly lightening, his voice technologically altered but unexpectedly articulate and clear, Perceval

transcendentally pronounces Stevens crazy: "Stevens, mon frère, tu es fou." Brother rejects brother by force of the father/Father. Indeed, brother rejects brother from the ruling position of the father/Father for in this God-like role, Perceval, at the two-storey window above Stevens, is not only backed by his father, but he has ascended to the father's position that so oppresses Stevens. He occupies the upper plane so often occupied by the paternal figure in relation to Stevens in the film (recall the dominant position of the father/Father in the post-sermon and dory lift scenes), underscoring the fact that Stevens' main source of conflict is the father not, as in the novel, the modern woman who assumes the so-called male place.

Recall that in the source text, Nora not Perceval threatens Stevens with her rise to the position of the father, particularly during the novel's climactic scene, which the film's storm scene parallels in terms of narrative order. She had begun to assume the paternal position when she had repeated her father's assessment about Stevens' inebriation (104, 133). Then, in the novel's final scene, she uses the coarse language of the town's adult men, paternal representatives, to shout at Stevens that he is not a man. In reaction, he kills her, in part to remove this new figurative father figure so that he can unite with the idealized mother figure and (attempt to) complete his Oedipal trajectory. (Recall that previously Stevens had symbolically killed his grandfather to "marry" Maureen and had later usurped his father [94] to then go fishing the mother substitute Olivia [95-97].)

Is there any basis for designating Perceval as representative of the Father who judges the Son in the novel? Perceval's ascension to theomorphic

adjudicator in the film has, in fact, a source in the novel. In Hébert's work, the Reverend, who knows that Perceval witnessed both Stevens' and his own crimes, imagines Perceval as the apocalyptic angel of judgment (51). However, Perceval's function in this divine role is minor in the novel and not part of a paternal order intent on subjugating the rebellious son. Rather, in this harsh, seraphic role in novel, Perceval serves as the harbinger of the Father's punishment of His wayward representative: the parodic Christ, the Reverend.³⁰ These imaginings represent the Reverend's inner conflict between God and himself over his sins against women, not any sense of the Son's subjugation by a God who maintains control by disallowing fraternal bonding, as suggested by the surreal storm scene between Stevens, Perceval, and their father in the film. Moreover, Perceval's symbolic foray into divinity in the novel constitutes part of his larger function as the voice of an instinctive, moral conscience, a role he barely assumes in the film.

Relatedly, Perceval's pronouncement that Stevens is crazy during the tempest in the film also derives in some measure from the novel. However, that pronouncement comes not from Perceval or, more significantly, from a paternal or even fraternal figure seeking to keep Stevens isolated in his lowly filial place but rather from Stevens and Maureen who are commenting on Stevens' manhood quest during the storm. In his letter of August 31, 1936, Stevens records that Maureen describes him as mad for insisting on experiencing the three-day storm (102); however, her observation betrays only her bewilderment over Stevens' frenzied behaviour. It is not a formal characterization, a medical diagnosis, or a god-like assessment. In that same letter he, himself,

categorizes his actions as insane (102), a comment which merely reveals he lacks both insight into his troubled passage into manhood and emotional maturity to deal with his swirling emotions and rage, particularly regarding modern women. Neither of these descriptions reflect the paternal order's opinion of Stevens at this time in the novel. At worst, Nora's father views Stevens as hopelessly drunk or drunk with sexual desire (133).

Nevertheless, Perceval's pronouncement in the film, made in the anagogic tones, suggests not only a paternal but a heavenly decree from God on high: Stevens is actually insane, an assessment supported by the lighting, *mise-en-scène*, editing and generic moon symbolism. As such Stevens, in the film's climactic sequence, is framed as a danger to the paternal order. He must therefore be forsaken. In contrast, in the novel, it is Nora who, in the novel's climactic scene is the perceived threat but, in her case, to the patriarchal order since she appropriates the father's voice to challenge the would-be patriarch. She must therefore be killed.

Having pronounced Stevens mad and, by implication, unsafe to be with, Perceval is forced by the father to relinquish Stevens to the thrashing elements. This abandonment underscores Stevens' fraternal and filial alienation and sets off Stevens' final rage in the film. Thus Stevens' ultimate expression of fury in the film is not set off, as in the novel, by a woman's (specifically Nora's) put downs regarding his manhood as she appropriates the father's voice. Rather, Stevens' intense ire in the film is provoked by his brother's rejection and, even more precisely, by his father's control of his brother, an inter-male conflict that, as we have seen previously, becomes mirrored in Stevens' struggle in the

raging sea. Moreover, since he is no longer engaged in a patriarchal struggle to overpower the female entity as he yearns to initiate his cousins in preparation of his later rape, he does not engage in a repetitive changing of manhood clothes in this film scene, unlike in the novel.

Where does this paternal-filial conflict lead in the film? As explicated further in the next chapter, Stevens' rape and murder of Olivia, the obedient virgin who symbolizes of the values of the old paternal order, materially expresses Stevens' conflict with the father and the Father's regime. It becomes the act that finally allows Stevens to begin to bring the old order down not a reflection of the impasse of male-female relations in patriarchy, as in the novel. However, what concerns us here is the aftermath of that action, since that brief but key period comments on the resolution of the fraternal relationship we have been examining.

After Steven's (apparent) off-screen murder of Olivia in the film, he solidifies his newfound manhood with the help of his brother. This consolidation is suggested by the following sequence of symbolic events. Amid the strewn flotsam, Perceval awkwardly stumbles along the dusky beach, picks up Stevens' hat and places it on his own head as he looks puzzled at what appears to be Olivia's body. He climbs up on the phallic rock where the slightly hunched Stevens now sits, pets him on the shoulder, then places his arm around Stevens' back. The two are shot from behind as they look out over the now calm ocean. Their silhouette becomes one against a tranquil sea and an auroral sky as the angelic, haunting violin theme, which has signified Stevens' rejected love in the film, soothes the scene. Perceval's hatted head cupped

over Stevens' bare one symbolizes not only the full bonding of the brothers but the constitution of Stevens' manhood by way of his psychic union with his brother.

Most significantly, by judiciously placing his apparelled head over Stevens' uncovered one, Perceval reconstructs iconographically the tumescence Stevens presumably achieved during the rape. The melded fraternal silhouette becomes a symbolic construction of the erect phallus facing the promise of an awakening day. While both his father's and Olivia's love were denied Stevens, his brother's loyalty ensures that Stevens' manhood, at least, remains intact. Even in his old age, old Stevens in the film at times wears a hat, suggesting that his manhood prevails even in his disoriented later life.³¹ In regaining his symbolic crown — the hat — Stevens (whose name means crown) achieves a sexual form of resurrection, enfeebled as it may be, before the paternal space of the sea, which reverberates with the Christ symbolism explicated earlier. With the virgin sacrificed on the beach below, Stevens has stilled the winds of anger at the wrathful old order and timorously lords over its archetypal waters. The image freezes on this reluctant perhaps aggrieved (note the stooped shoulders) but fraternally supported anti-Oedipus. By stopping the film narrative here —with young Stevens on the rock — Simoneau emphasizes the notion of Stevens' recreation of his past self. This is how old Stevens chooses to remember himself in the end: not as the deformed devil, as seen by the old paternal order, but as the mildly triumphant anti-Oedipus, who has managed to survive his filial oppression with his manhood intact.

The final scene of the brothers in the film is not without basis in the novel. In creating this scene, Simoneau was broadly inspired by Stevens' next-to-final fraternal comment in the novel: "J'... entends [Perceval] qui dit que je n'ai pu faire une chose pareille. Il frotte sa tête laineuse sur ma main, répète que je suis bon" (249). However, Perceval's kindly naïveté is undermined in the novel with Stevens' subsequent statement: "Imposture et dérision" (249). By contrast, in the film, no such undercutting of Perceval's motives or his brotherly understanding is made. Rather, Perceval's tender reunion with his brother suggests that for such an innocent boy to love Stevens, he must inherently be good and that there is hope that he will demonstrate this basic rectitude in the new phase that he is beginning with this gentle fraternal assistance. Thus, Simoneau returns to Stevens the brother he had figuratively begun to lose to paranoia by novel's end. Hébert had had Stevens, the failed Oedipus, feel abandoned by both his biological (Perceval) and symbolic (Michael) brothers. Alone and suicidal by novel's end, the only hope for this would-be patriarch was to ascend to heaven where, presumably, God rules and patriarchy reigns, and where he hopes his brother will greet him. In contrast, Simoneau gives Stevens both his brother and the hope for a better world with this brotherhood intact on earth.

Contrastingly, in the novel, Stevens loses his manhood after the rape and murders, symbolized by the loss and apparent irrecoverability of his hat. Although he has defended his manhood, acted like the patriarch and dominated Nora and Olivia through physical and sexual violence, he is unable to maintain his masculine identity in an era of changing gender roles symbolized and

foreshadowed by Nora, who had heralded a new social order where gender distinctions are blurring. After the Second World War, Stevens will observe: "Filles et garçons se ressemblent de plus en plus. A tant suivre des jeans délavés, des fesses plus ou moins rondes, on n'est plus sûr de rien. Le monde n'est plus aussi net qu'autrefois. Avant on aurait su tout de suite qui était garçon ou fille, rien qu'en les regardant se dandiner devant nous" (232). Thus, although in murdering Nora, the patriarchal Stevens self-defensively kills the first castrating man-woman or phallic woman he encounters, the stinging effects of Nora's effeminizing barb linger, reincarnated in the "male" sexual roles which increasing numbers of young women are assuming. Stevens cannot handle this post war generation of young women who, for his patriarchal tastes, are too sexually aggressive (232). He remains forever demasculinized, unable to assert his dominant male position in this world devoid of rigid gender roles.

The conceit of the "little death" — detumescence — following Stevens' orgasm during the rape (248) foreshadows a form of emotional death for this would-be patriarch and his eventual slide to suicide. His detumescence becomes permanent, a symbol of his perpetual demasculinization by modern women as a thwarted Oedipus. He will become unable to complete coitus without trembling (232) and will end up acting like a woman (231), using pills to shore up his failing sense of male power ("[sa] puissance" 236). As his final letter will reveal, he cannot ever fully arrive at the destination of his traditional manhood quest — "au bout" as he terms it — because he cannot negotiate as a man of the old order with the women of the budding new order, whom he meets during his journey of maturation. Unable to ejaculate the expression of his

sexual manliness within a woman, he cannot write the end of his story of ascension to manhood (243, 249). Consequently, his Oedipal quest, begun on his return to Griffin Creek as a young man, remains forever unfinished. He therefore cannot complete his identification process with the patriarchal father because he becomes forever unsuccessful in having relations with women, male domination now being out of vogue. This broken, drug-addicted, flaccid, effeminized man, hopelessly writing to his absent "brother" Mic and defiantly praying to meet his biological brother in patriarchal heaven, is hardly the image of the newly, if timidly, tumescent man supported by his brother that Simoneau projects at film's end.

Conclusion

This chapter documented how the process of selecting characters for development and scenes for dramatization, requisite in film adaptation, played out ideologically in Simoneau's androcentric privileging of Stevens' role as narrator and protagonist and in his androcentric focus on the father-son conflict and compensatory fraternal bonding. The novel's main conflict between the would-be patriarch and the inexperienced and latently modern women that is set up by the novel's polyvocal structure is erased from the film's narrative structure. Moreover, one of the novel's central concerns with the masculinity quest which subjugates women is also sidelined as Simoneau rewrites Stevens' Oedipal quest for identification with the patriarchal father into an anti-Oedipal one for rebellion against the old paternal order, as Simoneau foregrounds the

novel's sub-themes of sexual repression and Stevens' tensions with his father, and as he reformulates Stevens' fraternal relationships.

While, in the novel, the violence, anger and sexual control of Stevens' father towards Stevens evidently marked his childhood and his father's excessive paternal discipline evidently precipitated Stevens' departure from Griffin Creek, his sense of rejection by his father does not govern his reactions and behaviour with women upon his return, as it does in large part in the film. Rather his need to prove himself a man (a patriarch like his father ready to replace his father before his father) does and to this end he attempts to dominate various women in the source text. In contrast, in the film, women become, in part, either implicit, ambiguous collaborators with his rebellion or scapegoats for his feelings of rejection. This in turn changes the underlying vision of the root cause of (and implicit solutions for) much violence against women in heterosexual relationships.

The focus on the Father/Son conflict alters the underlying significance of the narrative's symbolism from meanings which comment on patriarchal relations between men and women to meanings which either comment on filial relations between father and son or on reconstituted manhood. In his role as rebellious Son, Stevens' designation as a Christ/Devil figure undergoes a shift in emphasis in the film bringing it under the banner of the Filial/Paternal struggle and away from the issue of sexual domination of women, with which it was more directly associated in the novel. Stevens seeks to identify with and displace father figures with the donning of his hat and manhood clothes in the novel while he seeks to defy the clergy by his donning and defiant removal of his hat

in reaction shots with the Reverend in the film. Furthermore, in the novel, Stevens will eventually lose his hat after the rape and murders, symbolizing his loss of manhood, while in the film he will regain his hat and establish his manhood by bonding with his brother.

In highlighting and developing the fraternal relationship that is mentioned in the novel, Simoneau removes those aspects of the brotherhood rapport that in the source text showed how patriarchy perpetuates itself through fraternal relationships. Notably, he excises the conceit of correspondence with “brother” Mic, letters which, in describing Stevens’ attempted Oedipal trajectory in the novel, were not only pornographic in their description of his sexual humiliation and destruction of women, but were both vehicles by which to perpetuate patriarchal ideals and destabilizers leading to the latent pornographer’s own mental breakdown. Further, Simoneau rewrites the relationship with Perceval. In the film, we do not see Stevens engaged in perpetuating patriarchy by introducing his brother to the idea of raping the new wife as he symbolically participates, as elder brother, in Perceval’s engendering process or see Stevens engaged in any parodic, patriarchally-contextualized fantasy of fatherhood with brother and sisters in tow. Rather, Stevens seeks to “save” Perceval from the oppressive old order by taking him out to sea and inviting him into the storm.

Ultimately, a remarkable if not systematic process of substitution of male for female voice and of some male-female conflict for male-male conflict takes place in the film adaptation to the point where modern Nora’s threatening ascent to the paternal position is replaced by the oppressive ascent of the brother to the father’s position. In the end, Stevens’ patriarchal reasons for failing to enter

the brotherhood of adult men are replaced in the film by his father's breaking of his bonds with the brother, while Stevens' alienation from the brotherhood of novel's end is replaced in the film by his recuperation by the brother and the latter's symbolic recreation of Stevens' tumescence and manhood, both lost by novel's end. Stevens who in the novel slides towards suicide and a last ditch attempt, as a thwarted Oedipus, to seek patriarchal Heaven, sits as a mildly triumphant anti-Oedipus by the film's close. The androcentric sidelining of the feminist concern with Stevens' troubled Oedipal trajectory and how it affects women in the novel is complete.

These thematic modifications of the fraternal relationship incorporate numerous reconstitutions and reassignments of symbolic objects and actions. Latently patriarchal symbolism becomes transposed with the switchblade, symbol of sexual assault, becoming the match box, symbol of coitus. In the end, the rape symbolism of the knife is recuperated as a symbol of paternal severance of fraternal relations. Positive images of brothers bonding in nature replace not only positive images of women bonding in nature, but eclipse references to natural associations that burgeoning women have with nature and the negative image of Stevens' patriarchal cover-up of his crimes at sea.

None of these narrative, scenic and symbolic changes are related to limitations of the cinematic medium. Not only are there cinematic solutions for the polyvocal narrative structure, but Simoneau could simply have made less androcentric choices in his selection of narrators, while finding ways to recognize the male-female dynamic. Moreover, unreal scenes such as Stevens' paternal fantasies could have been suggested in dialogue or in his drawings, or

in any variety of surreal or even disturbingly “real” dramatizations of the imagined world, as exemplified for instance by Peter Jackson in his acclaimed *Heavenly Creatures* (1994). In short, the process of compressing scenes and characters, the retrenchment of thematic focus, as well as the reconstruction of the symbolic meanings of various objects and gestures examined in this chapter manifest yet again a lack of concern with Hébert's feminist critique of patriarchy.

¹ See Gould for more on Hébert's contestation of the “phallic truth of unified self”, 924. Also see Collie, 285-287.

² See also Gould, 923.

³ As one of the most obvious changes to the Hébert text, the simplification of the novel's multiple narrative structure is observed by most critics of the film.

⁴ See DuPlessis on writing beyond the ending of the master plot in twentieth century women writers. Smart's comments suggest that Hébert is working in this tradition (1988 263).

⁵ In the film, old Stevens painfully remembers his past deeds while wandering in the dilapidated church to which, in the novel, the Reverend, after a night of tortured and guilt-ridden reminiscing, prepares to go to give a sermon. In the film, old Stevens partially cites comments made by the old Reverend in the novel, notably regarding the presence of the wind. In the film, old Stevens also reviews portraits of people from Griffin Creek, which are reminiscent of the old Reverend's portrait gallery in the novel.

⁶ Notably both of the narratives of the old men are dated the autumn of 1982. Both old men are obsessed with their sins and crimes of 1936 and are haunted by their memories in the depths of night. Both remember Griffin Creek as through an aquarium, a symbol of the sea where they fished the virgins, 32, 240. Both men smoked (as a symbol of their smoldering emotions) and as younger men they both stood domineeringly on rocks, 25, 60. As a young man, Stevens identifies with the image of a pastor when he dresses in his manhood clothes, 92. Most importantly, they both express patriarchal views of women and both engage in the subjugation of women: the Reverend sets off the rape trajectory with his molestation of Nora, and Stevens completes it with his attack on Nora and Olivia. (See also Gaulin, 8-11).

⁷ An interesting line of investigation, outside the parameters of this study, would be to determine what Simoneau retains of male and female versions of the same incident.

⁸ Bonneville's interview with Yves Simoneau (1986): 44.

⁹ Randall suggests that Simoneau's reading is in fact correct because she argues that Stevens penned all the narratives in the novel, 75. As discussed in Chapter 2, her position is highly debatable.

¹⁰ Garneau's observation on the elimination of the multiple narrators appears in a general review of several adaptations entitled “Dépolitisation et féminisme pépère”, which implicitly suggests her view that the simplification of the narrative structure is non-feminist. Slott is even vaguer in her categorization of this change, stating that Simoneau's choice of a single narrator breaks with the spirit of the novel, a concept she fails to define in her article on the adaptation (1989/90): 22.

¹¹ While maintaining a chronological order in his version of the narrative, Simoneau nevertheless changes the narrative order of a number of the events. The significance of some of these changes are discussed elsewhere when they affect the ideological tenor of the narrative.

¹² See, for instance, Bishop (1984); Collie; O'Reilly; Paterson (1985), and Slott (1987) for a discussion of aspects of these stylistic devices and narrative strategies in the novel.

¹³ Allusions to Stevens as a sky/sun god recur throughout the novel. For instance, Olivia compares him to a sun and a sunflower, 205; Nora refers to the transpiercing rays of his gaze, 122. During the rape he will assume the sky's position, by figuratively overturning the moon and the Milky Way, taking them out of the same (i.e. equal) celestial plane to reposition them as mother earth, on their back for dominance and possession, 247-248. Paterson also sees this image of Stevens on the rock as rendering Stevens God-like, as one who gives himself the power to create and destroy (1985): 174. Similarly, Mésavage says that "Stevens joue à Dieu en faisant paraître et disparaître Griffin Creek en le couvrant de son pied", 121.

¹⁴ Reid also notes Stevens' sense of alienation from his community, 120-121. In alternative readings, Smart reads the boot passage as indicative of Stevens' act of narration (1988): 262; Rea reads it as foretelling "the war games of too easy destruction, just as the rape-murders foretell his ability to serve as a soldier after his acquittal for the crimes", 176. Chevillot sees the boot-on-the-village image as drawn from folktales, meant to portray Stevens as "un géant surpuissant", 127.

¹⁵ Stevens, who maintains a steady gaze and who wears his hat throughout the silent confrontation scene with his father in the post-sermon sequence, expresses his desire for recognition from his father by moving to face his father more squarely and by very faintly nodding his head in acknowledgment of his father. The father, who stands in the dominant position, does not respond in kind. Although the exchange of looks shows that a tension exists between father and son, nothing in the meeting suggests that Stevens is seeking to dominate or succeeds in conquering his father. As Stevens' movement to face his father more squarely insinuates, Stevens merely hopes to meet his father (who stands in the upper plane) head on as an equal.

¹⁶ Earlier in the novel Stevens also makes it clear that his "costume d'homme" accords confidence: "Je n'ai retrouvé tout mon aplomb et mon assurance qu'en pensant à mes bottes et à mon chapeau. Je me suis dit qu'un homme n'a rien à craindre, chaussé de bottes viriles", 61.

¹⁷ See Reid for more on the relationship between Stevens' sexual relations with Maureen and his manhood quest, 122.

¹⁸ His designation as hunter/fisher, which is strong in the novel, is equivocal in the film. He spies Olivia in the woods in the film's fox hunting sequence (as the hungry fox?); however, he carries no weapon and collects ferns and berries in an idealized portrayal of a woodsman. Olivia is also a gather, picking berries, underscoring the notion of their mutual and natural sexual appetites. Moreover, *Stevens* is shot at by Patrick in this sequence, underlying his designation as prey-victim also, which blurs the designation of woman as prey in the film.

¹⁹ The close-up of Stevens' father, glancing after the fleeing Stevens, is succeeded by a long high angle shot of the father as seen from over the Reverend's shoulder, who stands even further up the cliff, with the church implicitly behind him. Rack focus then moves the viewer's attention from Stevens' father to the Reverend, who then turns to close the doors of the church. The Reverend is then shot facing the inside of the church from a camera positioned inside the church — from a space representing the Father. Through this camera gaze, symbolizing the eye of God, the Reverend is briefly silhouetted in a crucifixion-like image. He thus becomes an earthly representative of the Son. As such, he stands against the outdoor light with his arms spread out, to then grab the doors, which he then closes with a clatter. The image ends in the church's dim interior; the spectator is briefly shut up in the mystery of God, as son and Son are shut off from the grace of the Father, just as Stevens was moments before by his own father. The content, *mise-en-scène*, and editing of this son-father-Son-Father sequence of shots thus bespeak, both thematically and formally, Stevens' alienation from his father and the Father.

²⁰ For discussions of Stevens as Christ/Devil in the novel see for instance, Mésavage 116; O'Reilly 118; Paterson (1985): 176; and Sirois (1992): 125.

²¹ This ironic association of Stevens with Christ and the sacrifice of women is suggested by the fact that after the murders, the oars of his dory lie in the form of a cross, 152.

²² Relatedly, Winspur refers to the devil as a symbol of "the power-trap", 28.

²³ While as the typical alienated male, Stevens avoids all religious and family ceremonies, symbols of love and respect (fearing them like the devil fears holy water), his callous reaction to

Irène's suicide and his refusal to attend her funeral also reveal his underlying sexism. He saw Irène as merely a sensuousless woman, as though dead since her birth; he thus infers that she is just as well dead since she was not femininely sensual, not doing her feminine job of satisfying the male. He therefore need not attend the funeral of such a "useless" woman. In contrast, in a collective show of sympathy and respect, the village women cry for the deceased Irène, and Nora and Maureen shower her with flowers.

²⁴ He cites part of the old Reverend's rationalization in the novel that all the problems in Griffin Creek derive from the lust-inciting wind, 26.

²⁵ See, for instance, Frayling, 174-215.

²⁶ See Pallister for more on the mythical implications of this brotherhood (1995): 196.

²⁷ Not surprisingly, given Hébert's Roman Catholic roots, there is considerable latent Catholic symbolism in this novel ostensibly about Protestants. (Perhaps they are Anglicans, which would make some of the latent Catholic imagery more plausibly related to the story). At any rate, this "Catholic" imagery and symbolism is suggested in several ways. One thinks, for instance, of the ritual of the Reverend crossing himself after his sermon (31) and the symbolic significance of Stevens' letter of August 15th in which he describes fishing the virginal Olivia off a rock. The date frames Olivia as the Virgin Mary by foreshadowing her death, since Mary ascends to Heaven on August 15th. Olivia also often wears blue, the colour in which Mary is often depicted in Catholic iconography.

²⁸ In contrast, in the film, he says "Le poisson, c'est comme la religion, ça protège" showing again the shift onto the idea of the sexual repression of the paternal order away from issues of the adolescent "Brother's" sexual development.

²⁹ Note that Stevens is dressed to depart, carrying a travelling bag when he finds the dory, suggesting his intent to leave. Also note that Maureen has just been shown with tears in her eyes stopping her clock, signifying her sense that time has stopped for her now that Stevens has left her. In contrast, in the novel, time stops because physical and sexual violence has been committed against women and because Stevens seeks to fix them in the gender roles of yesteryear not because a woman has been jilted.

³⁰ See, for instance, Sirois on the Reverend as a parodic Christ.

³¹ My reading of the film's ending does not concur with Pallister's. She claims that "the end of the film... speak[s] to the desolation of the deed: male bonding is far from our minds.... Only the empty feeling of hopelessness, and sorrow too deep for tears" (1995): 206. Her reading dismisses the iconographic unification of the two brothers, overlooks the visual construction of Stevens' manhood through the iconographic construction of the phallus through the loving presence of his brother, and misreads the hope, timorous as it may be, that dawn typically symbolizes. Her qualification of the ocean as symbol of chaos neglects the gentle pastoral colours and calmness with which its image is imbued at the film's end.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFORMING THE MALE PROTAGONIST'S CONFLICT WITH THE "MODERN WOMAN" AND THE REPRESENTATION OF RAPE

"L'introduction du féminisme... engendera... pour tout dire en un mot: la femme-homme, le monstre hybride et répugnant."

— Henri Bourassa, 1925

"Rape is an expression of a social ideology of male dominance."

— Peggy Reeves Sanday

"Rape is a kind of terrorism which severely limits the freedom of women."

— Susan Griffin

The novel *Les Fous de Bassan* ends with the violent crimes of rape and murder against two young women by a young man. In recent years, feminists have argued that sexual assault, as well as the increasingly brutal depictions of sexual humiliation of women in pornography, reflect patriarchal defensiveness against the gains of feminism, gains which put traditional masculinity and manhood into question. As feminist anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday observes, "Men rape women when they are threatened with the loss of their culturally constructed maleness" (87-88). Hébert broaches this theme of the menaced masculinist or would-be patriarch in her novel. As we began to see in Chapter 5, Stevens is thwarted in his efforts to identify with and become the

patriarchal father by Nora, the modern woman, who begins to assume the so-called male social position. This chapter will backtrack somewhat in order to explore in more detail how Hébert outlines Stevens' increasingly uneasy rapport with the "modern woman" and how this tense relationship leads to and finds its ultimate expression in his final crimes against Nora and Olivia and how Simoneau incorporates and transforms that rapport.

While the previous chapter showed how some of that troubled rapport with the modern woman is replaced or at least overlaid with a heightened exploration of Stevens' relationship with his father or other "inter-male" issues, this chapter will analyze some of the retentions, omissions and dilutions *within* the portrayal of Stevens' conflict with women. It will seek to determine whether latent tensions with the modern woman or with the pre-feminist sisterhood explain any or are at least integrated into any of Stevens' aggressive behaviour with women in the film. To answer this question, this chapter will review the social context of female modernity in Québec, examine some of Stevens' reactions to the notion of a female sisterhood, and compare several specific instances of his interaction with, what was in the novel at least, the latently modern woman: his containment of Olivia, his rejection of Maureen, his denial of the "huntress" Nora, and his final crimes. The chapter will also briefly examine Simoneau's answer to Stevens' postscript to determine how Simoneau responds to Hébert's critique of the justice system and its failure to protect the modern woman.

The Rise of the Modern Woman in Québec

As the preceding chapter began to show, Stevens' individual failure to ascend to manhood (to become a patriarch) in the novel symbolizes the crisis of traditional masculinity during the rise of the modern woman and the pre-feminist sisterhood which together begin to threaten patriarchy prior to the Second World War in Québec. The year is 1936, emphasized by the repetition of the date in the novel, especially in the book of the Reverend (the failed patriarch). The traditionalist, repressive Duplessis regime, that will continue to deny women the right to a political voice, comes to power in the summer of that year — during Stevens' fateful return to Griffin Creek.¹ However, Québec women, who during the 1930's had been mobilizing around various issues of concern to women in such groups as "la Solidarité féminine," are also beginning to make a dent in patriarchal authority. They are now only four years away from winning their decade-old fight for the right to vote in provincial elections. They are gaining support from the Liberal government in-waiting and will win their hard won right to suffrage once the Duplessis government is briefly ousted during the war years.

Moreover, professional women in rural areas are beginning to band together and even traditional Catholic women's groups show on-going signs of keeping up with the changing times. In 1936, female rural teachers found "L'association des institutrices rurales" and "la Ligue catholique féminine" gives its stamp of approval to a new woman's bathing suit — a symbol of the active, modern woman. In short, in 1936, Québec stands on the eve of major changes for female social roles in the public sphere: not only are women, in that year,

making continued collective steps to take active charge of their lives in work and leisure, but soon they will have a voice in the political sphere and soon they will assume an expanded place in the labour force when they begin flocking to fill men's jobs during the war years (Dumont *et al* 245, 299-300, 343).

While francophone Québec is unable to shelter itself from the incursion of modern values spilling over from America and anglophone Canada, traditionalists fret over the influence that these values are having on young francophone women. As the *Almanach de la langue française* will decry in 1936, too many Québécois women are embracing a fun-loving, "non-ethnic" culture of the liberated woman, as reflected in their interest in the new fashions, cinema and magazines of the day and as expressed by their more daring tastes in appearance, food, music, sports, and outings (Dumont *et al* 246). This is the broader, unstated social context of the world of *Les Fous de Bassan*. Ibsen's Nora of half a century ago has finally stepped into Québec and has slowly and subversively begun to destabilize its patriarchal foundations.

Within this contested context, the old patriarchy is gradually crumbling. By 1982, the year of the elderly Reverend's and the elderly Stevens' swan song narratives, the dying anglophone patriarchy of Griffin Creek will not only be under siege from the rise of nationalist and papist forces in Québec (Reid 113), and as such may serve as a symbol of beleaguered francophone Québec in anglophone North America (Ewing 100), but will also be under siege from the now long-term rise of the liberated, egalitarian-minded, modern woman. This is, for instance, the year that women's equality will be reconfirmed in the Canadian constitution. In this context, the disintegrating anglophone patriarchy of Griffin

Creek serves as a microcosm for the threatened patriarchy in its wider social form: as it exists in francophone Québec and in the larger Western world.

Stevens as Maturing Patriarch

To this local patriarchy on the cusp of social upheaval returns Stevens on his manhood quest. He represents the male socialized within the traditional, rigid, patriarchal gender roles of yesteryear Québec.² As such he stands as antithetical to modernity, an inverse of the symbolic role le Survenant held in Germaine Guèvremont's 1945 novel of the same name. Stevens' evolution from a young boy who gently (although latently predaciously) touches a girl's cheek with the fingers of burning desire after her initiatory gaze (206),³ to a teenager who sidelines girls to their prescribed secondary place as passive on-lookers not active players (210), to an adult male who enjoys having women serve him (as in the case of Maureen, 66-68) suggests that his sexism is not inherent but developed over time and is thus learned. By the time he is an adult, his adoption of a rigid concept of gender roles is complete, with his sexism expressed by his contemptuous view of so-called female work and feminine behaviour. These attitudes are exemplified, for example, by his feeling out of place when he joins the women in the female outdoor task of berry picking as a young man (72) and by his sense of humiliation when he is reduced to crying and knitting like a woman as an old man (231). These sexist attitudes will manifest themselves in his violent or subjugating treatment of women as he increasingly feels threatened by their latent modernity which he needs to contain on his route to manhood, as I will show shortly.

In contrast, while in the film Stevens will show contempt of women by his insults and physical violence towards them, it is not clear that this behaviour reflects issues related to his developing or increasingly threatened patriarchal masculinity as it did in the novel. For one thing, in the film we are neither shown nor told about any of his childhood behaviour in relation to girls or women nor are we otherwise informed that he is on a manhood quest. All we learn, as we have seen, is that as a teenager he brutally attacked his father. Moreover, no overt comment on the relative worth of gender roles is made in the film, and some outdoor tasks (like the covering of the drying fish) are performed by both sexes. Although old Stevens briefly blubbers in the film, he shows no concern that he is crying "like a woman" as he does in the novel. These omissions underscore the film's lack of overt engagement with the theme of Stevens' evolving masculinity in terms of women and more particularly with the socially constructed nature of Stevens' traditional maleness over time. As such the film does not contextualize within a socio-psychological framework his adult need to dominate women. This decontextualization leaves us with the question: are there any other clues regarding Stevens' discomfort with, increasing threat from, or need to contain the (latently) modern woman in the film?

Stevens and the Pre-feminist Sisterhood

Not long after his return to Griffin Creek, Stevens, in the novel begins to manifest an angry awareness of a nascent but unconscious feminism, an outgrowth of female solidarity that implicitly challenges traditional gender roles and thus his ability to become a man. He contemplates the time when Nora and

Olivia will be mothers, “livrées aux rancoeurs des femmes, cachées dans leurs maisons fermées” (88). His complaint about the “rancoeurs des femmes” suggests not simply his misogyny, as several critics suggest, but his insecurity with the idea that one day the young women will be less naive about heterosexual relationships and have complaints about their condition as women. He fumes:

Ce que je déteste le monde feutré des femmes, leurs revendications chuchotées entre elles, à longueur de journée, l'été surtout, lorsque la plupart des hommes sont en mer, ou dans les champs. Il n'y a que mon oncle Nicolas pour les calmer et leur faire entendre raison. Au nom de Dieu et de la loi de l'Eglise qui sait remettre les femmes à leur place (88).

Horrified that the townswomen may have time alone together to develop what would in effect be a sisterhood and eventually a feminist consciousness (implied in the phrase “leurs revendications”), Stevens implicitly expresses a strong desire to keep these women in their prescribed secondary place, concurring with the Reverend's use of the traditional stick of Church law to break the development of a female sisterhood. This ambition to circumscribe women's social place reflects a typical aim of men who are violent towards women (Conseil du statut de la femme, April 1993, 29-32) and thus prepares the reader for Stevens' eventual assaults on Nora and Olivia. As one review of the literature explains, “la violence contre les femmes... viserait... à empêcher toute velléité qui les porterait à contester leur état d'infériorisation de d'oppression et de là, à y échapper” (Conseil du statut de la femme, February 1995, 58). Quite simply, Stevens wishes to join the Reverend (symbol of the age-old patriarchy) in his effort to protect the Griffin Creek patriarchy.

In contrast, in the film, Simoneau does not suggest that Stevens' eventual attack on his final murder victim, Olivia, flows in part from his growing need to protect the local patriarchy because he increasingly fears the emerging solidarity of mature women, especially sexually-experienced married women who no longer naively yearn for the likes of him (the patriarchal conqueror of virgins). Stevens makes no reprobatory comment regarding the claims, critiques or sisterhood of married women in the film, nor does the Reverend, nor does anyone report that the Reverend does. Moreover, since as we saw earlier, Simoneau also omits the presence of an emerging sisterhood along the female line, he also erases the possibility of integrating Stevens' views on this resisting social force through other means (such as gesture, editing or narrative sequence).

In addition, although Nora and Olivia (whose sisterlike relationship is suggested by their frequent scenes together) do briefly discuss Stevens and relationships (in the streamer-making scene and in the night path scene) which could suggest the possibility of more mature female exchanges on heterosexual relations later in life, these discussions appear to be less menacing to Stevens than those he believed married women had in the novel. Specifically, the threat to Stevens by these female conversations, which he seems to at least partially overhear, is somewhat undermined since they do not involve overtly complaining about or comparing bad relationships or making claims for improved relationships as was implied by the whispered "rancœurs et revendications" of the married townswomen in the novel. The conversations of the young women in the film are also greatly decontextualized from this larger

women's culture since they occur virtually outside the circle of more mature women. Maureen, as a widow who refuses the thought of remarriage, is only present at one of these conversations between the girls. As only one woman who was once married, she represents a very solitary link between these girls' conversations and more mature conversations that may occur in the otherwise unrepresented world of conversing married women.

In addition, these female conversations are not fully womanist or sympathetic to women and are therefore less threatening to Stevens. In the film, Nora appropriates Stevens' assessment of Olivia from the novel (82), telling Olivia, in the night path scene, that she is "trop sainte-nitouche pour lui." (In the novel, the most negative Nora gets about Olivia is to say that she is "malheureuse et trop solennelle" [122]). This appropriation of the superficial and disingenuous male assessment of the desiring but prudent⁴ virgin by the young female character whose very name symbolizes modern womanhood helps undo the menace that this modern woman can pose for men in the film. She is co-opted, turning on other women as Simoneau chooses to focus almost exclusively on her jealousy.⁵ She is parroting the voice of patriarchy, as symbolized by Stevens in the novel, a voice which in the novel refused to understand that the disrespectful and violent attempts of patriarchal men to take and control female sexuality is what makes women fear sexual relationships with such men.

In the novel, Stevens' discomfort with the sisterhood of women is also articulated when he expresses his anger with the women and girls of the village who follow him "en chaleur" (74, 80). Excited by their sexual interest, he is

nevertheless enraged by their collective, open and assertive display of desire. As a would-be patriarch, he must be the one to pick and approach desirable women. These women are instinctively reversing the patriarchal order in the custom of choosing sexual partners and are thus threatening his traditional sense of masculinity. Simoneau does not show that Stevens' eventual crimes of rape and murder flow in part from this growing irritation with a sexually assertive "sisterhood", as represented by groups of young girls who collectively, unabashedly and desiringly follow him, for there are no such groups in the film.

Stevens and the Traditional Woman

Indeed, it is Stevens' traditional view of confined gender roles and women's inferiority that he needs to keep intact in the novel in order to feel that he is becoming a man. This need explains his especial interest in the domestically occupied Maureen and Olivia. Bent on completing his Oedipal trajectory in the old way, he needs a woman who will assume the role of the traditional mother and thus allow him to ascend to the position of the traditional father or patriarch. In the interests of space, I will limit my discussion to a comparative analysis of Stevens' pursuit of the apparently traditional Olivia and to some aspects of his pre-rape reaction to her latent modernity, as well as to his reaction to the latently modernist desires of Maureen and Nora.

Stevens maintains a special predilection for Olivia in the novel partly because she engages in traditional female duties that reflect her apparent acceptance of her secondary and domesticated female role. He is attracted to the fact that she is chained to tradition (80) and that she understands (or so he

thinks) that she is owned by her father and brothers, indeed God Himself (96). He seeks her out after he learns from his disapproving grandmother that she is imprisoned in her traditional role as homemaker for male kin. Thus the timing of his visit (following his grandmother's observation) underlines his attraction to this traditional, male-held woman. Moreover, like a master, he delights in imagining making her go up and down stairs at his will and making her sew, seeing her "parfaitement occupée, durant de longues heures, son bras et sa main calmes tirant l'aiguille et le fil interminablement" (76). He spies on her at length as she irons a man's shirt (76).

The film's narrative structure also suggests Stevens' preference for women in traditional roles since he seeks out domesticated Olivia (whose housekeeping role he had learned about earlier from Nora) immediately following the rabbit strangling scene in which Maureen enters the male work space of the barn and angrily insinuates that Stevens is inept at this implicitly manly work. The fact that the next woman Stevens seeks out in the film is domesticated Olivia covertly suggests his interest in finding a woman who knows her place.

However, in contrast to the novel, although Stevens comes to see Olivia when she is ironing in her father's kitchen as he does in the novel, he does not precede this visit with fantasies about her engaged in endless domestic work, as he does in the novel, or otherwise express any desire to have her so occupied. He is thus not shown actively constructing her within her traditional role. If time were a factor in showing Stevens' pre-visit fantasies or fantasizing (for instance in a dialogue with another man), Simoneau could have transformed the ironing

scene to have Stevens manifest this interest in the traditional woman through a comment on her womanly ironing. Simoneau does not choose this amalgamative, more emphatic technique. Thus throughout the scene, Olivia's ironing remains only as a subtle reminder of her domestication. Indeed, this gender-role designation via the ironing is further underplayed, since the iron itself serves mainly as a metaphor of the girl's burning desire for Stevens in the film. Notably, she absentmindedly leaves the iron too long on the article being pressed, scorching it. In the novel, she had burned a shirt sleeve flustered because her attraction to Stevens is overlaid with her misgivings with his insistent presence against which her foremothers warn her (215-216). Thus the iron's symbolism becomes simplified in the film, a signifier of burning love (perhaps of women's work), not a more complex signifier of female desire, women's work and female misgivings (not to mention women's culture and female solidarity as previously observed).

Nevertheless, as we saw in the first chapter, Olivia's adherence to the traditional female role is suggested visually in the film in numerous ways (by her ironing, hanging sheets to dry, berry picking, serving a meal). Indeed, it is underscored in the night path scene in which we learn that she is dutifully carrying a pile of the Reverend's neatly folded shirts which she has apparently washed. This aspect of that scene symbolizes, as we have already noted, her dutiful service to the head patriarch — that she is obediently following the Law of the Father as Stevens likes to imagine her in the novel. However, not only does Simoneau not show Olivia's unhappiness in this circumscribed role (as explicated in Chapter 1), but more to the point for this chapter, Simoneau does

not emphasize Stevens' obsession with keeping her in a domesticated position that leaves her feeling incarcerated. He seems to be attracted to her because she is traditional, but, unlike in the novel, he manifests no interest in the negative connotations of that domesticated role, such as the woman's imprisonment, control, or ownership by the man, which in the novel had been implied by his seeking out Olivia after learning about her oppressively confined status. He thus does not exhibit a need to have her contained so that he can feel that he is a (patriarchal) man.

With the film's tempering of Stevens' interest in the *absolute* servility of Olivia (with the omission of his control fantasies of her domestication), his need for the fully traditional woman is attenuated as compared to the novel. His interest in the conventional woman thus becomes less ominous as it is less overlaid with the troubling aspects of his desire to control women. This transformation in Stevens' psychological needs is perhaps explained by the fact that the modern tendencies of the principal female characters are diluted, quickly contained, or outright erased in the film. Thus Stevens is less under threat and can concentrate on rebelling against the father by finding a suitable woman whom he can use in that vein.

Stevens and the Modern Woman — Stevens and Olivia

Recall that in the novel, Hébert creates a tension in Stevens' attraction to the traditional Olivia by having him have to contend with her modernist activities. Before he had even become a man ("caché sous son feutre marron" [213]), he had been torn in his interest in this apparently conventional girl who exhibited a

modern woman's ability at baseball. Allowed once as a young woman into "l'arène des garçons" (213), Olivia shows skill and rapidity and scores a point. Stevens is drawn to her, coming over to examine her more closely, but also feels castrated by her competence in this male activity, perceiving her running legs as "une grande paire de ciseaux" (213). To counter the threat that Olivia poses him, he thinks, "Elle n'est que senteur de fille [et] rejoïn[t]... à grandes enjambées, le groupe des garçons qui s'impatientent" (213). Having redesignated her as only a girl, he returns safely to the boys' world.

Similarly, once he is well into his Oedipal trajectory in which he proudly sports his manhood hat (92), he notices that this traditional woman can swim like a man (he initially takes her for her brother [96]). He quickly counters this threatening image of the latently modern woman with the thought that her brother, Patrick, "qui aime commander lui a sans doute donné des leçons de natation" (96). She must have learned from a domineering male. With this comforting thought, Stevens safely reinserts Olivia into the traditional vision of servile female follower in which he needs to maintain her.

In the film, Stevens is not clearly confronted by Olivia's modern tendencies to enter the male world. There are no images of her swimming or playing baseball. Her only manifestation of modern aspirations is contained in her announcement (created for the film) that she may be going to study to become a teacher on the mainland, which he may overhear in the streamer-making scene. However, the modernity of that announcement is much more ambiguous than her forays into the male worlds of physical activity in the novel. Already in the 19th century, the teaching profession had become

overwhelmingly dominated by women in Québec (Dumont *et al* 212, 288). The fact that Olivia would be leaving the island to study suggests an independence of spirit and a breaking away from domestic molds. However, since, as Olivia explains, she would be going because her *father* intends to send her and since the profession is not male-dominated, we realize that she is not venturing outside the circumscribed woman's place, even in leaving her community. Thus she never truly asserts a desire to enter the male world or displays any especial ability within that male sphere in the film. Consequently, Stevens does not, cannot, become engaged in an effort, either in fantasy or in actuality, to maintain her in her female role so that, as in the novel, he can maintain, gain or regain the patriarch's position. She simply remains in her traditional role and he continues to take an interest in her because she obediently adheres both to her father's will (going to study, for instance) and to the Father's Law (repressing desire) and thus represents someone on whom he can eventually discharge his anger with the oppressive father/Father. In this context, her initial resistance to him in the film's night path scene seems mainly an expression of coyness; her stronger resistance to him in the clothesline scene seems mostly a normal manifestation of self-defense, and her refusal of him in the barn dance scene seems chiefly an assertive desire to remain within her (incestuous) community.

Maureen and Nora also manifest a form of modernity in the novel which Stevens, as a would-be patriarch, must reject. According to the cultural script to which he adheres, he must be the sexual pursuer and must dominate and control sexual relations. However, in this society increasingly and latently impregnated by modern values, prospective female lovers develop the desire to

initiate sexual encounters and to become full sexual partners. Like the anonymous girls and women who (annoyingly) track Stevens (74, 80), Maureen and Nora attempt to assume a more active part in sexual relations, but Stevens, who must reject equality between women and men or lose his patriarchal identity, must reject their advances. How do these tensions play out in the film?

Stevens and the Modern Woman — Stevens and Maureen

In the novel, Maureen changes from being a reactive, swooning rag doll (68) to an actively desiring woman. At first Stevens is in control of their sexual relations: “la revers[ant], de temps en temps, au cours de la journée, entre deux jobs, dans la cuisine, derrière la cabane” (69). However, he begins to lose that control as her libido comes into its own. The more her desire awakens, the more his interest in her wanes. He seeks to punish her for daring to become sexual on her own terms by imposing his absence:

[J]’en ai de moins en moins envie, à mesure qu’elle se réveille sous moi.... La nuit, malgré ses protestations je dors dans la grange, en serviteur modèle, je lui répète que c’est là ma place attitrée.... Ma volonté est de dormir tout seul, la nuit, et de me satisfaire tout seul, si l’envie m’en prend. Que ma cousine Maureen découvre à loisir, couchée dans son grand lit conjugal, sa nouvelle solitude, plus grande que la première (69).

In the film, the reasons for the friction in Maureen’s and Stevens’ relationship are less clear cut, related to a more complex range of tensions. Maureen evolves from acting like an enraptured woman literally swept off her feet in the film’s extramarital bedroom scene (in an ambiguous nod to the novel) to a woman manifesting several challenging attitudes, which, unlike in the novel,

ultimately portray her almost as negatively as Stevens, thus sidelining the issues of his sexism and creating sympathy for him as a rejected suitor. A more detailed review of the key scenes will demonstrate this transmutation.

Following the almost generalized subservience Maureen manifests in the film's kitchen and extramarital bedroom scenes,⁶ Stevens first begins *returning* her to her place after she begins mildly asserting herself in the later gardening scene. His attempt to maintain his superior place as male is suggested spatially in this scene. Specifically, the choreography of space during a friendly conversation between Stevens and Maureen conveys the woman's move towards female-male equality followed by the man's mild shift away from it. This symbolic movement comes near the end of a lengthy shot, which begins with Stevens in the foreground hammering in a post and Maureen leaving her doorway and slowly ambling up through her garden. By mid shot they are in medium frame, side-by-side as equals, neither one physically dominating, suggesting an equality and an amicability that does not exist in the novel, nor, as far as equality is concerned, is suggested during their first sexual encounter in the film. However, Stevens quickly reasserts his ascendancy by moving forward again to his post; his aversion for female equality, so strong and central to the novel, thus finds a faint echo in the formal set up of this scene. Maureen, although she, too, moves forward to his side, remains, in terms of the camera, slightly back of Stevens for the remainder of the shot. This suggests her continued acquiescence to her secondary status at this point in the narrative.

However, in the made-for-film rabbit-strangling scene (which is loosely imagined from the minimalist reference to Stevens' rabbit skinning and to

Maureen's need for help with rabbit butchery in the novel, 68, 69, 157), Maureen will become more threatening and as a result Stevens will become more aggressive and domineering in subduing her. Indeed this scene arguably manifests his most dramatic putting of a woman in her place in the film, although the reason for it seems individualized, not part of a larger social project of keeping women in their place (a project that emulates the Reverend's goals) as was Stevens' conquering behaviour towards women in the novel.

In this scene, the interaction between Maureen and Stevens begins with her horror at him strangling a pregnant rabbit. In a pained voice, she reacts with a quick insult, "Pas celle-là imbecile. Elle est enceinte." In attacking his intelligence, her insult faintly echoes Nora's torrent of putdowns aimed at Stevens at the end of the novel. As he does against Nora later in the novel, Stevens in the film version responds defensively to Maureen's affront. While disdainfully holding the limp rabbit out of her reach, he says contemptuously, "Enerve-toi pas, la vieille."

With the latter term, he not only cruelly mocks her pain and concern but denigrates her because of her age, just as he eventually does in the novel (145). She, however, reacts with a greater sense of self-pride than she does in the novel (in which she merely becomes depressed after his rejection) by immediately slapping him. Her slap, which, on a physical level, again echoes the reactive verbal attack of the proud Nora in the novel, sends him into rage, just as Nora's insults do at the end of the novel. After a struggle characterized by more visual violence and more spatial expressions of female subjugation than the one he has with Olivia in the film's rape scene, Stevens manages to

force Maureen into a supine position for sexual assault before she successfully fends him off.

Before leaving the barn, though, he stands over her momentarily to emphasize that he is the conqueror. The *mise-en-scène* stresses his strength to her weakness, his dominance to her submission, as he towers in the foreground and she sits mute at his feet in the background, he with a large mallet held menacingly in his hand. This scene echoes the physical power Stevens wields over the girls during the rape and murder scene in the novel but betrays none of his sadistic pleasure in having downed his victim, unlike in the novel when he delighted in Nora's physical vanquishment (245). Nevertheless, by shoving Maureen onto the straw he has figuratively underscored her rejected social position as a dried-up old widow, a sexist vision he implicitly held of her in the novel when he observes that her barn (a womb symbol) contains "[d]e foin... sec comme de la poussière" (69).

However, that Maureen reacted less verbally aggressively than Nora did at the end of the novel (Maureen does not engage in a barrage of insults in male vocabulary that attacks Stevens' sexual-social male identity) shows that women in the film are still less threatening to Stevens than they are in the novel. As a result, he has to do less to contain aggressive women than he did in the novel. Therefore, while on the one hand his near rape of Maureen can be read as foreshadowing his eventual rape of Olivia at the end of the film, the fact that it is not completed also foreshadows the unclarity of the final crime (as I will explicate later). Thus while violence against women may in one way increase from physical violence and near rape to murder and actual rape over the course

of the film, Stevens' need to dominate women absolutely through sex as a way of keeping them in their sexual-social place is being elided, for it is never fully shown. Moreover, after this scene, one can argue that, in a sense, Stevens' struggle with women flattens out for it never becomes any more visually violent.

Indeed, from this point on Stevens' latent struggle with the implicitly equality-seeking or with the more generally assertive or even aggressive woman will be lessened or at least obscured as his struggle with his father and the paternal order continues to rise and becomes projected onto or integrated into his scenes with Olivia, notably in the night path, clothesline and rape scenes. By the time he relegates Maureen to the loneliness of the conjugal bed in the film's streamer-making scene (following two more rejections by his father as well his unsuccessful grappling with Olivia in the night path scene), the issue of him trying to contain, even on some latent level, the modern or assertive woman has become muddled. Not only are his conflicts with women (notably Olivia) becoming increasingly impregnated with his struggle with the paternal order, but in the case of Maureen it is becoming overlaid with a new struggle: one with a classist rather than the merely latently modern woman, as the following discussion will show.

In the streamer-making scene, Maureen expresses her modernity by her disinclination to remarry. She affirms her desire to do as she pleases, thereby suggesting her rejection of the confining demands of traditional marriage. This affirmation, which Stevens overhears, leaves Stevens, who had in the previous fishing expedition scene been again rejected by his father, without any immediate hope of reintegrating into this community through Maureen.

However, she goes further. She reveals that although she appreciates Stevens' hard work and sexual presence, she never really saw him as a possible husband for when Olivia asks her if she would consider remarrying, she responds by laughing, "Avec qui?" It is unclear whether his previously violent and domineering behaviour explains part of her reticence since she neither mentions it nor even betrays a negative tone of voice when she speaks about him. A younger man is evidently not outside the realm of possibility since Olivia suggests her brother Patrick. It simply seems that Maureen, who had manifested a hope of equal relations (through the choreography of space in the garden scene), also has a classist side to her because she seems to concur with Olivia's and Nora's references to Stevens as an employee in the latter part of this scene. By implication, then, she perceives Stevens as a man servant and thus beneath her. Her apparent modernity in not wanting to remarry is tainted with a sexually exploitative attitude of keeping an employee for sex. It is to this humiliating conversation that Stevens angrily reacts, shouting that he will now sleep in the shed. This statement constitutes his final rejection of Maureen in the film. Thus unlike in the novel, in which he, as would-be patriarch, is threatened by Maureen's rising sexual desire, in the film he, as latent egalitarian is irked by her sexually exploitative classism and for that reason ultimately spurns her.

Indeed, Maureen's classism is further underscored in this film scene by the fact that after Stevens' indignant announcement, she says nothing although in the novel she protests against his self-relegation to the shed. Moreover, when Nora (the girl with the modern name) yells at him, "C'est là la place d'un

employé”, Maureen does not correct her, which would have indicated her discomfort with such classist ideas. In fact, in the novel, it is Stevens himself who, in the novel, says, “Je dors dans la grange, en serviteur modèle” (69) as a cruel way to deny Maureen’s egalitarian desires.

In addition, with Nora’s expression of this unprogressive view, Simoneau continues his undoing of her as representative of female modernity, an act of undermining begun, as we have already seen, in the film’s night path scene. While women also describe Stevens in the same terms in the novel, it is not from the same stance as in the film. Specifically, as Nora reports, her mother sees Stevens as merely a hired hand, who sleeps in the barn as a model servant (135). However, her mother’s view betrays an innocent irony, unaware of the true reasons for which he has relegated himself to these sleeping quarters. Moreover, Nora only reports this view in her journal; she does not scream it at Stevens to put him down, as in the film.

Stevens and the Modern woman — Stevens and Nora

When in the film Stevens directly faces down Nora, who in the novel had most clearly expressed a latent form of liberal feminism and who had most threatened him, his underlying conflict with the modern woman (if it ever truly existed in the film) seems well in hand for this cinematic showdown barely betrays anymore of that struggle. To demonstrate this contention, let us review how his tussle with Nora’s liberalism is manifested in the novel and how it appears (if at all) in the film.

Recall that liberal feminism embraces the notion of equality between men and women and the concomitant belief that women are as equally capable as men to assume work done by or roles held by men. This is the ideology to which Nora, who, as critics note, conceives herself as the new Eve equal to Adam and who dreams of egalitarian relations as a queen with her king, instinctively adheres in the novel. She perhaps most actively acts upon these intuitive beliefs in the novel's huntress scene in which she attempts to become the sexual pursuer. Arguably her egalitarian standpoint, which I will explicate further momentarily, is important to the feminist perspective of the novel for it presents, instinctive as her views may be, an alternative, positive vision to the dominant patriarchal one of the male characters and, furthermore, is the most clearly articulated of these egalitarian attitudes in the novel. Moreover, Stevens' eventual slide towards suicide following his final, domineering and murderous refusal to accept Nora's modern tendencies and his general balking at those tendencies in post-war women underlines the fact that this (would-be) patriarch is undone by his own inability to embrace egalitarian principles. As Marilyn French states in her article "Is There a Feminist Aesthetic?": "[For a writer with a] feminist perspective... [d]omination is not divine but lethal to dominator and dominated" (70).

The novel's huntress scene has been noted by several critics as an important expression of Nora's bid for equality in sexual relations⁷ and is foreshadowed earlier in the text. Greedy for sexual knowledge⁸ Nora wants to pursue and taste carnal pleasures (symbolized by her biting an apple, symbol of the forbidden fruit, as well as by her picking strawberries, eating warm fudge,

wanting to share Stevens' saliva-soaked harmonica and dreaming of consuming kumquats with her lover-king, all visual activities). Early in Stevens' series of letters, she timorously begins her search for those pleasures by covertly chasing him in the strawberry picking scene in which he describes her as "une petite bête lustrée, à l'affut dans l'herbe... en bordure de la forêt" (72, 73). Later, more boldly and consciously, she again attempts to play the hunter with him. This time she is clearly in the forest and calls herself affirmatively "la chasseresse" (126). For hours she follows "ses pas pareille à un chien de chasse qui suit une piste" (127) only to be thrown into the role of the prey "tremblante et suppliante" the instant Stevens aggressively reverses their roles "[en faisant] volte face... [et en se faisant] lui le chasseur" (127). In refusing to allow her to switch gender roles, Stevens also contemptuously refuses to treat Nora, the desiring "chasseresse," as the woman and the equal that she desires to be viewed as (127). Instead he treats her like a child: "Je lui parle comme à un enfant que l'on met en garde" (91). He rebuffs her with a bored, meaningless kiss and a condescending admonishment not to do what she may regret (91). He sums up, "Je la refuse avec autant de véhémence qu'elle me désire. Epreuve de force. Il en a toujours été ainsi, je crois, chaque fois qu'une fille me fait des avances. Il faudrait les mettre au pas, toutes" (90). Stevens has no intention of allowing this young woman to assume the pursuer's role and she is angered, naively believing "qu'il serait si facile de s'entendre comme deux personnes, égales entre elles, dans l'égalité de leur désir" (127).

Significantly, although the sexist Stevens cannot accept Nora in the reciprocal (more dominant) role of the hunter, labelling her a child in order to

downgrade her burgeoning womanhood (72, 91), the innocent, pre-Oedipal Perceval embraces her in this assertive so-called masculine role. For him, Nora is like an Irish Setter (163), a breed renowned not only for its love of movement and its lustrous ruddy coat (the colour of Nora's shiny hair), but its affinity for bird hunting. Perceval thus acknowledges his young cousin as a possible Diana figure — as a figurative hunter of men (who in the novel are the ones primarily associated with predatory birds, notably the gannets).

Nora's attempt to fully assume that assertive pursuer's role is so drastically reduced as to disappear in the film. This is not because she displays no sexual appetite in the adaptation. It is clearly manifested both in direct language (for instance, by her stated willingness to sleep with Stevens in the night path scene and her question about whether Stevens sleeps at Maureen's in the streamer-making scene)⁹ and symbolically (for instance, with her grabbing Stevens' saliva-soaked harmonica and stating it is like kissing [as she does in the novel], and with her eating fudge in the streamer-making scene). Relative to Olivia she also displays a certain sexual abandonment in dress, with V-necked or bosom-tight dresses, unbuttoned sweaters, and frequently unbound hair.

However, while Nora manifests a degree of sexual readiness even aggressiveness in the film, her presentation as an actual sexual hunter actively trying to reverse gender roles is attenuated in the film. While her attempt is foreshadowed by her coming down to see Stevens after the church sermon and further suggested by her waiting for him after he visits Olivia (as she does in the novel), her bid at outright pursuit is then progressively undone. Firstly, the image of Nora actually "hunting" Stevens is split apart in the film. She

momentarily spies on him in the forest during the film's hunters' sequence, but with more the look of the jealous spy (for he is gazing on Olivia) coupled perhaps with the look of the concerned relative rather than the gaze of the hunter on watch. Then much later in the barn dancing sequence, she follows Stevens outside. This is her big "huntress scene", but it is devoid of hunter's signs. It unfolds not in the forest, where this scene as well as all the other scenes of hunting animals and women take place in novel, but by a wall not far from the dance. Perhaps it is the wall of the boathouse where Nora will soon be sexually accosted by the Reverend, and perhaps it thus carries latent piscatory signs but, if so, they are unclear.

Moreover, that she is in fact tracking Stevens — that she is actively assuming the huntress's role — is further underplayed because we do not actually see *her* following *him* from her point-of-view in the film, unlike what we are told in the novel. Although Nora's role as narrator is removed in the film, her subjective point-of-view need not be completely suppressed. Indeed, we never see — in one shot — Stevens clearly ambling ahead with her clearly following behind him. Rather in separate shots, we see him leave the barn dance and then we see that she is walking along and do not, for the moment, know why. The action is short and fragmented and hard to place in context. Indeed, as far as Nora is concerned, Simoneau makes no attempt to suggest that her pursuit, if one can call it that, takes much longer than the real time in which it occurs on screen. This brevity contrasts sharply with the hours that Hébert indicates that Nora traces Stevens in the novel. Of course, one could not expect such a

lengthy chase in the film, but a lengthier one than a few ambiguous seconds would have made her bid at pursuit more evident and threatening to Stevens.

Furthermore, Stevens seems to be almost immediately aware of her approach. Indeed, he seems to be aware of her presence before she becomes aware of him (unlike in the novel's huntress scene when he is aware of her either after she starts the chase or at least at the same time). He then almost instantaneously enters the position of the waiting predator/hunter in the film, hiding against the wall, before the spectator is even able to grasp that he is in fact being hunted by a woman and that he is reversing the hunter/prey roles. Indeed, we only learn after the fact that he has taken this position for we never see him actually assuming it; we only see him in it after Nora goes by. With this time compression and the lack of clarity in both the actual pursuit and the reversal of roles of pursued and pursuer, Nora's modernist attempt to engage in the role of sexual hunter and Stevens' sexist decision to refuse it is almost incomprehensible in the film. As a last point, she is not shown with a hunting dog or with any other venatic prop (in this scene or elsewhere) to suggest that she is the "huntress" Irish Setter as imagined by Perceval in the novel in a symbolic affirmation of her "hunting" desires.

In addition, it is unclear how well the notion that Nora hoped to be treated like an equal is retained in this silent visual translation of the novel's huntress scene. To recap, in the film after Nora passes the concealed Stevens, she stops, instinctively sensing his lurking presence. She then shyly turns and timidly begins to approach him after he rises from his hiding spot. He also immediately reciprocates, and they silently approach each other and almost

kiss. Stevens then brusquely repulses her, and a tear runs down one of her cheeks. This mute rendition of a scene in which in the novel both characters thought and spoke leaves it unclear how each feel about their respective approaches and Stevens' rejection. While Nora's approach in the film may signal her desire to be kissed or more specifically her desire to be kissed like a woman, something she expresses in her description of this scene in the novel, it is debatable whether the choreographed approach in the film also conveys Nora's abstract desire for equal treatment as a woman. Although Stevens' final push in the film scene conveys his contempt for and rejection of Nora, it does not necessarily articulate his awareness that he treats her as an *inferior* as in the novel.

With these internal dynamics obscured, the scene remains largely a superficial expression of Nora's hope for sexual contact and Stevens' rejection. Indeed, his reaction to her timorous approach may be less understood by the spectator as an expression of his sexism (a moment when he refuses to treat a desiring woman as his equal) and more as an expression of vengeful bitterness (a moment when he relieves his hurt feelings, having finally integrated the fact that in the previous barn dance scene Olivia, who obeys the hypocritical paternal order, has forever renounced him). As such, it is an expression of his projected discontent with that order. Alternatively, it may simply or also be a belated expression of his anger with Nora for treating him in a classist way in the earlier streamer-making scene.

The difficulty of visually rendering an abstract notion, such as the hope for equality between the sexes, is one of the well documented, although as Joy

Gould Boyum argues in *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film*, not impossible challenges of film (189-197). The internal conflict of the original scene could have been more surely conveyed verbally, if a graceful, unobtrusive way could have been found to express Nora's egalitarian desires. For instance, the cousins' dialogue from the novel's scene could have been included with slight alterations to clarify somewhat their respective sentiments regarding equality in sexual relations in the film. Furthermore, Nora could have been more precise about her feelings in her subsequent conversation with the Reverend in the following molestation scene. As it is, the reasons she gives in this latter scene for her anger at Stevens in the previous one remain superficial and vague. She says only that Stevens "est prétentieux, stupide." This statement is admittedly more specific than her affirmation to the Reverend regarding Stevens in the novel when she simply states "Je déteste mon cousin Stevens" (128). However, Simoneau could have used even more creative license to clarify her view even further, especially since he silences her in the actual "huntress" scene in the film.

As an alternative, some effort could have been made to integrate the characters' antithetical attitudes into the inner workings of their minds, especially since some of their thoughts are already conveyed in the moments before and after their physical encounter. Recall that prior to their meeting, Simoneau dramatizes Stevens' thoughts. In voice-over Stevens desiringly whispers Olivia's name then thirty seconds later Nora's, suggesting the would-be lover's acceptance to move on to the next girl now that his hope for winning the heart of the desired one has dissipated.¹⁰ Then after the encounter, Simoneau stages

Nora's general feelings of hurt following Stevens' rebuff by cutting a memory shot of the event into the sequence of shots showing the dejected Nora leaving the barn dance. However, since this closeup memory shot is only of Nora almost at Stevens' lips, suggesting that she is dwelling only on the missed kiss, and since Simoneau makes no additional attempt to overtly convey her feelings of being rejected as an equal, we can only be sure that she is sad about being spurned.

It could be argued that Nora's abstract hope for equality in sexual relations is implicit in the film's visual depiction of the actual encounter given that the latter part of her approach and her subsequent rejection occur on a relatively even plane of the horizontal axis and given Nora's history of sexual interest in Stevens in the film, notably her adult desire to sleep with him. However, that portion of their meeting is not included in her memory shot. Moreover, the more overt expression of her egalitarian hopes was not impossible by using other techniques, as I have shown, and is arguably necessary if one wishes to foreground the theme of the conflict between the budding modern woman and the (developing) sexist man. As it is, the casual viewer would certainly miss the faint cinematic expression of these ideas in the physical encounter of the two characters.

As this discussion of Simoneau's translation of Nora's attempt at becoming a sexual huntress and Stevens' reaction to her shows, Simoneau retains Nora in a relatively non-threatening role as hunter (by virtue of the shortness and the sketchiness of its depiction). Stevens is more able to contain her in this attenuated role than he was in the novel. Although he just as

vigorously refuses Nora in the film's huntress scene as he does in the novel's (his push of Nora in the film is equal in force to his condescending verbal humiliation of her in the novel), in the film this rejection is all that is required to dissuade her from her tentative and obscure foray into the position of the male pursuer. In the novel much more — specifically murder — is required to oust her from her so-called male position.

The Would-be Patriarch and the Challenging Female Voice

In the film, Nora will never again be with Stevens nor, more specifically, ever again challenge his male role. In the novel, however, Nora's voice only gets louder and her ascent to the adult male position more entrenched, vehement and threatening, with her most vigorously assuming the paternal voice just prior to her murder, as noted in the previous chapter. As Stevens records, in their final encounter:

Nora m'injuriait et m'insultait, se grisant elle-même d'injures et d'insultes, le vocabulaire grossier des hommes de Griffin Creek, leur colère brutale, passant soudain par sa bouche de jeune fille... Nora répète que je ne suis pas un homme et qu'elle me déteste. Elle pleure et rit à la fois (244).

As in the huntress scene, she is reversing gender roles, but now more aggressively. Her insults make crude use of male vocabulary, which, couched in abasement and rage, reflect the patriarchal paradigm for social relations that she has learned¹¹ and now uses to put Stevens in his place, awakening within him the rage he felt under his father's repeated, tempestuous and merciless beatings (e.g., 87 244). Her disconcerting laughter also echoes Mic's (59). Her

mocking screams thus offer a transformed gender reversal of the times when Stevens and Mic once jeered at the women they pursued (239).

However, this scene is not only about Nora assuming the position of the contumelious male, but about acquiring and exercising the power and pleasure of female speech. Her act of speaking is emphasized by verbs such as “répéter” and “dire” and her euphoria in casting her angry voice by the very word “plaisir”. Indeed, not only does Nora give voice to the dominant paternal forces that oppressed and angered Stevens, but she also gives voice to the ascending, resistant intergenerational sisterhood that so challenged and infuriated him. She embodies the emerging womanist Felicity, who thundered like Zeus¹² at the offending would-be patriarch Perceval, who had viewed Nora as prey, a sacrificial lamb (117). Like her grandmother, who disciplined Perceval for not treating Nora with respect, Nora storms at Stevens, instinctively realizing that he prefers traditional relations with Olivia rather than equal relations with her. Moreover, Nora’s laughter, which echoes the derisive male voice, is simultaneously and paradoxically the emblem and incarnation of her instinctive, threatening, female speech. Indeed, as the Cixousian epigraph preceding Nora’s narrative in the novel suggests, laughter becomes a form of female expression — the inarticulate voice of female desire for which there is no developed language in this patriarchal community.

Within this context, Nora’s mouth becomes an important symbol of her female rebellion. As Leslie Harlin also notes (130), the fact that Nora’s female voice directly challenges Stevens’ male one is underscored by the proximity of her mouth to his and his awareness of this fact: “La bouche vociférante de Nora

à portée de ma bouche. Répète que je ne suis pas un homme. Dit à Olivia de se méfier de moi. Renverse la tête. Son rire de gorge en cascade" (244).

Moreover, since the female mouth is also a vulva symbol, especially when hair blows about it,¹³ Stevens' reference to Nora's (laughing) mouth underlines not only his fixation on her castrating, insubmissive voice¹⁴ but his underlying fear of her volcanic sexuality, both of which he develops a patriarchal desire to contain and a murderous desire to quell. To stifle that orifice is to kill the expression of female challenge, female sexual desire and female appropriation of a male right to sexual expression. As Harlin also observes (130), while Nora's challenge to Stevens' virility aroused his anger,¹⁵ it is her instinctive, defiant laughter (which as we see here carries connotations of both female desire and the assumption of the male position) that incites his final act of silencing:

Désir fruste. Mes deux mains sur son cou pour une caresse apaisante.
 Son rire hystérique sous mes doigts.... La boule dure du rire, dans sa
 gorge, sous mes doigts. Simple pression des doigts....
 Un petit silence. Un tout petit silence pour reprendre
 haleine. La paix du monde autour de nous (244-245).

Arguably, Stevens' silencing of that female voice of challenge and desire constitutes a form of sexual assault.¹⁶ As feminist anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday affirms: "[R]ape is an expression of a social ideology of male dominance... [and a] silencing of the feminine" (84, 85). In quelling Nora's laughter, the symbol of her bubbling female libido repeatedly alluded to in the novel, Stevens silences both her female sexual expression and her instinctively modern attempt to assume, as a woman, male assertiveness and the male

social position. As well as denying Nora's right to comment on him, he is denying Nora's right to express her *own* sexuality just as he will do through his anatomical rape of Olivia. Indeed, that he views his attack on Nora as a form of rape is further suggested by his apparent ripping of her pink dress in a symbolic desecration of the coveted female flesh (188); by his recollection of the burial of her shelllike shoe (symbol of the womb) by the storming sands (symbols of semen) in a symbolic expression of the "disfiguration"¹⁷ and domineering penetration of the virgin (243); and by his description of her corpse using clichés for the violated virgin: "son âme fraîche insultée "(245).

That Stevens is in fact obsessed with quashing the emerging female voice is suggested when he manifests the need to silence it again, this time when it is Olivia's voice that rises. Not only does he fear her calling attention to his initial murder and prevent her from raising the alarm by tackling and raping her, but after he has spent his rage, he again becomes aware of her screamed response to his violence — "que... le cri perçant d'Olivia [monte]" (248). He thus must act as a silencer yet again, strangling her to stifle her final affirmation of her pain, anger and terror. Relieved, he notes, "La source du cri s'amenuise en un petit filet" (248).

How are these threatening, emerging female voices presented in film? First of all, as we saw previously, Nora does not figure as a voice of direct and demasculinizing challenge to Stevens within the film's rape and murder scene. She appears only as a cut-in figure, whispering "Vas-y-pas", a line which neither Stevens nor presumably its intended receiver, Olivia, can hear. Moreover, Olivia, the lone victim, does not assume Nora's challenging voice. She does not

speak, only apparently (according to old Stevens) screams although we never see her doing so. There are no shots of her mouth as a compressed transposition of Nora's threatening mouth in the novel. Therefore, nowhere in the actual rape scene in the film is there any evidence that Stevens has any sexually or socially challenging woman to silence. Thus the voice of the rising modern woman angrily but pleurably taking the male position while assuming her own power of speech is fully deleted and the problematics of heterosexual relations in situations where the young man remains a retrograde, would-be patriarch is well sidelined.

In making these changes, Simoneau is not only transforming the female-male conflict into a male-male conflict (indeed a symbolic father-son conflict) by replacing Nora's ascent to the father's position with Perceval's (as we saw in the preceding chapter), but he is concomitantly disengaging the narrative from issues which, for feminists, are fundamental to understanding rape, among them the patriarchal silencing of the female right to "speak" her sexuality and, as a corollary to that, to express all the facets of herself, such as her anger and her pain.

In addition, while the evidence of the powerful female voice of desire and dissension is all but gone in the film's rape and murder scene, the evidence of the male silencing of the female voice, itself, via strangulation is also almost imperceptible in the film. Olivia's strangulation occurs off-screen, suggested only by the abrupt stopping of what are supposedly her screams. Since Olivia does not verbally defy Stevens during or immediately prior to the attack (or indeed ever), this apparent strangulation is hardly a metaphoric rape of the

voice of female challenge and desire as it was in the novel. At most, it may symbolize Stevens' extinguishing of Olivia's latent maternal desires since the murder was foreshadowed by his strangulation of the pregnant rabbit much earlier in the film. However, even that is questionable since Olivia, herself, never expressed maternal desires in the film, unlike Nora who did so in the novel as the subversive, new, maternal-sexual Eve (118).

As a further difference, not only had Hébert's Stevens strangled Nora and Olivia, adamant as he was on stopping all sound of protest emanating from the female throat, but he had symbolically repeated that silencing by submerging the girls in the sea. In the novel, Olivia's narrative hints that she, at least, was not quite dead when Stevens suffocated her — that in fact she died later by drowning: "Il y a certainement quelqu'un qui... M'a jetée toute vive dans l'épaisseur calme, lunaire de la baie profonde" (207). Strangulation and drowning by the would-be patriarch emphasize the choking off of both the breath of life (which women by their procreative power evoke) and the voice of female desire and challenge by patriarchy,¹⁸ while echoing the fate of Irène's muzzled voice by hanging. However, even in the aftermath of the crimes, Simoneau excises this recurring theme for he does not have Stevens plunge Olivia, his only victim, underwater. Rather, he leaves her lying high, dry and exposed on the beach. With Simoneau including only one off-screen strangulation rather than two narratively foregrounded strangulations and a drowning as in the novel means that he de-emphasizes the notion of the patriarchal silencing of the female voice in the film.

Concomitantly, while Simoneau underplays the silencing of women as an integral part of Stevens' crime, Simoneau erases the voices of the women who try to bring the crime to light. As noted in previous chapters, no functional equivalent to Pat's and Pam's mural, which in the novel had symbolized the collective, subversive disclosure by women of the crimes against women in this patriarchal community, appears in the film. This mural had made a subversive challenge to patriarchy in a number of ways (by virtue of its colour, content, location and effect on the Reverend) which meant that its omission from the film made several erasures of overlaying significance to the feminism of the source text. One subform of challenge that the mural represented in the novel, which has not yet been mentioned, is that it stood as a covert form of "speaking out" against rape, a fervent activity early in the second wave of the feminist movement (Brownmiller 397) in which Hébert, as a feminist writer, engages by giving Pat and Pam the remindful, revelatory brushes. As Michele E. Anderson notes, the physical deformation of the women in the twins' picture — "[t]he lack of an eye, a nose or a mouth [—] suggests... the victimization of these women" (102). In expunging the disfigured content of the mural as well as the female painters, Simoneau erases this symbolic act of women speaking out against patriarchal violence against women.

The Lead-up to the Rape

Although Simoneau does erase the female voices of aggressive desire and protest in the crime scene, leaving Stevens little in the way of female modernity against which to react in the film's rape scene, Simoneau does seem

to momentarily accord Olivia the active, albeit silent, manifestation of her yearning in the opening of this scene, suggesting, on the surface at least, Simoneau's partial willingness to broach the theme of female libidinal expression and perhaps Olivia's modernity. In this lead-in, she is drawn to Stevens, any qualms she may have had about him apparently gone. Perhaps she is intent on proving that she is not the prude that Nora ungraciously once called her in the film since she advances despite Nora's cut-in (though likely unheard) warning not to go. Perhaps under the light of the moon she is simply fatally attracted to the devil-lover, as other women may have been before her. Perhaps she is merely manifesting the unacted upon interest she had for Stevens in the novel.

Indeed, on the latter point, Olivia's fateful promenade along the moonlit beach, during which she is wrapped in a white blanket over a white nightie, can be read as amalgamating two particular moments in the novel, one involving her and one Nora. It can be seen in part as a dramatized transformation of Olivia's decision in the novel to quit the virginal bed that she shared with Nora in order to sleep on the floor swathed in a red blanket with black stripes and dream of Stevens during the night of the great (sexual) storm into which he had earlier attempted to coax the girls (133, 222). The beach walk in the film (the leaving of "la chambre des filles [133]) would thus constitute Simoneau's visual translation — as an actual occurrence — of Olivia's fantasy: "[d']être seule au monde, face à celui qui [l]'attire dans la nuit" (222). The scene can also be interpreted as a character-transposed illustration of Nora's self assurance just prior to her murder. No longer the timid girl who needs coaxing down to "le

domaine interdit" (242), as she was in the novel, Olivia becomes the (sexually?) confident girl, reminiscent of Nora who, in the novel, "s'élance dans le sentier menant à la grève, tachetée de lune, légère et décidée" (242). Indeed, not only does Olivia seek out Stevens, but when she finds him, she tugs repeatedly on his arm as he lies unresponsively, showing her to be the initiator of the physical part of their encounter.

There are two caveats to be made about this image of Olivia resolutely approaching Stevens. Although she assumes somewhat more modern behaviour than she does in the virginal bedroom scene in the novel by actually acting on her desire rather than dreaming about it as she does in the novel, she is also divested of the modern reasons for which she *did not* follow Stevens out into the night in the novel. Although she had felt strong desire for him, underscored by the red blanket in which she wraps herself to dream of him, she does not accompany him because he had not treated her as an individual woman. He had tried to tempt her and Nora into the stormy night by addressing them as if they were one sexual animal, stripped of separate libidinal personalities: "[Il] les tutoie comme une seule et même créature à deux têtes, quatre bras, quatre jambes et deux petits sexes cachés" (104). As she states, "Qu'il s'adresse à moi toute seule et non point à Nora en même temps, comme si nous étions des soeurs siamoises... et je le suivrai hors de la maison" (221). Since Simoneau has had Stevens focus on Olivia throughout much of the film narrative and has never had Stevens voice *aloud* to the girls any view he may have of them as one and the same sexual game, Olivia has no reason not to

seek him out because of any sexist, homogenizing, animalistic view he may harbour of her.

As a second caveat, Olivia pulls on torn Stevens' sleeve more out of concern for his well-being than out of any burning desire for him. This concerned gesture portrays her as an unthreatening figure compared to either the berating or the earlier sexually pursuant, modern Nora of the novel. Indeed, the worried tug coupled with the white blanket wound firmly round her characterize her more as the uptight, virginal caretaker than the proudly individualist woman enveloped in desire that she was in the novel when, wrapped in the scarlet blanket, she had refused to follow this sexist man who ignored her unique qualities.

Furthermore, the image of Olivia seeking out Stevens disengages the narrative from any indication that *he* undertakes an at least partly premeditated ploy of bringing her (and Nora in the novel) to the secluded beach in order to inscribe them into their inferior gender roles through violent sexual initiation. This premeditation is suggested in numerous ways in the novel. Recall that while Stevens attempts to insinuate in the novel that he was swept away by anger and madness while committing his crimes, a certain degree of purposefulness underlies his acts, a fact which correlates with sociological studies on rape and rapists (Brownmiller 186). As his immediate regret over not raping Nora before her death implies (245), he had a goal in mind when he brought the girls to the beach. Recall that at the barn dance he had already determined that he would have Olivia "par ruse ou par violence" (99). Recall also that like a soldier he had deliberately stood watch for the girls¹⁹ for one last

encounter before he leaves for Florida, for one last get-together before, as he says, the summer and their youth ends — for one last meeting in which he will harvest their virginity, a concept with violent undertones.²⁰

In addition, it is suspicious that prior to meeting Nora and Olivia, Stevens goes to the bother of emptying water from his dory²¹, the vessel he will use to dispose of their bodies, particularly since he says that he will be taking to the roads (99), when his reference to boots suggests that he will be leaving for Florida on foot (100) and when his earlier reference to his travels had indicated his exclusive use of land transportation (57). (Nora and Perceval also confirm that he arrived by walking, 125, 166). Indeed, Hébert emphasizes the dubiousness of Stevens' bailing behaviour by ominously repeating it (107, 135, 169) and then making numerous associations between Stevens' dory and the crimes.²² Read within the context of his past piscatory interest in the girls, one understands that he is getting ready to "fish" the virgins, to filet them with his phallus-knife.

Having prepared his dory and stood in ready wait, hat in hand in feigned respect (107), Stevens then takes steps to guide the girls to the moonlit beach, using the seductive "ruse" of offering the male arm and taking the girl's hand. As "un domaine interdit" (242), the seashore not only symbolizes, in Stevens' mind, the sexually forbidden — the line or sexual threshold he will attempt to take the virginal Nora and Olivia across. It also serves as a symbolic site of the socially forbidden, a place where Stevens can teach the girls a lesson for venturing beyond their social and sexual confines as women. Assaulting them outside allows him to mete out his punishment for their transgression of their

social place, of venturing outside the interior, the house— of exposing the protected womb.²³ Recall, Stevens has spent his entire narrative trying to enter the uterine, internal spaces which the girls inhabit (house, kitchen, church, barn); now he has them outside in the “male” public space. Thus when the dead adolescents lie at his feet, he describes them as “les filles punies” (248). Just as he had planned, he has taken them by “ruse et violence” and has finally castigated them for their social transgression by forcing them into sexual transgression.

Contrastingly, in the lead-in to the film’s rape scene, Olivia’s unstated desire rather than Stevens’ aggressive intentions suddenly becomes the narrative motor, as she walks purposefully (although of course unknowingly) to the site of her death and murder, propelled (presumably) by the mute yearnings of the virgin, hidden beneath the white blanket. Thus Simoneau’s rare decision to draw from one of the female narratives (in this case Olivia’s) in order to build this latter portion of the fatal attraction sequence serves to omit the would-be patriarch’s latent desire to plot a rape and return women to their sexual-social place and therefore to expunge part of the sociological and feminist understanding of this type of crime.

Indeed, Stevens’ complete lack of premeditation is underscored by the fact that, in contrast to the novel, he merely lies and waits. Not only does he not stand watch as he did in this scene in the novel, but he is not even *in* wait as were the predatory, sexual male hunters “à l’affût” elsewhere in the novel (e.g. 41). Instead, apparently worn out by his struggle with the previous storm symbolizing his battle with his father, Stevens lies in an inert, defeated fetal

position, as if washed up on the beach. He is hardly the semi-scheming man of the novel, who had Maureen knit him socks for his get-away flight, prepared his dory for the disposal of the bodies, waited (erect) for the girls and guided them to the beach. By no stretch of the imagination, then, can his fetal position seem tactical. He is not acting out a sly venatic intention to possess Olivia but will merely seize the opportunity to do so once it arises. In addition, as an originally inactive participant in this final scene, he has manifested no attempt to draw Olivia further into the forbidden male public domain; indeed, the dichotomy between outer, male, public space and internal, female, private space has been less demarcated in the film than in the novel, since, for instance, the dance is set outside not in a barn and since Stevens works inside Maureen's barn into which *she* (criticizingly) penetrates.

Representing Rape

This discussion brings us to the question of how much Simoneau allows the film adaptation to reveal the sexual politics that Hébert embedded into her portrayal of the rape and murders in the novel. As first suggested in the previous chapter, the final assault against Olivia in the film constitutes in large part an ultimate expression of Stevens' anger with his oppressive father. How much does this context of father-son conflict suppress the feminist understanding of the act of rape as a method to subjugate women? A comparison of the representation of the crimes in the novel and the film will attempt to answer this question.

Although unsatisfied sexual needs are offered as an excuse for Stevens' final attack in both texts, the underlying reasons for his crimes in each are antithetical. While in the novel he rationalizes his assaults as unquenched lust caused by the sexually regulatory Law of the Father, they are actually characterized both by his sexist desire to inscribe the sexually/socially "disobedient" women into their inferior biological and social roles and by his patriarchal and ultimately lethal desire to designate and contain (and consume) the woman as total nurturer (the former need driven by his compulsion to prove his patriarchal manhood and the latter need driven by a pathological craving to possess the mother figure whom he was denied by the paternal order). In the film, Stevens' final attack is also superficially presented as sexual hunger. However, the underlying subtext of paternal-filial conflict qualifies that desire. By dominating the obedient virgin who respects the Father's sexual regulations, Stevens manifests primarily an impulse to rebel against the Law of the Father, and by extension his own father, rather than, as in the novel, an overriding desire to teach his victim a lesson in sexual politics as in the novel. While in Hébert's work, Stevens, in effect, acts like the patriarchal Reverend to keep women in their place, in Simoneau's adaptation Stevens is reacting against the Reverend via his relations with women. A textual comparison will demonstrate these contentions.

In the novel, in the paragraph immediately preceding the beginning of his description of his violent encounter with the girls in the novel, Stevens suggests that the reasons for his assault are the sexual frustrations caused by the Reverend's regulation of extramarital sex. He insists: "Les filles d'ici sont

intouchables jusqu'au mariage. C'est le pasteur mon oncle qui l'a dit. Tout le mal vient de là" (242). A few pages earlier he alluded to his parents' brutal sexual control as an additional layer of oppression (239). He blames his (supposedly) sexually repressive culture for his explosive behaviour even though he knows that there are women, such as Maureen and Nora, who do not adhere to its rules and to whom he has ready access (Bishop 1984/85 196). He reveals his true sexist colours when he expresses his displeasure with these willing women by implying that he would rather have relations with prostitutes just to spite the sexually ready women, notably the modern Nora: "Autant prendre son fun chez les guidounes et laisser les petites oies macérer dans leur jus. Ça, Nora ne me le pardonnera jamais" (242). As his comments indicate, as a would-be patriarch, he is only comfortable having sex with women whose sexual response he can control, such as prostitutes, rather than with women, such as Nora and Maureen, who have begun to express their own desire.

This need to control the sexual woman is embedded in his initial physical contact with Nora. It betrays more a need to subjugate this woman who dares challenge him, than any frustrated sexual desire. In an ominous attempt to appease her angry beratings, he places his hands on her neck for, as he claims, "une caresse apaisante" (244). However, his urge to strangle the sexually assertive woman had already been foreshadowed in the ironing scene when he had wanted to choke Olivia in response to her sexually assertive gaze (79). Not surprisingly then, in the next moment in the rape scene, when he is threatened by Nora's mocking and libidinal laughter, he immediately applies pressure to her

throat, instantaneously converting his original, superficially pacifying and sensual gesture into a murderous one.

Then, once she falls dead without his having had a chance to penetrate her, he reveals that the pleasure he feels he has missed is not so much from unconsummated sexual relations *per se* but, as he more specifically explains, from unspent time terrifying her. As he says: "Pas eu le temps de jouir d'elle. De sa fureur. De sa terreur. De l'odeur de sa terreur sous ses aisselles" (245). He thus regrets not having had the opportunity to fully dominate her by fomenting fear within her. Recall that inciting terror within women had been one of his choice and repeated methods for dominating them in his narrative, a manifestation of the culture of fear some patriarchal men create in a rape culture in order to control women (Griffin 1982 51). Nevertheless, Stevens succeeds at least in relegating Nora to her inferior gendered position at his feet once he has killed her. He even believes he has done so forever. As he states, he delights in "cet agenouillement de Nora Atkins... devant moi... avec son envie de femme... matée et domptée.... Son allégeance à mes pieds. Durant l'éternité. Amen" (245).

In contrast, in the film, Stevens' initial reason for making physical contact in the rape scene vis-à-vis his only victim Olivia seems more purely sexual than his initial reasons for making physical contact with either Nora or Olivia in the novel's rape scene. His furtive yearning glance, apparently at Olivia's clothed bosom frames his subsequent attack partly as frustrated, unsated lust gone awry. However, the reasons for the assault have a deeper cause. When Olivia begins to turn away from him in the film, mutely and gently rejecting him as she

has done several times in the film, she is obediently doing what the Reverend preached near the beginning of the film — showing her faith in God by overcoming the temptations of the (devil's) lascivious gaze, the look of the one who rebels against the paternal order. In turning away, she is thus literally enacting the Father's Law — what was, in the novel, only Stevens' *rationalization* for attacking the girls.

Thus the first thing that Olivia does that frustrates Stevens in the rape scene in the film contrasts with both the first thing that Nora does in the novel (which was to challenge the would-be patriarch socially and sexually) and the first thing that Olivia then does in the novel (which was to attempt to flee from and raise the alarm about this attacking would-be patriarch). As such, Simoneau's Olivia does not represent any sort of challenge or threat to Stevens, but merely the operating laws of the old paternal order that Stevens has found so oppressive in the film. She is simply a "fille intouchable", "déchirée entre sa peur de [lui] et son attirance de [lui]" (80) — a manifestation of the superficial view Stevens had of her in the novel — on whom he can work out his final transgression against the Law of the Father and thereby rebel against the old order. He literally rises to the occasion by partially getting up to then bring her and the old order down.

In contrast, in the novel, Olivia's sexual reticence (suggested in the novel's rape scene by her need to be coaxed down to the beach) stems not primarily from her obedience to the sexually regulatory paternal law (in spite of Stevens' claim to the contrary) but to the foremothers who earlier and repeatedly had warned her of the dangers of predatory, patriarchal men. She is

unconsciously obeying the counsel of a resistant maternal line which covertly threatens Stevens' ascent to the patriarchal position of the father not the sexual regulations of the Griffin Creek patriarchy. (As we saw in Chapter 4, the Reverend does more, in the novel, to promote extramarital sexual activity among the girls than to repress it. Moreover, when he warns them against "le séducteur couvert de peaux de brebis... du loup dans la bergerie" [50], he is ironically referring to himself, the Shepherd, who is also the predacious wolf [128]). Within this context, in assaulting Olivia in the novel, Stevens is symbolically attacking the subversive sisterhood of women that is slowly undermining the Griffin Creek patriarchy, not the paternal order as in the film.

Because some of the underlying issues surrounding the rape are different in the novel and the film, so is the representation of the actual rape. In the novel, Stevens is, superficially at least, reenacting the timeless literary ritual of deflowering the virgin ("déflorer la vierge"), as his careful reference to Olivia's peony-like vulva reminds us. In playing out this sexual rite of passage within a patriarchal paradigm of sexual relations, he inscribes Olivia's inferiority as a woman into his very sexual initiation of her, or put another way, he initiates her into patriarchy. He is intent on reminding her that she is beneath him by bringing her down and dominating her. Thus he begins the rape, as he says: "[en] la fai[sant] tomber sur le sable" (245). Just as he had repeated this notion of the felling/downfall of the woman in his description of his attack on Nora (with comments such as "cette fille... tombe à genoux devant moi" [245]), he will repeat it in his description of his attack on Olivia, noting after her felling that "les cris d'Olivia ... tombent ... dans la mer" (247). Finally, after the murders, Olivia

“rejoint Nora à [s]es pied” (248) and the girls become “de[s] pierres *couchées*” (emphasis added, 248), desexed, immobilized and petrified through their sexual domination by this would-be patriarch.²⁴ Indeed, within two pages he rehashes verbs like “s’écrouler” and “tomber” (245, 247) when referring to his attack on Nora and Olivia in order to emphasize his goal of bringing them down and subjugating them at his feet. This is a heightened version of the domineering desire which the Reverend manifests towards one of his twin housekeepers who falls asleep at his feet (34).

Having knocked Olivia down, Stevens then lies on her in a physical affirmation of his male dominance in the age-old conquest tradition expressed in the sexual position of the man-on-top (foreshadowed in Perceval’s attack on Nora by the seaside [117]). Once he has felled Olivia and got her beneath him, he precedes to describe her in terms of her terms of biological (sexual) and traditional gender (social) identities, while yelling sexual humiliations at her and tearing at her clothes in an attempt to reach and expose her vulva, the organ he claims defines her.

For Stevens, Olivia is a marine-mother figure: a womb-receptacle (“cette conque marine [248]”) lined with fertile silt (“une vase profonde [248]”). As Patricia Smart’s comments suggest (1988 260), his need to immobilize her during the rape symbolizes his desire to freeze her in this traditional maternal role.²⁵ However, he does not simply aim to hold and consume her in her conventional designation as traditional mother figure (the figure he believes he has been denied and whom he needs to become a patriarchal man), but he wishes to maintain her in a demeaned form of the female role: as whore (“une

salope”). He wants to remind her that not only is she a woman who must assume her traditional procreative role beneath him, but that her body exists solely to serve his sexual needs. Thus his clichéd, nasty and pretentious attempt to reveal to her hidden sexual desires by calling her a whore, his stereotypical and pathetic insinuation that she “really wants sex” because she is actually a slut, together operate to inscribe her in her inferior role as sexual servicer of men.

To this end, he compares her pubic hair to an animal's. He cruelly puns on her virginity, playing on Pascal's famous quotation “L'homme n'est ni ange ni bête, et le malheur veut que qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête” while screaming at her to admit that “elle [cet ange] est velue, sous sa culotte, comme une bête” (248). His clichéd association of carnality with the animal world defines her sexuality as bestial, part of the natural order that he will dominate, just as the Reverend (symbol of patriarchy) had attempted to master the sea (25) (the natural world). She is but maternal-piscatory prey to be consumed (“[une] conque ... poisonneuse”, an angel fish “[un] ange” [248]) and he is the shark/hunter (“[un] chien de mer” [246]). These references to socially reviled classes of women and to lower, consumable life forms all underscore Stevens' obsession with reminding Olivia of her inferior social status and utilitarian sexual status. He is intent on knocking her off the angelic pedestal on which society places the virgin by imposing a physical, moral and social downfall upon her to thereby demean her as a woman.

Moreover, into his description of his attack he embeds his belief that this utilitarian sexual role he assigns Olivia is the role of all women and that what he

is doing to her is what he aims to do to all women with whom he has sexual relations. This universal project is embedded in his desire to “unmask” Olivia during the rape scene (248), which recalls a previous moment in the novel when he had fantasized about doing the same to other women (82). In the earlier passage he had wanted to “deshoe” Olivia to reveal her webbed toes (symbol, for him, of her hidden “impurity”: her sexual desire) and then tear the rags off the other women to denude their sexual organs for his use. His shift in this earlier passage from his need to expose and humiliate a particular woman (Olivia) to his urge to strip and herd together all the available women (“en un seul troupeau bêlant” [82]) for his sexual pleasure had revealed that his intent in unshoeing Olivia formed part of his larger project of reminding all women that their sexual place is to serve the sexual needs of men, that they are defined solely by their animality. Stripping Olivia during the rape scene thus constitutes part of Stevens’ broader social project of putting all women in their sexual-social place. He tears at her clothes intent on reminding her that her “unique vérité” (82), her sole role, resides in her baring her sexual organ to the man. As Bishop notes, Stevens wants Olivia to acknowledge that her genitals make her “qu’un sexe” (1984/85 188). All she is is a cunt.

Within this context, his frustration with her well clad body during the attack can be read less as a comment on his dismay with her virginal reserve (which he wants us to believe) and more as a revelation of his anger that she has claimed some sexual boundaries and thus a right to make choices regarding sexual partners and the pace of sexual relations. Wearing “un barrage de linge et d’élastique” (248), she has set barriers against his easy

entry, unlike the prostitutes (the sexual servicers of men) of Sainte-Catherine Street who, he recalls in later years, wear no underwear to please their male clients. Olivia's vestmental claim to sexual boundaries links her to the resistant intergenerational sisterhood that so threatens Stevens. Recall that her claim to sexual barriers had first manifested itself in the ironing scene when she had stood in her blue dress behind the hymenal ironing board ("comme si cette planche à repasser était une barrière nécessaire entre nous" 77) working the iron that linked her to the sea-dwelling foremothers who ride the wind to warn her against him (77). Stevens breaks through these maternally raised barriers in the rape scene by wrathfully tearing open her blue skirt. His reference to "ce linge... déchiré [de sa] jupe bleue" (155, 248) symbolizes her violently ripped hymen that the warning maternal line had attempted to protect from brutal patriarchal rupture — from the domineering process of engenderation.

As this discussion reveals, the subtext to the rape is a version of the battle of the sexes:²⁶ a struggle between a man who wishes to dominate and a woman who resists her subjugated role, sustained by the latent presence of the resistant female line. To underscore the combatant nature of the encounter, Hébert appropriates the traditional image of masculine literature of the erect penis as weapon to show that logically this militaristic designation must lead to war against women. She thus recasts the image within the feminist understanding of rape in which the phallus serves as an instrument of assault (Benedict 14) not as an organ of love-making. Into Olivia's womb, Stevens' "arme" forcibly plants (fires) his precious seeds (bullets). As he has earlier insinuated, he views symbols of semen as bullets and Olivia's womb as

defenseless.²⁷ He is thus blasting his way into the virginal soil²⁸, into the fertile mud — into the silt which, in Nora's egalitarian view, was the medium out of which male-female equality could be created.²⁹ In his memory, he will frame his attack on Olivia and Nora within the context of a real world war, referring to "[les] filles violées" (233) — other women he may have raped as a conquering soldier as he raged at the ever-present female forces ("[les] bruits de marées au galop" (233). This would-be patriarch, who had stood as a soldier at watch for the enemy, as he anticipated his final encounter with the girls, is now in full battle.

With the rape presented in this bellicose context, Stevens is framed as fighting down the Ideal Woman ("la Beauté" [82]) who, in spite of her apparent traditional traits, will not submit to her conventional social assignments as sexual organ, maternal receptacle or submissive sexual prey. Olivia fights back ("se débat..." [246]) with fist and nail (248). As she says of her response to Stevens' earlier attack on her, "Je suis forte et ne me laisse pas faire si facilement" (202). In her more egalitarian view, sexual relations are a wrestling match, which either sex could win (202). However, in Stevens' patriarchal view, he must be the winner. In his fury, he identifies with "[!]a grosse voix triomphante [du vent], plus forte que tout" (246). Its great strength carries phallic connotations, echoing Perceval's masturbatory rendering of the limp penis "dur et fort" on the night of the murders (142).

As Stevens affirms in his description of the rape and murder scene: "Dans toute cette histoire... il faut tenir compte du vent" (246). This is the wind of destructive male desire (Bishop 1984/85 189),³⁰ a desire that can be further qualified as predatory,³¹ in which the male carries phallic instruments associated

with force, killing and consumption. Its piercing voice (“sa voix lancinante”) associates it with the lancinating phallic/rape symbols of the knife and the gannet beak.³² In the rape scene, the wind first rises in Stevens’ imagination “sur la mer” (244) — i.e., on top of the female entity — as a symbolic projection of his enraged patriarchal reaction to the angry modern woman, Nora. It reaches crescendo forces when Olivia resists him, rising to cyclonic levels as he assumes the lethal hunter’s position as shark.

Here the foremothers begin to make their presence felt. As Stevens forcibly lifts Olivia’s skirts (imagining the wind whipping them up), he hears a moan: “Quelque part dans la tempête une sorte de gémissement intolérable” (246), and then imagines her skirts opening like a hoop, allowing him to force his entry. The source of this moan is ambiguous. On the surface, it suggests the onset of his domineering sexual arousal. Perhaps it expresses Olivia’s pain and fear. However, it also connotes the first figurative sign of the plaintive voice of the sea-dwelling mothers in this scene. Later, when the rape is in full force and Stevens, the latent sun god, imagines overturning the moon and Milky Way (female sexual and maternal symbols), he envisions the soul of the sea (where the foremothers dwell) exhaling: “sa fureur sacrée, sa plainte sauvage” (247). “Gémissement” and “plainte” are synonyms.

Thus as Stevens begins the rape, the foremothers simultaneously begin their jeremiad against the sexual domination of women. It is the lament that, as we saw earlier, Pat and Pam will take up visually years later in their sea mural as they scratch 1936, the date of the beginning of the downfall of the Griffin Creek patriarchy, into the “plinthe” or symbolic buttressing structure of the

rotting House of the Father. It is the subversive, resisting "complainte" that will force this local patriarchy to face itself and crumble under the weight of its own crimes.

As this analysis shows, the climax of the final heterosexual encounter in the novel is not pure orgasmic ecstasy but stormy sexual subjugation. Although some critics have read the rape passage as symbolic of Stevens' sexual release (for instance, Slott 1987 298), a reading that couches rape as a sexual act in which the narrative climax mimics male sexual orgasm,³³ Stevens, himself, is clear that his act was an expression of angry domination (of the woman). As he states, the calm after the emotional storm follows his expression of rage *not* his release of sexual tension: "Dans le silence qui suit je comprends tout de suite que le calme de la nuit, que la beauté de la nuit n'ont pas cessé d'exister pendant tout ce temps. Seul le grondement de ma rage a pu me faire croire le contraire" (248-249). Moreover, since his fury dissipates not earlier in the attack after he ejaculated but only once he has later subjugated the virgin, his inner storm is clearly not a display of sexual frenzy but of patriarchal anger. His need was to establish his male superiority by forcing the woman into her inferior anatomical and social role, not to gratify himself. It is his rage at the defiant woman that hardens his penis into a weapon not unsated lust that roused a fury of sexual frustration. A battle between the would-be patriarch Stevens (who emulates the patriarchal Reverend) and the latently modern woman (who issues from the resistant maternal line) has taken place. Stevens has only temporarily won.

How does the rape unfold in the adaptation? First of all, it becomes the film's framing device, when it was only revealed at the end of the novel as the ultimate expression of Stevens' desire to put latently modern women in their place, the *reductio ad absurdum* of conceiving of women in terms of cultural clichés, especially as consumable maternal-prey. As Slott observes, this change in narrative structure encourages the viewer to "*understand Stevens... [to look for] rationalizations and motivations for his behaviour*" (1989/90 24). Most particularly, with the duplication of Olivia's approach and turning away (full at the beginning of the film and partial at the end), the new narrative setup emphasizes the frustrating effect that the Law of the Father has on the Son, with its repeated denial of Stevens' need for love.

How much does Simoneau then incorporate the theme of male domination and subjugation of the female victim into his representation of the rape? Having had his gaze silently refused by Olivia, Stevens apparently (for the gesture is quickly filmed and unclearly framed), pulls her back to face him. When she then begins to struggle, her eyes widening in fear, Stevens yanks her down. However, we see little of this grappling or her descent. If he is trying to make her a "fallen woman", as he was in the novel, his attempt is underplayed since her physical fall, which symbolized his aim of putting her in her inferior gender role in the novel at least, occurs in an imperceptible split-second in the film. Simoneau could have underlined it with any number of cinematic techniques, including slow motion, replay, or at least a longer choreographed event.

Nevertheless, Simoneau does show Stevens rolling on top of Olivia (as he says he does in the novel), indicating his physical domination of her both at the beginning and the end of the film. Simoneau also uses an overhead shot in both rape scenes to emphasize Stevens' conquest. However, here ends Simoneau's replication of Stevens' description of his subjugating behaviour during the sexual assault in the novel. Although Stevens does bring Olivia down (albeit with less emphasis) and does physically dominate her, he does not immobilize her for any length of time. The significance of the latter action could have been stressed in the film by slow motion or a freeze frame or at least a longer, more immobilizing gesture in order to convey the key notion that Stevens was keeping Olivia in her degraded place, an aim so central to his rape of her in the novel (if indeed this is what Stevens is seeking to do in the film).

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Stevens is notably silent. Except for the screams he claims he made (we hear no distinctly male voice, only what he purports to be Olivia's screams which merge with the gannet cries), he says nothing. He does not designate her as a mere womb-receptacle nor ever denigrate her as a slut or a cunt, nor otherwise label her as a whore or an animal or as any other form of conquerable, consumable being. Since he does not verbally inscribe her into her inferior gender role, we cannot be sure that that is what he thinks he is doing.

Indeed, the notion that he is (sexually) initiating Olivia into patriarchy is obscured if not erased. Not only is his act of domination curtailed but it is unclear that he is even attempting to deflower her since there is no visible indication or unequivocal verbal assertion of penetration. Although she is

presented *virginally wrapped in white*, there is no conspicuous evidence of him actively ripping or tearing off her clothes, as in the novel. Thus there is no obvious breaking of or allusion to the breaking of the symbolic maidenhead so if it were his goal to induct Olivia into the patriarchal order or even (as suggested in the first chapter) to beat her incestuous brother to her deflowering, these desires remain subtextual.

Moreover, Simoneau offers no indication that Stevens perceives his penis as a weapon or that he views the rape in bellicose terms as he does in the novel. Indeed, no verbal or visual (either literal or figurative) allusion is made to his penis until after the rape when he sits on the phallic rock and constitutes his manhood symbolically with his brother. Thus the notion of patriarchal domination through the militaristically conceived phallus wielded in the battle of the sexes is deemphasized while any allusion to the physical violation or violence of rape or of sexual assault as a tactic in a war against women is expunged.

In comparison to the novel, Olivia's opposition to this more ambiguous, albeit domineering assault, is subdued. Just as her pained verbal response is tempered and made more ambiguous as noted earlier, her physical resistance is all but omitted, continuing the undoing of her representation as a female threat. She does not fight back with fist and nail as in the novel. In the rape scene at the beginning of the film, her well visible legs are lifeless. In the momentary struggle of the rape scene at the end of the film, she barely moves them. She remains bundled in her virginal blanket, arms flapping.

As a further change, Stevens does not seek to subjugate Olivia's gaze in the rape and murder scene. Recall in the novel he had developed the desire to conquer the straight-forward, steady, copulative stare of the sexually affirmative woman.³⁴ He had delighted in generating fear in women's eyes (77, 90) and in using his own gaze to strike dread in their hearts (97). The murders of the latently modern Nora and Olivia become his ultimate vehicle for dominating the female gaze (Gould 926). His successful subordination (in his view at least) of the desiring cousins is represented in part by "leurs yeux chavirés" (239) and Nora's rolled back eyes (245) after the murders, which he pointedly remembers in the novel. He had successfully replicated, in a more brutal fashion, what the patriarchal husbands had achieved with their wives in the source text: the undoing of the female gaze. Married women no longer engage in the exchange of looks but stare far away.

Simoneau, however, disengages Stevens from any interest in conquering the female in these ways. Just as he does not desire to strangle Olivia after she looks at him in the ironing scene in the film (unlike in the novel), he never tries to use his own gaze to intimidate her. While Simoneau goes to great lengths to develop Stevens' jealous gaze in the barn dance scene, Stevens does not use that destabilizing/destabilized gaze to master or frighten Olivia. Not surprisingly, by the film's rape and murder scene he does not exhibit any awareness, desire or glee in overpowering the female gaze. The shot of Olivia's horrified eyes just before Stevens pulls her to the ground in the rape scene gives him no obvious pleasure as a subjugator. Her terrified look only serves to convey the natural outcome of her growing fear of him at that moment and inserts her within the

cinematic tradition of the female victim, found notably in the melodramatic horror film. Simoneau does not show her eyes again nor have Stevens recollect them, in obvious contrast to the novel in which he specifically remembers his dead victims' rolled up eyes, suggesting his delight in their final vanquishment.

None of these changes are for technical or cinematic reasons. Read within the context of Stevens' filial anger with the Law of the Father/father, this literal mute-ation of the rape merely reflects his continued preoccupation with bringing down the old order. We understand that while he does fell Olivia and does dominate her, he says nothing to sexually or socially degrade her because he is not intent on reminding *her* of her inferior social status but of reversing his subjugated position with the oppressive/repressive father/Father. With this interpretation one understands that no obvious penetration occurs because the Son does not rape the Father, but merely overthrows him. The gannet cries thus mainly express the son's desire to consume against the Father's Law, while suggesting that he may indeed be actually partaking sexually of this woman.

In this reading, the moan ("[la] gémissement... intolérable") to which old Stevens alludes in the film suggests either the young man's (domineering) sexual arousal or perhaps rising anger, but only ambiguously, if at all, the pain of the female victim (which is never otherwise heard). Since the (lamenting) foremothers or otherwise concerned maternal presence is never established as a possible referent elsewhere in the film, this moan cannot suggest any subtextual allusion to a female jeremiad against violence against women, as it does in the novel.

Because there is little depiction of the felling of the woman, little physical struggle, little evidence of physical violation, less immobilization, no angry stripping, and no sexist beratings, Simoneau expunges the feminist understanding of rape as a violent and domineering act against the woman, an act that seeks to place and retain her in her inferior social position. He thus reinserts its representation into the Western Tradition that elides those very characteristics.³⁵ A sexual assault in the critical, realistic, feminist tradition of Anne-Claire Poirier's 1983 film "Mourir à tue-tête" this rape is not.

Moreover, in setting the sexual assault within the context of the son's reaction against the oppressive father (played out in the earlier storm scene) and against the sexually repressive Father (represented by Olivia's refusal of his gaze), Simoneau simplifies and masculinizes the reasons for Stevens' behaviour. He is focusing on the narrative strand that related some of Stevens' anger in the rape and murder to paternal oppression, oppression that had been recalled by Nora's vehement use of crude, male vocabulary in the novel's rape and murder scene. (As in the novel, the whole issue of Stevens' sexual frustration because of Olivia's [and other women's, as he suggests in the novel] obedience to a sexually repressive Church is a red herring since Stevens is no more sexually deprived in the film than he was in the novel. On one point then, Simoneau and Hébert seem to concur: explosive sexual frustration does not form a basis for rape, as feminists have long argued and sociological studies have found [Benedict 14-15]).

In selecting the paternal-filial conflict as a core factor in the sexual assault, Simoneau inserts the assault more squarely within the masculine

tradition of rape as allegory for relations between men.³⁶ While this indirect strategy of dealing with “inter-male” oppression is also recognized by feminists as a basis for some actual rapes,³⁷ it is not the issue that Hébert was solely foregrounding in her novel. Indeed, Nora, herself, did not, in her enraged use of male words, exclusively represent the oppressive male order that Stevens sought to bring down in attacking her, but also and more significantly, as we have seen, the rise of a new female order that he sought to silence. Thus in choosing to embrace only the theme of paternal oppression of the son, Simoneau sidelines the problem of sexual politics as it concerns modern women in society. Simultaneously, in focusing on Olivia as an obedient virginal representative of/servant to the old paternal order, he embraces a form of sexual politics as it concerns Woman, the symbolic female of narrative.³⁸ In contrast, Hébert was presenting rape as the result of destructive heterosexual relations between men and women in patriarchal society: the outcome (in part at least) of rising tensions between latently modern women and a would-be patriarch.

Indeed, the issue of rising tensions between men and women is further obliterated by the attenuated nature of Stevens’ anger during the rape. The narrative movement toward increasing levels of violence against affirmative women that crescendos with the rape and murders in the novel is tempered, even de-climaxed, in the film (if it exists at all) since Stevens’ inner rage seems to have abated not peaked by this point in the film narrative. Indeed, there is little to suggest that he is even mad. Although in the film, old Stevens insists that just prior to his attack he heard a moan, a possible allusion his rising fury, in

fact we hear no such noise, especially with a masculine tenor (a sound which, furthermore, could have been technically altered to suggest that it is internal). Moreover, his stilted facial expression makes the inner tempest unconvincing. The tremendous violence of his churning psyche, which reaches a fevered pitch in the rape scene of the novel, thus remains muted in the film. This restrained wrath may be due to poor direction, poor acting and/or poor editing, or it may simply reflect the fact that Stevens has spent his anger at his father in the previous storm and is now at the stage of acting on his (latent) decision to finally and symbolically overthrow the old order.

Whatever the case, the cataclysmic conflation of Stevens' storming mind and his sexism thus does not explode as one as it does in the novel's sexual assault scene. Olivia's rape and murder, while the narrative goal of the film, are so devoid of male fury compared to the film's previous storm (in which Stevens thundered against his father) and so devoid of physical struggle and violence (especially as compared to his earlier assaults on Maureen and Olivia in the film and to his description of the rape in the novel), that the actual rape and murder in the film seem an afterthought. Several seconds of stiff rolling about on the beach and the deed is (apparently) done.

As a last point of comparison, the fact that Simoneau reduces Stevens' final crime to one (apparent) murder and one (apparent) rape further distances it from a comment on violence against women in patriarchy. Both the fact that there were two murders and effectively two rapes (one symbolic and one actual) in the novel underlined the social nature of violence against women. Moreover, the seemingly different personalities of Stevens' victims had revealed that, as a

group, women face the prospect of intimidation and violation from the sexist male, regardless of the woman's mode of sexual expression (whether reserved or unabandoned in the eyes of the rapist)³⁹, simply because they are women and especially women who dare to declare (covertly or overtly) their right to sexual autonomy and sexual limits. Moreover, the notion of the participation of the wider male social web in violence against women is further undone since neither the Reverend nor Perceval witness Stevens' crime, as they may have done in the novel (50), a fact which in the Reverend's case underscores the patriarchal order's collusion in keeping women subordinate.

Postscript: Is There Any Justice for Women after Death? — Simoneau's Answer to Stevens' P.S.

While Simoneau concentrates on the oppressive/repressive paternal order, he obliterates one ill-functioning form of the male hierarchy: the system of law enforcement. This is an intriguing omission since in recording the police investigation Hébert had accorded particular attention to abusive relations between men within the male hierarchy. Recall that contrary to the responsibility of police to protect the innocent while bringing the accused to justice, the detective McKenna stoops to the cruel, tyrannical level of Stevens and other men the novel. Perceval testifies, "Je vois très bien le soulier jaune pointu de McKenna donner un coup sur la jambe de mon frère Stevens. Pour lui faire dire qu'il est un assassin" (194). McKenna's brutality results in the judge rejecting Stevens' confession, calling his "aveux... extorqués et non conformes à la loi" (249).

With Stevens' acquittal, Hébert makes painfully clear the inability of the male hierarchy to regulate itself when the rules of the game are dominance and control. Moreover, with it she recognizes the fact that, until recently at least, a high proportion of rape cases ended in acquittal or light sentences (Walby *et al* 95-96). Thus while she shows the problem of "inter-male" violence, she also alludes to the poor record the judicial system has had historically in meting out justice for patriarchal crimes against women.

Since the actual investigation and its unsatisfactory result could have been summarized in a written epilogue (a frequently used device in narrative film when time constraints disallow the dramatization of an event) and since the thematics of the "inter-male" violence were so central to Simoneau's interests, it is difficult to read this excision as anything other than his continued avoidance of the problematic issues posed for women by male-dominated systems corrupted by power — the failure of the misguided ethos of male protection to serve the interests of women.

Simoneau thus exempts the audience from having to examine parallels between the botched criminal investigation, its consequences for women and the continued violence against women. Moreover, by not showing or suggesting the fact that there was a police investigation, Simoneau relieves Stevens of any responsibility for his crime. Indeed, Stevens does not even attempt to hide Olivia's body, hinting that he fears no consequence — violent or not — for his final assault. Neither his crime *per se* nor related concerns with social justice for women were ever the issue; his relationship with the paternal order was the only one.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how much Simoneau concedes to some of the novel's implicit reasons for Stevens' heightened levels of violence against women at the close of summer. The previous chapter (Chapter 5) had noted that to consolidate his patriarchal identity and become man enough to face his father, Stevens, in the novel, had needed to start putting women in their place. This chapter (Chapter 6) then explored in more detail how the rising forces of female modernity had increasingly challenged that process. While on the one hand, Stevens, in the novel, shores up his patriarchal identity by returning pursuing, desiring women to their traditional gender roles, on the other hand, he becomes increasingly destabilized by the relentless rise of the modern woman and a pre-feminist sisterhood. In the end, unable to accept either Nora's aggressive or Olivia's latent modernity, Stevens, as unadaptable would-be patriarch, lethally puts them both in their sexual-social places through the rapes (one symbolic, one actual) and murders.

This chapter found that Stevens' sexist desires and latent tensions with modern women and female solidarity are often barely integrated, if at all, into Stevens' aggressive behaviour with women in the film. Firstly, his sense of threat from a pre-feminist sisterhood is largely absent. Secondly, although he seems to be attracted to the apparently traditional woman, unlike in the novel his attraction to her is less ominously attached to a desire to imprison her in her domestic role. Thirdly, traces of the female characters' latent modernity are either erased from or greatly tempered in the film, leaving the male protagonist

with no compelling reasons to contain these women as fully as in the novel or to return them to their gender roles.

Reinserted firmly into the traditional moral order, Olivia does not pose any threat to him as a latently modern woman but merely and eventually comes to represent the paternal order itself. Maureen, who had initially exhibited some traditional traits as in the novel, also, as in the novel, starts to show mild signs of modernity. However, in contrast to the novel, these signs, as they represent female modernity as a whole, are contained at their most aggressive moment by mid narrative. They are then, as far as Maureen is concerned, gradually undone, as she ultimately manifests a more distasteful, covert classism, muddying the reasons for Stevens' uneasy rapport with her.

By the time that he faces down Nora in the film, his conflict with the latently modern woman seems to have dissipated (if it had ever truly existed) for the film's huntress scene, so key to revealing Nora's egalitarian desires in the novel, barely if at all reveals the struggle between Stevens, as a would-be or latent patriarch, and Nora, as a quintessential instinctive feminist. This latter change is especially significant ideologically since Nora's more overt hope for sexual equality in the novel was important to its feminist perspective and helped contextualize Stevens' violence towards women as patriarchal defensiveness.

In addition, female modernity is not otherwise expressed either in the lead-in to or in the actual rape and murder scenes as a way of explaining Stevens' final act of violence against a woman as reactionarily patriarchal. Neither Nora nor Olivia gives expression to that modernity in any way in the film's ultimate crime scenes although Nora's verbal taking of the male sexual-

social position constituted a central destabilizing influence on him in the novel. In addition, the premeditated elements of his final crimes are erased, further expunging evidence of his patriarchal defensiveness.

With various aspects of female threat stripped away in the adaptation, Stevens is most strongly in conflict with his father and seems to be mainly reacting to Olivia as a symbol of the old paternal order by the time of her final doing in. As he is elsewhere in the film, Stevens is using her to act against the paternal order *against* the Reverend's Law; he is not, as Stevens in the novel is, oppressing her and other women in order to *emulate* the Reverend. His ultimate crime against a woman in the film becomes a confused mixture of (perhaps) a latent sexism (he still dominates Olivia during the supposed rape) and anger at the paternal order, which this obedient virgin represents. Moreover, not only is his battle with the latently modern woman muted in if not deleted from the rape but his covert struggle with the resisting female line that underpinned his rape of Olivia in the novel is also expunged in the film.

Stevens' underlying hostility with the paternal order could explain some of the "mute-ation" of the rape, in particular the evacuation of almost all of its sexual violence, both in its verbal and physical forms, for the son does not rape the father but overthrows him. However, in tempering Hébert's brutal and in some ways more graphic portrayal of rape (albeit its, at times, symbolic description) and in omitting the second symbolic rape victim, Nora, as well as the possible witnessing of the crimes by the representative of the patriarchal order and the failure of the justice system to deal with the patriarchal

perpetrator, Simoneau skirts the hard and collective realities of patriarchal violence against women that Hébert was revealing.

While the huntress scene may have posed some challenges in transferring an abstract and internally felt idea on sexual equality to a visual medium, all the other alterations were based largely on selections, transformations and suppressions of characters, gestures, dialogue and type of conflict not on problems posed by the cinematic medium. In some cases these transmutations were further underscored by cinematic techniques (framing, editing, *mise-en-scène*) that emphasized the new meanings or understated original ones. Taken together these changes further reveal the underlying governing process of ideological rewriting.

A few final comments are in order. A review of these various permutations in conjunction with those in the previous chapter reveals that Simoneau has reversed the gendered nature of Stevens' points of conflict in the novel and the film. In the novel, Stevens displaces his father two-thirds of the way through his narrative to then go on to seek the mother-substitute as he continues to increasingly battle the latently modern woman. Inversely, in the film, he most emphatically contains the most threatening example of female challenge less than half way through the film (in the rabbit strangling scene) to then continue containing her in her various more muted (or at least no more threatening) symbolic forms at no greater levels of visual violence as he goes on to complete his rebellion with the father figure. These modifications reflect the effect of foregrounding the father-son conflict which, in the highly condensed

narrative of the film, begins to overshadow Stevens' rapport with women, affecting the way one can interpret his conflict with them.

In short, whereas the novel outlined, in Stevens' narrative, a crisis in masculinity in which latently modern women pose an increasing threat to the would-be patriarch, the film outlines chiefly a crisis in filiation in which women are largely scapegoats or at times, as we saw in the preceding chapter, collaborators in the father-son struggle. While women may also be sometimes menacing, in a partial concession to Hébert's thematics, they do not divert Stevens from his main seditious trajectory with his father. While Hébert unflinchingly exposes the social dynamics that lead to patriarchal violence against women in a crumbling patriarchy, Simoneau androcentrically centers on the tired filial struggle of the Western Tradition.

The final result is that two gender-inflected visions of social history emerge in the novel and in the film with respect to the male hierarchy's response to modernity. Through Stevens' crisis in masculinity and the earlier mentioned Fall of the House of the Father at the hands of Pat and Pam, Hébert hints at the onset of a major crisis in patriarchy set off by female subversive acts, which began to rise even in the repressive Duplessis era with the birth of the modern woman in Québec and which eventually resulted in women gaining political (public) voice and later rights. Although women will not win those first battles with retrograde patriarchs (of the likes of Stevens), their spirit (like Olivia's) will stubbornly (even naively) prevail.

Contrastingly, through his focus on the father-son conflict, Simoneau hints at the crisis in Québec's paternal order — or male hierarchy — of the

period. Stevens' individual filial crisis incarnates the rising rebelliousness — “le refus global” — of the liberal, misunderstood, even artistic and sensitive son/parishioner against the defensively oppressive and sexually repressive paternal order of the Duplessis era, marked by period costume, the Québec symbol of the Percé rock and the physical and controlling presence of the dominant Church. The paternal order's eventual crumbling under the rising son will be heralded by the ruined Church interior, plastered with the paintings of (presumably) the “mad” or discontented Son, who has finally ascended to occupy the seat of the fallen Father. Hébert and Simoneau thus display two different affinities with social history and offer two different ideological critiques.

¹ For alternative and additional readings of the significance of 1936, see Reid 113; *Mésavage* 113-114; and Rea 176.

² With the exception of Bishop, most critics who have considered the issue read Stevens' adult misogyny as the product of socialization, an interpretation with which I concur. Bishop reads Stevens' behaviour as the manifestation of an inherent destructiveness in male desire (1984/85).

³ Smart notes the significance of Olivia initiating the gaze (1988): 259.

⁴ Bishop makes the distinction between Stevens' assessment of Olivia as prudish and her actual and understandable prudence (1984/85): 188.

⁵ Recall that both in the novel and the film Nora jealously tells Stevens about Olivia's deformity of webbed toes behind Olivia's back in an effort to dissuade his interest in Olivia. Indeed, both Olivia and Nora jealousy vie with each other for Stevens' attention in the novel. However, even in this mode they do not engage in what one might term sexist appraisals of one another.

⁶ Recall, he quickly overcomes her momentary struggle against his sexual conquest in the extramarital bedroom scene in the film.

⁷ See, for instance, Bishop (1984): 125; Côté and Mitchell 83; Dufault 183; and Rea 174-175.

⁸ She uses the expression “*avide de toute connaissance terrestre et marine*”, 116.

⁹ These statements manifest in a specific way her more general desire for coitus as expressed in the novel by her statement: “*Je sais comment sont faits les garçons. Cet aiguillon que les mères puissantes leur ont planté au milieu du corps, et moi je suis creuse et humide. En attente*”, 118. They also give more sexually explicit expression to her particular desire for Stevens, which in the novel was in part manifested in fairytale fantasies, 120, 125.

¹⁰ The thirty second interval, long for narrative film, also somewhat undoes the notion that Stevens sees Olivia and Nora as one sexual animal, revealed in the novel when he repeats their first names in rapid succession “[*lorsqu'il*] les tutoie *comme une seule et même créature*”, 104.

¹¹ One recalls such impressionable events as when her Uncle John angrily or brutally expressed his superiority (e.g. 114 and 117) and when the Reverend violently slapped her after the American was attracted to her. Later she repeats her father's words that Stevens “*est souï*

comme une bourrique" (133, 104) which Olivia then replicates (223), showing how behaviour and attitudes are transmitted intergenerationally.

¹² Bishop compares Felicity with the Greek god (1984/85): 182.

¹³ This image is suggested by the rising of the wind (244) coupled with the recurrent male fixation on sexually connotative references to both blowing female hair ("[s]es cheveux plein les yeux" 74, "ses cheveux courts plein les dents" 43 (see also 97 and 134) and to pubic hair ("sa senteur de fille sous ses jupes, au creux roux de son ventre" 245; also see 248. Also see Harlin 130-131.

¹⁴ Slott, for instance, labels Nora's threatening voice as "powerful" (1987): 298.

¹⁵ Remember he is feeling particularly vulnerable because he has removed his hat and thus stands before her with no supportive proof of his manliness, 61, 92, 107.

¹⁶ This is an interpretation implied by several critics but not explicated, opening it up for an opposite reading by Pallister in her discussion of the film (1995): 185. This impasse among the critics thus requires a closer consideration of the textual evidence.

¹⁷ See Higgins and Silver for more on the concept of disfiguration and the feminist call to restore the reading and representation of "rape to the literal, to the... violence — the physical, sexual violation [of the female body]" in order to reveal that rape constitutes "corporeal deformation or mutilation", 4.

¹⁸ For other comments on the notion of submergence see Gould 922 and Slott (1986): 165.

¹⁹ Olivia observes that Stevens is "posté comme une sentinelle", 224.

²⁰ For Stevens, harvest and death merge with the end of youth and summer. He refers to "moissonner... et mourir... [lorsque... n]otre jeunesse, dans l'été ... s'achève", 88, 106. Nora refers to the grass ready to be scythed, 122; the harvest carries connotation of cutting down and death; as the *Petit Robert* states *faucher* denotes: not only *moissonner*, but *couper*, *anéantir*, *détruire*, *abattre* and *coucher* and by extension the "taking" of the woman.

²¹ Ewing also observes that Stevens' behaviour with his dory is suspicious but does not explain why, 107.

²² Not only does Stevens use it get to rid of the bodies, but Perceval witnesses the suspicious movement of a small vessel on the water, 141-142; sees the dory's oars in the form of cross and laments "Nora et Olivia sont perdues", 152; finds Olivia's blue bracelet beside the dory, 178; and notes that it is eventually hidden away, like the other evidence, 187.

²³ Olivia had desperately wanted to leave "[sa] chambre fermée", 223. Nora was drawn to the natural joys beyond the confining doors for the Church: "J'aime les dimanches d'été lorsque la porte de l'église est ouverte à deux battants sur la campagne", 117.

²⁴ Recall that Irène (in her relations with the Reverend) and Maureen (in her relations with Stevens) also become like stones (Irène, 44 and Maureen 66) from sexual insults thrown their way, 145.

²⁵ See also Gould for additional comments on the immobilization of Olivia, 926

²⁶ For other comments on the battle of the sexes, see Reid 123 and Smart 258.

²⁷ When Stevens watches the waves breaking on the shore in an erotic replication of coitus as he spies on Olivia swimming (not long before he sexually attacks her on the rock), he says, "Dans cette eau qui moutonne, dont chaque vague moutonne et crépite, pareille à des balles de fusil, mille balles de fusil lâchées ensemble, une muraille crépitante qui se forme, monte, atteint son sommet, s'affaisse aussitôt, écumante sur le sable, mourante sur le sable, en un petit fil d'écume, tel un crachat blanc", 95. On the point of defenseless wombs, circles and centers are womb images. While Olivia dances, Stevens confesses, "L'envie me tient d'atteindre Olivia par ruse ou par violence, d'exister avec elle, au coeur même du cercle magique de sa danse, là où sa petite vie de danseur est libre et sans défense", 99.

²⁸ Recall that earlier he had described the virginal Nora and Olivia as "deux capucines dans un bac de terre fraîche", 101.

²⁹ As we saw earlier, in the symbolism of Nora's narrative, earth (man) and saline water (woman) couple to make clay out of which she is born as an equal to Adam, 115-116.

³⁰ Although some critics have read the wind as a non-gendered symbol of desire (Harlin, Reid) or as a provocative female voice — "la force 'enrageante' des femmes" (Randall 72), I

concur with those critics who read the wind as carrying male connotations, at least as far as the male characters are concerned (Bishop, Gould, Noble, Slott).

³¹ Recall, as far as the male characters are concerned, it rose when the Reverend spied predatorily on his swimming nieces as the diving gannet plunges phallicly — beak first— into the protected maternal sea, implicitly to fish out its nubile piscatory prey, 38. It revealed Nora's sexual edibles when he stalked her like the hunter after the fox (41) and did the same to Olivia when Stevens spied predatorily on her, 77, 216. Stevens used its noise to mask his predatory approach, 216. If the woman's desire should rise in a whirlwind of sexual excitement, as did in Nora's case in an earlier scene, it is significantly unaccompanied by lethal predatory instruments (43, 81) and it is quickly contained or undone by the dominating male. The Reverend violently slaps Nora and Stevens turns her desire to anger.

³² As another example, when the Reverend prepares to stalk Nora with his hunting rifle, he plays on the word "lame" to describe the wind's salty breath, 41.

³³ Such a reading normalizes the use of force and terrorization and underplays Stevens' desire to dominate through the sexual act. It also privileges Stevens' perspective while ignoring the victim's position, in spite of Stevens' clear references to Olivia's resistance. Slott's reading accepts uncritically Robert Scholes' stance that "[t]he archetype of all fiction is the sexual act"; cited in de Lauretis 1984 108. See Winnett for a critique of this male-centered interpretation of narrative, desire and reading.

³⁴ As Smart notes, as a child Olivia looked first at Stevens, attesting to her instinctive sense of equality (1988): 259.

³⁵ See Higgins and Silver for a discussion of the whitewashing of the representation of rape in the Western Tradition, 2-5.

³⁶ In this tradition, rape often serves as an allegory for "inter-male" tensions in class, race, linguistic or political relations. For a discussion of rape as an allegory for class and race relations see Rajan 61-78. For a discussion of rape as an allegory for linguist/political relations in Québec literature see Smart (1988): 235-254.

³⁷ As Susan Griffin states in her influential essay "The Politics of Rape", "[T]he rage that one man may harbour toward another higher in the male hierarchy can be deflected toward a female scapegoat" (1982): 55.

³⁸ See de Lauretis for a description of the distinction between women (as real historical subjects) and Woman as a cultural symbol or "fictional construct" (1984): 4-6.

³⁹ Slott also notes that regardless of how a woman behaves, she is the victim of patriarchy (1986): 160.

CONCLUSION

“Parler n'est jamais neutre.”
— Luce Irigaray

To contribute to the investigation of patriarchal correction in the remediation of Canadian letters, this dissertation took a microanalytical approach to explicate some of the key transformations which Yves Simoneau's film adaptation made to the feminist critique of patriarchal society inscribed in Anne Hébert's novel *Les Fous de Bassan*. To unmask the extent and subtleties of the ideological shift from novel to film, I did comparative close readings of the two works using feminist analytical concepts and considered symbolic, structural, psychological, and sociohistorical aspects of the two texts as well as the cinematic creation of meaning and textual detail.

To demonstrate the overarching patterns of the ideological permutation, I will discuss my findings in terms of a comprehensive review of the changes. The unravelling of Hébert's feminist stance is centered around a realignment and compression of the narrative's thematic concerns. While the novel focuses primarily on an abusive patriarchy, the film concentrates mainly on an oppressive, repressive paternal order, a reconstituted subtheme of the novel. The central conflict shifts from the struggle, in the novel, between a dominant

but dying patriarchal order and a rising, resistant maternal line (which ultimately will, in spirit at least, outlive patriarchy) to the clash, in the film, between a corrupt paternal order and a nascent filial force (which ultimately will herald a renewed male world). In focusing on strife in the male order, Simoneau rewrites the protagonist's efforts to identify with and assume the social position of the patriarchal father into a singular revolt against the father's values. This alteration in turn changes the underlying reasons for some of the son's violence against women.

As a result of these various modifications, the tussles between the frustrated would-be patriarch and the emerging desiring modern women, which in the novel had symbolized the broader social tensions between women and men, are either muted, downplayed, or more easily contained or are recuperated for and reintegrated under the father-son battle in the film. More mildly contesting women are also reassigned less progressive social stances than they held in the novel. In the end, the key reasons for the downfall of the dominant social order mutate from the inability of patriarchal individuals to adapt to the dawn of an intuitive feminism into the instinctive desire of the frustrated son to overthrow the old paternal order. In short, the crisis in patriarchy that had informed the Reverend's narrative and Stevens' final letter in the novel becomes a crisis in the paternal order in the film and the crisis in masculinity that had characterized Stevens' narrative in the novel becomes a crisis in filiation in the film.

To make these major thematic transpositions, Simoneau either tempers or substantively alters the portrait of patriarchy both in the public and private

spheres (giving women as a group less need to resist) while simultaneously accentuating and reformulating oppressive aspects of these spheres for the son (giving him more reason to rebel against rather than to emulate the old order). Notably, a key symbol of the male-dominated public sphere, the Church, represented by the Reverend, is all but purged of its patriarchal forms of oppression while its paternal-filial forms of domination are highlighted. All the complex and ironic interplay that had existed in the novel between the patriarchal Word and its manipulative user (who in the source text wields biblical text both to keep women in their place and to justify his sexist and venatic behaviour) is stripped down in the film to a simplified story about a clerical hypocrisy and sexual regulation in a Calvinist (symbolically Jansenist) paternal order against which the oppressed, natural Son will rebel, in part by violating women. Among other things, this thematic retrenchment culminates in the film's single, even ambiguous, rape and murder, an event divested of most of the novel's key subtextual allusions to the individual and collective fight between male domination and female opposition, including the perpetrator's desire to emulate the patriarchal Church, and the Church's collusive part in perpetuating such violence against women.

Similarly, the private sphere, which is so onerous to women in the novel, undergoes several attenuations in the film while the son's oppression by the biological father is developed and contextualized. The novel's broad-ranging suggestions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of wives are deleted from the film and childlessness is no longer the possible result of the sterility of the patriarchal male or, more symbolically, of arid patriarchal heterosexual

relationships. While Simoneau retains the son's physical mistreatment in the family, he chooses not to deal with the father's brutal methods of engendering the son, which in the novel had revealed part of the paternal effort to perpetuate the Griffin Creek patriarchy. Instead, Simoneau transforms the motivations for the violence of the father towards his sons into reasons related only to the father's stubborn retention of paternal control. In addition, the patriarchal desire to establish a transcendent paternity is either cut, mitigated or filtered ambiguously through the wife or is transfigured in anonymously rendered portraits associated with the elderly son's efforts to reconcile himself with his past skirmish with the old paternal order.

Problematic instances of the paternalistic dominance and protection of daughters are erased while another is distorted by one daughter's/sister's apparent acceptance of an atypical and incestuous rapport with her brother. The male protagonist becomes partially recast in the film as the thwarted romantic hero trying to save the damsel from the sexually desirous brother (who seeks to safeguard his sister's body for his personal sexual use). This is a more honourable role than the one the protagonist played in the novel as the would-be patriarch ruttishly and venatically trying to wrest ownership of the female body from the male protectorate.

The problems of mothering in patriarchy and the negative effect that this experience has on mother-son relationships are also removed in the film in favour of an ambiguous foray into mother-to-son incest which is subtextually and enigmatically related to the filial protagonist's growing madness. In making these troubling suggestions of mother-to-son incest, Simoneau not only

reverses the son-to-mother desires manifested in the novel as part of the main male characters' heterosexual Oedipal trajectories, but he disengages the text from exploring the underlying, patriarchally caused reasons for these men's excessive craving for maternal love — i.e., the patriarchal father's destruction of normal mother-son relations. Simoneau thus removes Hébert's indictment of the patriarchal mutilation of the mother-son relationship in favour of an equivocal but disturbing suggestion of the pernicious effect and maleficent nature of maternal love, only questionably mitigated by the possibility of the mother's helpless attraction to the devil-liberator son.

Moreover, Simoneau's introduction of these two twists on the incest theme not only ambiguously resituates the principal son in the narrative as victim/liberator but replaces feminist issues raised in the novel by the clergyman's avuncular, exploitative sexual advances towards the pubescent, modern woman who is awakening to her normal desires. Furthermore, these thematic changes indicate Simoneau's decision to emphasize more bizarre forms of familial dysfunction stereotypically believed to exist in sexually repressive and isolated communities (in this case an island) rather than to portray more common forms of familial abuse found in patriarchal families (strung along the coast in a symbolic portrait of omnipresent patriarchy continuously reproducing itself), as revealed in the novel.

Simoneau reformulates Hébert's portrait of a nascent feminism developing along the female line by reducing the novel's constellation of maternal characters (who either refuse, in various ways, to accept traditional gender roles or who attempt to forge a private space for themselves while

protecting female offspring) to one biological mother and several vaguely maternal figures (who seemingly accept or promote incest or who obey the old order). He also inserts suggestions that if women ever resist the male order it is for sexually or psychologically dysfunctional reasons. Furthermore, Simoneau erases the novel's allusion to the birth of a pre-feminist solidarity and solicitude in favour of a reference to the search for a masculine quest for brotherly bonding, love and sensual freedom. Positive steps in the film protagonist's fraternal quest replace fantasies or acts in which he engaged in the novel to dominate women, a change which expunges additional negative elements of the male engendering process.

Selective transpositions to and suppressions of the source text's structure and symbolism buttress the thematic changes. Simoneau most obviously reveals his predilection for masculine thematics by privileging the male narrator-protagonist over the novel's alternating male-female narrators-protagonists, as others have noted. Not only does this modification erase the subjective experience of female desire in patriarchy but it omits the structural representation of tensions between dying or would-be patriarchs and the emerging modern women. In addition, Simoneau mitigates the challenge of latently modern women not only by deleting it or by replacing it by inter-male standoffs but by altering its meaning through a new narrative order that links it to the central father-son drama and by adopting the linear, narrative structure of patriarchal logos, uncontested by female intervention.

The meaning of many symbolic objects and designations are altered (to rewrite or stress either the paternal-filial or fraternal themes or to present

women negatively) or are cleansed (to remove patriarchal references) or are omitted (to suppress positive female connotations). For example, symbolic representations of female desire, recreative power, resistance or rejuvenation, or spirit are either omitted or reconstituted for the father-son battle. We find these various transformations in the reworking of the source text's symbolic use of the sea and its attributes and associations (such as the seashore, sea foam, sea mist and tides); the full moon; the knife; gannets; the piscatory/hunting rapport; Christ and devil assignations; the hat and other costume detail; the wind; Pat's and Pam's mural; colours; whispered voices; gestures, such as the Reverend's slap; light, and inner and outer space.

The sea, which in the novel was a maternal entity around which the contest between the still dominant patriarchy and the emerging solidarity of the female line occurs and on which the would-be patriarchs' domineering Oedipal trajectories are projected, is reappropriated as a paternal site around which the father-son struggle is fought and fraternal bonds are forged. Similarly, the trope of venatic/piscatory sexual pursuit, in which the male pursuer/hunter/shark dominates and consumes the female, is either omitted or less ominously rendered as it is partly recuperated under the fraternal quest. These changes underplay the source text's concern with the perniciousness of patriarchal heterosexual rapports. For example, gannets in the film do not symbolize the patriarchal, predatory desire to rape, as they did in the novel, but represent either understandable filial frustration, natural male hunger, normal male desire to mate, or the search for reconciliation with or freedom from the paternal order. Likewise, another of the novel's symbols of rape, the knife, is either assigned

new meanings, which are associated with paternal severance of fraternal bonds or female despondence, or is materially transformed into a symbol of coitus.

None of the discussed transformations occurred for the cinematic reasons posited by earlier critics. Previously cited challenges of the source text — its multiple narrators, its interior monologue, its symbolic language, the voice of a phantom, and the portrayal of a collectivity — all have cinematic solutions, even though some may have been somewhat experimental or suggestive. In fact, on the latter point, Simoneau succeeds admirably, by insinuating, as we have seen, a transformed collectivity made up of incestuous or otherwise sexually dysfunctional maternal and fraternal figures all overseen by a repressive paternal order. Moreover, although the novel is indeed largely made up of interior action, it is not devoid of dialogue, and, rather than making fuller use of it, Simoneau often chooses either to silence or deform it, notably in key scenes involving women or their social fate. Likewise, he substitutes or suppresses biblical quotations, including those that were part of spoken scenes, which Hébert had used to critique patriarchy.

In addition, as demonstrated, he is successful in making a highly symbolic film; he simply introduces different “antecedents” for many of those symbols or otherwise tempers the level of their critique of patriarchy. Indeed, he chooses to delete multi-symbolic characters and objects which would have lent themselves to the compact, compressed nature of a cinematic narrative and cinematic visuals. One recalls, for instance, the complex and paradoxical image of women swimming which connotes, depending on the viewer, not only their quest for renewal and female ties but their preyed upon status in patriarchy,

their sexual autonomy and their (threatening) abilities as modern women. As just one other example, one thinks of Pat and Pam who served several emblematic roles as women in patriarchy and whose keynote mural offered a quintessential and layered array of visual comments on women's lot in and resistance to patriarchy.

These particular excisions and simplifications are part of Simoneau's larger, calculated reconstitution of the novel's entire social order, which he achieves through his selective cutting of a number of secondary male and female characters (who both as individuals and as part of a collective served to comment on various aspects of either the operations of patriarchy or female experience within it); his strategic amalgamation of some male and female characters; and his careful recharacterization of remaining characters by elective suppression or transformation of their ideological functions.

I do not believe that Simoneau's decision to shift the narrative's dominant thematic concerns necessitated, in and of itself, an automatic reassignment of meaning of the text's symbolism, characterization and so forth. A counter symbolism or a counter formalism could have been embedded in the film to give voice to female opposition to patriarchy. The detailed textual comparison allowed me to demonstrate that he did not choose to take this tack with the symbolic aspects and underplayed it or recuperated it with the formal aspects. Indeed, cinematic techniques are often used either to sideline or undo Hébert's feminist thematics rather than express them. For instance, Simoneau minimizes the visual depiction of the female quest for equality in the choreography of space while accentuating the paternal-filial power imbalance in

the use of cinematic space. His editing together of scenes to which he has already made thematic or symbolic changes often further emphasizes those new meanings and superimposes additional thematic shifts.

While I chose to read the novel *Les Fous de Bassan* as a feminist by looking for its engagement with Western feminisms' general aim of charting and critiquing the situation of women in a patriarchal society, Simoneau and his creative crew did not choose to offer a similar reading by way of their cinematic adaptation. Why they did not is open to speculation, but a few social factors, which I did not broach in the dissertation, bear consideration. As feminist translation theorist Luise von Flotow states: "[A] good understanding of the socio-cultural contexts... prevalent in the periods in which the [source] works were written and the translations were produced helps explain the impact that social movements [and] cultural politics... may have on these texts" (66). Further research on the representation of feminist critique in film and television adaptations of Canadian and Québécois literature would benefit from consideration of the sociohistorical context of the cinematic reproduction. As an example, I will close with an overview of these matters as applied to this case study.

The years during which Hébert was periodically working on her novel (1977-1982), second-wave feminism in North America and France was still relatively close to its origins — an influential but contested social movement after a decade of turbulent activity. Hébert's symbolic incorporation of the movement's pre-history into her novel is thus hardly surprising, especially given her long-term literary interest in female subjectivity and her concerns with

female desire and the motherhood experience in patriarchy. Since the dominant culture often resisted feminist analyses and demands during this period, one understands why after Hébert's claim to female subjectivity in *Kamouraska* (1970), during an especially active period of the movement, she presents a more embattled portrait of the female voice in *Les Fous de Bassan*.

Nevertheless, during this period, the issues raised by feminism received considerable media attention and resonated in Western and more specifically Québécois cultural production and Simoneau himself, recognizing the growing popularity of the feminist critique of violence against women in society incorporated it, although in an ambivalently sympathetic way, into his early work. However, by the mid-1980's, when the film adaptation of *Les Fous de Bassan* went into production, a backlash against the claims and tenuous gains of second-wave feminism was, in the opinion of a number of feminists, well underway in North America. Increasingly virulent forms of violent pornography which showed the masochistic victimization of women (French 1992 165-166) and the reformulated portrayal of "monstrous mothers" by Hollywood (Kaplan 134) were some of the sadistic and misogynic cultural practices of a defensive patriarchy which North American feminists were observing.

Simoneau seems to participate in this backlash in his film adaptation of *Les Fous de Bassan* by not giving the birth of a pre-feminist consciousness the same attention as Hébert gave it in her novel. While he does not incorporate pornographic representations of women into the adaptation, he does, as we have seen, suggestively introduce insidiously incestuous mother figures. In doing so, he mimics a trend in the dominant culture to depict mothers

negatively, while heralding his own embracement of a specific theme that he would continue to address in his later films, notably *Dans le Ventre du Dragon* (1989) and *Mother's Boys* (1993).

Interestingly, Simoneau's reconstitution and partial silencing of Hébert's literary critique of patriarchy and his muzzling and deformation of her female characters' voices occur when women's film production in Québec was plateauing, even somewhat curtailed, following a nascent but tenuous period of activity. Specifically, during the 1970's, women's film production, especially as it concerned feminist subjects, had begun to enter the Québécois film corpus, notably through the National Film Board series "En tant que femmes" set up in 1970. Although, this work remained marginal in terms of overall film production in Québec, especially of features (Denault 128), the films in the NFB series were televised throughout the province and were important in raising the consciousness of many women (Dumont *et al.* 492). Moreover, women filmmakers, like Léa Pool, were beginning to make their mark while successfully developing feminist aesthetical approaches to deal with female subjectivity and desire (Lahaie 1992; Suchet 1986). However, in spite of these positive aspects, women's film production, which briefly rose to 20% of all production in Québec after the establishment of the Institut québécois du cinéma in 1977, soon fell to 15%, a level at which it remained throughout the 1980's (Denault 129).

Thus Simoneau chooses to delete female subjectivity, to quash Nora's rising voice of female modernity and to elide feminist concerns at a time when such thematic interests — as expressed by female filmmakers — were, on the one-hand, well-contained in terms of overall film production but, on the other

hand, widely seen, and as such potentially threatening to the dominant social order. One might say that in suppressing the emerging female and embryonic feminist points-of-view of Hébert's characters, Simoneau acts like the defensive Stevens in Hébert's novel, reflecting the dominant culture's (including the Québécois film industry's) difficulty in according additional space and full consideration to contesting female perspectives and evolving feminist concerns. Indeed, it is ironical to note that Simoneau stays the tide of rising feminist voices in *Les Fous de Bassan* only a year after *Les Productions la marée montante* recovers the visual political and social history of Québécois women as it matures into feminism in Josée Beaudet's engaging one-hour documentary *Le Film d'Ariane ou Une petite histoire des femmes de 1925 à 1980* (1985), shown on Radio Canada and celebrated since.

Moreover, Simoneau's failure to place, front and centre, the tensions between would-be patriarchs and latently modern women as well as his disinclination to examine, in a feminist way, the social fallout resulting from clashing perceptions of gender roles in his adaptation of Hébert's novel also reflect the growing inability among many men in Québec to deal with feminist challenges to gender identity and social organization. Indeed, as Denise Pérusse observes, the theme of "l'irréconciliation des sexes", characterized by gender role stratification, confusion and friction, marked some of the most notable feature-length films made by both men and women in Québec in the late 1970's and early 1980's, a reflection of the taut relations between the genders (27-32). Although Simoneau, himself contributes to the exploration of these themes during this period in *Les Yeux Rouges, ou les vérités*

accidentelles (1982), which he wrote and directed, and *Pouvoir Intime* (1986), which he co-wrote and directed, his stance vis-à-vis feminism remains ambivalent, as the endings of both these films reveal.

In *Les Yeux Rouges, ou les vérités accidentelles*, a story about a mysterious and murderous voyeur, Simoneau shows his female protagonist acquiring autonomy and confidence as she deals with a stalking husband and other sexual harassers. However, he increasingly undermines her affirmation of agency as the narrative unfolds by playing on her vulnerability vestmentally and by intimating her ultimate inability to free herself from her violent, estranged spouse. Similarly, he suggests, in the film's opening sequence, that violence against women is a reflection of patriarchy only to subvert that analysis by the film's closure, when we are left in doubt as to who the real guilty party is. The patterns of violence against women may only be accidental truths.

In *Pouvoir Intime*, a story about the failed holdup of an armoured car, Simoneau introduces the themes of fractured gender roles through a female robber and a homosexual couple, who are security guards. A sociopolitical reading of the film's ending suggests that the future of Québec society lies with non-traditional women and men, since both the gang woman (Roxanne) and one of the homosexual guards (Janvier) survive the destruction of the traditional paternal order and, after the doomed and lethal heist, split the spoils in front of the burnt-out shell of the Church. However, as Henry Garrity states, while Simoneau "undercut[s] the audience's traditional image of homosexual men and androgynous women by making them the film's heroes and triumphant survivors" (32), he also suggests that Québec society is disintegrating, for

Roxanne and Janvier go their separate ways at the film's close (35). Indeed, all the couples presented in the film, whether they be father-son, heterosexual or homosexual are destroyed and there is no possible union between the remaining characters.

Furthermore, Simoneau's Roxanne stands in opposition to the charming and beautiful epitome of womanhood and female desirability represented by the Roxane of Edmond Rostand's *fin-de-siècle* *Cyrano de Bergerac*, to whom her name alludes. However, her rejection of femininity seems to be a problematic issue for the filmmaker, something Janis L. Pallister also intimates (1995 343-344). This late twentieth century man-woman, who initiates sexual contact and then rejects renewal with her ex-boyfriend, scandalizes other women with her use of the men's washroom and has to wear a wig to disguise her masculine traits. She seems a latently dangerous character to the traditional men and women of the film. Similarly, Janvier's frigid name suggests the impossibility of renewal in a winter wasteland of wrecked relationships. Indeed, as with Roxanne's name, Janvier's carries connotations of Simoneau's despair over the loss of traditional gender roles. It constitutes a bleak play on the name Janus, the Roman god, after whom the month of January is named. As a two-faced deity, who looks both forwards and backwards, Janus is the god of exits and entrances, of endings and beginnings. However, in the context of the film, his homosexual namesake seems only to represent a cul-de-sac — a "two-faced" or deceitful version of masculinity, the end of an era with no clear possibility for the start of a new one.

Faced with what for Simoneau seems to be a hopeless social context of irreconcilable or “uncouplable” couples, Simoneau increasingly begins to take refuge in male sociopolitical concerns with the paternal hierarchy. As Garrity’s analysis of *Pouvoir Intime* shows, he began mining this subject in this police thriller, which delineates, in part, not only the fall of a corrupt old paternal order but, most touchingly, the heartbreak in the father-son diad caused by paternal loyalties divided between the male-dominated group and duty to the son. However, while the son succumbs to the will of the father in *Pouvoir Intime*, losing his life as a result, he rises against the father in *Les Fous de Bassan*, acquiring if only timorously and with the help of his brother, his own phallic power. The latter film can thus be seen as, in some sense, a sequel to *Pouvoir Intime* — the expression of Simoneau’s need to find a way out for the “fils déchu.” Indeed, Simoneau came to work on the adaptation of Hébert’s novel shortly after he completed *Pouvoir Intime*, which adds weight to this speculation on his evolving thematic interest.

Moreover, after *Pouvoir Intime*’s pessimistic final comment on the future of the paternal order, Simoneau seems to need to suggest his hope for a renewed paternal order. Stevens’ subtextual reincarnation of the male *refus global* of Duplessian repression, the elder Stevens’ filial occupation of the Father’s old seat of power in the ruined church, and the young Stevens’ silhouette of phallic resurrection against the dawning sky in the arms of his brother after Stevens’ rape and murder of Olivia, the old order virgin, at film’s end together bespeak Simoneau’s desire for undoing an old male order and

forging a new one, while keeping patriarchy intact. In Simoneau's vision, the new male order would not be fundamentally changed by a rejection of violence against women (for it is now part and parcel of how the son rejects the father) but would merely be reordered through the rejection of a repressive religious order and the embracement of a more corporal and egalitarian brotherhood.

Simoneau's decision to highlight inter-male relationships, especially between father and son, augurs their reappraisal by other important male filmmakers in Québec in the coming years, including Jean-Claude Lauzon (*Un Zoo la Nuit* 1987) and later Robert Lepage, as well as numerous others (Lockerbie 13). Thus, just as feminist filmmakers were beginning to bring their issues to the fore in Québec during a period when both they and others were examining the effects of feminist demands on heterosexual relations and gender, some of the principal male filmmakers were choosing to reinvestigate, in a central way, perennial inter-male concerns. One can accept the director's prerogative to treat a range of subjects over the course of a film career, for the sake of variety if nothing else. However, it seems that Simoneau, in making the changes that he does to the feminist critique and engagements of *Les Fous de Bassan*, was participating in, even anticipating, a wider men's movement away from feminist concerns towards more familiar if not always more comfortable filial concerns.

This unwillingness to expose patriarchy and its consequences for women in a feminist manner was reflected in other cultural and social practices of the period. For instance, the undoing of feminist analysis became quite common in government discourse by the mid-1980's, when concepts such as wife battering

and violence against women, which had identified the typical victims of physical abuse in heterosexual relations, were permanently subsumed and unnamed under the generic term “family violence” (G. Walker). The most striking example of the dominant culture’s diffidence with feminist analyses of violence against women came at the end of the decade in the media’s often gender-blind response to the massacre of fourteen women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal by a self-proclaimed, anti-feminist man (Saint-Jean).

It must be reiterated, however, that Hébert’s novel has not been universally read as a feminist critique of Québec society, even by feminist critics themselves. Indeed, as we saw, some feminist critics figure among the novel’s most severe detractors, including Suzanne Lamy, Lori Saint-Martin, Janis L. Pallister and Marilyn Randall, who variously claim that it is stereotypical and conventional — marked by a feeble feminism and the triumph of men. In addition, several critics, including one or two who interpret it as partly a feminist critique of society, suggest that the sexual regulation of the Church (which is undeniably alluded to in the novel) is one of the community’s principal problems. They follow in the footsteps of critics of Hébert’s earlier works, such as *Le Torrent*, who understand her to be concerned primarily with the revolt of Québec society against the Church, a mainstream view Simoneau evidently shares as he aligns the adaptation with what is also a common theme of Québécois film.

On the other hand, some critics read, at least implicitly, the novel as chiefly or partially concerned with a critique of patriarchy, and it is with these critics I side, while making critical nuances, extensions, clarifications and corrections to offer a holistic reading of the novel’s feminist engagements.

Moreover, Hébert herself, repeatedly countered those interpretations which insisted that some of her earlier work, particularly *Le Torrent* and *Les Fous de Bassan*, was mainly concerned with sexual repression and the oppressive (catholic) Church, evoking instead her preoccupations with women's place in society. As we saw, male characters in the novel evasively raise the specter of sexual repression to rationalize their own patriarchal abuse. However, this lack of consensus on the social reading raises an obvious question: if feminist critics do not concur on the type and degree of social critique embedded in the novel, how can one expect a filmmaker to see it necessarily as feminist, let alone develop a cinematic version of it that fully incorporates that feminist stance? This question, in turn raises the larger issue of what a feminist approach to film adaptation would entail.

The answer returns us to the position I assumed as a feminist reader when I undertook the analysis for this dissertation — one must read “like a feminist”. This work involves various steps for the adaptor. As feminist theorists of reading suggest, one will only discover a literary and more specifically a poetic text's feminist stance if one chooses to look for it. Clues that it could indeed be there may be signalled by extratextual authorial statements about the writer's concerns with the position of women in society as well as by epigraphs and other allusions to feminist intertexts, thinkers or studies (Kuhn), as in the case of Hébert. The ability of the adaptor to then interpret the actual text “like a feminist” lies in a multidisciplinary understanding of feminist aesthetics, feminism and feminist critiques of patriarchy. In the case of this novel, a basic understanding of women's evolving place and claims for equality (the

sociohistorical issues) and a basic understanding of the patriarchal oppressiveness of the masculinity script (the psychological issues) were both critical, although earlier critics had ignored key elements of the former and had missed important aspects of the latter. The adaptor should also understand that masculine subjectivity has a place in feminist texts if it is used, as in Hébert's work, to expose and denounce the harsh realities of female experience in patriarchy not to divert critical attention from patriarchal operations, as in Simoneau's film version. Finally, Hébert's text points to the need for the feminist adaptor to go beyond the quest for positive images of women and to read for and find ways to present the source text's ironic or otherwise critical comments on how patriarchy affects or determines the behaviour or fate of women, something only partially done by previous critics of the novel.

That said, fidelity to Hébert's text would not even have been required to produce a feminist film version. Rather, to draw from feminist translation theorists, all that the translation/adaptation project requires is allegiance to feminist goals (Lotbinière-Harwood; Simon). Even if Hébert were not the feminist writer that this dissertation suggests that she is and even if the elements I explicated as feminist critique did not exist or were deemed to be sympathetic to patriarchy, a feminist filmmaker could nevertheless have created an adaptation with a feminist perspective. Unlike translation, film adaptation is even less concerned with faithfulness to the text. Remediation has long been understood among filmmakers as an activity informed by artistic creation, as the buying of the source author's rights implies. Moreover, some feminist translators advocate an ideological intervention in the text (Lotbinière-Harwood).

Just as a feminist text can undergo patriarchal correction so can a patriarchal text be subject to feminist revision. In the end, Simoneau, if shackled by traditionalist, short-sighted or contentious readings of Hébert, always had artistic license at his disposal. He decided to make it work for the filial not the feminist project.

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