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American Women (re) Writing the Frontier: Domesticity, the Production of Space and Social Relationships in Selected Narratives of the 19th and 20th centuries

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to:

- My wife Katia.

- My children Rafik, Nadine, and Nabila.

- My parents.

- My sister Nouara.

- My friends.

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Abstract

This thesis examines women's literary representations of the American Frontier in selected fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It studies the issue of the production of space and social relationships which is embedded in their dialogized discourse. Responding to their male counterparts who see the frontier space as the place of the male renewal and the domestication of the woman, many female authors such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Mary Austin, Willa Cather, and Laura Ingalls Wilder appropriated the frontier space to discuss gender-related issues such as social roles, the private and the public spaces. Borrowing the concept of representational space from Henry Lefebvre, it argues that these women writers resort to that grand narrative of American identity and Manifest Destiny in order to show their resistance and participate in the debate on the place of women in the American society. To show their discord with the dominant frontier ideology which represents the woman as silent, dainty, and submissive, they promote a contrasting image, that of a courageous independent woman who enjoys the outdoor space. To reach its aim and investigate the ways in which these American female writers produced space and social relationships, revised the male frontier narrative and challenged the status quo which constricted women's mobility, the present research adopts a conjunction of perspectives, borrows from spatial, dialogic and feminist theories. The way these U.S. women authors produced space and social relationships is studied in the light of Henry Lefebvre's spatial theory developed in his book *The Production of Space* (1991). In this book, Lefebvre explains that it is through movement that the spatial ideologies are produced and transformed. The dialogized discourse of the women writers under study is examined through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism explained in his books *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). As far as their feminist stance is concerned, the latter is treated in the light of the feminist assumptions of Victoria Walker explained in her article "Feminist Criticism, Anglo-American" (1993).

Key Concepts:

American Women, The Frontier, Gender, dialogue, Domesticity, Mobility, Space and Power

Contents

General Introduction

Since the first Europeans arrived to the North American continent, response to its space, or what is commonly known as the American Frontier, has been one of the most important and pervasive characteristics of American literature and culture. Responses to the frontier space are ubiquitous in the writings on the New World from the first settlements to the present day. Whether it is the propagandist tracts of Captain John Smith, the sermons of William Bradford and John Winthrop, the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Frederick Jackson Turner, Owen Wister and Zane Grey or the western films of John Ford and Clint Eastwood, the Frontier is always represented as a male space where women are invisible or simply absent.

Frederick Jackson Turner, the father of the historiography of the Frontier, was one of the first historians who ignored the presence and participation of women in the frontier process. In his landmark essay entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," also known as "the frontier hypothesis," he argues that:

> At the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows Indian trails. Little by little, he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germs, anymore than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is that here is a new product that is American (Turner, 2010: 4).

In his essay, Turner explains that the frontier experience was a very important factor that contributed to creating a composite American identity. In his view, all the settlers from different backgrounds who moved westward in waves to tame the wilderness were Americanized in the frontier. Inspite of the presence of women among these settlers who moved to the frontier following the American dream, Turner simply ignored them.

Another writer who continues the frontier ideology as a male space is Leslie Fiedler. In his book, entitled *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968), he argues that the American

frontier, from the seventeenth-century Puritan settlements in Massachusetts Bay Colony to the late settlements in the Far West, was the space of the "rugged white male." In this respect he writes: "Westering, in America, means leaving the domain of the female in search of a mythic land of adventure and opportunity for the runaway refugee American male" (Fiedler, 1968: 51). For Fiedler, the open space of the American Frontier is the place or the domain of renewal and regeneration of the white male who escaped the feminizing society of eastern United States.

When women are included in frontier stories written by male authors such as Cooper, Wister, Grey and Rolvaag they are always domesticated and stereotyped. In fact, the woman is generally represented as a helpless victim who awaits rescue from Indians, or other perils, or as sunbonneted "gentle tamer" who cares for her husband and children. In the two cases the woman occupies the domestic or the private space and satisfies what Barbara Welter has called the four principles of the "cult of true womanhood" which are: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Welter, 1966: 152).

Contrary to the dominant view which sees the Frontier space as the place of the male renewal and the domestication of the woman, this thesis will try to demonstrate that the Frontier was not solely a masculine monolithic space; it was also an ideological stage engaged by American women writers in their discussions of gender-related issues, such as social roles, the private and the public spaces. These issues are reflected in many works by women writers along American history, such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; Or, Early Times In the Massachusetts* (1827), Mary Hunter Austin's *Lost Borders* (1909), Willa Seibert Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913) and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House Series* (1935-1943). So my purpose in this study is to focus on the fiction written by these women to investigate how the female characters in these fiction respond and negotiate the frontier space to free themselves from the stereotype of the "angel in the house" and to conquer the public or the outside space.

In so doing, I hope to point out how female Frontier fiction resists and subverts the male master narrative of the Frontier, exposes feminine spatiality and struggles to assume full citizenship for American women.

Review of the Literature

The concept of the Frontier is ubiquitous in American literature and culture. Its origin goes back to the early seventeenth-century journals of William Byrd, William Bradford, and John Winthrop, back to a time when America's frontier was the lush Carolina hills and the rock bound New England coast. It goes also back to Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur's *Letters From an American Farmer*, first published in 1782, which announced that on the American frontier "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men" (qtd. in Simonson, 1989: 41). Regardless of their viewpoint, Americans acknowledged a frontier early in their history: a frontier Thomas Jefferson expanded with the Louisiana Purchase; a frontier Andrew Jackson represented as the first log-cabin president in the White House; a frontier from which Abraham Lincoln drew his ideals; and John F. Kennedy hailed it anew (Ibid).

As a process of settlement, the term was originally used by the first European colonists who landed in the New World to refer to the open space beyond their settlements. In the words of Turner the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization (Turner, 2010: 3). So for the first settlers of Jamestown (1607), the fall line was the frontier. In the eighteenth century what lay beyond the Appalachian Mountains constituted the frontier and the Far West represented the frontier for the settlers of late nineteenth-century America.

As previously mentioned, one of the first historians to theorize on the centrality of the concept of the Frontier in American history was Frederick Jackson Turner. In "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," he argues that the key factor in American development was "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the

advance of American settlement westward" (Turner, 2010: 1). Furthermore, he adds that the frontiering experience constituted the dominant element in shaping the American composite nationality. In other words, this experience in the frontier space distinguished Americans from other people of the world by giving them an identity different from Old World traditions. In this respect he writes:

> The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe ... The fact is that there is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a real sense. Moving Westward, the frontier became more and more American (Turner, 2010: 3-4).

Moreover, in his view, even if the 1890 Census declared the frontier closed, Americans stil possess many traits of the frontier process which are

> That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind...; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil (Ibid. 37).

Turner' hypothesis was very influential in 20th century America. Historian Gerald Nash says that "soon political leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson espoused the frontier theme, and within a few years writers, artists, and musicians joined them until it quickly entered into national consciousness and myth" (Nash, 1991: 17).

Despite its fame and dissemination among historians and writers, Turner's "Frontier Thesis" is a very restrictive idea. Throughout his whole master narrative women are absent. In fact, his frontiers were devoid of women. His pioneers are all male: explorers, fur trappers, miners, ranchers, and farmers. He writes: "to study the advance of the frontier and the men who grew up under these conditions is to study the real history of America" (Turner, 2010: 4).

By excluding women from the frontier process, he claims the history of America as a masculine one.

In addition to Turner, Henry Nash Smith was one of the most important historians of the "Myth and Symbol" school who wrote on the Myth of the Frontier. In 1950, he published his pioneering study on that Myth entitled *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. In the latter, he studied the myths and symbols the European colonists developed in the "new found" land after their encounter with the "wilderness." According to him, the Myth of the Frontier had three important mythic visions: The first one was the "Passage to India" (1790-1850), which was an earlier vision of the frontier as the passageway from Europe to Asia. This vision found its way in the writings of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Hart Benton, and Walt Whitman (Smith, 1950: 15-44). The second one was "The Sons of Leatherstocking," a vision which focused on the "wilderness" side of the frontier, represented by the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Charles W. Webber, and Beadle's dime novels (Ibid. 51-112). The third and the last vision was "The garden of the World," which focused on the civilizing side of the border and on the cultivation of frontier lands. This image is best expressed by Frederick Jackson Turner in his Frontier hypothesis (Ibid 250).

Smith's study is very important in American studies in the sense that he analysed the roots of the frontier myth in American imagination and paved the way for the coming historians to redefine the westward movement. However, Smith's work is limited by the fact that he focussed only on the male Myth of the Frontier and ignored women agency. In fact, like Turner, Smith also represents the frontier as the space of the masculine renewal. In his three mythic visions, the frontier hero is always male: the hunter and the farmer. In other words, all his heroes are male such as Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, and Buffalo Bill.

The most important frontier scholars who came after Smith is the cultural historian Richard Slotkin, who devoted three volumes to the Myth of the Frontier. The first volume is

entitled *Regeneration Through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860* (1973). In this study, Slotkin traces the development of the Myth of the Frontier through violence from the first captivity narratives of the Puritans to the hunter myth of James Fenimore Cooper's the *Leatherstocking Tales*. In the second volume, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985), he examines the transformations of that myth at the turn of the century and how this mythology was appropriated and accommodated by different politicians and writers to serve their ideology when they dealt with the clashes between capital and labour, and explain the dominant position of the Anglo-Saxon in the American society. The final volume of the trilogy, *Gunfighter Nation: the Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (*1992) deals with the use of the Myth of the Frontier in the twentieth century to justify the dominant position of the United States as the first world power. In this examination Slotkin links the American number one position to the clash of the Cold War and US Imperialism. For him, this is the last stage of that myth.

In Slotkin's Trilogy, the Frontier is the myth of regeneration of white male America through violence. In other words, it is the conflict between white civilization represented by White males and "savagery" represented by the racial Other, be it Indians or blacks. For him, this myth was used to spread the ideology of domination and expropriation. As examples, he mentions the subjugation and extermination of Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans. However, Slotkin's voluminous trilogy on the Myth of the Frontier marginalizes the role of women.

With the beginning of the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, new studies of the history of the American Frontier process and the marginalization of women started to appear. However, these new studies too were influenced by the masculine master narrative of the Frontier which lauded the traditional cardinals of femininity, or the four

principles of a true woman (piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity) discussed by Barbra Welter in her article entitled "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" (1966).

In an article entitled "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West" (1980), Joan Jensen and Darlis Miller assert that Dee Brown's *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (1958) was one of the first books to attempt an overview and analysis of the roles of women in the American West (Jensen and Miller, 1980: 173). For them, Brown continues the male myth of the frontier when he codifies the assumption that the white male tamed the wilderness in its physical aspects and the women who followed their lords brought with them the domestic ideology of the Victorian east. According to him, the women who moved to the frontier took with them the social and the cultural values associated with the homes they had left behind in the East, since "the Wild West was tamed by its petticoated pioneers" (qtd. in Ibid. 179). In his study, Brown classified all the women who moved to the frontier into four main categories or stereotypes: the gentle tamers, sunbonneted helpmates, hell-raisers and soiled doves.

The first stereotype, the one of "gentle tamers" is best represented by the refined ladies who brought culture and civilization to the American frontier. They are the ones who established the social and the cultural values in the West. The second one, the "sunbonneted helpmates," are the extraordinary wives and mothers who followed their lords where they might lead and enabled their men to succeed. The third one, the "hell-raisers" are cowgirls who acted more like men than women, best represented by Calamity Jane. The fourth stereotype, the "soil doves" are generally associated with sex. They are prostitutes who inhabited saloons, dance halls and hogtowns (Ibid.180-81). Even today these stereotypes are prevalent in male frontier fiction and westerns films.

In *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880* (1979), feminist historian Julie Roy Jeffrey supports Browns contention that frontierswomen embraced the Victorian

domestic ideology in the frontier space even if this ideal is difficult to maintain. According to her, since women were more valued for their traditional qualities, frontierswomen tried to recreate the domestic environment they had left in the East (Jeffrey, 1979: 4). In other words, by clinging to the eastern ideals of domesticity, they confirmed their mission which is the civilizing of the frontier (Ibid. 198).

Another feminist historian who continues in the same vein is Lillian Schlissel. In *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (1982), she focuses on the accounts of men and women during their westward journey. According to her, while men emphasized their adventurous prowess, courage and bravery in facing the Native Americans, women recorded their domestic chores and how they tried to maintain the role of the True Woman they had known in the East. For her, the most important role women assumed in the frontier space is the one of the docile wife who takes care of her husband and children.

In the heat of the early feminist consciousness-raising of the 1970s, the ecofeminist Annette Kolodny published two major works on the relationship between gender and the frontier in American literature: *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984). In *The Lay of the Land*, Kolodny studies male writings on the frontier from the first documents of exploration and propaganda to the twentieth-century writings of Faulkner and Bellow. She argues that the masculine writings on the frontier from the exploration documents of Christopher Columbus to the late twentieth-century male western writings portray the land as a woman. She writes

> From accounts of the earliest explorers onward, then, a uniquely American pastoral vocabulary began to show itself, releasing and emphasizing some facets of the traditional European mode and all but ignoring others. At its core lay a yearning to know and to respond to the landscape as feminine (Kolodny, 1975: 8).

Being in an alien territory, the first colonists represented the land as a nurturing maternal breast, then after the first settlements the figure of the caring mother was transformed into a virgin woman who waits for impregnation (Ibid. 9). By representing the land as a virgin female who waits colonization and domination American male writers enforced their masculine Myth of the Frontier and excluded women from having any agency in the frontier process.

In *The Land Before Her*, Kolodny examines women writings about the frontier from the captivity narratives of Mary Rowlandson to the western writings of E.D.E.N. Southworth and Susanna Cummins. In this study she recovers the woman's voice and puts her within the Myth of the Frontier. For her, the women who moved to the frontier brought with them the Victorian domestic ideology of the East and tried to found new gardens in the "wilderness." In other words, the women who travelled to the American West attempted to reproduce the Victorian rules they were accustomed to in the eastern settlements. She notes that from the "howling wilderness" described by Mary Rowlandson the land was turned into the figure of a "beloved home," a fruitful garden (Kolodny, 1984: 37). One of the women described by Kolodny, Hannah Gilman writes

> We were blest with children, our substance increased – to whatever we turned our hand, we were prospered, and in a few years, we were able to set under our vine and fig tree – and have none to make us afraid (qtd. in Ibid).

According to Kolodny, unlike their male counterparts who saw the frontier landscapes as a liberating space where they can cast off the constricting rules of civilization, the women who ventured in the frontier space looked more for new homes than freedom. In other words, rather than to appropriate the independence and the freedom the frontier space offer they imposed their Victorian domesticity on the western landscape.

In an article, entitled "women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West" (1984), the feminist critic and cultural historian Elizabeth Jameson

questions Barbara Welter's concept of "true womanhood" as the only proper ideal through which women could see themselves in the American frontier. In her analysis, she argues that westering women found many difficulties to stick to the Victorian ideology of domesticity:

> While some of its ideals were expressed by some western women, the roles it prescribed were attainable only by leisure-class urban women. Definitions of Victorian Womanhood arose from the changing realities of an elite who did not perform productive labor and who were valued for their very economic usefulness. The ideal was far from the reality for homesteaders or from working-class women in either mining towns or urban centers (Jameson, 1984: 3).

In addition to gender, both ethnicity and class played a very important role in distancing women from the domestic ideology. Jameson notes that "By virtue of class or ethnicity, most western women were not viewed as ladies by the proponents of True Womanhood" (Ibid. 2). Moreover, in the frontier space the public and the private spheres were permeable. In this respect she writes

> Men could and did cook, do housework ... Women could and did plow, plant, and harvest. And for all western women there were periods when they had full responsibility for managing the family's economic fortunes. Family survival depended on flexibility and interdependence in work roles (Ibid. 3).

Elizabeth Jameson concludes that further studies in women agency in the American West are needed, arguing that "We need to explore further how practical necessity modified genteel expectations and then to look beyond the first generation's frontier experience to the pioneer daughters who appear to have been more receptive to new roles than their mothers were (Ibid. 7).

More recently Susan Armitage suggests that researchers who are interested in the history of women and the American Frontier should see women westering process as a new adventure for remaking the self or redefining the feminine identity outside the ideology of domesticity (Armitage, 2011: 339-440). And this is what this dissertation tries to do. In fact, in my thesis I will explore the actions and reactions of four pioneer daughters who responded

positively to the Frontier space, and how the latter allowed them to transform the Victorian gender roles.

The Issue and Working Theses

Presenting American Frontier women as mere victims of an expansionist myth created to celebrate American virility, as is done in the works of Brown, Jeffrey, Schlissel, and Kolodny is not to render enough justice to both the literary creativity and gender struggle of American Frontier women, be they authors or ordinary people. For, while writing offered American women a discursive space to contest male writings, the frontier provided them with the opportunity to create space, by the means of movement, mobility, and work. Indeed, the production of space is also what gives 'sense and sensibility' to those women, and any study which does not account for this aspect would be partial.

In writing about women as the ones who looked for gardens and domesticity in the West, Kolodny and the other feminist historians did not explore how women authors challenge the male Myth of the Frontier which associated men with independence and freedom and western women with dependence and submissiveness. In their studies, these historians argue that women were more interested in the fantasy of creating a home and a garden than by the opportunities of freedom offered by the frontier space. My thesis, therefore, explores this aspect of women's fantasies, by contrasting female and male attitudes toward different political and social issues that permeated American society such as women's social roles and the freedom offered to them within the frontier space. In this research, I will examine women's subversive relationship with the frontier discourse and how the frontier space allowed them to question the ideology of domesticity and to assume a new role in the American society which is one of agency, self-assertion and mobility.

At the heart of my contribution to the feminist studies of the Frontier, therefore, is the issue of the production of space and social relationships embedded in the dialogized discourse

of many American women writers. Indeed, in studying Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827), Mary Austin's *Lost Borders* (1909), Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913) and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House Series* (1935-1943), this thesis aims to show that thanks to mobility, American women writers of the Frontier produced space and social relationships in their frontier narratives as mobility, or movement is indeed an important device that asserted their female identity and helped them to escape the male attempts to freeze them in pre-defined subject positions related to traditional womanhood.

In *The Production of Space*, Henry Lefebvre contends that those who influence and change the spatial ideologies and social relationships of a given society are the ones who have the power to move themselves (Lefebvre, 1991: 170). Thus the ones who have the power to move from one space to another can influence, resist and transform the dominant ideologies that structure social relationships in societies. Applying this argument to the American Frontier, I contend that it is thanks to movement, or mobility, that American women authors and their characters produce a sense of identity which is different from the one assigned to them by their society.

All the women authors discussed herein use movement to produce a different space, where women characters enjoy their participation in the public sphere as full citizens. All the texts explored in this study depict women on the move within the frontier space to subvert the eastern domestic ideology which otherized them. Furthermore, I argue that these women writers use the Frontier Myth as "a representational space," to borrow another concept from Lefebvre, in order to respond, resist and transform the spatial ideologies of the American society. In other words, they resort to that grand narrative of American identity and Manifest Destiny in order to show their resistance and participate in the debate over the place of women in the American society. To show their discord with the dominant frontier ideology

which represents the woman as silent, dainty, and submissive, they promote a contrasting image, that of a courageous, independent woman who enjoys the outdoor space.

Furthermore, this thesis purports to focus on the fiction written by women authors to show how the frontier space empowered the female characters in their narrative and led them to resist strictures of convention and conformity commonly imposed upon them. In other words, I will try to show how the frontier space led them to free themselves from the stereotype of the "angel in the house" and to conquer the public space or the outside space. In so doing, I hope to bring further evidence on how these female Frontier fiction resist and subvert the male master narrative of the Frontier developed by writers and leaders, such as James Fenimore Cooper, Frederick Jackson Turner, Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, Zane Grey and O.E. Rolvaag, by exposing feminine spatiality and women struggle to assume their full citizenship.

Thesis Outline

To reach my aim and investigate the ways in which these American female writers produced space and social relationships, subverted the male frontier narrative and challenged the status quo which constricted women's mobility, I engage the Frontier myth from a conjunction of perspectives, borrowed from spatial, dialogic and feminist theories. This thesis consists of five chapters including a general introduction and a general conclusion. The first chapter is entitled Historical Background and Theoretical Framework. The second chapter deals with Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* as a reply to James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* Tales. In the latter, I argue that the two writers engaged the frontier tradition to disseminate their ideologies concerning the place of women in the American society. While Cooper resorted to the frontier space to silence the woman question of post revolutionary America and support the ideology of domesticity, Sedgwick's work reveals her challenge to Cooper by inaugurating the project of a different space where women enjoy the outdoor space

and disavow their private roles. The third chapter is concerned with Mary Austin's *Lost Borders* as an answer to Frederick Jackson Turner's and Theodore Roosevelt's Frontier Theses. Chapter four is devoted to Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* as a direct response to Owen Wister's *The Virginian* and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*. In it, I examine the dialogue between the three writers on the issue of the New Woman. While Wister and Grey use the frontier space to tame the New Woman and affirm the masculine domination, Cather's response opposes the domestic roles assigned to women in the two male authors' respective narratives. Cather's heroine Alexandra Bergson is a New Woman who enjoys the open space of the frontier and assumes her full citizenship. Chapter five deals with Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* Series as a response to O. E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. Finally, the general conclusion will consist of a succinct synthesis of the ideas developed all through this thesis.

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Chapter One

Historical Background and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter aims to trace the development of the Myth of the Frontier from the Puritans to Frederick Jackson Turner. It purports to present and analyze the metaphors associated with the myth from the foundation of Puritan New England to Turner's Frontier Thesis and to show how women were excluded from the frontier process. Throughout history, Americans resorted to that myth to try to solve their crises and express their own ideologies. From the sermons of William Bradford and John Winthrop, the agrarian dream of Thomas Jefferson to Turner's ideology, the Myth of the Frontier served three important purposes in the developing American nation: as an explanation of America's difference from England, and thus the necessity for separation (cultural as well as political) from that country; as justification for the subjugation of the Native American population and the domination of women; and as justification for the imperial ventures of the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

When we refer to the Myth of the Frontier, this means more than a shifting line drawn between settled and unsettled areas; it also contains a set of images of endless opportunities of exploration and growth which influenced American identity from the seventeenth century to the modern time. Describing the formation of myths, Richard Slotkin writes

> Myths are stories, drawn from history, that have acquired through usage over many generations a symbolizing function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produces them. Historical experience is preserved in the form of narrative; and through periodic retellings those narratives become traditionalized. These formal qualities and structures are increasingly conventionalized and abstracted, until they are reduced to a set of powerfully evocative and resonant "icons" – like the landing of the Pilgrims, the rally of the Minutemen at Lexington, the Alamo, the Last Stand, Pearl Harbor, in which history becomes a cliché. In the end myths become part of the

> language, as a deeply encoded set of metaphors that may contain all of the essential elements the American world view (Slotkin, 1985: 16).

From this passage, we understand that the Myth of the Frontier is that set of images, stories and legends taken from the American pioneers experience during the Westward Expansion in the American continent. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to point them out and explain them before moving to the discussion of the fiction under study.

I-The Frontier in American History: From a Religious Discourse of Wilderness to a Male Discourse of Domination

The Myth of the Frontier encompasses all the ideas the first "explorers" used to explain their ventures in the Eastern border of the North American English colonies. When the first English, Dutch and French pioneers immigrated to the New World their accounts of the American West were a constellation of contrasting representations that imagined the place as an edenic garden and hauntingly as dark, mysterious afterworld (Slotkin, 1973: 26-37). The first propagandist and promotional literature about the New Land started to appear in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To encourage migration to the American continent, this literature emphasized the edenic qualities of the land by portraying it as the Garden of Eden. This vision is best represented by the propagandist tracts of Captain Arthur Barlowe and Captain John Smith. In a report written after a voyage to Virginia in 1584, Barlow described the New-Found Land as

> So full of grapes, as the very beating and surge of the sea overflowed them, of which we found such plentie, as well there as in all places else, both on the sand and the greene soile of the hills … that I thinke in all the world the like abundance is not to be found: and my selfe having seen those parts of Europe that most abound, find such difference as were incredible to be written (qtd. in Marx, 2000: 37).

To strengthen their colonizing enterprise, Captain John Smith followed in the same vein with his "A Description of New England". To emphasize America's plenty he wrote:

> He is a very bad fisher who cannot kill in one day with his hook and line, one, two, or three hundred cods … if a man work but three days in seven, he may get more than he can spend … for hunting also: the woods, lakes, and rivers, afford not only chase sufficient, for any that delights in that kind of toil, or pleasure; but such beasts to hunt, that besides the delicacy of their bodies for food, their skins are so rich, as may well recompence thy daily labor, with a captain's pay (qtd. in Baym, 2003: 55-56).

And to stress America as the land of promise, he added: "heer in New England nature and liberty affords us that freely, which in England we want, or it costeth us deerly" (Ibid. 55).

Rather than to continue this promotional literature, the Pilgrims and the Puritans did not regard themselves as moving to a New World garden. Instead, they portrayed themselves on a venture from a corrupt Old World into a wilderness. In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford reported that the New-Found Land was

> A hidious and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? And what maltituds ther might be of them they knew not. Nether could they, as it were, goe up to the tope of Pisgah, to vew from this wilderness a more goodly countrie to feed their hops; for which way soever they turnd their eys (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respecte of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a wetherbeaten face; and the whole countrie, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage heiw. If they looked behind them, ther was the mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a maine barr and goulfe to separate them from all the civil parts of the world (Bradford, 2008: 95-96).

With the promise of God and their hard work, they will transform this haunting wilderness into a flourishing civilization. This passage from cotton Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World* illustrates best the Puritan vision. He wrote

> The first planters of these colonies were a chosen generation of men […] and yet withal so peaceable that they Embraced a Voluntarily Exile in a Squalid Horrid American Desert, rather than to live in contentions with their brethren […] The New Englanders are a people of God […] accomplishing the Promise of Old made unto our

> blessed Jesus […] The Wilderness thro which we are passing to the Promised Land is all over filled with fiery flying serpents (Mather, x-xi).

In the Puritan vision and their description of their frontier experience we find many parallels between their own venture and biblical precedents. The most striking parallel is the way they link their sojourn in the wilderness to the Israelites' escape from Egypt about 1225 B.C., and their forty-year adventure in the Sinai desert. This story and other biblical references to the wilderness such as John the Baptist's mission in the wilderness and Jesus Christ's forty-day temptation in the wilderness, helped to develop a general Judeo-Christian image of the wilderness not only as a realm of chaos but also as a place of refuge and ultimately of revelation (Williams, 1987: 25-26).

Thus, the seventeenth-century religious interpretation of the wilderness space as the source of regeneration and renewal put an end to the vision of the Frontier/wilderness as the place of danger and deprivation. Indeed, the frontier experience which was set against the corruption of the Old Wold society provided a source for personal renewal and communal growth. For the Puritans their survival in the wilderness and their subjugation of the Native inhabitants who were considered as "wild" as the wilderness environment, was a necessary step towards building the city upon a hill, and thus revealing the sign of God's promise.

From the seventeenth century to the present day, the conception of the frontier space as a regenerative place continues to attract the American imagination. In the eighteenth century the Wilderness Myth was transformed into the Agrarian Myth or what Henry Nash Smith calls the "Garden of the World" (Smith, 1950: 123). From the late eighteenth century onward America was seen as a land of vast empty territories of fertile land waiting farmers to cultivate them. This will lead to small independent farmers with equal social status and a very close connection to the land. Though the frontier was not viewed as a haunting wilderness, many American pioneers understood that they should work hard and persevere to transform

the frontier into the ideal garden. Moreover, they should also drive away The Native Americans from the land because the latter did not "improve the land."

This process of tilling the land is very beneficial for the American farmer because having a piece of land to work for himself will strengthen his independence, industriousness and dignity. Moreover, this agrarian process is very beneficial for the whole American nation because it is a safety-valve for all the people who are oppressed in the East. Furthermore, it regenerates American society and it keeps it free from many social ills such as labour unrest, land monopolies, class divisions, and overcrowding cities. So the availability of land for cultivation is linked to the uniqueness of American identity and its exceptionalism.

Among the most important spokesmen of this Agrarian Myth are Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur and Thomas Jefferson. In the third letter entitled "What is an American" from his *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur articulates best American exceptionalism when he states

> Here are no aristocratic families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one; no great manufactures employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury [...] We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory, communicating with each other by means of good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable. We are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself [...] We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve, and bleed; we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be (Crèvecoeur, 1981: 64).

From this passage, we understand that for Crèvecoeur the open frontier space is the source of American exceptionalism. In other words, it is the one which fashions American identity by strengthening the exceptional qualities of independence and individualism.

The other emblematic figure who linked the greatness of America to the agrarian ideal is Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson believed that the democratic spirit will continue to flourish in

the United States as the small farmer continues to cultivate his piece of land. In 1797, he wrote

> While we have land to labor then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a workbench, or twirling a distaff [...] For the mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigor. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the hearts of its laws and constitution (Jefferson, 2010: 157).

For Jefferson and many of his contemporaries who espoused the agrarian ideal, America's exceptionalism is the direct result of the vast open space of the frontier and the work of the independent, prosperous farmer.

In the nineteenth century, this agrarian myth was transformed into Manifest Destiny. In other words, the vision of the American frontier as empty land to be cultivated by the independent husbandman for his benefit and the wealth of the nation remained the cornerstone of American expansionist ideology understood as Manifest Destiny. This phrase was first coined by John Luis O'Sullivan in 1845 when he wrote: "Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (qtd. in Horsman, 1981: 21).

Though O'Sullivan was the one who coined the phrase, it was William Gilpin who popularized it within the American people. In 1860, he expressed his excitement over the opportunities opening up for America in developing the frontier. He wrote

> The untransacted destiny of the American people is to subdue the continent – to rush over this vast field to the Pacific Ocean – to animate the many hundred millions of its people, and to cheer them upward – to set the principle of self-government at work – to agitate these Herculean masses – to establish a new order in human affairs [...] to regenerate superannuated nations – to change the darkness into light – to stir up the sleep of a hundred centuries – to teach old nations a new civilization [...] to dissolve the spell of tyranny and exalt charity – to absolve the curse that weighs down humanity, and to shed blessings round the world (Gilpin, 1874: 130).

From this passage, we understand that the frontier symbolizes hope and freedom for the American people. Moreover, it is also a way to escape from the social, economic, and political ills of other countries. Furthermore, it provides also the American people an open space for regeneration or renewal to build the perfect society on a hill.

At the turn of the century which witnessed the shift of the United States from a rural to an urban industrialized society, the notion of the frontier as the place of regeneration or renewal of the American man found its spokesperson in the name of the historian Frederick Jackson Turner. To cement the place of the frontier in the official historical discourse, and emphasize the uniqueness of the American qualities and their destiny to spread their system around the world, he wrote his Frontier Thesis. On July 12th, 1893, Turner delivered his major essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" to the American Historical Association Conference held in Chicago in conjunction with the World's Columbian exposition. To stress the importance of the frontier in enhancing American development and shaping the American character, He started his paper by writing the following:

> Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development (Turner, 2010: 1).

This passage demonstrates that with Turner, the concept of the frontier has a new meaning. It is not just a line of demarcation or borderland which separates two areas or countries as it is referred to by the census report of 1890 that reduced the frontier to its geographical side (Ibid). Turner expanded the meaning of the term when he viewed the expansion of the frontier westward as the foundational factor in the development of the American character and the evolution of the American institutions.

In his new vision, Turner reminds the American audience that the frontier space is the crucible where the American national character is fashioned and transformed. In other words, any American process of self definition, should take the frontier factor as its basis because the latter had been with them from the foundation of the first colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. As the frontiersman kept moving from the eastern settlements towards the western lands and his touch with the simplicity of primitive society, he created a collection of habits, activities and laws that became the defining features of the American national character. In other terms, it was in these geographical displacements that the frontiersman got rid of his position as a colonial subject and affirmed his belonging to the new American nation. For Turner, the frontier Americanized the pioneer and freed him from dependence upon Europe. The frontier transformed his old ways into new American ways. In this respect he claims:

> The frontier is the line of most effective and rapid Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel and thought. Little by little he transforms the wilderness. But the outcome is not old Europe ....The fact is that there is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a real sense. Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American (Ibid. 3-4).

In addition to the composite American nationality that is fashioned and moulded by the frontier space, the latter also influenced the political institutions of the American nation, Turner contends. For example, the frontier predisposed the pioneers to embrace social democracy. In the words of Turner from the frontier space came

> The democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bounds (Ibid. 32).

By linking American democracy with the westward advancement, Turner undermines the germ theory which emphasized only the European roots of American development and political institutions. In other words, in writing about the close connection between the

community building of the American West and social democracy, Turner undermines the preceding contention about the influence of the covenant theology of seventeenth-century Puritanism, and the social contract philosophy of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment on American institutions.

Turner's theory did not merely reshape American identity according to the nation's past history; it also supplied the symbolic means to preserve American identity in the future, at the same time justify American imperialist expansion. If the continual westward movement had signified the birth of that well-defined identity, then the only way to save the American spirit was to continue expansion to the west. And once all North America had been conquered, only by going overseas could expansion continue and America's Manifest Destiny be fulfilled. Turner contends

> I am placed in a new society which is just beginning to realize that it has made a place for itself by mastering the wilderness and peopling the prairie, and is now ready to take its great course in universal history. It is something of a compensation to be among the advance guard of new social ideas and among a people whose destiny is all unknown. The west looks to the future, the east toward the past (qtd. In Bogue, 1998: 35).

As American history from the end of the nineteenth-century until the present day shows, American expansion towards what became merely imaginary West has never ceased.

II-Stereotypes of Women in the Male Frontier Myth

In order to analyse the woman's resistance, revision and challenge to the major assumptions of the male mythologies of the Frontier, we should first discuss the latter and show how the Westward Movement Frontier was mythologized as a male space where men could prove their manhood and women were assigned to the domestic space where they should take care of their husbands and nurture their children. Furthermore, in order to understand the debate and dialogue between female and male writers about who has the right

to claim the public space of the frontier we should first discuss the different ideologies and stereotypes associated with westering women. Indeed, once the gender lines were fixed and the spheres of influence were separated between masculine and feminine frontier experiences things became easy for male writers and historians to ignore the woman experience and to focus only on the heroic deeds of the frontiersman. All this was done in purpose to support the ideology of domesticity which restricted the movement of women in the public space.

Frederick Jackson Turner, the father of the historiography of the Frontier, was one of the first historians who ignored the presence and participation of women in the frontier process. In his landmark essay entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," also known as "the frontier hypothesis," he argues that:

> At the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows Indian trails. Little by little, he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germs, anymore than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is that here is a new product that is American (Turner, 2010: 4).

In his essay, Turner explains that the frontier experience was a very important factor that contributed to creating a composite American identity. In his view, all the settlers from different backgrounds who moved westward in waves to tame the wilderness were Americanized in the frontier. Inspite of the presence of women among these settlers who moved to the frontier following the American dream, Turner simply ignored them.

What Turner expressed in his Frontier Thesis was just a continuation of a tradition that started with the first explorers of the New World. In her book, entitled *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975), the American scholar Annette Kolodny writes that the movement to the American frontier was a projection of a male fantasy that began during the fifteenth century with Christopher Columbus's first

voyage to the New World searching for an earthly paradise. The image that was projected on the New World by Columbus and the first explorers was that of a virgin, wild woman "with all her virgin beauties", "a delicate garden" and "a country that hath her maydenhead" (Kolodny, 1975: 4-11).

The starting of such symbolizations is to be found in the documents of exploration and the earliest American writings. In their propaganda tracts to invite migration to the New World, the first explorers and settlers were using a sexually suggestive language to describe the land. For example, in his "*Nova Britannia*" (1609), Robert Johnson commented on Virginia's "Valleyes and plaines streaming with sweet springs, like veynes in a natural body"; another explorer, Captain John Smith, in 1616, praised the rough New England coast as a virginal garden when he refers to "her treasures hauing yet neuer beene opened, nor her originalls wasted, consumed, nor abused"; Thomas Morton, in 1632, complained about the colonists who had rudely abandoned New England, leaving her "like a faire virgin, longing to be sped,/And meet her lover in a nuptiall bed"; and John Hammond, in 1656, in the role of a lover who was recalling the delight he found in the two mistresses "*Leah and Rachel; or, The Two Fruitful sisters Virginia and Mary-land*", about whom he says "having for 19 years served Virginia the elder sister, I casting my eye on Mary-land the younger, grew in armoured on her beauty (qtd. in Ibid. 11-13). Kolodny argues that such verbal images are "a bold exercise of masculine power over the feminine (Ibid. 22). In other words, the representation of the land/frontier as female is a reflection of the ways in which western women themselves were stereotyped.

To exclude women from the public space, the male Myth of the American Frontier appropriated the themes and structure of the traditional narratives of discovery and settlement which were based on the heroics of the American Adam. The latter was transformed into the cowboy or the "solitary, Indian-like hunter of the deep woods" who embodies the traits of

courage, individualism, violence, challenge, and aggression. So unlike the frontiersman who conquered and subdued the land by his competence and bravery, the woman was confined in her proper place either in the log cabin or the sod house. In the words of Annette Kolodny in the garden of the American Adam, Eve is redundant (Kolodny, 1984 5).

One of the dominant Victorian spatial ideologies which restricted women's movement was the Cult of True Womanhood. In her article entitled "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800-1860" (1966), historian Barbara Welter defines the ideology of domesticity by writing the following

> The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power (Welter, 1966: 152).

This ideology of the hostage of the home which essentialized and idealized white middle class femininity was mainly promoted through nineteenth century women's magazines, gift annuals, and religious literature, that circulated the idea that "In a society where values changed frequently, where social and economic mobility provided instability as well as hope, one thing at least remained the same – a true woman was a true woman, wherever she was found (Ibid). This ideology became the norm that defined the role and the place of women in the American society.

The emergence of the ideology of domesticity was mainly the result of the changing economic role of women in the family. In the early years of the first settlements in the New World women worked hand in hand with men to sustain the growing colonies. The shortage of labourers and the scarcity of women pushed the male heads of the families to ask for their

help to create their little commonwealth. In his History *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford described this cooperative community or microcosm of society when he writes

> And for mens wives to be commanded to doe service for other men, as dressing their mate, washing their cloaths, etc., they deemed it a kind of slaverie, neither could many husbands well brooke it. Upon the poynte all being to have alike, and all do alike they thought them selves in the like condition, and one as good as another (Bradford, 2008: 146).

As Bradford suggests, although women were not pleased with the different tasks their husbands assigned them, for the purpose of survival and the growth of the infant colonies they joined their husbands the other men and women in the workplace. In the words of Bradford their aim was "bringing in communitie into a common wealth" which "would make them happy and flourishing" (Ibid. 147). Before the industrialization of the United States, the major needs of the family were produced within the family which was considered as a unit of production. All the members of the family worked together for the benefit of the household. As women's productive contributions were vital to the survival of colonial household, their role in this commonwealth was both recognized and valued.

But with the industrialization and the urbanization of the frontier society the role of women started to change. Simply put, with the shift of production and exchange from the household to a more developed capitalist factories women's work was devalued and perceived as less essential to family survival. In her book *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1800-1840*, Julie Roy Jeffrey argues that "although the women often toiled long and hard in the home, middle class women no longer performed tasks that were economically central to their families; they rarely produced vital goods or earned much money" (Jeffrey, 1979: 5). So in spite of their hard work, devotion and participation in the foundation and survival of the first settlements women were assigned the position of the second class citizen.

While women continued working in their homes or private spaces, men embraced market production. As the household became less and less a centre of production this led to the women's loss of connectedness to public and economic life. So with the devaluation of women's work a sharper division of labour between husband and wife was created. In other words, as men's crops and livestock were exchanged for cash while women's clothes and food goods remained in the household or were directly bartered for other goods men's and women's spheres became more and more separate. Alexis de Tocqueville who visited America in 1830-1831 was very struck by the situation when he wrote

> The Americans have applied to the sexes the great principle of political economy which governs the manufactures of our age, by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman in order that the great work of society may be the better carried on ... In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace with the other, but in two pathways that are always different. American women never manage the outward concerns of the family or conduct a business or take a part in political life (Tocqueville, 1991: 278).

Being confined to domestic life women found themselves the custodians and guardians of morality and virtue. As Republican Mothers on whom the task of educating the emerging American nation women found a new meaning for their lives. In other words, by embracing the ideology of domesticity women found a place in society and a role of their own. In the words of Linda Kerber the colonial role of mistress of the household gave way to that of mother of republican citizens

> The best they could do was to assert that properly educated republican women would stay in their homes and, from that vintage point, shape the character of their sons and husbands in the direction of benevolence (Kerber, 1980: 231).

Theses virtues and the resultant ideals of the cult of domesticity, rather than reflecting the reality of women's experience, served to add a new dimension to the myth of the American garden.

The wide circulation of domestic literature which ranges from Sermons, manuals like *The young Lady's Friend*, popular magazines like *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Hearth and Home*, and domestic fiction like *Girlhood and Womanhood: Or Sketches of My Schoolmates* and *The Lady's Amaranth* reinforced the position of the home or the private space as the only proper place for women. For example, in 1853 Sarah Josepha Hale one of the fervent supporters of this ideology and the editor of the *Godey's Lady's Book*, claimed that "Home is woman's world; the training of the young her profession; the happiness of the household her riches; the improvement of morals her glory" (qtd. in Matthews, 1992: 55). Furthermore, the advocates of this doctrine argued that women should adopt passive or feminine ideals in order to balance the aggressive male characteristics of industrial growth and political prowess. For instance, in 1836 the Journal *North American Review* advised women to "leave the rude commerce of camps and the soul-hardening struggling of political power to the harsher spirit of men, and instead to take up the domain of moral affections [and] the empire of the heart" (qtd. in Kerber, 1997: 167). Thus, as the defenders of home and hearth and the protectors of the traditional values they should not interfere within the public space as the latter is the sole preserve of men.

The ideology of the Cult of True Womanhood promoted the masculine dominance over women. The latter were respected and have authority but only if they remained in the domestic sphere under the ultimate control of her husband, father, and society. Under this ideology Welter argues that women became hostages to values that men in a burgeoning materialistic society had neglected – that appointing women to the role of guardian of moral virtue alleviated men's guilt for their own disregard of virtue in the pursuit of national and personal growth and change (Welter, 1966: 152).

Within the private role established for women by nineteenth century morality and reflected in the popular literature of the time, women were confined to a carefully defined

women's place. Their sphere of influence was a private one, limited to home and family. Women's contributions lay not in their role as workers, but rather in their role as the repository of virtue and the moral guardians of the family: "the proponents of domesticity insisted that women had the responsibility of maintaining values and ensuring social stability in a time of rapid change; women were ultimately responsible for the national welfare" (Jeffrey, 1979: 6). They were expected to be perfect wives and perfect mothers to remain both domestic and demure, "modest, submissive, educated in the genteel and domestic arts, supportive of [their] husbands' efforts, uncomplaining…an example to all" (Myers, 1982: 6). This was the normative behavior towards which a woman was to strive, her sacred duty, her destiny.

The ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood played a vital role in the creation of stereotypes about the role and place of women in the American society. They were also the source for the major stereotypes that we find in male frontier literature, history and arts. In spite of the participation of women in the foundation and the consolidation of the first settlements in the frontier, they are nonetheless typically described by romanticized and inaccurate stereotypes which tend to obscure their real lives and real character and which paint one-dimensional portraits. Indeed, the exclusion of the female or her relegation to the subaltern positions is fashion in male frontier literature from the biographies of Daniel Boone, the *Leatherstocking tales* of James Fenimore Cooper to the modern frontier novels of Owen Wister, Zane Grey and O. E Rolvaag. In other words, masculine frontier literature assigned freedom, independence and adventure to male characters while female characters were silenced and denied such roles. The women who appear in male frontier literature or in "Hisland" to borrow Susan Armitage's word are strictly stereotyped. The three basic stereotypes of frontier women are: the refined lady, the helpmate, and the bad woman (Stoeltje, 1975: 27).

The “refined lady” is the sensitive and emotional woman who is taken unwillingly by her husband to the American frontier. She is too genteel to adapt to the rough conditions of the American wilderness. In *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915*, Sandra Myres describes these ladies as the oppressed drudges: “overworked and over birthed, [they] live through a long succession of dreary days of toil and loneliness until, at last, driven to or past the edge of sanity, they resign themselves to a hard life and an early death” (Myres, 1982: 1). Unable to adapt their refined ways to the new harsh environment, they suffered unhappiness and insanity. The only way the refined lady can prove or maintain her gentility is to become a victim of the wilderness.

Besides the image of the helpless refined lady stands the stereotype of the “sturdy helpmate.” She is the gentle tamer or the civilizer of the frontier. Like her sister, she did not choose to go West but once the decision was made by her husband she followed,

> grim-faced and determined. She exchanged her fancy dress for gingham and linsey-Woolsey, her face wreathed in sunbonnet, baby at breast, rifle at the ready, bravely awaited unknown danger, and dedicated herself to removing wilderness from both man and land and restoring civilization as rapidly as possible. She was a woman of some culture and refinement, “domestic, submissive but sturdy, moral,” the guardian of all that was fine and decent (Ibid. 2).

The sturdy helpmate represented the “Madonnas of the prairies,” the brave “pioneer mothers,” and the “gentle tamers.” As the words “Madonna,” “mother,” and “tamer” suggest, the aim of these women was to restore the Victorian domestic ideology in the frontier. In other words, the primary feature which defines these women is the ability to fulfil their domestic duties which enabled their men to succeed. Although they succeeded in coping with the hardships and the demands of frontier life they still need the protection of their husbands.

The third stereotype which is associated with frontier women is the image of the bad woman. The latter has two sides. One is the backwoods belle who lives outside the

conventions of society. She is mainly represented by the stereotypical image of the female bandit "Calamity Jane," who is more masculine than feminine, a woman who could smoke, swear and shoot with a pistol:

> Like the Prairie Rose described by the nineteenth century army officer and explorer Randolph Marcy, she was occasionally shocking in her speech and manners, and just as wild, untamed, and free from tyrannical conventionalities of society as the mustangs that roamed over the adjacent prairie (Ibid. 4).

The second face is represented by the soiled dove or the whore with the heart of pure gold. She is associated with saloons, dance halls, alcohol, and rowdy living. These bad women represented the antithesis of the True Woman, as they violated the precepts of the Cult of True Womanhood. As they reside beyond acceptable society, they are an example of what a pure woman should not be.

One of the first women to be stereotyped in male frontier literature was Rebecca Bonne. According to Boone historian John Filson she was, "the first white woman to stand beside the Kentucky River" (qtd. in Slotkin, 1973: 286). In his *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone*, Filson describes Rebecca as "an amiable spouse" leaving her nearly nameless (qtd. in Ibid: 301). Commenting on John Filson's account, Richard Slotkin argues that the textual Rebecca was "subject to the conventional weaknesses of the conventional sentimental heroine, suffering deprivation and heartbreak without acquiring a personality of her own" (Ibid.).

This stereotype of the passive and silent frontier woman continued with James Fenimore Cooper. The theme of the frontier space as unsuitable for the sensibilities of women was the major point of his *Leatherstocking tales*. The hero of cooper's novels is the adventurous frontiersman who goes by several names – Natty Bumppo, Hawkeye, Deerslayer, or Leather-stocking. However, his female characters are not protagonists; they are weak and they lack control over their lives. His novels portray a society in which gender, race and class

must remain fixed if order is to prevail in American society. And in case a woman ventures in the frontier space and shows capacities of defying the patriarchal strictures she will be killed like what happens with Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In his frontier novels Cooper established a patriarchal hierarchy in which males are empowered by their freedom, independence and adventure whereas women are relegated to their "proper sphere" which is the private or the domestic.

During the period of the great migration to the American frontier (1850-1890), the stereotype of the bad woman was the most circulated image of frontier women in dime novels. It is mainly represented by female characters like *Hurricane Nell. Queen of the Saddle and Lasso (1877)*, or *Zilla Fitz-James: The Female Bandit of the Southwest* (1877). These female protagonists were aggressive, masculine, and self-sufficient. However, as they violated the traditions of the Cult of True Womanhood by living in the margins of the civilized society they represented all the bad qualities a True Woman must avoid. In contrast, other novels displayed a strong bias towards the pioneer mother image which pictured pioneer women as perfect ladies who nonetheless were capable of defending home and family and holding down the homestead until their husbands returned, while bringing enlightenment to the Indians and other uncivilized inhabitants of the frontier (Myres, 1982: 8).

The stereotyping of women continued in twentieth-century male frontier literature. Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), and Zane Grey's *Rider's of the purple Sage* (1912) which are among the most popular and well-known frontier novels of the twentieth century still perpetuate the Myth of the Frontier as a male space where women should be under the authority and control of men. In other words, in both novels power is defined through male control of land, cattle, women and the other races. There are women in these novels, but the frontier of *The Virginian* and *Riders* is also a highly gendered space. In other words, everything is structured around the nineteenth-century ideology of the separate spheres where

men are assigned the public or the outside space and women are kept in the private or the domestic space.

The lives of the genteel ladies who possessed high sensibilities and emotions were also romanticized in other frontier narratives such as Dorothy Scarborough's *The Wind* (1925), O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie* (1927) and Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973). In these stories the heroines could not adjust to the harsh environment of the American frontier, as a result either they committed suicide or became crazy. In *Between Sun and Sod* (1984), Willy Newberry Lewis claims these women are "dashed and buffeted by the winds of western life until their frail bodies broke" (qtd in. Myres, 1982: 1). These images of the frontierswomen who are frightened by the wind, the vast space, and the emptiness of the prairies reinforce the stereotype of the helpless woman on the frontier.

Stereotyping women was also one of the most important themes of western or cowboy art. In an article entitled "The Way We Weren't: Images of Men and Women in Cowboy Art" (1984), Corlann Gee Bush argues that western, or "cowboy art" which tells a story based upon the frontier myth and set against a natural backdrop is both narrative and representational (Bush, 1984: 73). For her, the combination of realistic detail and artistic techniques in cowboy art serve only to reinforce the overall myth of the West as the men's sphere. However, as Bush suggests the stories that many of the paintings present are false and stereotypes:

> The cowboy artists do not paint the real West. They paint, instead, the romantic West; the West of myth and legend; the West the culture wants it to have been. The function of cowboy art, therefore, has been to paint stories that freeze the frontier myth in the cultural subconscious (Ibid.).

By perpetuating the myth of the frontier in their art, cowboy artists simply reinforce the stereotypes of women and support the ideology of domesticity.

The ideology of separate spheres is the focus of cowboy art. In the majority of the portraits, the frontier experience frees men from their domestic roles and from the constraints of civilized society. Men are excited to venture in the frontier space and their story is depicted as that of action, adventure, and violence. On the other hand, painting upon painting pictures the pioneer woman, genteel and passive, seated in a wagon, cradling her baby (the standard metaphor for American civilization and the next generation), being led across the plains (Ibid).

The story of women who are portrayed in cowboy art is not an epic of adventure and heroism as it is the case for men. When men are depicted in cowboy art, the emphasis is upon bravery, confrontation, and violence. In contrast, the frontier experience of women is reduced to an allegory, a tale of passivity, dependence, gentility and victimization. In other words, the emphasis is upon the woman as the symbol of civilization and True Womanhood. Either fallen or chaste, victim or Madonna, she is a stranger, perhaps even an intruder, in Hisland. The artistic techniques clearly shape and reinforce these myths. Men in cowboy art have direct eye contact with someone or something either within the painting or implied by it. Women stare beyond the picture frame at nothing; they become objects for viewing, not actors seeing something specific. John Berger reduces this dichotomy to an aphorism: “men act and women appear” (Ibid. 77).

In addition, men are usually portrayed holding guns or other weapons. This serves to underscore the themes of violence and danger in their stories. Women are rarely shown using weapons. When women do hold guns they are either much larger than the women or they are clearly frightened by them. Hence western women must be defenceless and dependent. And to reinforce that image, the figures in paintings of women are shown holding small children. This furthers the allegorical image of woman as a nurturing or civilizing force. In contrast, men will appear arrayed all over the canvas in order to emphasize the isolation and

individuality of the frontier. Regardless of how many figures are in the scene, each man is separate and apart. For them the West is an epic adventure and each man is involved in an individual battle (Ibid).

Stereotyping women is the most prevalent feature of male frontier history and literature, and art of both the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The three (male frontier history, literature, and art) support the image of the frontier space as Hisland (Armitage, 1987: 3). In the latter men are given voice, action, authority, adventure, freedom and independence whereas women are kept voiceless, submissive and dependent. These stereotypes of women in the frontier space which are created by men serve the perpetuation of the ideology of separate spheres in which men are assigned the public/outdoor space and women are relegated to the domestic/indoor space.

III-Theoretical Framework

To investigate the ways in which these American female writers produced space and social relationships, subverted the male frontier narrative and challenged the status quo which constricted women's mobility, I engage perspectives from spatial, dialogic and feminist theories. For feminists, the study of space is very important because they argue that women's actions and behavior are spatially controlled by the different patriarchal structures. For them, the latter restrict women's movement and experiences. In her book entitled *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), Doreen Massey contends that the division of space into public and private spheres is one of the forces which supports male dominance over women and confine the latter to certain gender roles. She writes

> The limitation of women's mobility, in terms of both identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover, the two things – the limitation of mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related (Massey, 1994: 179).

The same idea is developed by Daphne Spain in *Gendered Spaces* (1992). Recognizing the hierarchical division of space into public and private spheres as the cause of women's limited mobility and their dependence on men, Spain contends that to be independent and enjoy a life of full citizenship, women must have access to the public sphere. She writes

> Spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with lesser power. By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced. Thus spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women. For women to become more knowledgeable, they must also change places (Spain, 1992: 15-16).

In the similar vein, in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (1989), the British feminist Carol Pateman links the foundation of feminism to the spatial policies of different societies. She argues that: "the dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist struggle; it is ultimately, what the feminist movement is about" (Pateman, 1989: 118).

In "Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspectives," Linda Mc Dowell suggests, "for theorists interested in questions about individual and social identity, whether working in the humanities or the social sciences, geographic questions, questions of location and dislocation, of position, of spatiality, and connections are central" (Mc Dowell, 1997: 30). Besides, in his preface to Bertrand Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011), Robert T. Tally Jr. asserts that "in recent years, space – along with such related concepts or practices as spatiality, mapping, topography, deterritorialization, and so forth – has become a key term for literary and cultural studies (qtd. in Westphal, 2011: ix). As the Frontier is a spatial concept par excellence, in my thesis, I will make mine Henry Lefebvre's and Yi-Fu Tuan's spatial theories. I have decided to make an appeal to these theories because they offer me the

opportunity to discuss the different ideologies that construct social relationships within the Frontier Myth. In fact, most spatial theorists among them the ones mentioned above argue that the most suitable way to examine social relationships is through the study of social space and the ideology behind its production.

In his book which is entitled *The Production of space*, Henri Lefebvre, a French philosopher and spatial theorist, argues that all space is social space. He adds that the latter is formed by the interconnection of the physical, the ideological, and the relational elements. Furthermore, he asserts that all social space is produced space. He writes

> Social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production). And these forces, as they develop, are not taking over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology, or some other comparable consideration … A social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct causal fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations. Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information (Lefebvre, 1991: 77).

As an economic, social and cultural process, this production is particularly affected by the development of capitalism. Furthermore, as something which is produced by society, every time the latter changes space also changes.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre conceptualizes social space in a dialectical triad that consists of “spatial practice” (the perceived), “representations of space” (the conceived), and “representational spaces” (the lived). Spatial practice is the everyday space produced by the relationships between the material organization of society and its use; representations of space is space as imagined, represented, and produced by scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers; and representational space is space as it is

experienced and depicted by inhabitants, users, and artists in representations which expose the dominant social configurations of space as products of power (Ibid. 38-39). In his book entitled *In/Different Spaces* (1997), Victor Burgin demystifies these three components when he writes:

> Spatial practice … is the material expression of social relations in space: a marketplace, a bedroom, a lecture theater, a ghetto. Representations of space are the conceptual abstractions that may inform the actual configuration of spatial practices, for example, Cartesian geometry, linear perspective, le corbusier's "modular" or the Quattrocento painter's braccio. Representational space is space as appropriated by the imagination; Lefebvre writes that it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects and is predominantly nonverbal in nature (Bergin, 1997: 11).

Another important concept in Lefebvre's theory is the notion of mobility. For him, the ones who can influence and change the spatial ideologies and social relationships of a given society are the ones who have the power to move themselves (Lefebvre, 1991: 170). Thus the ones who have the power to move from one space to another can influence, resist and transform the dominant ideologies that structure social relationships in societies. In other words they produce social spaces (Ibid.). In this respect, he writes

> A body – not bodies in general, nor corporeality, but a specific body, a body capable of indicating direction by a gesture, of defining rotation by turning round, of demarcating and orienting space, both occupies and produces social spaces through and by the motions the body produces (Ibid.).

For him, when people move through space to satisfy their every day needs the resulting movement prevents stagnation and cannot help but produce differences in social spaces (Ibid. 395).

The theoretical notion of movement is also important for the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. In his seminal work entitled *Space and Place: The perspective of Experience* (1977), Tuan defines the concepts of space and place by writing the following:

> The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (Tuan, 1977: 6).

At the heart of Tuan's work, the opportunities of freedom and independence found in space. In this respect he adds

> Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. Being free has several levels of meaning. Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced (Ibid.52).

Furthermore, he contends that "space, a biological necessity to all animals is to human beings also psychological need, a social perquisite, and even a spiritual attribute … Space means escape from danger and freedom from restraint" (Ibid.58).

In this research, I argue that the vast open space of the frontier shapes and transforms the identity of the women writers and their characters. In other words, the open frontier space gives them "enough room in which to act," as a result, they are empowered with the force which allows them to move beyond the domestic space and defy the patriarchal strictures and restrictions on women. As far as the "spiritual attribute" is concerned, I suggest that the women writers mentioned above and their characters take their inspiration from the frontier landscapes. Indeed, like the latter which do not allow domestication, women also refuse to be under the domination of men.

In his masterpiece, Lefebvre asserts that "any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, and speculated about" (Lefebvre, 1991: 15). In essence, then, the frontier narratives that I will study in the

present research are examples of what Henri Lefebvre calls "representational space." Lefebvre defines representational space as

> space that is directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants", "users", but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational space may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs (Ibid. 39).

In *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (1990), David Harvey describes "representational space" as discourses on space. He writes

> They are mental inventions (codes, signs, 'spatial discourses,' utopian plans, imaginary landscapes, and even material construct such as symbolic spaces, particular built environments, paintings, museums, and the like) that imagine new meanings or possibilities for spatial practices (Harvey, 1990: 218-219).

Here we can begin to see the application of Lefebvre's spatial theory to my thesis. I suggest that the Myth of the American Frontier is an example of this representational space, with its complex symbology and its use of the historical imagination. The Frontier is a social space that is produced through writings on the New World from the first settlements to the present day. In his book entitled *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (1991), the American historian Richard White writes

> Geography did not determine the boundaries of the West; rather history created them. The West that Americans recognize in the twentieth century is their own work. It is not something that has always existed in some neat geographical package awaiting discovery (White, 1991: 3).

In this thesis, I suggest that this imaginary space (the frontier) continues to be produced via numerous discourses and media. And the texts under study in this project are an example

of this production of space. Furthermore, I argue that as the space of American identity and exceptionalism many American female writers among them the ones discussed herein use that space to try to subvert the dominant frontier male ideology in order to free themselves from the patriarchal society.

For Lefebvre, all the historical societies from the Greek to the modern ones have diminished the importance of women and restricted the influence of the female principle. He writes

> The Greeks reduced the woman's station to that of the fertility of a field owned and worked by her husband. The female realm was in the household: around the shrine or hearth; around the omphalos, a circular, closed and fixed space; or around the oven – last relic of the shadowy abyss. Women social status was restricted just as their symbolic and practical status was – indeed, those two aspects were inseparable so far as spatiality was concerned. And most societies have followed this same route (Lefebvre, 1991: 247-248).

With the marginalization and the subordination of the woman to the masculine principle, it is inevitable in these circumstances that feminine revolts should occur (Ibid. 410). For Lefebvre, this feminine revolt will challenge and transform the dominant spatial ideologies by producing a new social space where women will act as full members of the society.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre suggests that the potential to change social space and transform social relationships is to be found in the artistic sphere (Ibid. 349). For him it is within the domain of art that the socio-political aspect of space is revealed. In other words, it is through the works of artists and writers that we can expand the ideologies of social space and critique them at the same time (Ibid. 405). As an example, he cites the Cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso and the writings, paintings, and architecture of the Bauhaus artists who came a decade later. So like these modernist artists and writers who produced and revised space in their works, I suggest that Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, Austin's *Lost Borders*, Cather's *O Pioneers!* and Wilder's *Little House Series* use the artistic sphere (Representational Space) to

produce space and social relationships. In the words of Henry Lefebvre, the texts discussed here put up resistance to the male master narrative of the frontier; they also inaugurate the project of a different space (either the space of a counter-culture, or counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing real space) (Ibid. 349).

As far as Bakhtin is concerned, I will transpose in this study his concept of the Renaissance on Turner's Frontier. For if the Renaissance shaped the identity of the modern western world, it is the Frontier following Turner which shaped the American character and identity. Furthermore, at the heart of both Frontier and Renaissance I identify heteroglossia. In his book entitled *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), Mikhail Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as

> A diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve specific socio-political purposes of the day, even of the hour, (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases) (Bakhtin, 1981: 262-63)

At the heart of Bakhtin's heteroglossia I identify debate and interaction of several discourses or the struggle between the official and nonofficial registers. And the various discourses that I am concerned with in my thesis are the different voices that interact in the frontier space, mainly the ones of men and women.

Before starting the discussion of Sedgwick's, Austin's, Cather's and Wilder's subversion of the master narrative of the frontier, it is of order to define Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism that will be used in the analysis. For Bakhtin, the novelistic discourse is inherently dialogic and involves a number of utterances belonging to speaking subjects and interacting within the wider social context. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981),

he foregrounds the social dimension of language and the simultaneous interactions of utterances within a given background:

> The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements – that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object (Ibid. 281).

As for the dialogism at the heart of novelistic discourse, it is explicated by Tzevetan Todorov in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*, where he argues that the core of all discourse, according to Bakhtin, is its dialogic essence. Todorov writes

> The most important feature of the utterance, or at least the most neglected, is its dialogism, that is, its intertexual dimension. After Adam, there are no nameless objects nor any unused words. Intentional or not, all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates. A single voice can make itself heard only by blending in the complex choir of the other voices already in place. This is true not only of literature but of all discourse (Todorov, 1984: x).

Bakhtin's dialogic approach is more explicated in his book entitled *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). In the latter, Bakhtin proposes another discipline for the study of discourse in prose which is called metalinguistics. For him, the latter is the most suitable approach for the analysis of discourse because it recognizes the dialogic relationships within discourse such as agreement-disagreement, affirmation-negation and so on; which arise between two utterances at two individual voices coexisting and interacting simultaneously (Bakhtin, 1984: 182- 184).

In his metalinguistic analysis of prose, Bakhtin categorizes three types of discourse. The first is the direct discourse. It is oriented towards a specific topic, to name, inform or express in novelistic prose. In fact, it is the authorial discourse. The second type is the

represented discourse which is characterized by the direct speech of characters and it is referentially oriented. So both the two types are single-voiced as they express single consciousness and intention. The third type is when someone takes one's direct discourse and infuses it with authorial intention and consciousness. It becomes a double-voiced discourse in which three varieties are distinguished (Ibid. 199).

The first has to do with the uni-directional double-voiced discourse whose specificity is stylization and authorial purpose which simply coexist with the purpose of discourse. Vari-directional double-voiced discourse is the second variety typified by parody and irony. The voices in this category clash hostilely, and in this respect, Bakhtin asserts that "The second voice, once having made its home in the other's discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host and forces him to serve directly opposing aims. Discourse becomes an arena of battle between two voices" (Ibid. 193). The third variety is of an active type in which the other's discourse exerts influence on that of the author, and in one way or another determines it. It is divided to sub-varieties such as hidden polemic, internally dialogized discourse and the reflected discourse of another. Bakhtin draws the conclusion that "In Dostoevsky, almost no word is without its sideward glance at someone else's words" (Ibid. 203)

I am interested in the hidden polemic. It is considered a rejoinder or reply to someone else's words. Bakhtin writes

> In hidden polemic the author's discourse is oriented toward its referential object, as any other discourse, but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme, at the other's statement about the same object. A word directed toward its referential object, clashes with another's word within the very object itself. The other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied (Ibid. 195).

There is also a hidden dialogue. According to Bakhtin the idea should be communicated for its interest in order to live. Thus it is applied between two individuals, or more, he adds that the dialogic relationships in the other ideas bring creativity. In this context he says

> Dostoevsky knew how to reveal, to see, to show the true real of the life of an idea. The idea lives not only in one person's individual consciousness if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live that is to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with the ideas of others. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice-consciousness the idea is born and lives (Ibid. 87-88).

Furthermore, Bakhtin considers the present essay as being a provocation to the future response by new words in order to be known as a dialogue. In fact, this notion of dialogue does not take place in a direct conversation but rather could be a shift from one period to another as agreement or disagreement (Ibid.). He writes

> The word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one generation to another generation (Ibid. 202).

The dialogue with which this research is concerned relates to the woman resistance to the Male discourse of the Frontier, as illustrated in Sedgwick's, Austin's, Cather's and Wilder's appropriation of the Frontier narrative to foreground the woman voice and redefine feminine spatiality. The Myth of the Frontier is one of the most important myths in American history, representing a master narrative that comments on the formation of the country's identity and the development of its culture. As an "authoritative discourse", as such types of narrative are called by Bakhtin, it exercises a tremendous power on American thought, because it implicitly conveys a set of assumptions and an underlying worldview that assigns action, authority, courage and freedom to men and silence, passivity and submission to

women. However, in spite of its authoritative discourse, the Frontier Myth can be resisted, challenged, and changed as will be demonstrated in Sedgwick's, Austin's, Cather's and Wilder's frontier narratives. This thesis also attempts to demonstrate that Lawrence Buell's assertion that "the wilderness tradition in American narrative will have to be redescribed as essentially a male tradition" (Buell, 1995: 112) is a very limited one. In fact, many American female writers among them the ones mentioned above appropriated the Frontier Myth in order to subvert and transform the dominant spatial ideologies and social relationships of the American society.

Another important thing to recognize in my study is the continuous movement of the frontier. The latter did not exist in one time or place, but moved every time pioneers conquered new lands. In his Frontier Thesis, Turner writes

> American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating the American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West (Turner, 2010: 2).

The frontier is a chronotope to borrow Mikhail Bakhtin's Concept. Bakhtin defines the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (Bakhtin, 1981: 84). So this is why we can write of the American frontier in Massachusetts Bay of the 1600s as well as the nineteenth-century Dakota Territory. Though the process of the frontier is in constant movement it also carries a chronotopic dimension as it refers to a specific time/space.

As far as the feminist perspective is concerned, my thesis will be based on the feminist assumptions of Victoria Walker. In an article entitled "Feminist Criticism, Anglo-American" (1993), Walker writes

> Anglo-American feminist literary criticism shares the same purpose as all feminist inquiry: that of exposing the mechanisms upon which patriarchal society rests and by which it is maintained, with the ultimate aim of transforming social relations. The object of feminist criticism is therefore fundamentally 'political.' Feminists advocate this transformational activity because they believe patriarchal society operates to the advantage of men and serves men's interests above all others (Walker, 1993: 39).

For Walker the aim of the feminists is to transform the social relationships in society and provide women with independence and equality. Her assumptions correspond directly to the aim of the women writers discussed in this thesis.

Besides, I will also borrow some concepts from other feminists such as Elaine Showalter, Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar. In an article entitled "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing History of feminist Criticism" (1984), Showalter contends that nineteenth-century women's writing was "a coded response to male images, influences, and texts, a form of protest against patriarchal literary authority" (Showalter, 1984: 39). This protest was carried in the form of revision that questioned the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures (Showalter, 1981: 183). Furthermore, she adds that this revision can be read as a double-voice discourse containing a "dominant" and a "muted" story, what Gilbert and Gubar call a "palimpsest" (Ibid. 204). In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (2000), Gilbert and Gubar argue that in palimpsestic writing the surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 3).

By writing frontier narratives and using the double-voice strategy, the women writers discussed in this thesis reached two precious objectives. One of them is the fact of being published and the other is subverting male hegemony. In fact, by creating strong and independent female heroines who enjoy the open space of the frontier they deconstruct the male Myth of the Frontier which assigns the private space of the home to women. As far as their muted messages about competence and bravery are concerned, it is through the act of marrying their female protagonists that they are conveyed. However, unlike their male counterparts who dominate and domesticate women in their fiction the women authors discussed herein change the traditional marriage by allowing their heroines to choose their husbands and to retain their individuality and independence even after marriage.

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Chapter Two

Early American Literature and the Call for a New Nation: the Frontier, Gender, and Ethnicity in the Fiction of Catherine Maria Sedgwick and James Fenimore Cooper

Introduction

This chapter puts in perspective Catherine Maria Sedgwick's and James Fenimore Cooper's frontier narratives. It purports to study Sedgwick's response to her contemporary male writer on the issue of gender in the imaginary construction of American nationhood. In his book *Imagined Communities* (2006), Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2006: 6). With the emergence of the printing press, the two forms that provided the technical means for representing the kind of imagined community, that is the nation, are the novel and the newspaper (Ibid. 25). As the two authors wrote during a time when the newly independent United States was struggling with the creation of a national identity, I argue that the two writers engaged the frontier idea to disseminate their ideologies concerning the place of women in the American society.

Cooper situates the spirit of the American nation in the frontier, because it is the place where meet the various ethnicities that make up the American social mosaic. However, in his conceptualization of the American nationhood, Cooper overlooks the role of gender, and constructs the nation in terms defined by masculine, virile virtues such as courage, exploration and war. If included at all in the frontier fiction of Copper, women are used as rewards to fight for to show masculine virtues of bravery and competence. In other terms, Cooper supports the ideology of separate spheres to affirm male courage, self-reliance, and

independence. In his view, women should be kept inside the house because the frontier space is unsuitable for the "weaker sex."

Like Cooper, Sedgwick was at work in using the frontier fiction to build up a national literature and define the history of the American people. However, being a woman, she was also aware of her own marginalization in the misogynist society of early nineteenth-century America. Unlike her contemporary Cooper, Sedgwick uses the imaginative space of the frontier to subvert the ideology which confined women at home and stripped them of the right of being full citizens of the United States. In her frontier fiction she produces a new space and novel social relationships, where women enjoy the act of being in the public space and participate in the construction of the new nation.

Sedgwick's frontier novel *Hope Leslie* (1827), which appeared after the publication of Cooper's frontier saga *The Pioneers* (1823), and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) is a direct reply to Cooper's version of American frontier history and the place of women in American society. In other words, it is her response to Cooper's support of the ideology of the separate spheres that stereotyped women when it considered them as second class citizens. By giving voice to her heroines and placing them at the centre of the action, instead of confining them at home, Sedgwick rejects the hyper-masculinized frontier narrative of her male counterpart. Through her novel, she allows her female characters to imagine, articulate, and negotiate their own roles in the American society. In other words, she offers her female characters a new space from which to establish their own subjectivities in opposition to the stereotyped image which was given to them in male frontier narratives.

In this chapter, I argue that both Sedgwick and Cooper used the novel to imagine the American nation. In the imagined community of Cooper women are portrayed as weak, sensitive, and dependent. They cannot venture outside without being protected by men. Their place is at home to serve their husbands and nurture their children. Unlike Cooper, Sedgwick

produces in her novel a new social space where her female protagonists are represented as intelligent and independent. They enjoy the outdoor space without needing masculine protection. Furthermore, they participate as active agents in the social and political issues that permeate the American society.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section puts Sedgwick's and Cooper's frontier narratives in their historical context. It discusses the Woman and the Indian questions as key concerns of nineteenth-century America. The second section reviews the issue of gender in Cooper's frontier narratives to demonstrate how Cooper resorted to the myth of the frontier to silence the woman question that challenged the patriarchal society of post revolutionary America. The third section analyses Sedgwick's work to reveal her challenge to Cooper by inaugurating the project of a different space where women enjoy the outdoor space and disavow their private roles. The fourth section deals with the issue of race in Sedgwick's and Cooper's works to show the share of other ethnicities in the construction of American identity. While Cooper used the Indian question to support Indian removal and white supremacist ideology, Sedgwick's reference to the Native American question is an attempt to give voice to the marginalized voices in the American society and to appeal for equality between all the members forming the American mosaic.

I- The Woman Question and the Indian Question as Key Concerns of Nineteenth-Century America

In order to understand the complexity of Sedgwick's and Cooper's representation of women, Indians, and their role in their imagined communities, we should read their novels in their historical context. In other words, we should relate the novels to the early nineteenth-century attitudes about gender and race; particularly, white Americans' attitudes toward women and Native Americans. While Cooper supports the ideology of domesticity and the

removal of the ethnic other from the American scene, Sedgwick's response is a kind of polemic against the privatization of women and an appeal for gender and racial equality.

During the American Revolution, women were not strangers to the world of political action as they marched in demonstrations and attended meetings and rallies (Waldstreicher, 1997: 7). In other words, they played a very important part in resisting the tyranny of the king. For example, when the colonies protested against the excessive taxes passed by the British Parliament, the "Daughters of Liberty" an organization founded by women in 1765 boycotted the imported British products and manufactured goods such as tea and cloth. Moreover, the Daughters of Liberty planned spinning bees where women weaved homemade clothing and textiles. As a result both men and women wore homespun clothing during the Revolution. Furthermore, when the Revolutionary War began the Daughters of Liberty and other groups of women helped the colonial army mainly by supplying the latter with money and other materials (Wike, 2018: 23). Their different actions during the Revolution gave women a voice in this patriotic cause and necessarily joined the world of the home with politics.

However, with the beginning of the nineteenth century the status of women in this young American nation witnessed a drastic change. As the household started to lose its preponderant place in the new nation's economy and men were embracing a market economy a sharp division between the spheres of men and women took place. What we have come to call the ideology of domesticity was used as a tool for removing women from the public space and relegating them to the private life. According to this ideology, the home space has nothing to do with the world of business and politics. In other words, women should be protected from the restless and competitive world of business.

Before arriving to the newly independent American nation, the ideology of domesticity started first in England with Hannah More. The latter is credited as the founder of this

ideology (Romero, 1997: 20). In her book *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* originally published in 1799 and widely read by women in the United States for decades after, More urged women to abandon their training in painting and dancing and to opt for a true education when she writes "The profession of ladies, to which the bent of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers and mistresses of families (qtd. In Cott, 1997: 74). For More, women should be taught to retain their dignity, delicacy, refinement, and piety. These principles formed the backbone of American domestic ideology over the course of the early and mid-nineteenth century.

At the end of the American Revolution and the need to explain and justify the ideology of separate spheres a new patriotic and virtuous role was invented for women. The latter was the role of the Republican Mother. In fact, as the new nation needed moral and virtuous men who would govern the nation wisely, women were encouraged to cultivate the genteel home spaces and inculcate morality and virtue on their sons. In the words of Linda Kerber

> The best they could do was to assert that properly educated republican women would stay in their homes and, from that vintage point, shape the character of their sons and husbands in the direction of benevolence (Kerber, 1980: 231).

As time went on, this American domestic ideology was related to the concept of "True Womanhood" where piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity were the virtues that women were expected to embody in the American republic.

According to the supporters of this view, while women cultivated the private spaces of their households, their men were busy in the public spaces of the villages, towns, and cities in which they worked and lived. This ideology found its acme in Catherine E. Baacher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy For the Use of Young Ladies at Home* (1841) where she reinforced the separation of the spheres when she reminded her readers that

> in the domestic relation, she takes a subordinate station, and that, in civil and political concerns, her interests be entrusted to the other sex, without her taking any part in

> voting, or in making administrative laws ... by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman the great work of society may be the better carried on (Beecher, 1846: 27-28).

For Beecher this kind of political economy is the most suitable one and represents the natural order of any civilized society.

Written during the period when the ideology of the Republican Motherhood was transformed into the ideal of True Womanhood, both Sedgwick and Cooper tried to answer the Woman Question. While Cooper lauded the ideology of domesticity and regarded the latter as the most suitable for American women, Sedgwick challenged the standard and argues that the private fate for women is not inevitable. In fact, by writing about female character that disobey their male counterparts and engage in public affairs, Sedgwick wants to affirm that women also belong to the outdoors.

The other question which haunted the American people in the first decades of the nineteenth century was the Indian issue. The latter was one of the most important issues in the United States. The discourse around this issue has been shaped by what Lucy Maddox calls "the yoking of oppositional or incompatible terms": white Americans viewed the debate in terms of a "choice between civilization and extinction for the Indians" (Maddox, 1991: 8). Whites believed that Native Americans would either assimilate into their culture or become extinct (Ibid. 24). Over the past few decades, the enlightenment belief that people are shaped by their environment has created an optimistic sense that Native Americans, while inferior to whites, could be "improved," or "civilized." By 1815, however, many had attacked this belief in the environmental forces shaping the Indians and began to support supposedly more scientific ideas about race, leading to rigid beliefs in Anglo-European superiority over all other races (Horsman, 1981: 104-117). In the 1850s, "only a minority of Americans believed that transformed Indians would eventually assume a permanent, equal place within American society" (Ibid. 207). Between 1815 and 1850 white American society rejected early belief that

Native Americans could be civilized. In fact, it almost completely rejected American Indians (Ibid. 190).

The change in attitudes toward race in general and Native Americans in particular caused severe political tensions, between whites and Native Americans and among whites. In 1824-25, Southern states determined government policy by pressuring the federal government to expel the Indians. A comprehensive plan to resettle Indians in the lands west of the Mississippi River was presented to Congress in 1825, but "the question of the use of force had still not been resolved and the morality of removal was still being questioned in Congress. The latter was badly split on these issues, and in 1825 and 1826 the vague … removal plans could not obtain a general supporting vote in the House." Nevertheless, the Adams administration from 1825-1827 "clearly revealed the hardening of attitudes toward the Indians at the national level" (Ibid. 197).

Although a few white Americans had less narrow minded reasons for supporting the expulsion of the Native Americans from their lands because they thought it would prevent the otherwise inescapable extinction of Indians it was clear that most were motivated by expansion: "Indian removal was not an effort to civilize the Indians under more favorable circumstances … rather it was an act to allow white Americans to occupy all the lands they wanted east of the Mississippi River" (Ibid. 199). Like Sedgwick, the whites who befriended the Native Americans and truly objected to the policy of removal were too few in number "to exert decisive political influence" (Ibid.). By the late 1820s, when *Hope Leslie* was first published, hatred of the Indians and support for their removal had grown, making it increasingly difficult for the government to resist southern state pressure (Ibid. 200). In 1828, a year after Sedgwick published *Hope Leslie*, Andrew Jackson was elected as President of The United States. Jackson's election determined the fate of the Indians: Jackson and his government worked thoroughly to secure the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The

latter has been passed by force and led to the expropriation of the Indians from their lands. Indeed, many Indian tribes were forced to cede their lands west of the 95th meridian and relocated further west (Pearce, 1988: 57). In the 1820s, debates on the Indian Question in Congress "revealed both the unwillingness of the majority to accept the Indians as equals, and the extent to which a sense of Anglo-Saxon racial destiny and of irreversible distinctions between races was beginning to invade the popular consciousness (Horsman, 1981: 203).

II- Cooper, the Woman and the Nation: A Critical Review

Many scholars criticized James Fenimore Cooper for his conventional and lifeless heroines. One of these scholars is James Russell Lowell who wrote in 1848: "The women he draws from one model don't vary all sappy as maples and flat as the prairie" (qtd. In Williams, 1981: 160). In his *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler described Copper's white women as sexless wooden ingenues (Fiedler, 1969: 157). Besides, Kay Seymour House, in a study titled *Cooper's Americans*, argues that Cooper's world is a man's world, and women are almost completely outside it (House, 1965: 14).

There are women in the *Leatherstocking Tales*, but these women are not Cooper's heroines. According to Williams, the women in Cooper's novels fall into three categories. The first one is the dependent child-maiden who is very weak. The second one is the young woman who is stronger and more independent, but the latter is of mixed race and Cooper never allows her to be his heroine. The third one represents the majority of Copper's women, she is not weak like the child-maidens, but she is always dependent and she is wholly feminine (Williams, 1981: 161-162).

The first category of women (the fragile child-maidens) is best represented by Louisa Grant in *The Pioneers* (1823), and Alice Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In *The Pioneers*, Louisa Grant is Cooper's "true woman." She is the "angel of the house" who embodies the four pillars of the Cult of Domesticity; she is pious, submissive and weak. For

example, in one of the scenes in the church Louisa is represented as the most pious person of the congregation. In fact, while the congregation is not interested in the ceremony as it regarded the latter as a spectacle, rather than a worship in which they were to participate, Louisa is on her knees, with her meek face humbly bent over her book (Cooper, 1985: 125). Moreover, even in her physical appearance, the characteristics which are emphasized by Cooper are the ones of the "true woman". He writes

> The appearance of this stranger, for such she was, entirely, to Elizabeth was light and fragile. Her dress was neat and becoming; and her countenance, though pale, and slightly agitated, excited deep interest, by its sweet and melancholy expression (Ibid).

All these traits show that Louisa is a Victorian woman who embodies all the virtues of the ideology of domesticity.

To show that the outdoor space is not the suitable space for women, Cooper depicts women who venture outside in a state of helplessness and fragility. For instance, in one of her trips to see Judge Temple's land prospect, Louisa became scared by hearing the crackling sounds of a nearby tree. She had relinquished her reins, and with her hands pressed on her face, sat bending forward in her saddle in an attitude of despair mingled strangely with resignation (Ibid. 240). Moreover, to show that women needed male protection in the public space, Oliver Edwards comes to her rescue and controls her horse. Furthermore to argue for the dependency of women on men, Cooper writes

> After some little time was in recovering her strength, the young lady was replaced in her saddle, and, supported on either side, by Judge Temple and Mr. Edwards, she was enabled to follow the party in their slow progress (Ibid.).

From this quotation, we understand that women cannot venture outside without being protected by men. Therefore, Cooper strengthens the ideology of domesticity that confined women at home.

In addition to Louisa Grant, Alice Munro of *The Last of the Mohicans* is also one of the most well-known fragile women of Cooper's frontier saga. Cooper opens his frontier narrative with Colonel Munro's daughters, Cora and Alice preparing to embark for a journey in the wilderness territory in order to reunite with their father in the more secure Fort William Henry. Cooper introduces Alice to the reader from the beginning of his novel in order to mark her opposition to her sister Cora in spite of their familial relationship. In this respect he writes

> A young man, in the dress of an officer, conducted to their steeds two females, who, it was apparent by their dresses, were prepared to encounter the fatigues of a journey in the woods. One, and she was the most juvenile in her appearance, though both were young, permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes, to be caught, as she artlessly suffered the morning air to blow aside the green veil which descended low from her beaver. The flush which still lingered above the pines in the western sky, was not more bright nor delicate than the bloom on her cheek; nor was the opening day more cheering than the animated smile which she bestowed on the youth, as he assisted her into the saddle (Ibid. 488).

By portraying Alice as a lovable woman who cannot fend for herself, Cooper wants to show the dependency of women on men in the frontier space. In other words, Alice is portrayed as feeble and childish to fit her place in the American society because according to Cooper, the woman must be passive and submissive or as Williams puts it "Cooper's heroine is superfluous to the action. She waits quietly in the wings until one of the male characters can take time off from the main business of masculine adventure and self-development to marry her" (Williams, 1981: 160).

To support the ideology of the separate spheres and to show that the place of women is in the private space, Alice is portrayed as thoughtless and artless. For example when the Huron Magua frightens the two sisters by dashing past them, Alice asks Major Heyward whether the Huron is "an especial entertainment, ordered on our behalf" (Cooper, 1985: 490). Later, after their arrival at Fort Henry, Heyward separates from the sisters for a period of time. When he came back to them, Alice chastises him for being a "recreant knight who abandons his damsels in the very lists" (Ibid. 641). By referring to Heyward as her Knight, Alice is just

underscoring her femininity and showing her submission. In other words, by calling him her knight, she affirms men's bravery, competence, and independence and women's docility and dependence

The passivity and immaturity of Alice led her to put other's lives in danger many times in the novel. In fact, much of the novel will be spent to rescue her from harm. For instance, in one of the scenes she asked David Gamut the psalmist to sing for her amusement without noticing the harm of her act. Indeed, such noise would attract their enemies. As a result, Duncan Heyward was obliged to remind her that "common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as possible (Ibid. 497). In addition to this, when Magua appears suddenly at Glenn's falls, Alice is convulsed with fear (Ibid.599). Later, in chapter 25, when Hawkeye and Duncan Heyward infiltrate the Iroquois cave to rescue her, she became so paralyzed with fear that the two must carry her out wrapped in a blanket like a sick squaw (Ibid. 775). The fact that the simple-minded and childish Alice is the one who is left at the end of this frontier romance to bear the future children of the American society shows Cooper's patriarchal ideology. The marriage of Major Duncan Heyward and Alice provides a happy ending to the novel. As Louise Barnett puts it

> By the union of the white American couple at the conclusion, and by the death or defeat of the Indians and foreign whites, the frontier romance conveyed a historical truth which transcended the particulars of specific battles and wars: the ongoing possession of the North American continent by whites who had overcome the native inhabitants, and who had by expelling foreign whites, insisted upon a new national identity (Barnett, 1975: 67).

The national identity upon which Cooper insisted was the pure white one and the woman who would give birth to this identity must be dependent, docile and submissive.

The second category of women in Cooper's novels the more independent and stronger character contains only a few women. The latter are criticized and even punished by the author for transgressing the patriarchal structures or the bounds he has set on proper feminine

behaviour. The best example to illustrate with is the case of Cora Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cora is strong, brave, resolute, courageous and preserving. To distinguish her from her light-hearted and carefree sister Alice, Cooper writes

> The tresses of this lady were shining black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with colour of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds. And yet there was neither coarseness, nor want of shadowing, in a countenance that was exquisitely regular and dignified, and surpassingly beautiful. She smiled, as if in pity at her own momentary forgetfulness, discovering by the act of raw of teeth that would have shamed the purest ivory; when, replacing the veil, she bowed her face, and rode in silence, like one whose thoughts were abstracted from the scene around her (Cooper, 1985: 488-9).

From this quotation we understand that Cora is the opposite of her sister Alice. Cora is serious her sister is carefree. She is mature Alice is lighthearted. However, the most important thing which distinguishes her from her sister is the rich blood in her veins. Indeed, Cora is a woman of mixed blood. And we know this in chapter 14, when Colonel Munro tells Duncan Heyward about his adventure in the West Indies and how he married Cora's mother. The latter was "descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class, who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people" (Ibid. 653).

Most of other characters in the romance acknowledged Cora's traits of courage and bravery. For example, in one of the scenes watching the early morning shelling of Fort William Henry, Cora states: "I sicken at the sight of danger, that I cannot share."Responding to her, Hawkeye affirms that Cora has the strength and bravery of a man, saying: "I would I had a thousand men … that feared death as little as you." (Ibid. 633). Moreover, Heyward's laudatory statements on Cora's fortitude and courage are repeated several times in the novel. For instance, he calls her "noble" in a tone of "admiration" for her brave attitude during the siege (Ibid. 643). When speaking to Montcalm, he says that "he would gladly trust the defense of William Henry to Cora (Ibid. 647-8).

The qualities for which she is admired, Cora demonstrated them at crucial moments to save her sister and other characters in the novel. For example, in the scene when Cora, Alice, Heyward and Gamut are captured by Magua, as Hawkeye has instructed she marked the trail for the rescuers to follow. Of the four captives, "Cora alone remembered the parting injunctions of the scout, and whenever an opportunity offered, she stretched forth her arm to bend aside the twigs that met her hands" (Ibid. 582). In another scene when the Huron Magua intimidated both the Delawares and the captives, "Cora met his gaze with an eye so calm and firm, that his resolution wavered" (Ibid. 822-3). Throughout this sequence, Cora demonstrates her resolution, flexibility and perseverance.

Nina Baym argues that Cora's race prevents her from being the surviving heroine in the novel. In this respect she writes

> The main point seems to be that in spite of her superior qualities – her kindness, courage, modesty, maturity, thoughtfulness, steadfastness, self-reliance, nobility of soul, resourcefulness, and very great beauty – Cora cannot be married. Because her mother was partly black, Cora is hopelessly spoiled. Her "blackness" is not the cause of her many virtues, but is the cause of all these virtues counting for nothing. … Cora's tragedy is not that she is unladylike, but that her exclusion from the prerogatives of her class is gratuitous: blood, not character or breeding, is fate (Baym, 1992: 6).

In addition to this, I will add that Cooper kills Cora in his novel because he cannot accept a strong woman who ventures in the frontier space and even defies the patriarchal structures. This is why he reserves Duncan Heyward for the infantile Alice whom Baym calls "the silliest of Cooper's heroines." In other words, in order to forge the new national identity to which Barnett made a reference, Alice must be the bride at the end of the novel.

The third category of women in Cooper's *Leatherstocking series* is the dependent, emotional and totally selfless. It represents the majority of his heroines. They include such characters as Elizabeth Temple in *The Pioneers* and Ellen Wade in *The Prairie*. These girls are not childish as Alice Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans*, however, they are always

portrayed as dependent and feminine creatures. According to Williams, Cooper and Leatherstocking often refer to animals and women as creatures and the only male characters they call creatures are the black slaves (Williams, 1981: 163). In fact, the sentence which Cooper's hero repeats in the series is "we must protect the feeble ones." And the word feeble can be associated to the portrayal of Ellen wade in *The prairie*. Cooper says that Ellen is Paul Hover's "gentle and dependent companion" (Cooper, 1985: 1071). In one of the scenes, when the Indians appear, Paul reaches for his gun, but Ellen buries her face in the grass, an action that Cooper says was a natural to her sex as the young man's was to his (Ibid.).

James fenimore Cooper's heroines are never allowed to start the action. The latter is always the initiative of men. One thing that prevents independent female action, of course, is the fact that Cooper's heroines can never act with impropriety. For instance, Elizabeth Temple in *The Pioneers* prefers to be burned alive in the forest rather than remove her petticoat (Ibid. 421).

In Cooper's saga it is improper for a woman to act for herself because it is considered as unfeminine. So even the most spirited woman in his novels would not act to save her own life. And this is the case of Elizabeth Temple in *The pioneers*. She does not try to save herself when she is in danger, and although she shows more spirit than her timid friend, Louisa Grant, her only action is a passive resignation until a man appears to rescue her. The only qualities Cooper emphasizes on her are softness, modesty and purity (Ibid. 413). Moreover, at the end of the novel Cooper tells us that she will obey Leatherstockings injunction: "trust in God Madam and your honorable husband" (Ibid. 464).

Cooper included young women characters in his *Leatherstocking Tales* only because they were necessary for the marriage plot that his audience was expected. So the qualities he lauded in his women are dependence, innocence and childlike simplicity. Or as Williams puts

it without this youthful marriageability, there was no reason to include such non uninteresting persons in a novel, unless for comic relief (Williams, 1981: 179).

Cooper's attitude toward women and their place in the American society is stated more clearly in his non-fiction works. And the best example to illustrate with is his book *Notions of the Americans* published in 1828. In the latter, Cooper portrayed America as a true paradise for women because as he put it "in America men take better care of women" (Cooper, 2009: 104). According to him, American women are like angels in paintings; they are more beautiful, more delicate and more feminine than anywhere else in the world (Ibid. 58). However, for Cooper, these angels are only good when they stay at home. In other words, the public space is outside of their reach because they cannot act for themselves.

As far as the political rights are concerned, Cooper excludes women from the category of people who should be given these rights, indeed, in the same book he says: "political rights in America should be given only to those who know how to use them, not to women, children, idiots and paupers (Ibid. 266). Moreover, he adds: "all who have reached a certain standard of qualification, shall be equal in power, and that all others shall be equal in protection (Ibid). By putting women in the same category with children and idiots, Cooper is just expressing his sexist ideas and patriarchal ideology.

In Cooper's worldview the only right women should have or ask for is the claim to be protected by men. And for him the only way to give women this right is to keep them safely within the home. In this respect he writes

> To me, woman appears to fill in America the very station for which she was designed by nature …. Retired within the sacred precincts of her own abode, she is preserved from the destroying taint of excessive intercourse with the world. She makes no bargains beyond those which supply her own little wants, and her heart is not early corrupted by the baneful and unfeminine vice of selfishness (Ibid. 105).

From this quotation we understand that Cooper denies women the right of going outside to search for their independence and freedom. More than this, they have no separate existence; they exist for the satisfaction of men.

From the review above, I can say that the stereotype of the passive and silent frontier woman started with James Fenimore Cooper. The theme of the frontier space as unsuitable for the sensibilities of women was the major point of his *Leatherstocking tales*. The hero of cooper's novels is the adventurous frontiersman who goes by several names – Natty Bumppo, Hawkeye, Deerslayer, or Leatherstocking. However, his female characters are not protagonists; they are weak and they lack control over their lives. His novels portray a society in which gender, race and class must remain fixed if order is to prevail in American society. And in case a woman ventures in the frontier space and shows capacities of defying the patriarchal strictures, she will be killed like what happens with Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In his frontier novels Cooper establishes a patriarchal hierarchy in which males are empowered by their freedom, independence and adventure, whereas women are relegated to their "proper sphere" which is the private or the domestic.

III- Sedgwick, the Woman and the Frontier Space

Unlike Cooper who supports the ideology of domesticity which constricted the liberties of women, Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* is an appeal to gender equality and the liberation of women. In fact, she understood that the division of space into the private and the public spheres was the source of masculine dominance over women. In her book entitled *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), Doreen Massey contends that the division of space into public and private spheres is one of the forces which supports male dominance over women and confine the latter to certain gender roles. She writes

> The limitation of women's mobility, in terms of both identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover, the two things – the limitation of mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related (Massey, 1994: 179).

The same idea is developed by Daphne Spain in *Gendered Spaces* (1992). Recognizing the hierarchical division of space into public and private spheres as the cause of women's limited mobility and their dependence on men, Spain contends that to be independent and enjoy a life of full citizenship, women must have access to the public sphere. She writes

> Spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with lesser power. By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced. Thus spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women. For women to become more knowledgeable, they must also change places (Spain, 1992: 15-16).

To change places and conquer the public space Catherine Maria Sedgwick reclaimed the frontier space and writes women outside the domestic realm. Sedgwick's frontier novel *Hope Leslie* is clearly a direct response to James Fenimore Cooper's frontier saga, especially *The Last of the Mohicans*. Her text is full of evidence that she is answering Cooper's novel. The first reference to Cooper within her own text can be found at the beginning of chapter seven, where she writes

> It is not our purpose to describe step by step, the progress of the Indian fugitives. Their sagacity in traversing their native forests: their skill in following and alluding an enemy, and all their politic devices, have been so well described in a recent popular work, that their usages have become familiar as household words (Sedgwick, 1987: 81).

The recent popular work Sedgwick is referring to is of course *The Last of the Mohicans*, however, in Sedgwick's novel the captivity narrative genre; too, is revised. Rather than to follow male heroes who spend most of their time in rescuing female captives as is the case with Cooper, the reader of *Hope Leslie* will follow a male captive (Everell Fletcher) and his

captors in the wilderness and how he will be rescued by a woman; the native princess Magawisca.

In their novels Sedgwick and Cooper contrast two sisters. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper chooses the dependent, submissive, and child-like Alice to be his heroine. The latter is the one who survives at the end of his story and even granted marriage with the hero, while he kills Cora because she shows capacities of defying the patriarchal strictures. Or as Leland Person puts it "as a brave woman who possesses a voice and agency, Cora is unsuited for Copper's Adamic vision" (Person, 1985: 684).

Unlike Cooper, in *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick unites the hero Everell Fletcher with the strong and independent heroine Hope Leslie. Sedgwick's response to Cooper is clearly expressed when she names her heroine Alice before the Puritans renamed her Hope. The only thing that Cooper's Alice and Sedgwick's Alice/Hope have in common is that they both marry. Hope frees herself and others from imprisonment, unlike Cooper's Alice, who must be freed from captivity several times. Hope faints only once, and only after escaping Pequods' captivity, a storm at sea, the threat of a rape by inebriated sailors and a mysterious verbal attack by Sir Philip's page. Whereas Alice faints at the first sign of danger and is rendered unconscious numerous times, Hopes faints at the slightest sign of danger only once.

Hope is the contrast of the domestic woman who is lauded by Cooper and the supporters of the American domestic ideology of the 1800s. Sedgwick writes

> Nothing could be more unlike the authentic, 'thoroughly educated' and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; as unlike a mountain rill to a canal – the one leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful, or stealing softly on the unseen, unpraised loveliness; the other formed by art, restrained within prescribed and formal limits, and devoted to utility (Ibid. 121).

In this passage Sedgwick is deriding the ideology of domesticity. By putting quotation marks on the phrase thoroughly educated, she is just making reference to the way her contemporary

women were educated. By contrasting hope's competence, sportiveness, and freedom with the thoroughly disciplined young ladies of her time who are indoctrinated into domestic servitude she is clearly against this stifling ideology. Sedgwick's heroine is not a True Woman but she is a Real Woman as she exhibits the characteristics of intelligence, physical fitness and health, and self-reliance (Cogan, 1989: 4).

To subvert Cooper's ideology of the separate spheres, Sedgwick reinstates women in the American frontier and writes heroines who enjoy the outdoor space through walks and horseback riding. In fact, her novel is greatly preoccupied with space. In the text, space and personhood are thoroughly associated. In an article on space and subjectivity, Paula E. Geyh contends

> Subjectivity and space are mutually constructing: while subjects constitute themselves through the creation of spaces, these same spaces also elicit and structure subjectivities. To understand postmodern subjectivities and space we must explore the complex ways in which they construct one another (Geyh, 1993: 104).

The frontier sites the female heroines (Hope and Magawisca) dwell in empower them and encourage the development of their faculties and virtues namely self-reliance, self-interest and independence.

The heroine of the novel Hope Leslie is influenced by her upbringing in the frontier space of Bethel. Bethel, A space of freedom and empowerment, is positioned distant from the ideological structures that would subject Hope to the dogmatic principles of Puritan society. As a result, it illustrates how crucial space is in developing one's awareness and identity. Furthermore, when Hope first arrives at the frontier homestead, there is no mother figure to inculcate her the Puritan elder's idealized duties of submissiveness, docility, and passivity since they believe that these traits are "next to godliness ... a woman's best virtue" (Sedgwick, 1987: 153). Hope's growth in this frontier space, which houses Anglo colonists, Native

Americans, servants and children all under one roof empowers and enables her to transgress the strict boundaries and hierarchies established by the puritan Patriarchs.

Unlike the women characters of cooper who are frightened by the immensity of the frontier space, Sedgwick's female heroines revel the spaciousness of the frontier. In a letter written to Everell, Hope describes how she ventured with a party of men to climb a nearby mountain despite the resistance of her surrogate father and aunt Grafton. The latter remonstrated by alleging that it was 'very unladylike, and a thing quite unheard of in England,' for a young person to go out exploring a new country. Hope responds "our new country developes faculties that young ladies, in England, were unconscious of possessing" (Ibid. 98). Furthermore, she adds

> He must have a torpid imagination, and a cold heart, I think, who does not fancy these vast forests filled with invisible intelligences. Have these beautiful vallies of our Connecticut, which we saw from the mountain, looking like a smile on nature's rugged face, and stretching as far as our vision extended ... My senses were enchanted on that high place. I listened to the mighty sound that rose from the forest depths, like the roar of the distant ocean, and to the gentler voices of nature, borne on the invisible waves of air (Ibid. 100-101).

From this quotation, we understand that Sedgwick is commenting on the difference between the American frontier and England. In both England and America young women have the same faculties. But, unlike England which keeps her women unconscious of their faculties therefore undeveloped, the American frontier allows women to develop their faculties and express themselves. In other words, the American frontier allows women to recognize in themselves the same faculties developed and promoted by American men namely, those essential American virtues of independence, self-reliance, and self determination.

Empowered by the frontier space, Sedgwick's female protagonists are the ones who rescue others from danger such as snake bites and captivity. For example, during her wilderness journey, a rattlesnake bites Hope's tutor Master Cradock. Without hesitating or showing any sign of fear or feminine frailty Hope proposes to suck the venom from the

wound to relieve the old man (Ibid. 102). Furthermore, to show her courage and bravery hope takes her horse and embarks upon a long journey in the frontier space to search for an old Indian woman named Nelema who has the antidote. By so doing, she refutes Cooper's justification for the separate gendered spheres ideology. Furthermore, she even challenges the notion of a gendered subject by demonstrating that the acceptance of the traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity do not obviate an individual's ability to appropriate traits identified with either gender in aspiring to full citizenship.

Another important wilderness or frontier site that empowers women to perform acts of justice and defy men's authority in the text is Sacrifice Rock. In the latter, Magawisca sacrifices her arm in order to save her childhood friend Everell Fletcher from execution at the hands of her father chief Mononotto. Having failed to convince her father to spare her friend's life, Magawisca climbs the face of a rock in a final effort to help her friend

> The chief raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca, springing from the precipitous side of the rock – screamed "Forbear!" and interposed her arm. It was too late. The blow was levelled – force and direction given – the stoke aimed at Everell's neck, severed his defender's arm, and left him unharmed. "Stand Back!" cried Magawisca. "I have bought his life with my own. Flay, Everell – nay, speak not, but flay – thither to the east!" she cried, more vehemently (Ibid. 93).

By using her physical strength to save the young white man Magawisca affirms her courage and bravery. In this brave action of the Indian woman Sedgwick remind us of the famous story of the Indian princess Pocahontas who saved Captain John Smith.

Moreover, the most important faculty the frontier develops in women is the ability to think critically and hence challenge the established authority. Indeed, Hope insists not only on the physical freedom to climb mountains and visit graveyards alone at night, she insists on intellectual freedom as well, having learned from the arguments of those around her to doubt all dogma and to let her mind expand

> like the bird that spreads his wings and soars about the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain ... enjoyed the capacities of her nature and permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith. Her religion was pure and disinterested – no one, therefore, should doubt its intrinsic value, though it had not been coined into a particular form, or received the current impress (qtd. in Fetterley, 1998: 499)

In making her heroine revere herself, Catherine Maria Sedgwick is just expressing what Judith Sargent Murray asked for in her essay entitled "Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, Especially in Female Bosoms" (1784), where she claimed that "reverence of self" was essential for the success of the new Republic and proposed that the woman "would early empress under proper regulations, a reverence of self ... that dignity, which is ever attendant upon self-approbation, arising from the genuine source of innate rectitude" (Ibid). In fact, Hope Leslie is clearly characterized by a "reverence of self ... arising from the genuine source of innate rectitude." As Aunt Grafton puts it, "it's what everybody knows, who knows Hope, that she never did a wrong thing" (Sedgwick, 1987: 177).

Listening only to her consciousness, Hope intervenes several times in the nation's public affairs to save other women. For example, when the old Indian woman Nelema is sentenced to prison after she is accused of witchcraft, Hope first testifies on behalf of the old Native American woman. However, when her pleas are ignored by the Puritan magistrates, she ventures on a great personal danger and succeeds to free the Indian woman. The other instance, Hope intervenes publicly to free another woman is when the Indian princess Magawisca is imprisoned after being wrongly accused of fomenting and Indian attack. Hope again asserts her agency by preparing a successful plan that allows Magawisca to escape. In fact, Hope "took counsel only from her own heart, and that told her that the rights of innocence were paramount to all other rights, and as to danger to herself, she did not weigh it – she did not think of it" (Ibid. 124).

Unlike the frontier space that is represented as the space of freedom and empowerment for women, the domestic space of the house is depicted as stifling and oppressive. Both Magistrate Pynchon's home in Springfield and Winthrop's mansion in Boston represent the domestic space as the site of oppression and in the service of political ends. For instance, when the Native American Nelema is wrongly accused and condemned for witchcraft, the magistrate's house serves as the jail where the Indian woman is imprisoned. In another example, when hope helps the Indian princess Magawisca to escape her imprisonment after she is wrongly accused of fomenting an Indian attack Hope is removed to the private space of governor Winthrop's house. The Puritan elders relocated her to the governor's mansion where "Madam Winthrop will give her pious instruction and counsel and her godly niece, Esther Downing, will win her to the narrow path, which as the elders say, she does so steadily pursue" (Sedgwick, 1987: 114).

In *Hope Leslie* there is no glorification of the home. The Winthrop's and Pynchon's homes are repressive, Digby's parlor is the setting for mistaken identities and the Fletcher homestead is vulnerable to Indian attack. Throughout the whole novel, the home is depicted as a precarious site of danger. In other words, it is not a comforting haven, with "good living under almost every roof" as de Crévecoeur would have it, but a site of danger where women and children fall victim to men's battles (qtd. in Singly, 1993: 46).

In her novel Sedgwick denigrates the ideology of domesticity, the concept of the republican mother, and the Cult of True Womanhood. In other terms, the women who submit to the social codes of these doctrines are either removed early on from the text such is the case of Alice Fletcher and Martha Fletcher, or if kept as is the case with Margaret Winthrop they are derided.

The first woman who is removed early on from the text is Alice Fletcher. The latter is a woman who submits to the will of her father without showing any resistance. For example,

when her father refused her marriage with her cousin William “Alice had, in the imbecility of utter despair, submitted to her father’s commands” (Sedgwick, 1987: 13). Moreover, when her father chose another husband for her and he gave her as a trophy, she accepted her fate and embraced the role of the domesticated housewife. As the symbol of British domesticity she does not fit the imagined community Sedgwick wants to construct in the newly independent American republic.

The other woman who is violently removed from the novel is Martha Fletcher. The latter embodies the four pillars of the Cult of True Womanhood which are: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter, 1966: 152). For Sedgwick, she possesses “all the meek graces that befitted a godly maiden and dutiful helpmate” (Sedgwick, 1987: 14). Martha Fletcher symbolizes the perfect domesticated woman who does not question anything said by her husband. For example, when Mr. Fletcher decides to move his family from Boston to the frontier settlement of Springfield, Martha “received his decision with meek submission as all wives of that age of undisputed masculine supremacy” (Ibid. 16). Furthermore, when the old Indian Nelema informed her of a possible Indian attack by the Pequod Indians, Martha remained silent and does not take any decision to protect her family. In fact, her ineffectual subjectivity and meek submission prevented her from acting alone without the permission of her husband. As a consequence, the Fletcher home is attacked by the Indians, Martha and her infant children are killed, and her eldest son Everell is taken captive to be executed in the wilderness. From all this we understand that for Sedgwick docility and submission are not the traits American women should strive for. In other words, through the death of Martha Sedgwick shows her rejection of the ideology of True Womanhood.

Another example which shows Sedgwick’s refutation of the docile and submissive wife is her derision of Madam Winthrop. The latter is described as

> Continually taught to matron and maiden, the duty of unqualified obedience from the wife to the husband, her appointed lord and master.... like a horse easy on the bit, she was guided by the slightest intimation from him who held the reins; indeed – to pursue our humble illustration still farther – it sometimes appeared as if the reins were dropped, and the inferior animal were left to the guidance of her own sagacity (Ibid. 145).

As this quotation indicates, Sedgwick's derision of Margaret Winthrop suggests that this type of women must not be the example for the future of the American republic. Rather, American women should follow the example of Hope Leslie who listens only to her conscience and enjoys the public space.

Throughout her novel Sedgwick rejects the ideology of the separate spheres which stereotyped and constricted the liberties of women. For her, American women should not be reduced to the patriarchal concepts of female submissiveness and purity. In fact, by presenting American women as pioneers and adventurers who show their acts of bravery in the frontier space Sedgwick suggests that women must play active and essential roles in the American society. In other words, by portraying female heroines who defy male authority and speak publicly against the injustices of the stifling patriarchal laws she urges women to conquer the public space and assume their full citizenship.

IV- Sedgwick, Cooper and the Racial Other

To produce an indigenous national literature different from the European precedent, both Sedgwick and Cooper resorted to the history of the Indian-white relations. In other words, the Indian question constituted a particularly appropriate field for the production of a national literature. In *Removals: Nineteenth Century American Literature and the politics of Indian Affairs* (1991), Lucy Maddox argues that every debate and piece of literature from the first half of the nineteenth century had some discussion of the Native American's position in the American society, both geographically and politically. Even authors who did not address the Indian issue directly made mention of it. Maddox contends that the Indian's position

served as a metaphor for the predicament of women, African slaves, and European immigrants who were regularly arriving on American shores (Maddox, 1991: 6-7). The Myth of the American Frontier represented the imagined space where such questions could be resolved. So Catherine Maria Sedgwick and James Fenimore Cooper seized the opportunity which was given to them by the frontier literature, they used the latter's tools in their cultural work to look back to the past, interpret the present and consider the prospects of the future. Or as Carolyn Karcher writes: "the frontier romancers of the 1820s including Sedgwick realized that they were participating in a dialogue about the nation's destiny" (karcher, 1998: xix).

James fenimore Cooper was one of the fervent supporters of the Indian Removal Act. In *Notions of the Americans* published in 1828, he qualified this policy as "humane, rational project that will bring the Indians within the pale of civilization" (qtd.in Robinson, 1997: 15). Moreover, his support for Andrew Jackson's removal policy is clearly showed in his *Leatherstocking* series. As George Dekker has noted: "in Cooper's mind American nationhood and the Westward Movement … were intimately connected; each new clearing furnished a sign of the increasing temporal greatness of the nation…." (Dekker, 1967: 65).

The two important novels which show the confrontation of two or more races in Cooper's Frontier saga are *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. In fact, the story of each novel revolves around a race of people (Whites) who are new to the New World and who do their best to limit the existence and lifestyle of the original inhabitants of the land. And this is always done in the name of God and Civilization. In these novels, Cooper wants to perpetuate the separation of the races in the New World. In other words, his novels serve a "white purpose" which is to put the white man and the Native American in their proper places (Mills, 1986: 438).

To justify the separation of the two races Cooper describes the Native Americans in racial terms. In other words, to demonize the Indians he emphasizes the characteristics of savagery and brutality. For him, the man of color is 'savage' by nature so he cannot be trusted or civilized and must be either put in a delimited reservation or exterminated. Furthermore, in his works, Cooper sees intermarriage between the two races (whites and Indians) as a curse on the American nation. So to preserve their Anglo-Saxon purity Americans must avoid such miscegenistic marriages.

Cooper's racism is first suggested in *The Pioneers* through the most famous Native American character of the *Leatherstocking Tales* the old Mohican Chingachgook. The latter plays a central role in four of the five *Leatherstocking* novels. At first sight, Cooper represents Chingachgook the equal of Natty Bumppo. The two are equals in their heroism, strength and closeness to nature. However, a close attention to Cooper's depiction of the Mohican chief in *The Pioneers* reveals that his access to the transformative powers of the frontier is limited. In one of the scenes in which the villagers celebrate the Christmas season, Chingachgook is present, since he is a Christianized Indian, however, despite his anglicized clothing and knowledge of European manners he stayed outside the crowd. In fact, he is depicted as

> Uttering dull monotonous tones, keeping time by a gentle motion of his head and body. He made use of but few words ... Mohegan continued to sing while his countenance was becoming vacant, though coupled with his thick bushy hair, it was assuming an expression very much like brutal ferocity (Cooper, 1985: 165).

Moreover, the Native American is characterized as a drunk and potentially dangerous being. Even his capacity for action is suppressed in the narrative as it is explained that he is too mentally and physically impaired by his inability to control his consumption of alcohol. According to Susan B. McGee, Mohegan's lack of self-control over his body relinquishes his right to claim his native land (McGee, 2012: 35).

The other famous Native American of Cooper's series is the Huron Magua. In *The Last of the Mohicans* Magua is portrayed as a "savage" who has a 'ferocious smile' and a 'bloodthirsty vengeance' (Cooper, 1985: 573). Throughout the whole novel, Cooper is just emphasizing the demonization of Magua. In this respect he writes:

> There was a sudden fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage ... The native bore the tomahawk and knife of his tribe; and yet his appearance was not altogether that of a warrior. The colors of the war paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect, which thus had been produced by chance. His eye alone, which glinted like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. For a single instant, his searching and wary glance met the wondering look of the other, and then changing its direction, partly in cunning and partly in disdain, it remained fixed, as if penetrating the distant air (Ibid. 487).

Moreover, to stress the savagery of the Native Americans Cooper depicts the Huron Indians as

> the shades of the infernal regions, across which unhappy ghosts and savage demons were flitting in multitudes, [...] and are fierce, wild and joyous when savagely tomahawking, braining, and scalping an enemy, burning him at the stake, or ripping out his heart (Macdonald, 2000: 27).

The image one can sort out from this quotation is that the Indian is someone who is barbarous, bloodthirsty and cruel.

According to Louise K. Barnett, other writers such as Hawthorne and Melville share the tendency to portray the Indians as 'Ignoble savages' because frontier romances are always devoted to a white audience. As a result, the Indian is always portrayed as someone who carries negative and rude images and is viewed an enemy to be killed (Barnett, 1975: 87). This is why Cooper emphasizes the barbarous side of the Hurons by referring to them as being a 'thievish race', 'monsters', and 'devilish Mingoes' (Cooper, 1985: 511, 594, 540). In other words, Cooper's representation of the Native Americans underscores all the demonic and savage characteristics that can be found in a human being.

To justify the subjugation of the Native Americans and the spoliation of their lands, the American colonists had devised a slew of methods to portray the Indian in the most ignoble way, in the words of Roy Harvey Pearce "one radically different from their proper selves; they knew he was bound inextricably in a primitive past, a primitive society, and a primitive environment, to be destroyed by God, nature and progress to make way for civilized man (Pearce, 1988: 4). So to remove the Native Americans further west and to take their lands, many Americans and among them Cooper considered the Indians as being inferior to whites. In other words, this image of inferiority gave them the opportunity to undertake the destruction of the Indian under the terms of a universal moral progress, which in the terms of Roy Harvey Pearce is the special destiny of America to manifest (Ibid. 212). It is also the point of view developed by James fenimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans* as he reminds us at numerous points in the narrative that the removal and destruction of the Indians is a manifestation of America's destiny.

Since the fate of the Indian is disappearance and it is something which is sealed by God, nature and progress, the Native American must give his place to the whites in order to establish their civilization in the wilderness. We find this idea of the vanishing race in Charles Darwin's theory of the Survival of the Fittest. Darwin's theory of evolution is a process in which human species are engaged in an eternal struggle for survival. In this respect he writes

> I have now recapitulated the facts and considerations which have thoroughly convinced me that species have been modified, during a long course of descent. This has been affected chiefly through the natural selection of numerous successive, slight, favourable, variations; aided in important manner by the inherited effects of use and disuse of parts; and in an important manner ... by direct action of external conditions, and by variations which seem to us in our ignorance to arise spontaneously (qtd. in Banton, 1961: 3).

Applying this theory to the Native Americans, Cooper depicts the Mohicans as constantly fighting the savage Hurons throughout his novel. The conflict is defined by who would be physically fit enough to survive. Uncas is killed at the end of the novel. His death not only

means the death of an Indian, but also the death of Indians in general, because they are deemed unfit and doomed to extinction (Yorburg, 1983: 11).

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper introduces his protagonist in situations where he always declares himself to be white. Hawkeye asserts that he is 'a man without a cross' by which he means that he is of unmixed blood, pure stock (Cooper, 1985: 604). Moreover to underscore his whiteness, Hawkeye declares

> I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren't deny that I am genuine white (Ibid. 502).

In this quote, Hawkeye emphasizes his pure whiteness. Furthermore, his insistence that he is pure white, with "no cross in his blood," is quite explicitly an assertion of moral and spiritual preeminence (Robinson, 1997: 21). Throughout the whole novel, the frontiersman Hawkeye is depicted as the man who possesses the best gifts of civilization and savagery

> The frame of the white man … was like that of one who had known hardship and exertion from his earliest youth. He wore a hunting shirt of forest green … and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur. He also bore a knife in a girdle of wampum, like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but no tomahawk. His moccasins were ornamented after the gay fashions of the natives, while the only part of his under-dress which appeared below the hunting frock was a pair of buckskin leggings that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees with the sinews of a deer. A pouch and horn completed his personal accouterments. The eye of the hunter or scout, which ever might be, was small, quick, keen, and restless, roving while he spoke … as if in quest of game or disturbing the sudden approach of some lurking enemy (Cooper, 1985:500-501).

However, the fact of living with the Indians Chingachgook and Uncas does not prevent him from keeping ties with his origin or race.

As far as the theme of miscegenation is concerned, the latter comes to the fore if one reads the *Leatherstocking Tales* as part of an ongoing dialogue between Catherine Maria Sedgwick and James fenimore Cooper. Indeed, Miscegenation takes a very important place in

the *Leatherstocking* Saga mainly in *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. In the latter, Cooper is against interracial marriage and he shows this at different occasions.

To support this contention, I will use first the example of Oliver Edwards in *The pioneers*. At first, it is assumed that Oliver Edwards is part Indian, thus with 'savage' blood in his veins. So Cooper separates Edwards from Elizabeth temple in the tale. Elizabeth and Oliver cannot marry because people with mixed blood cannot be placed in the same socioeconomic position as people with pure blood. However, when the racial roots of Edwards were discovered to be pure white and heir to part of Judge Temple's estate the barriers between him and Elizabeth disappear. Moreover, he is welcomed into the family of Judge Temple and allowed to marry Elizabeth.

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper allows no place for interracial romance or miscegenation. This can be clearly seen in the end he reserved for Cora Munro, Uncas and Magua. The three die at the end of the novel while Duncan Heyward and Alice Munro survive and marry. About this plot Louise Barnett says that "because Cooper split his heroine figure, he has the freedom to sacrifice Cora without violating the basic requirements of the frontier romance. Alice is saved to marry Heyward, but Cora and the two Indians who desire her all die. The happy ending, defined as the marriage of the white hero and heroine, is qualified in *The Last of the Mohicans*, but not negated" (Barnett, 1975: 64).

When we read the first chapters of *The Last of the Mohicans*, the first impression we have is that Cora Munro rightfully deserves to be the real heroine of this story because she is the opposite of her half-sister Alice. She is not timid or helpless like Alice, but she is courageous and intelligent. Describing her, Cooper writes

> The tresses of this lady were shining black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with colour of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds. And yet there was neither coarseness, nor want of shadowing, in a countenance that was exquisitely regular and dignified, and

> surpassingly beautiful. She smiled, as if in pity at her own momentary forgetfulness, discovering by the act of raw of teeth that would have shamed the purest ivory; when, replacing the veil, she bowed her face, and rode in silence, like one whose thoughts were abstracted from the scene around her (Cooper, 1985: 488-9).

But being a mullato, Cooper cannot allow Cora to marry a white man. In other words, the fact that he does not permit Major Heyward to fall in love with her in spite of all the good qualities she showed indicate that Cooper is against interracial marriage. By killing both Cora and Uncas at the end of his novel he puts an end to the fantasy of an Afro-Indian alliance.

Cooper's discrimination against the racial other be it Indian or Black can be more clearly seen in the attitude of Major Duncan Heyward towards Cora Munro. Before Colonel Munro divulged the secret of her mixed blood, Heyward had the greatest respect for her high qualities, enjoyed talking to her, and even cared for her safety because he thought that she is pure white. In one of the scenes Cooper writes

> The young man [Duncan] regarded the last speaker [Cora] in open admiration, and even permitted her fairer though certainly no beautiful companion [Alice] to proceed unattended, while he sedulously opened the way himself for the passage of her who has been called Cora (Ibid. 492).

In a conversation between Heyward and Alice about music and his singing voice, Heyward says

> I know not what you call my bass, said Heyward, piqued at her remark, but I know that your safety and that of Cora is far dearer to me than could be any orchestra of Handel's music (Ibid. 498).

However, when Heyward knew that Cora is of mixed blood half white and half black, he changed his attitude towards her. He even became no more interested in her security and fate. In one of the scenes where Cora was captive of the Indians she said to him

> And dearest Cora, Duncan; surely Cora was not forgotten? Not forgotten! no regretted, as woman was seldom mourned before. Your venerable father knew no difference between his children; but I – Alice, you will not be offended when I say, that to me her worth was in a degree obscured (Ibid. 772).

After the death of the two lovers, the Indian maidens started to lament them. After lamenting the passing of their potential chief, they moved to Cora his bride to be in the afterlife. In this respect, Cooper writes

> Then, they who succeeded, changing their tones to a milder and still more tender strain, alluded, with the delicacy and sensitiveness of women, to the stranger maiden, who had left the earth at a time so near his own departure, as to render the will of the Great Spirit too manifest to be disregarded. They admonished him to be kind to her, and to have consideration for her ignorance of those arts, which were so necessary to the comfort of a warrior like himself. They dwelt upon her matchless beauty, and on her noble resolution, without the taint of envy, and as angels may be thought to delight in a superior excellence; adding, that these endowments should prove more than equivalent for any imperfections in her education (Ibid. 869).

Making reference to this passage, Richard Chase suggests that by killing off both Cora and Uncas, Cooper gives them "a chance of felicity in the happy hunting grounds" (Chase, 1957: 64). However, even this possibility is put aside by Cooper by making Hawkeye reacting negatively "when they spoke of the future prospects of Cora and Uncas, … shook his head, like one who knew the error of their simple creed … Happily for the self-command of both Heyward and Munro, they knew not the meaning of the wild sounds they heard" (Cooper, 1985: 870-71).

To show his endorsement of the miscegenation taboo, Cooper doomed the union of Colonel Munro's daughter Cora and the young Mohican Uncas. In fact, he kills both lovers to prevent their union. As Roy Harvey Pearce argues the marriage of Cora and Uncas "would be impossible in Cooper's world of civilization and progress; hence, temporizing the issue by making Cora's ancestry somewhat dubious, he must do away with them both" (Pearce, 1974: 529). By doing so, cooper shows the superiority of white civilization over the Native American primitive life. In other words, Cooper preferred to celebrate the Anglo-Saxon marriage of Duncan Heyward and Alice Munro because this union will give birth to a pure American identity. Or as Mary Chapman puts it

> In the final chapters, the novel shifts its focus irrevocably from the dark and sensual Cora as romantic heroine to her fair and virginal opposite, Alice. In moving from the potential union of Uncas and Cora to the actual union of Heyward and Alice, the novel traces a narrative trajectory from sensuality to virginity and from potential miscegenation to racial purity. Rather than unite feuding peoples, as marriages in historical romances often do, the marriage implied at the end of the novel ensures the colonists' safety from the threats of miscegenation (Chapman, 1999: 247).

To subvert Cooper's white supremacist ideology and his demonization of the Indians, Sedgwick set her book in Puritan New England in the immediate aftermath of the Pequod War. She extensively researched the history of the time period and drew inspiration from it for many of her characters and plots. Indeed, in the preface to her third novel she informs her readers that she has located *Hope Leslie* in seventeenth-century New England and has designed her historical novel as a means by which others might be prompted to investigate the early history of their native land (qtd. in Kelley, 1987: xx). To provide a corrective to the intellectual repressiveness of Cooper's history making and history writing (Maddox, 1991: 95), Sedgwick chooses to add Native American voices to these conventional accounts of early United States history. In other words, by introducing these other voices and their interpretations of Puritan America, Sedgwick intends to encourage further reading of America history.

In a study where she examined the representations of the Native Americans in nineteenth-century American literature, Sherry Sullivan, writes "the debate over the Indian was a vehicle for debate over different views of white American society and national identity" (Sullivan, 1985: 26). This is the case of *Hope Leslie* where Catherine Maria Sedgwick is not only concerned with the controversy surrounding the Indian question; she also uses the latter to investigate how women are viewed in American culture and to criticize the patriarchal systems that were in place in both Puritan and her modern society. In her introduction to the novel, Caroline Karcher notices that in the nineteenth century, "As increasing numbers of

women gained access to literacy and took up the pen, fiction became a vehicle for debating women's proper place in both the family and the republic." she adds that *Hope Leslie* serves as such a vehicle where Sedgwick "offers her answers to such questions about whose bodies should be included in the nation and empowered to determine its future" (karcher, 1998: xx).

Writing back to Cooper, Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* affords a radical rereading of history that questions the very foundations of America's defining Frontier Myth and demonstrates the humanity of the Indians and the cultural engagement of women, especially in questions of social justice. In other words, by putting face to face Indian brutality and Puritan expansionism and savagery, *Hope Leslie* strongly challenges the ways in which Cooper's frontier narratives distorted the history of white settlement and the conflicts with the Indians. In these narratives the Indians are depicted as 'savages', malevolent and their violence against the whites was unprovoked. This genre of literature highlights the Indian violence and provocation and they end every time with a white victory that often involves extermination of the Indians and the progressive movement of white settlement and civilization (Zagarell, 1987: 233-34).

To challenge and subvert Cooper's preconceptions about the Indians, Sedgwick starts her novel by a preface. In this respect, she writes

> The Indians of North America are, perhaps, the only race of men of whom it may be said, that though conquered, they were not enslaved. They could not submit, and live. When made captives, they courted death and exulted in torture. These traits of their character will be viewed by an impartial observer, in a light very different from that in which they were regarded by our ancestors. In our histories, it was perhaps natural that they should be represented as "surly dogs," who preferred to die rather than to live, from no other motives than a stupid or malignant obstinacy. Their own historians or poets, if they had such, would as naturally, and with more justice, have extolled their high-souled courage and patriotism (Sedgwick, 1987: 6).

Through this preface she declares her assumption of the humanity of the Indians; she ascribes behavioural differences to environment and demands that her reader adopts an alternative

viewpoint. A viewpoint that sympathizes with the Native Americans and respects their customs and traditions.

In contrast to Cooper who emphasizes the characteristics of brutality and savagery of the Indians, Sedgwick draws a flattering portrait of the Indian princess Magawisca. She writes

> The Indian stranger was tall for her years, which did not exceed fifteen. Her form was slander, flexible, and graceful; and there was a freedom and loftiness in her movement which, though tempered with modesty, expressed a consciousness of high birth. Her face, although marked by the peculiarities of her race, was beautiful even to an European eye. Her features were regular and her teeth white as pearls; but there must be something beyond symmetry of feature to fix the attention and it was an expression of dignity, thoughtfulness, and deep dejection that made the eye linger on Magawisca's face (Ibid. 23).

In this passage, Sedgwick emphasizes Magawisca's noble stature and intelligence. Moreover, to reinforce her strong character and bravery, even Everell Fletcher lauds her by saying "she had an habitual self-command that hid the emotions of her heart from common observers and veiled them even from those who most narrowly watched her" (Ibid. 45). From this quotation, one can grasp that Magawisca is a woman of action, and as such she is set in opposition to the frail and dainty women lauded by Cooper. According to Mary Kelley, "Magawisca is the only Indian woman in early American fiction invested with substance and strength" (Kelley, 1987: xxvi).

To demonstrate that the traits of ferocity and infidelity are not only the sole preserve of the Native Americans as it is propounded by Cooper, Sedgwick supports her stance with several examples of white men's savagery and hypocrisy. The first instance which shows the Puritans' savagery is rendered early on in the novel through the practice of scalping. In fact, the scalping of Indian chiefs is greatly rewarded by the Puritan authorities. In one of the scenes, Digby, the Fletcher family servant claims "Sir, you know we think no more of taking off a scalp here, than we did of shaving our beards at home. Then he untied his pouch and

drew from it a piece of dried and shriveled skin, to which hair, matted together with blood, still adhered (Sedgwick, 1987: 25). This abhorring act shows the inhumanity of the Puritans.

The other example which shows the hypocrisy of the Puritans is when they imprisoned Magawisca. The latter is captured while organizing a meeting between Hope and her sister Faith and wrongly accused of fomenting an attack with the Pequods. The Puritans imprison her without taking into consideration Magawisca's act of courage and bravery in saving Everell's life. When she is tried by the Puritan magistrates Magawisca challenges the authority of the Puritan leaders when she says: "I deny your right to judge me ... not one of my race has ever acknowledged your authority" (Ibid. 286). Furthermore, she claims

> Take my own words, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle. The white man cometh – the Indian vanisheth. Can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us? Nay – and it matters not whether we fall by the tempest that lays the forest low, or are cut down alone, by the stroke of the axe ... thou didst promise ... to my dying mother, thou didst promise, kindness to her children. In her name, I demand of thee death or liberty (Ibid. 292-93).

All this show the untrustworthiness of the Puritans and the greatness of the Indian princess.

In the novel's fourth chapter, which recounts the Pequod War from the point of view of Magawisca, the Native American princess who witnessed the Puritan attack, Sedgwick subverts the one side history that is propounded by Cooper's frontier saga. In the words of Patricia Kalayjian Sedgwick both revisions the war and engages the dialogics of history (Kalayjian, 1997: 66). In fact, by allowing the Indian heroine Mgawisca to tell the story of the Puritan attack on the Pequods from the Native American point of view, Sedgwick moves her audience to reflect on the white community's brutality and barbarity towards the Native Americans.

As a brave and confident woman Magawisca starts her recital of the massacre of the Piquods at Fort Mystic to show the cruelty of the Puritans. In other words, her version of the story shows the distortion of history by Cooper. In fact, to demonstrate the weakness and

treachery of the Puritans Magawisca tells Everell how the Puritans chose to attack the Pequod Fort when the chiefs were away at a council. She says

> Oh! The dreadful fray, even now, rings in my ears! Those fearful guns that we have never heard before – the shouts of your people – our own battle yell – the piteous cries of the little children – the groans of our mothers, and oh!, worse – worse than all – the silence of those that could not speak ... their leader gave the cry to fire our huts ... then was taken from our hearth-stone, where the English had been so often warmed and cherished, the brand to consume our dwellings ... some of our people threw themselves into the midst of the crackling flames, and their courageous souls parted with one shout of triumph; others mounted the palisade, but they were shot like a flock of birds ... thus did the strangers destroy, in our own homes, hundreds of our tribe (Ibid. 48-49.)

Magawisca and the remaining members of her family owe their salvation to her mother's cunning who finds a secure place for hiding, but their whole tribe is slaughtered. When chief Mononotto (Magawisca's father) and his friends return from the council they find their village in a state of chaos and desolation.

To show the hypocrisy and brutality of the Puritans Magawisca tells to Everell how her younger brother, Samoset, who tried to defend their tribe is captured and beheaded by the Puritans. "Magawisca paused – she looked at Everell and said with a bitter smile – 'you English tell us, Everell, that the book of your law is better than that written on our hearts, for ye say that it teaches mercy, compassion, forgiveness – if ye had such a law and believed it, would ye thus have treated a captive boy?'" (Ibid). Moreover, to show the atrocities the Native Americans endured at the hands of the white men Magawisca continues her tale and recounts how the English chased unsuspecting women and children into the swamp and slaughtered them:

> The English penetrated the forest-screen, and were already on the little rising-ground where we had been entrenched. Death was dealt freely. None resisted – not a movement was made – not a voice lifted – not a sound escaped, save the wailings of the dying children. One of the soldiers knew my mother, and a command was given that her life and that of her children should be spared. A guard was stationed around us (Ibid. 55).

This passage is a direct response to Cooper's frontier saga. Whereas in Cooper's frontier fiction the ones who are killed are white women and children, in Sedgwick's version the story takes another view that of unprotected Native American women and children who are slaughtered by white men.

Through Magawisca's story of the Pequod War Sedgwick revises white masculine history and moves her audience to see how the courage of the Pequods was distorted into ferocity and barbarity. Speaking about Everell's reaction, Sedgwick writes

> This new version of an old story reminded him of the man and the lion in the fable. But here it was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist's subjects; but it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth and giving it to whom it belonged (Ibid. 53).

The truth Sedgwick wants to speak about is the extermination of defenceless Native American families at the hands of the Puritans.

Unlike Cooper's Leatherstocking series where unprovoked Indians attack unsuspecting white settlements, in Sedgwick's frontier version the Indian action comes in retaliation after white men's attack. For example, before the massacre at Mystic Fort Magawisca's father is described as a virtuous man of peace who befriended and helped the white men in different matters of their infant colony. However, after the battle that devastated his tribe he became totally transformed: "from that moment my father was a changed man. He neither spoke nor looked at his wife, or children; but placing himself at the head of one band of the young men he shouted his war cry and then silently pursued the enemy" (Ibid. 57).

By telling the Pequod Story, Sedgwick achieves several aims. First, she gives voice to women who are silenced in the Puritan and her contemporary society. In fact, by allowing Magawisca to tell her story she revises the white masculine historiography and fosters the recognition of the Native American's humanity and dignity. Second, in her story the guilt is

put on the white men who attacked and decimated unprotected Pequod women and their children which is a point of view that contrasts sharply with Cooper's distorted history. Third, by showing the sympathy of both Hope and Everell toward the Indians at a time when the latter were violently removed from their lands to the west, Sedgwick sustains the Native American cause and militates for a cross-racial society.

Sedgwick's sympathy with the Native Americans can be more clearly seen in the end she reserved for her characters. For example, the ones who otherize and do not accept the inclusion of the Indians in the future American republic such as Mrs. Fletcher, her servant Jennet, and Sir Philip Gardiner, are violently removed from the novel. By contrast, the characters who support the Native American's plight, befriend them, and show their willingness to welcome them in this nascent republic are Sedgwick's heroic characters. For Sedgwick, the American republic should be a mosaic that welcomes all the races.

Through her frontier fiction Sedgwick criticizes Andrew Jackson's policy of removal and Cooper's imagined community which does not allow the mingling of the two races (Whites and Native Americans). This idea can be supported by different examples in the text. For instance, in one of the scenes at the beginning of the novel, Mr. Fletcher is described as someone who is "mortified at seeing power, which had been earned at so dear a rate, and which he had fondly hoped was to be applied to the advancement of man's happiness sometimes perverted to purposes of oppression and personal aggrandizement" (Ibid. 16). Besides, in another scene, he is depicted as "deeply lamenting the motives of the mistaken policy that led to tensions between the Puritans and Pequod leadership (Ibid. 26). Though William Fletcher is talking about events which took place during the Pequod War, Sedgwick's contemporary readers will directly make a link to the government's policy toward the Indians which is under discussion in the US Congress at that time. So Sedgwick's *Hope*

Leslie is a direct response to this segregationist policy and a call for an equal society where all the people enjoy the same rights and freedoms.

Unlike Cooper who is repelled by even the thought of miscegenation, Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* is a strong and subversive critique of this taboo. In other words, by imagining a happy ending for the miscegenistic marriage of Faith Leslie and the Indian Pequod Oneco, Sedgwick suggests a possible solution to the conflicting relations between the Indians and the Whites. In fact, in her preface to her third novel she claims that Americans are confined not to the actual, but the possible (Ibid. 6). This possible future of the American republic should be a space where all the different ethnic groups living on the American soil enjoy their interracial relationships.

The love relationship between Faith and Oneco started when they were living in the Fletcher household. After Mononotto's attack to save his children from servitude, Faith is taken captive to the Pequod village. After she gets older, she marries Magawisca's brother Oneco, calls herself Mary rather than to keep her Puritan name and even refuses to leave her Indian community. Through the two lovers mutually enjoyed union and Faith's adoption of the Indian culture, Sedgwick welcomes the ethnic other in her imagined community.

In the scene in which the two sisters (Hope and Faith) are reunited, and through Hope's changing attitude toward the Native Americans from suspicion to acceptance of her sister's adoption of Indian culture, Sedgwick urges the American people to accept interracial marriages. After a long separation between the two sisters, Magawisca the Pequod princess arranges a meeting between Hope and Faith. When Hope sees Faith

> In her savage attire, fondly leaning on Oneco's shoulder, her heart died within her; a sickening feeling came over her, an unthought of revolting of nature ... and springing forward to clasp her in her arms, she retreated to the cliff, leaned her head against it, averted her eyes, and pressed her hands on her heart, as if she would have bound down her rebel feelings (Ibid. 227).

At first sight Hope does not accept her sister's integration within the Indian community and will do her best to try to convince her to regain the white society.

Using Magawisca as her interpreter, hope first asks her sister if she remembers when the Indians sprang upon the family at Bethel, murdered Mrs. Fletcher, her innocent children and she stolen away. Faith replies that she remembers it well, for then it was Oneco saved her life (Ibid. 229). After that she uses another scheme to try to restore her sister to the Puritan community. She asks Magawisca to tell her that "she shall be decked with jewels from head to foot, she shall have feathers from the most beautiful birds that wing the air, and flowers that never fade – tell her that all I possess shall be hers (Ibid. 229-30). However, Faith refuses that offer and prefers to stay with her new community. Moreover, when Hope tries to put her cloak on her sister's shoulders, Faith says that she does not like the English dress (Ibid. 229). By keeping her Indian clothes Faith shows her desire to stay with her new adopted family.

This passage hints to a historical fact in American history, as many women captives chose to remain in their adoptive Indian tribes. In his book *Native and New comers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (2001), James Axtell confirms this idea when he claims that "had not they been forced to return by military enforced peace treaties, the ranks of white Indians would have been greatly enlarged (Axtell, 2001: 194). Quoting a colonel who negotiated an exchange of captives in 1764 with the Indians in Pennsylvania he adds "most of them, particularly those who have been a long time among the Indians, will take the first opportunity to run away (Ibid).

At the end of the meeting between the sisters, Faith is captured by the Governor's guards and is forced back to the white community. In the Fletcher household, Faith becomes the hostage in the house who does not accept to reintegrate the Puritan society

> All day, and all night ... she goes from window to window, like an imprisoned bird fluttering against the bars of its cage; and so wistfully she looks abroad, as if her heart went forth with the glance of her eye (Sedgwick, 1987: 265).

When Hopes sees the miserable situation of her sister and her leaning for her husband and her adoptive Indian family, Hope's mind starts changing from revulsion to reconciliation. For example, when Aunt Grafton asks Faith to put away her Indian objects, Hope intervenes and says "Let her have her own way at present, I pray you, aunt. She may have some reason for preferring those shells that we do not know; and if she has not, I see no great harm in her preferring bright shells to bright stones" (Ibid. 267). Furthermore, to confirm the changing attitude of Hope, Sedgwick writes

> Hope took a more youthful, romantic, and perhaps natural view of the affair; and the suggestions of Magawisca, combining with the dictates of her own heart, produced the conclusion that this was a case where "God had joined together, and man might not put asunder" (Ibid. 338).

Through the shifting attitude of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick urges her American readers to be tolerant toward the Native Americans and respect their own way of life. Moreover, by allowing a happy ending of the marriage of Faith and Oneco she moves her audience to accept the ethnic other and interracial marriages.

At the end of the story Oneco succeeds to rescue his young wife and the two travel to the frontier space to enjoy their life and continue the lineage of the Pequods. By portraying Faith as a white woman who prefers to stay with her husband her adoption of the traditions and customs of her Indian family, Sedgwick subverts Cooper's white supremacist ideology which assumed that European-American civilized society is superior to Native American tribal organization. Furthermore, by allowing Faith to choose between the two systems of life, she affirms the agency and the ability of women to assume their choices.

Conclusion

In her intertextual tribute to Cooper, Catherine Sedgwick creates heroines who negotiate their role in the patriarchal societies in which they live. In her fictional response to Cooper, she imagines a society where women have direct participation in the political organization of the republic. In other words, by writing about women's participation with men in a national past, she denies the establishment of the separate spheres ideology on which the notion of female inferiority was justified. In fact, by allowing her female protagonists, Hope Leslie and Magawisca to speak publicly on issues pertaining to gender and race, she challenges Cooper's ideology and even provokes her audience to reconsider the place of women in American society. Moreover, by including Indians in her imagined community Sedgwick sustains the Native American cause and militates for a cross-racial society.

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Chapter Three

Mary Hunter Austin and the Post Turnerian and Post Rooseveltian Gender Rewriting of the Frontier

Introduction

The connection between Mary Austin, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Theodore Roosevelt is quite explicit. Austin read both of them thoroughly and even visited Roosevelt at his home where they discussed different issues of the time (Austin, 2007: 32). So the aim of this chapter is to put into dialogue Austin's frontier narratives with Turner's and Roosevelt's frontier myth. It attempts to demonstrate how Austin's works deconstruct the male frontier narrative by privileging the experiences of women and Native Americans, voices which were ignored or silenced in the grand narratives of the American frontier. Moreover, this chapter argues that Austin's use of women characters to build an equitable society in the frontier space is a promotion of a new spatial ideology that might reconfigure the Western space and social relationships.

Mary Hunter Austin (1868-1934), a prolific American writer, wrote on a wide variety of social and political issues, such as feminine power and genius, conservation, economics, international affairs, woman suffrage and Native American traditions and rights. She wrote in a period that witnessed the flourish of the frontier literature, including Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, Andy Adams *Log of a Cowboy*, and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*. The ideas of these writers and statesmen were in full swing and represented the acme of the Frontier myth as a masculine space associated with male leadership and values. However, critical tradition prefers to reduce her whole body of work to the collection of nature essays entitled *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). In other words, although she wrote along with her male counterparts during the same period, about the same

setting and people her name is not grouped with male frontier writers. The truth is that as Stineman argues Mary Austin is not cited beside western American historians like Turner and Roosevelt or famous frontier fiction writers like Wister and Grey because in her oeuvre she is criticizing the late nineteenth-century history and the early twentieth-century popular fictions of the American frontier and the ideologies of domination which are imbedded in them (Stineman, 1989:1- 4).

When Frederick Jackson Turner declared in his major essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) that the American frontier was closed, the frontier shifted from its meaning as a geographical space to the realm of myth. In other words, it became a culturally contested space. So Austin reclaimed this territory and sought to redefine its meaning in the American cultural imagination. In her frontier narratives such as *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), *Lost Borders* (1909), and *Earth Horizon* (1932), Austin used different strategies to resist and revise this Anglocentric and patriarchal myth. Her frontier fiction opens up and produces a new social space in which all the marginalized voices are included.

Mary Austin's work has received a great bulk of critical literature. Most of the critics situate her oeuvre within the tradition of "nature writing". For Edward Abbey, Mary Austin is a genuine nature writer who shared the tradition with John Muir, John C. Van Dyke and John Burroughs. He argues

> Mary Austin has something special going for her ... the world of nature. The natural scene. The country out there, yonder, beyond the wall, beyond the interstate highways ... beyond that wall lies the natural, nonhuman world. Nature. What's left of it ... we save what we can of the original world that could have been our lordly inheritance. Mary Austin's *Land of Little Rain* is one of them, another nature book. That is a book about earth, sky, weather, about some of the plants and animals that survive (Austin, 1988: viii-ix).

Another critic who continues in the same vein is David Wyatt. In his book, *The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California* (1986), he contends that Austin's nature writing is a desire to remake paradise in which Eve is the precursor (Wyatt, 1986: 95).

Other critics such as Richard Drinnon, Esther Stineman, Karen S. Langolis, and Elizabeth Ammons tackle her representation of the Native Americans. In *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-hating and Empire Building* (1997), Richard Drinnon puts Austin within a group of fiction writers whom he labels the civilizers and the conquerors. For him, Mary Austin is a racist writer who continues the westward trek of her grandmothers by taking up a homestead in the arid lands of Southern California ... she believed and never stopped believing that the continent had to be won from Indians so nature could be "subdued" (Drinnon, 1997: 233). Esther Stineman claims that Austin's respect for the Indians was not enough. What she needed was a more realistic view of the problems and poverty encroaching upon the Indians of New Mexico, whose interests could not be substantially advanced merely by the enthusiasm of the Anglo elite (Stineman, 1989: 179). In her article, "Marketing the American Indians: Mary Austin and the Business of Writing," Karen S. Langolis argues that for Austin, the Indians represented just a good material to sell her books for the Eastern audience (Langolis, 1997: 151). For Elizabeth Ammons, Austin participates in the Anglo-American racism towards the Indians. As an example, she cites Austin's opinion on the Indian painter Diego Rivera

> It was a relief to discover that there was no Nordic taint in Diego Rivera. There was Moorish blood, a little Jewish, perhaps, Spanish and Indian. Especially the Indian; poised, centered, at home with his work. A great painter; a great man (qtd. in Ammons, 1992: 101).

Ammons adds that with its turn-of-the century race-theory rhetoric, this statement has to make a modern reader cringe. Ideas of racial and ethnic "taint" and "blood" have always been used to promote racist agendas (Ibid).

As far as the feminist perspective is concerned, Mary Austin's work has been considered by several critics such as Susan J. Rosowski, Faith Jaycox, and Esther Stineman. All the three critics agree that Austin is a rebellious woman who wrote against the patriarchal society. For example, Stineman claims that

> Austin criticized "feminine" values that disempowered women. She agitated against the male-dominated hierarchy where ever she found it, publicly in her lectures and writing, privately in her letters. Her career testifies to her indomitable will and her commitment to interpret the world in a way that affirmed her unique, woman's voice, a voice that she claimed was never "meant to chirrup or twitter" (Stineman, 1989: 3).

From the review of the literature above, we notice that Austin's frontier fiction has been studied and criticized from different perspectives. However, the issue of the production of space and social relationships which is embedded in the dialogue between Austin and her male contemporaries, mainly Turner and Roosevelt is not yet tackled as far as I know. Thus, in my study, I hypothesize that Austin's *Lost Borders* is another produced space where the woman enjoys the freedom of the frontier space. Furthermore, I argue that, in *Lost Borders*, Austin does not only revise the male frontier myth, but also produces another western myth. In the words of Henry Lefebvre it is through art and literature that we produce space and transform social relationships (Lefebvre, 1991: 349).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the biography of Mary Austin where the focus is put on the influence of the frontier on her writing career. The second section analyzes the issue of gender in Turner's and Austin's frontier narratives to demonstrate how Turner used the myth of the frontier to silence the progressive era challenges to gender role by asserting patriarchal dominance, and how Austin responded by rejecting this Victorian thinking about women and asserting the liberation of women in the frontier space. The third section discusses the issues of race and power in Roosevelt's and Austin's works to reveal Roosevelt's ideology of masculine domination and Austin's restitution of the frontier to its true owners, the Indians.

I- Mary Austin the Frontierswoman: A Life (Writing) in Movement

Born in 1868 in Carlinville, Illinois, Mary Hunter Austin was never enamoured with the joys of domesticity. She was the Daughter of lawyer and Civil War veteran George Hunter and temperance activist Susanna Savilla Graham Hunter. As an amateur writer who devoured books, Austin looked to her father for intellectual guidance. In fact, her father was the first person who encouraged her to be independent and to read *Alice in Wonderland* (Lanigan, 1989: 13). On the other hand, her mother warned her against quoting Thoreau and talking about nature with boys (Austin, 2007: 112). According to Austin, her mother was a Victorian woman who believed in the idea that "the gentleman will tell the lady what to think" (Ibid. 113). However, Austin was not discouraged by her mother and defied all these constricting ideas. Indeed, as a child, she read many literary classics that she found in her father's collection or borrowed from others.

In 1870, the Hunter family moved from the town to the countryside where Austin enjoyed long outdoor walks. Her experience in exploring the gardens, orchards, and bottomlands of this rural neighbourhood became the source of her power. For example, one of their neighbours, Mrs. Keplinger recalled

> She was always an oddity ... She had two great braids of hair on top of her head and used to wander around the yard staring at everything. I always wanted to see down into her, but I never felt that I could. I couldn't fathom her. My husband used to look out the window at her and say to me, 'I wonder what will become of Mary. I wonder what she will be' (qtd. in Pearce, 1979: 79).

As a girl who is fascinated by the outdoor, she bought for herself Hugh miller's *Old Red Sandstone* one of the earliest geological texts that enhanced her love for the open space.

Her educational career was a struggle against the intellectual limitations put on women in nineteenth-century America. In 1884 she joined Blackburn College, where she studied science, psychology and political economy. Then, in 1885 she moved to the Normal School in

Bloomington to prepare her teaching degree in order to earn money and help her family. However, there she suffered from a nervous breakdown that she attributed to the bad living conditions of the school, the lack of outdoor exercise, and the absence of fresh vegetables in her diet (Lanigan, 1989: 22). As a result, the family doctor sent her home for rest and convalescence. A common decision in the nineteenth century when women were considered incapable for sustained intellectual endeavour. Women's brains were generally considered as unsuitable for such hard work. For example, in 1877 the University of Wisconsin regents declared

> Education is greatly to be desired, but it is better that the future matrons of our state should be without a university training than that it should be produced at the expense of ruined health; better that the future mothers of the state she be robust, hearty, healthy women, than by over study, they entail upon their descendants the germs of disease (qtd. in Ibid. 23).

After her convalescence, she returned to Blackburn College to carry on her studies in science. Her studies in biology were a stimulating force in her career and pushed her to challenge the doctrine of women passivity and emotional lability as opposed to men's supposed rationality and assertiveness. In 1888 she graduated with the title of the best class poet. Describing her struggle to reach her aim, she wrote: "I won a college degree by dint of insisting on it, and by crowding its four years into two and a half while my brother had the full four years" (Austin, 2007: 151-159).

From an early age, Mary Austin was frustrated with her contemporary society's rigid attitude toward gender issues. This frustration was mainly caused by the mixed gender-roles she experienced in her family. On the one hand, her mother educated her to be a "true woman" and submissive to her male counterpart. On the other hand, she also encouraged her to work outside to help her family who were in need of money. In fact, Susanna Hunter was an unconventional woman who did not adhere strictly to the ideology of domesticity.

Although she had fixed ideas on gender roles within the home, Susanna Hunter was pragmatic enough to realize that Jim would be unable to support the family in his attempt to farm in California she pushed Austin from “domestic life” in the home into life as a wage earner, and Austin helped supplement the family income by teaching.

Mrs. Hunter was also the president of the local chapter of the Women Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The latter was a national organization of women that agitated against tobacco, liquor and asked for social reforms. As an advocator of certain women’s issues and rights she invited Frances Willard the leader of the suffrage movement to address the ninth annual convention in Carlinville in 1882. Being among the audience and hearing the speech of this ardent feminist enhanced Austin’s anger at the inequity of the status of women in American society. As a result, she joined the Broom Brigade, the girls’ division of the WCTU. From her participation in the meetings of this organization and her observations she learned that women can shape national policies and influence political leaders (Goodman, 2008: 6).

Austin’s critique of misogynism in American society was also influenced by a very important event that took place during her childhood. This event was the four-minute egg story. In *Earth Horizon*, Austin tells us that she did not like soft- boiled eggs so she asked her mother to let her egg stay for one additional minute in the cooker. She even proposed that she will tend to it herself. But her brother Jim liked soft-boiled eggs so Susanna Hunter submitted to his will. And as the head of the family all the other members were expected to follow his choice without question. Moreover, Mary was blamed by her mother for asking for something different from the other members of the family. And her brother “Jim, consistently playing his part as the complaisant favourite of the house, delivered judgement, ‘somehow you never seem to have any feeling for what a home should be’” (Ibid. 129). For Austin, her mother

could not understand why she wanted something different from the other members of the family. But when she looked back at her mother's reaction, she muses that

> Perhaps there was latent in Susie's mind, in spite of her avowed liberality toward the woman movement, something of the deep-seated conviction, of the part of the house mother, that drove many girls of Mary's generation from the domestic life, that a different sort of boiled egg was more than a female had a right to claim on her own behalf (Ibid.).

The episode of the four-minute eggs and the reactions of her mother and brother Jim enhanced her understanding of the inferior status of the woman in the American society.

When she was twenty years old, she moved with her mother to California to join her brother Jim who started a homestead in San Joaquin Valley (Ibid. 181). Unfortunately for Jim the acres he took from the American government were not fertile. In fact, much of the good land was already taken by other homesteaders. So he settled in a barren area awaiting the promise of irrigation. In her autobiography *Earth Horizon*, Mary Austin describes the first days in the Far West as follows

> Something quaintly ancestral in our setting in; one-room cabin, calico-curtained, bunks against the wall .... We combined [with neighbours] on the necessary excursions to the water-hole, to the canyon for wood, to Bakersfield, thirty miles away across heavy sand for mail and supplies (Ibid. 191).

By 1888 California was already settled by thousands of homesteaders, but Austin's description of that territory runs as if she had moved to a barren ground. In other words, she had moved to an area of the country where life still resembled the fiction of "Bret Harte and Helen Hunt Jackson, and ... all of times past (Ibid. 177).

The migration of the Hunter family to California differed from the migration of the traditional eastern families who homesteaded in the American west. Unlike the traditional families where the man takes his family to the frontier even though he might tear them away from friends and relatives, Susanna Hunter was the one who took the decision to break

connections with her home and follow her son Jim to the far west. Looking back to her mother's decision of following her son Mary Austin argues that Susanna wanted to be near her beloved son, and adds

> Susie had always wanted another sort of life for herself than Mary remembered so happily in plum street, a life of seeing and hearing, of social participation. Susanna wanted to satisfy her desire for "most women wanted; time and adventure of their own. Perhaps there was back of Susie's impulse toward the West something of the pioneer urge that brought Polly McAdams out of the settled places of Tennessee to the wilds of Illinois. Against all advice our home was dismantled, our goods sold or shipped, tenants found for the house (Ibid.).

By writing about her mother's will and other women to go west and experience a new adventure, Mary Austin associates women with the act of pioneering, an act reserved only for the men in male frontier tradition. For Austin, her mother was following "Southern California's promise of expansion ... [and] the rumor of public lands still to be had for the taking (Ibid. 176). In her pioneering act, Austin's mother continues the frontier process of the early pioneer women like her great-grandmother Polly McAdam on whose shoulders rested the true settling of America.

In "One Hundred Miles on Horseback" (1889), her first published work that appeared in the *Blackburnian* Austin described their exhilarating journey from Carlinville to California by writing the following

> Those whose lives been spent in the prairie lands of Illinois can have little conception of the pleasure of a journey on horseback through the most picturesque part of California. To us, wearied with two thousand miles of hot and dusty railroad travel, and two days and nights of anguish in a pacific coast steamer, the prospect was delightful beyond comparison (Austin, 1996: 25).

In this quotation we understand that the real pioneers for Austin are not the widely popularized cowboys who were enjoying the open space of the American frontier but independent, rugged female adventurers who were following the American dream.

In California the hunter family was first sheltered by General Edward Fitzgerald Beale a legendary military veteran and the owner of a prosperous ranch in the Tejon valley. General Beale became a surrogate father for Austin and a great stimulator for her writing career. Beale was one of the first persons who encouraged her to write about the frontier by introducing her to the local diverse population such as (cowboys, Anglo miners, Chinese railroad workers, Hispanic sheepherders, and American Indian basket makers). He also put into her hands important documents such as government documents and military explorations that she incorporated in her earliest works.

In 1891 Mary Austin travelled to San Francisco where she met the poet and editor of the *Overland Monthly* Ina Coolbrith. This meeting changed her life because Coolbrith became her first mentor who paved her the way for her writing career. Also in the same year she married Stafford Wallace Austin, an engineer of genteel background who wanted to start a farming project in the California frontier. In 1892 they moved to Owens Valley to launch his irrigation project. Unfortunately for Wallace, his project failed the thing that engendered many financial problems for his family. Indeed, he even could not pay the rent of their lodge. Living with a husband who could not support the needs of his family, Mary Austin took the responsibility of the family by working outside the home to make ends meet, first as a boardinghouse cook and later as a teacher (Ibid. 236-264).

Despite the difficulties she met during her marriage she remained with her husband until 1907. Then, she decided to leave Wallace and California behind to live in Europe. In England she met many feminists such as May Sinclair and even marched in a suffrage parade. In 1914 the Austins divorced (Ibid. 297). Austin lived the rest of her life as a “woman alone” supporting herself by teaching, lecturing and writing. She was deeply influenced by the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and affected by other feminists and radicals she encountered in New York. Dividing her time between New York and California from 1911 to 1925, Austin

met Emma Goldman, Elizabeth Curley Flynn, Margaret Sanger, Bill Heywood, and Lincoln Steffens, and she became active in various feminist and leftist struggles. From 1903 to the early 1930s Mary Austin was one of the most active public intellectuals in America. She published thirty-three books which include travel writing essays, literary criticism, autobiography and novels where she documented the different changes in American society (Alaimo, 2000: 71).

II- Reshaping the Gender Experience of the Frontier: Austin and Turner

This section deals with the dialogue between Austin and Turner. The two authors published their frontier narratives during the same period and in the same magazine the *Atlantic Monthly*. For example, Austin's essay *The Land of Little Rain* appeared in the same edition of the magazine next to Turner's "Contributions of the West to American Democracy" where Turner popularized his Frontier Thesis as a masculine space where there is no place for women. So we hypothesize that Austin's break from male normative traditions and discourses surrounding the frontier is a way of affirming the place of women in American society.

1- Turner: The Frontier Thesis and Feminist Criticism

Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) was undoubtedly one of the most influential thinkers of his time. Born in the wilderness village of Portage, Wisconsin, he witnessed different elements of the frontier process. In his biography of the historian, Ray Allen Billington describes this influence as follows

> Portage was just emerging from its pioneer past during his impressionable years ... All about were reminders of frontier days certain to make their imprint on a small boy. Thought the dusty streets each summer lumbered prairie schooners loaded with "emigrants" bound for the free government lands of northern Wisconsin or the Dakotas. Almost every issue of the local newspaper told of the Indian outbreaks in the West, flavoured with the editor's damnation of the "savages" who began the Madoc War or wiped out Custer's command on the Little Big Horn. Occasionally, events at home reminded him that civilization was in its swaddling clothes: a hunting party was formed to track down a wolf pack, vigilantes were recruited to help the sheriff capture an over ambitious horse thief. The wilderness was not quite subdued, and young Turner felt its influence (Billington, 1973: 15).

The other influence that has a very important part in Turner's career was his father Jack Turner who was a journalist, a politician and a historian who encouraged his son to explore his respectable library. As a teenager, Turner wrote an occasional column in his father's newspaper where he quoted his favourite authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Goethe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Victor Hugo, Charles Lamb, Daniel Webster, Rousseau, Thomas Carlyle, and many others. The years he spent in the office of his father's newspaper, *The Register*, allowed him to be aware of the importance of local history and politics. Commenting on his father's influence Turner writes

> My practical experience in newspaper work, and in contact with politics through my father probably gave me a sense of realities which affected my work and my influence. I had to see the connections of many factors the purely political. I couldn't view things in the purely "academic" way (qtd. in Jacobs, 1968: 7).

As far as his education is concerned, he attended the University of Wisconsin from where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1884 with the award of the best class orator, a time period when the college orator rather than the college athlete was the campus hero. After graduation, he worked as a reporter for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in Madison for a year before he decided to return to the University of Wisconsin to study history under the supervision of Professor William Francis Allen. The time he spent with this famous historian prepared him for further studies in history as Allen instilled in his young protégé a respect for the principles for historical criticism, a belief in the use of sources, and the concept of society as a continuously evolving organism (Billington, 1974: 7).

When he defended his 1888 master's dissertation, *The Influence of the Fur Trade in the Development of Wisconsin*, no one could have predicted the revolutionary effect that Turner's ideas would have on the course of American historiography. Yet even in this paper, the originality of Turner's ideas and themes was obvious. His uniqueness stems from the fact that the subject was inspired from the historian's Midwestern setting, which until then had not

been considered worthy of scholarly and academic attention. Regarding the peculiarity of Turner's thinking, he emphasized how important geography, geology, and meteorology were in interpreting American history at a time when other factors, such as economics and religion dominated the scene (Simonson, 1989: 4).

To further his studies and deepen his knowledge in American history he enrolled at the John Hopkins University to earn his Ph. D. When Turner defended his doctorate thesis *The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin: A Study of the Trading Post as an Institution* (1891), he further confirmed the importance of geography in the definition of the national character. The time he spent in this university proved to be one of the most rewarding of his entire life. In addition to the intellectual stimulus he received from his remarkable teachers such as Albin Small, Richard T. Ely, and Woodrow Wilson, the year he spent in the seminar of Herbert Baxter Adams lunched his career as a western historian.

The state of historical research at John Hopkins University was dominated by Professor Adams "germ Theory" which linked historical development in America to the Anglo-Saxon heritage. For Adams, American culture and institutions were merely an extension of medieval Teutonic structures that had been transferred first to England and then to North America. The fact that Adams gave more importance to the Anglo-Saxon origins and too little to American environment as an important factor in the shaping of American institutions served as a negative catalyst to Turner who strongly opposed it. In his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), Turner refuted this one sided view of American history and described its development in environmental terms. In so doing, Turner made possible the independence of American studies from British influences (Ibid.). In one of the speeches he gave later he even acknowledged that his famous speech was "pretty much a reaction" against Adams dogmatism (Davidson & Lytle, 2010: 127).

To popularize his Frontier hypothesis Turner followed his famous speech by a significant stream of publications. Articles such as “The Problem of the West,” “Dominant Forces in Western Life,” “The Middle West,” and “Contributions of the West to American Democracy” which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *International Monthly* helped in the dissemination of the frontier idea within the American public. Within a decade after the appearance of the frontier thesis, students from different regions of the United States rushed to the University of Wisconsin to attend Turner’s seminars. Moreover, Professor Turner was sought after to lecture on any aspect of the frontier and to accept permanent appointment at Berkeley, Chicago, Stanford, and Harvard (Ridge, 1991: 12).

The influence of the Frontier Thesis did not stop at the level of academia, but it touched different segments of the American society. Politicians, diplomats, economists, geographers, and sociologists all of them resorted to the frontier rhetoric to support their public speeches. For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used the closing of the frontier in a speech to justify his New Deal policies, imperialists such as Theodore Roosevelt used the same idea to support overseas expansion, john F. Kennedy spoke of a new frontier to contain communism, and George W. Bush made an appeal to the cowboy archetype to justify his war on terror. In simple terms the Turner doctrine became the Holy Word for scholars and politicians alike (Billington, 1974: 15).

Despite his popularity and fascination with American history and particularly the American west, Turner wrote only two books and thirty essays. His first book entitled *The Rise of the West 1819-1829* was published in 1906. Then, in 1920 he published *The Frontier in American history* which was a collection of some of his essays. In 1932 he died before completing his second book which was published by Professor Graven, a student of his, under the following title: *The United States 1830-1850: The Nation and its Sections*, in 1935. The overall strength all these works is the orientation of American historiography to elements that

helped differentiate American identity from those of other countries at a time when the United States was getting ready to end its continentalism and enter a new phase of its history known as globalism (Simonson, 1989:5-6).

It was during the World's Columbian Exposition (World's fair) in Chicago, and before the American Historical Association that Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his famous paper "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," on July 12th, 1893. He started his paper by seeing American development in terms of westward expansion. Turner argued the following

> Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession and the advance of American settlement Westward explain American development (Turner, 2010: 1).

As this passage demonstrates, with Turner, the word frontier loses its usual connotation. It is not reduced to a line on the map or a statistical fact as was the case in the census report of 1890 which approached the frontier from one single side, a geographical perspective. Turner went beyond the traditional meaning of the phrase when he saw the expansion of the frontier as a driving force behind the evolution of the American institution.

First, Turner defined the frontier by negation. The conventional European frontier – "a fortified boundary line running through dense populations" – does not apply to the American frontier because it cannot explain American development. The latter "lies at the hither edge of free land." Relying on the census report, Turner gave it a native definition by stating that it is "the margin of that settlement which has a density of two or more to the square mile (Ibid. 3).

Second, Turner described it in geographical terms. The frontier was determined by physical boundaries changing through time. The seventeenth-century frontier line was the Allegheny Mountains. Then, the nineteenth-century was marked successively by the frontier

of the Mississippi, the Missouri town to the frontier of the arid lands and the Rocky Mountains, each having its own impact on the settlement (Ibid. 9).

The third definition of the frontier is concerned with the evolutionary process in which different people occupied various types of frontiers. There was the Indian-trader's frontier, the rancher's frontier and finally the farmer's frontier. Each one, advanced for purpose of exploitation, only to be replaced by the next. The rancher's frontier settled the trader's frontier, while the farmer's frontier occupied the former. With the expansion of population and farms, this process culminated in towns and cities, which underwent a complex development with the emergence of manufacturing. Turner describes this evolutionary stage as follows

> Stand at Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file – the Buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indians, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle – raiser, the pioneer farmer and the frontier has passed by. Stand at the South Pass in the Rockies a century later and see the same procession with wider intervals between (Ibid. 12).

In his definition of the American frontier, Fredrick Jackson Turner reminded his American audience that the environmental component was an integral aspect of any process of self- definition, because it had always been a part of their lives ever since they first settled along the Atlantic coast. The frontier kept shifting from the Atlantic coast to the pacific, and it was during these geographical displacements that the American had been able to renounce his status of colonial and proclaim his belonging to the American nation. The "perennial rebirth" that the frontier provided, "this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnished the forces dominating the American character" (Ibid. 2-3). For Turner, the frontier Americanized the pioneer and freed him from dependence upon Europe. The frontier transformed his old ways into new American ways. In this respect he wrote:

> The frontier is the line of most effective and rapid Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel and thought. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe ... The fact is that there is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a real sense. Moving Westward, the frontier became more and more American (Ibid. 3-4).

In addition to its sociological effects, the frontier had an integrative impact on American origins. Turner wrote that the Middle West was a mediating point between the Far West, North and South (Ibid. 28). This Middle West which Turner identified with the frontier as a whole, displayed a terrain that showed how Europeans were blended into one single character, the American character. In facts, the frontier supported the emergence of an American nationalism that counterbalanced the sectional inclinations of the North and South and helped build the composite nationality. Turner asserts:

> The Middle West was a region mediating between New England and South, and the East and the West. It represented that composite nationality ... It was least sectional... It became typically American region (Ibid. 27-28).

Turner argued that the frontier had an impact on both the establishment of American institutions and the growth of the American character. For instance, Americans were more inclined to social democracy because of the frontier. Turner qualified the aforementioned claim about the influence of the social contract philosophy of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the covenant theology of the seventeenth-century Puritanism on American institutions when he wrote about the close relationship between the community building of the American West and social democracy. In this respect he argues

> American democracy was born of no theorist's dream. It was not carried in the Sarah Constant to Virginia, nor in the Mayflower to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier. Not the constitution, but free land and abundance of natural resources open to a fit people, made the democratic type of society in America for three centuries while it occupied its empire (Ibid. 174).

Local, state and federal government differences were related to the frontier settlement process. Though, the settlement process followed a pattern, each community retained a distinct quality reflected in its politics.

American history, according to Turner, derives its unity from the concept of the frontier, and he viewed American progress only in that way: "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development" (Ibid. 1). Turner's central claim is that free lands – which could be farmed and owned without any upfront money – explained the course of American history. For Turner, the frontier is synonymous with the West, free lands, the American landscape, and the wilderness. Throughout his Frontier Thesis, he used these terms interchangeably to refer to the process of western expansionism in general, and it is the flexibility of the frontier concept that makes the word typically Turnerian in the sense that he coined it as an Americanism.

Turner's implicit reference to women in his Frontier Thesis was in line with the dominant ideology of his time. This ideology consigned women in the private sphere and saw them as "the guardians of virtue." In fact, the role of the "True woman" was very important during the Progressive Era because it represented a stabilizing force in the American society which witnessed a rapid transformation during that period. With industrialization, millions of workers from Eastern and Southern Europe rushed to the United States searching for jobs. These aliens as they were called by the nativits brought with them new languages, new traditions, and new faiths. So the "founding immigrants" from Anglo-Saxon origin who saw themselves as the real Americans worried that these new immigrants from Italy, Russia, the Balkans and Greece will destabilize their racial dominance. As a result, the Anglo-Saxon establishment expanded the ideology of "True Womanhood" to perpetuate the Anglo-Saxon race.

In his Frontier Thesis, Turner supported the ideology of domesticity and wanted to silence the progressive era challenges to gender role by asserting patriarchal dominance. In this respect he said

> I like persons, particularly who like the things in which I am interested for friends. But for someone to love, I do not wish to have one who knows over much about whether I am doing well or ill in the world of letters. I dream of having someone who is another world to me to which I can turn from the everyday world. (qtd. in Bogue, 1998: 56)

In this quotation we understand that for Turner the good woman is the Victorian woman who takes care of her husband and rears her children. The woman who does not interfere with the world of letters or the public space. For him, the ideal wife is the "angel in the house." A position satisfied by his wife Caroline Mae who was a "true woman." According to Allen Bogue, Turner found in his wife an excellent hostess and mother to his three children. He, in turn was a loving and paternalistically protective husband (Ibid. 61-63). Like his friend Theodore Roosevelt, Turner believes that the proper place of the woman is the home or the private space. And it is only there that she can serve the American nation. This is why in one of his letters to his daughter in 1917 he claimed that his grand son's

> Generation will have to live in a new age of rebuilding, and we must do what we can to prepare him for being useful. And that kind of an education begins in the mother's arms. How much of a child's life is woven out of his mother's love, and ambitions, and sacrifices, and self-repression (Ibid. 11).

In his Frontier Thesis, Turner continues the fantasy of the first explorers, who to dominate women represented the American wilderness as a woman. In the similar vein, Turner represented the frontier as a "True woman." For him, when the frontiersman controls the wilderness frontier the latter serves as the womb or the crucible of regeneration,

> American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line and a new development for the area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American

> life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character (Turner, 2010: 3).

In his Frontier Thesis, Turner transposes the function of the "True Woman" on the frontier. Indeed, like the "True Woman" who inculcates on both her husband and children the 'republican virtue', the frontier also would renew the frontiersman in a cycle of perennial rebirth. Moreover, this maternal role of the frontier can also be seen when the frontier functions as "the line of most rapid and effective Americanization" (Ibid. 3-4). Furthermore, as a child who sees his mother at first too strong to resist, so too "at the frontier, the environment is at first too strong for the man" (Ibid. 4). However, to assume his subjectivity and individualism, the frontiersman rebels against the mother "transforms the wilderness" and "here is a new product that is American" (Ibid).

In his essay Turner resorts to the stereotype of the "True Woman" to stabilize the American society. Emil Durkheim argues that myths have stabilizing functions, their purpose is "to ensure solidarity, to guard against lawlessness and chaos" (qtd. in Novik, 1988: 4). Both the frontier and the mother are given important and powerful roles which are: to give birth, to Americanize, and to regenerate. However, to avoid lawlessness and chaos Tuner assigns the mythic hero the role of the dominator. In other words, to maintain the superiority of men over women or a certain hierarchy power is held by man and the woman assumes a subordinate position that of the "True Woman."

In his Frontier Thesis, Turner establishes boundaries between men and women when he claims that

> The advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady way from the independence on American lines. And to study this advance, the men who grew up under these conditions, and the political, economic, and social results of it, is to study the really American history (Turner, 2010: 4).

By claiming that the real American history is the one which is made by men Turner excludes women from the frontier process and the public space. For him, only the history of the frontiersman is worthy for recording. Moreover, in gendering human culture as specifically male and nature as specifically female, he translates the natural dominion of humans over nature to one of men over women and by extension Euro-Americans (those who have subdued nature) over Native Americans.

In his Frontier Thesis Frederick Jackson Turner reaffirms the misogynist ideology of his time, a political ideology that excludes women from the public space. In other words, he perpetuates the progressive era's ideology of domesticity that denies any public presence of women. His is doing what Susan Bordo defines as the "masculinization of thought" (Bordo, 1987: 9). In fact, by defining the frontiersman as the icon who represents American manhood and history he establishes a hegemony that renders women invisible. Indeed, only one woman is mentioned in "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Turner writes that "Kit Carson's mother was a Boone" (Turner, 2010: 19). By not mentioning her name, Turner erases the identity of this woman, he stresses only her maternal and domestic roles.

In Turner's Frontier Thesis, the protagonist or the hero is the male pioneer who encountered a series of physical places as the American nation expanded its boundaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific coastline. He argued that the colonization of the Great West was accomplished by men who conquered successive frontiers (Ibid). Turner's frontier process begins with the colonial frontiersman who ventured into the American wilderness to blaze a trail for other colonists to follow. As the pioneer proceeded westward, he encountered the frontier or what Turner calls "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Ibid). According to Turner, the source of America's progress was the struggle of the frontiersman with the wilderness and the Indian at the edge of civilization.

As far as the Native Americans are concerned, Turner links their disintegration to the advancement of civilization. In spite of the violent relationship between the Indians and white colonists, Turner makes no mention of this. As Richard Slotkin notes, “Turner’s work is remarkable for the degree to which it marginalizes violence in the development of the frontier” (Slotkin, 1992: 55). Unlike his predecessors like James Fenimore Cooper, violence, massacre, and dispossession are absent from Turner’s history. In Turner’s narrative, the Native American assumes only one role which is the assistance of the white colonist to be transformed into the American individual or the new man.

In the Myth of the Frontier that Turner presents, American manhood and nationhood are both constructed after the frontiersman’s encounter with the wilderness and the Native American. The effect of the Indian frontier was very important in consolidating the complex nervous system of the pioneers. Moreover, the presence of a Native American population created “a common danger, demanding united action” (Turner, 2010: 15). Indeed, the first intercolonial congresses were formed to establish common measures of defense. The first powers of what would become the American government were “the determination of peace and power with the Indians, the regulation of Indian trade, the purchase of Indian lands, and the creation and government of new settlements as a security against the Indians” (Ibid).

For Turner, The United States will continue to progress so long as the frontier existed because the latter is the source of American exceptionalism. In his article which is entitled “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill” (1994), the American historian Richard White argues that Turner articulated the widely held cultural view that America’s exceptionalism was not derived from America’s European roots and old world institutions but from the American’s interaction with a “frontier space” lying beyond the boundaries of a civilized America (White, 1994: 12-13). Turner’s narrative celebrates the triumph of the white pioneer who owned the land and dominated the others under the legitimacy of the progress of the

nation. In other words, the possession of the physical West was necessary to the building of America.

Turner's Frontier Thesis is based on the opposition between "civilization" and "savagery". In fact, it shows a dualistic version which valorizes the image of Anglo-Saxon male domination in the West thus furthers a nationalistic ideology which is based on Anglo-Saxon imperialism. The most important aspect in Turner's paper is his pronouncement of its closure. Indeed, he concluded his masterpiece by declaring that "the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history (Turner, 2010: 38). By declaring the end of the geographical frontier, Turner brought it to the realm of myth. In this respect, he ends his speech with a nationalistic image of the frontier, to which

> The American intellect owes its striking characteristics.That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to affect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes from freedom – these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier (Ibid. 37).

At the turn of the century, The United States faced a great challenge or cultural anxiety which was how to continue to develop America's exceptionalism with the loss of the physical frontier. So the challenge for Americans according to Turner is to find new frontiers to conquer in order to renew the traits they had developed in their engagement with a frontier spatiality (Ibid. 59). Though Turner did not regard hunting or warfare as valued exercises by which Americans could recover their lost frontier, he accepted imperialism as a commercial necessity. In fact, he was a man of his time, the time of expansion and neo-imperialism. By promulgating his frontier thesis "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," he gave a response to the wishes of his countrymen who wanted new frontiers beyond the American borders. Thus, by announcing the end of the frontier in the United States, he

announced the end of the policy of continentalism in America and the beginning of another ideology called globalism or imperialism. In his essay "the problems of the West," he clearly endorsed the policy of overseas expansion when he claimed

> For nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check. That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue (Ibid. 219).

These words found a good hearer in the name of Theodore Roosevelt who provided Americans with new frontiers beyond the American borders.

2- Austin: Movement, the Female Body, and the Production of the Frontier Space

In *Lost Borders*, Mary Austin challenges Turner's ideology of the frontier by reinserting women and issues of gender into the cultural and gender dialogues of the American West. In her Frontier fiction, Austin encourages paradigms which are opposite to the prevailing attitudes on women's roles in American society. Indeed, she is not only replacing the male frontier narrative of the turn of the century where the lone male headed West in search of his identity and moral values. Instead, she puts her women outside the home which is an attempt to create a counter discourse to the domestic ideology prevalent in nineteenth-century America. In *Lost Borders*, Mary Austin foregrounds her women characters walking and moving in the frontier space to critique the dominant spatial ideologies that constricted women's movement.

Mobility is a very important concept in Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. For him, the ones who can influence and change the spatial ideologies and social relationships of a given society are the ones who have the power to move themselves (Lefebvre, 1991: 170).

Thus the ones who have the power to move from one space to another can influence, resist and transform the dominant ideology that structure social relationships in societies. In other words they produce social spaces (Ibid.). In this respect, he writes

> A body – not bodies in general, nor corporeality, but a specific body, a body capable of indicating direction by a gesture, of defining rotation by turning round, of demarcating and orienting space, both occupies and produces social spaces through and by the motions the body produces (Ibid.).

For him, when people move through space to satisfy their every day needs the resulting movement prevents stagnation and cannot help but produce differences in social spaces (Ibid. 395).

Another theorist who links the production of space to mobility is Michel de Certeau. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), he demystifies the interconnectedness among movement, agency and space. According to him, the everyday actions of moving about and walking critique the dominant spatial ideologies (Certeau, 1984: xix). He argues that people who inhabit the social spaces use different tactics to resist spatial homogeneity and produce a different space. Among these tactics he cites walking and moving about (Ibid). He claims

> The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or the statement uttered. At the most elementary level, it has a triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on language); it is a spatial taking out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language) (Ibid. 97-98).

Furthermore, he suggests that walking is an act of producing spaces, literally, through one's footsteps, beating paths on the topography, and figuratively, through the story that unfolds in the interaction of walker and walking space. The act of walking spatializes (Ibid. 97).

In her autobiography which is entitled *Earth Horizon* Austin sees herself as an American pioneer, in both senses the literal and the literary ones. Writing of her experience in the Wild West, Austin claims

> Her trouble was that the country failed to explain itself. If it had a history, nobody could recount it. Its creatures had no known life except such as she could discover by unremitting vigilance of observation; its plants no names that her Middlewestern botany could supply. She did not know yet what were its weather signs, nor what the procession of its days might bring forth. Until these things elucidated themselves factually, Mary was spellbound in an effort not to miss any animal behavior, any bird-marking, any weather signal, any signature of tree or flower (Austin, 2007: 194-195).

By writing about her movement and observations in the American frontier Austin compares herself to the first pioneers who mapped the West, thus she resituates women in the frontier process. And this certainly influenced how she portrayed her women characters in her fiction. In her stories such as "The land," "The Return of Mr. Wills," and "The walking Woman" Austin revises the Turnerian Frontier Myth and rebels against the situation of women in American society who are confined in the private space under the concept of "True Womanhood" or "True Womanless," as Austin called it. In her body of work, she rejects the notion of the dependent, submissive "angel in the house" because for her this ideal was not suitable for women in the frontier.

For Austin, the frontier is a space of liberation for women. The "treeless spaces" of the desert pushed her to search and to know more (Austin, 2007: 195). In *Earth Horizon*, she recounts how she suffered from malnutrition when she first arrived with her family to the American West. However, the sense of liberation the American frontier put on her led her to search for food to cure herself. This act of searching for food in an alien space encouraged her to express her independence and agency. In this respect she writes

> There was something you could do about unsatisfactory conditions besides being heroic or a martyr to them, something more satisfactory than enduring or complaining, and that was to get out and hunt for the remedy. This for young ladies in the eighteen-eighties was a revolutionary discovery to have made (Ibid.).

Unlike her male contemporaries who saw the frontier as an unsuitable space for women, Austin's frontier is a liberating space for both men and women. This episode of searching for wild grapes to cure herself represents the distance she took from the social ideals her family represent. She wrote: "it was so like Mary, her family remarked, to almost starve to death on a proper Christian diet and go and get well on something grubbed out of the wood" (Ibid. 193). Her move to the frontier space symbolizes her rebellion against the nineteenth-century domestic ideology.

After the resolution of her health problems and the sense of being free when walking in the desert, Austin started the exploration of the vast open space of the frontier on horseback:

> I suppose it is not really safe, as I know so little about horses and people tell me it is easy to get lost. I heard mother tell Mrs. Dunham that she hoped something would happen to give me a good scare, as she is never easy a minute when I am out of sight. I think the openness of everything scares mother, she has always lived in towns. And it frets her that I am not homesick. I can not make her understand that I am never homesick out of doors, but that in people's homes, especially in houses that she calls "homelike" and "beautifully furnished" I am often very homesick. I used to be homesick in our own house. But I am not homesick with the sky, nor with the hills (Ibid).

In this passage, Austin narrates her love of the open space and the rejection of the dictates of her mother who represents the domestic ideology. Unlike her mother and Mrs. Dunham who became homesick in the frontier space because they were scared by the open space, Austin shows her delight with her movement in the outdoors. For her, "homesickness" is not the nostalgic longing for home, but the sickness is caused by the harsh restriction in the home which trap adventurous and pioneer women like Austin.

Austin's frontier version goes beyond that of the women that Annette Kolodny documents in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984). In their writings these women created an alternative frontier mythology which "focussed on the spaces that were truly and unequivocally theirs: the home and the small cultivated gardens (Kolodny, 1984: 176). Kolodny writes

> With strategies such as these ... the westernized domestic fictions encouraged women readers to claim the new frontier as a garden of their own.... No longer the realm of the isolate Adamic male adventurer, the frontier in theses novels came to embrace home, family, and social community informed by their values. If few pioneer women actually encountered such idealized configurations as daily life, this does not diminish the fact that the novelists' domesticated western fantasy represented a historically important creative act. For it provided prospective female immigrants with a set of images through which to forge some kind of acceptable relationship to an unfamiliar landscape (Ibid).

Unlike these women who wrote about the domestic space, Mary Austin saw the frontier as providing women like herself with the freedom and different opportunities to define themselves beyond the domestic conventions. For Austin the open space of the frontier was not yet colonized by domesticity thus it offers the chance to cast off the constrictions of the "angel in the house." In other words, the frontier serves as the place of possibility, a space of disidentification from rigidly gendered cultural scripts (Alaimo, 2000: 67).

In *Lost Borders*, Mary Austin revises the erotic and feminized image of the land which is very popular in male frontier narratives such as the ones I discussed above. In this respect she argues

> If the desert were a woman, I know well that she would be: deep breasted, broad in the hips, tawny, with tawny hair, great masses of it lying smooth along her perfect curves, full lipped like a sphinx, but not heavy-lidded like one, eyes sane and steady as the polished jewel of her skies, such a countenance as should make men serve without desiring her, such a largeness to her mind as should make her sins of no account, passionate, but not necessitous, patient – and you could not move her, no, not if you had all the earth to give, so much as one tawny hair's breadth beyond her own desires. If you cut very deeply into any soul that has the mark of the land upon it, you find such qualities as these – as I shall presently prove to you (Austin, 1987: 160).

Rather than to portray the frontier as submissive and dependent, Austin represents it as dominant and powerful. As Esther Stineman puts it "Austin's evocation of the land differs from the female aspect of the land evoked by other writers in her imaging of anthropomorphized feminine power .... Austin's blatant sexual imagery presents not a land raped by men but rather the land imagined as dominant mistress (Stineman, 1989: 102).

So unlike Turner who portrayed the frontier as a virgin land to be conquered and subdued, Austin's frontier is powerful and her character could not be changed by men without its desires. In this respect Anna Carew-Miller writes

> In these works, Austin continued to develop an alternative woman's tradition of nature writing by transforming the conventional metaphors for a female nature. She replaces the conventional tropes – the bounteous mother earth and seductive nymph – with a wilder goddess, frequently representing the landscape of the desert as lioness. In Austin's writing, this version of a female nature is powerful and dangerous. Only women who have rejected Victorian codes of conduct for ladies can live unmolested by this lioness because their relationship to nature is one of connection and communion (Miller, 1998: 82).

In her *Lost Borders*, Austin encourages American women to be like this ferocious land difficult to be subdued and dominated by men. In other words, the frontier is another alternative of women self determination and strength when she writes: "you could not move her, no, not if you have all the earth to give, so much as one tawny hair's breadth beyond her own desires" (Austin, 1987: 1). Here, Mary Austin develops another identity for women that of woman not of a wife or a mother as they were suggested by her male contemporaries such as Turner. Moreover, unlike the women Kolodny describes in *The Land Before Her* who wanted to create a domestic garden in the wilderness, Austin's women celebrate their freedom in the frontier outside the conventions of domesticity which were associated with females' roles in the West. Indeed, she concludes her story by writing "any soul male or female that has the mark of the land upon it embodies these qualities" (Ibid).

In her story which is entitled "The Return of Mr. Wills," Austin portrays a woman who knew freedom and independence in the American frontier. She knew how to endure and prevail without the presence of a husband. At the beginning of the story, Mary Austin tells us that "Mrs. Wills had lived so long with the tradition that a husband is a natural provider that it took some months longer to realize that she not only did not need Mr. Wills, but got on better without him" (Austin, 1987: 184). After seventeen years of marriage between Mrs. Wills and Mr. Wills, the latter ventures in the frontier space searching for the lost mines and he remained

absent from his house for three years. “Those three years were so much the best of her married life that she wished he had never come back” (Ibid. 181).

In this story there are no female victims who needed male protection from danger or miscegenation as it is the case in male frontier narratives. In fact, the obstacle to Mrs. Wills freedom and independence is her husband and his absence from the house frees her from the domestic constrictions. Moreover, the thing that frees her most is the American frontier which striped away the social pretentions and conventions that in a settled, civilized community might have sustained the marriage. In this respect the narrator says “Back East I suppose they breed such conventional men because they need them, but they ought really keep them there” (Ibid. 181). The East-West reversal or the negation of the moral values is evident as well in Mrs. Wills’s church going when the narrator states “Back East it had meant social standing, repute, moral, impeccability,” whereas “in Maverick it means a weakness” (Ibid. 182).

While in the masculine frontier narratives as the ones discussed above the frontier space was the field of liberation and regeneration of the male hero, in Austin’s narrative Mr. Wills is trapped by the frontier. Revising the theme of the frontiersman who subdues the virgin land Austin writes

> Out there beyond the towns the long wilderness lies brooding, imperturbable; she puts out to adventurous minds glittering fragments of fortune or romance, like the lures men use to catch antelopes. She caught Mr. Wills for three years. He was just the sort of man who never had should moved to the arid West: there is a sort of man bred up in close communities, like a cask, to whom the church, public opinion, the social note, are a sort of hoop to hold him in serviceable shape without these there are a good many ways of going to pieces (Ibid).

The lure of fortunes and riches trapped Mr. Wills who went into pieces. However, Mrs. Wills is transformed in the frontier space. As the narrator notes

> Mrs. Wills trusted too much to notions ... from the church and her parents when she might have done better to draw a lesson from nature: “all up and down the wash of Salt Creek there were lean coyote mothers, and wild folk of every sort could have taught her that nature never makes the mistake of neglecting to make the child-bearer competent to provide (Ibid. 184).

She became independent and for the first time took the responsibility of her family. She cared for her children and supported financially her family by launching a series of projects. She even started to participate in society and the latter began to consider how Mrs. Wills get on with her life without Mr. Wills in it.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Wills, her husband returned and he settled on his family like a blight (Ibid. 186). For her, it was "the stroke of desolation with a sort of dinginess creeping up from her dress to her hair and her face, and it spread to the house and the doorway (Ibid). Then, Mr. Wills started to exert his control over his family. Mrs. Wills resisted and even revolted against her husband when the latter started to demand money from his sons. Moreover, she wanted to divorce from him but the minister offered no way out. Mary Austin ends her story with a bit of hope that Mr. Wills would again leave in search of riches and Mrs. Wills would free herself for good. In other words, encouraged by the frontier which stripped the moral and domestic conventions, Mrs. Wills learned that her gender dependency on male was not necessary and that it is something which is socially constructed.

According to Melody Graulich, a scholar of western American literature, the story is a rewriting of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle." She describes "The Return of Mr. Wills" as a successful attempt by a female author to resist the myth of "the self-reliant male rebel who escapes civilization and heads West to find freedom from authority and tradition" (Graulich, 1989: 190). Graulich argues: "While 'Rip Van Winkle' implies that women inhibit men's freedom and stifle their characters, 'The Return of Mr. Wills' asserts that men inhibit women's independence and stifle their growth" (Ibid. 191).

In this story Mary Austin celebrates women's strength and self-sufficiency and criticizes the domestication of women in the West. By painting the land as a sexual female, she forges an antidomestic identity for feminists and also subverts the utilitarian conception of

nature. In another story entitled *The Ford*, she represents the frontier as a domineering mistress. She wrote

> For a man lives with his land as with a mistress, courting her, suiting himself to her humours, contriving as he can that her moods, her weathers shall drive for and not against him. And in time he becomes himself subject to such shifts and seasons. He cannot handle himself; he is to be handled (qtd. in Alaimo, 2000: 75).

By painting the frontier as a female mistress who takes control and dominates the male suitor, Austin is just writing back to her male contemporaries who feminized the land in order to conquer it. For her the land will never be dominated by men. Lois Rudnick argues that Austin and her female contemporaries who wrote about the frontier such as Alice Corbin Henderson and Mabel Dodge Luhan "envisioned the land as masterless and opposed the Judeo-Christian imprimatur that man must rule, tame, and reform the land" (qtd. in Ibid). So by representing the land as a female mistress and not mother who is dominated by the patriarchal structures, Austin wanted American women to free themselves from the trope of the "angel in the house" or the concept of "true womanless."

In Austin's *Lost Borders*, the frontier space always offers women more safety and fulfilment than the hearth. In another story which is entitled "The Woman at the Eighteen-Mille," Austin creates a world of equality between men and women. The relationship between male and female is an egalitarian one or possible because the frontier settlement is far from civilization. The whole story revolves around the working relationship between a woman who manages the Eighteen-Mile house and a man from the East named Whitmark.

Austin started this story by paying attention to all the components of western tales so that it is easy for her readers to identify with them. In this respect she asserts

> There was a mine in it, a murder, and a mystery, great sacrifice, Shoshones, dark and incredibly discreet, and the magnetic will of a man making manifest through all these, there lonely water-holes, deserted camps where coyotes hunted in the streets, fatigues and dreams and voices of the night. And at last it appeared there was a woman in it (Austin, 1987: 204-5).

After establishing her territory, Austin centers her story on the woman and how the latter kept her "soul alive and glowing in the wilderness (Ibid. 205).

After a period of time, Whitmark and the woman fell in love. However, the woman was not the domestic helpmate Whitmark left behind in the East. In fact, he had married the latter "for all the traditions of niceness and denial and abnegation which men demand of the women they expect to marry, and find savorless so often when they are married to it. But the woman of the Eighteen-Miles opened his spirit to the freedoms and independence the frontier can bring to both women and men. In this respect Austin argues

> He had never known what it was like to have a woman concerned in his work, running neck and neck with it. Divining his need, supplementing it not with the merely feminine trick of making him more complacent with himself, but with vital remedies and aids. And once he had struck the note of the West, he kindled to the event and enlarged his spirit. The two must have had great moments at the heart of that tremendous coil of circumstance (Ibid. 207).

In Austin's version, the frontier space offered both women and men opportunities of independence and freedom to enlarge their spirits "in a way civilized society did not (Ibid. 210).

The last story of the collection *Lost Borders* is entitled "The Walking Woman." In the latter, Austin offers her readers a female heroine who is independent and completely free from the Victorian constrictions of family, men and society. Like the woman of the Eighteen-Mile she worked side by side with a man. And in this working relationship she discovered her strength and courage. She enjoyed protecting the flock and running through the mountains. The narrator says

> For you see said she, "I worked with a man, without excusing, without any burden on me of looking or seeming. Not fiddling or fumbling as woman work, and hoping it will all turn out for the best. It was not for Filon to ask, can you, or will you. He said, Do, and I did. And my work was good. We held the flock. And that, "said the walking woman, the twists coming from her face again, "is one of the things that make you able to do without the others" (Ibid).

The frontier experience liberated the Walking Woman from the burden of looking and seeming, acts which are played by Victorian women as games of courtship. She did not need such games because in the wilderness she proved herself the equal of her male partner.

The story continues with a love relationship between the Walking Woman and the sheepherder. They even had a child together without being married which is a radical change for women at that time. In other words, this portrait endorses sex and childbearing outside marriage. The Walking woman was against marriage and home, a position that represents an antidomesstic feminism that rejects the rules of the Victorian society. In this respect Austin writes

> She was the Walking Woman. That was it. She had walked off all sense of society-made values, and knowing the best came to her, was able to take it. Work – as I believed; love – as the Walking Woman had proved it; a child – as you subscribe to it. But look you: it was the naked thing the Walking Woman grasped, not dressed and tricked out, for instance, by prejudices in favour of certain occupations; and love, man love, taken as it came, not picked over and rejected if it carried no obligation of permanency; and a child; any way you get it, a child is good to have, say nature and the Walking Woman; to have it and not to wait upon a proper concurrence of so many decorations that the event may not come at all (Ibid. 261-62).

To Turner who wanted the woman to be only the "angel in the house," Austin retorts with a "New Woman" whose feminism and strength emanates from the frontier itself.

The Walking Woman became a frontier legend. No one knew her name, but most of the time she is referred to as Mrs. Walker. Her frontier adventure led her to live with sheepherders, miners, and teamsters, "unarmed and unoffended" (Ibid.). For Austin, what protected the Walking Woman from offense was not the ladylike behaviour of Victorian women but her independence, courage, wisdom and the knowledge of the frontier space, which was "as reliable as an Indian's" (Ibid).

In Mary Austin's *Lost Borders* women took the centre stage whereas men became minor characters or foils to her plot. Like Frederick Jackson Turner, she examined the influence of the American frontier on the formation of American identity. However, unlike

Turner who built his Frontier Thesis on male freedom, subordination of women and violence, Austin's Frontier Thesis is a world where men were incline to "go to pieces" like Mr. Wills and women achieved their independence and strength through contact with the frontier space and work. In other words, while portraying self-reliant women in the frontier, she also subverts the conventional view of the West as the space of regeneration of the white male.

III- The Frontier and Power: Mary Austin and Theodore Roosevelt

This section puts in perspective Austin's and Roosevelt's frontier narratives. It was at a very early age that Austin was introduced to Roosevelt's writings as she listened to her mother and brother reading *The Winning of the West* (Austin, 2007:132). When she reached adulthood she even became a good friend of Roosevelt. The two authors corresponded and exchanged on different issues concerning the American society. However, despite their similar interest in the Myth of the frontier, their projects for the American society were fundamentally opposed. While Roosevelt's use of the myth of the frontier is an attempt to assume the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons over the other races and the masculine domination over women, Austin's appeal to the myth of the frontier is an attempt to give voice and presence to the marginalized identities; by asserting the Indians history and propriety of American land in order to affirm obliquely the women's share in the American Dream.

1- Roosevelt: From a Virile Frontier to an Ideology of Masculine Domination

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the twenty-sixth President of the United States, is considered as one of America's most efficient and colourful chief executives. He is the son of rich New Yorkers, who traced the roots of their origin to seventeenth-century Dutch settlers. His first contact with the American frontier was through his reading of adventure stories written by writers such as Thomas Mayne Reid, R. M. Ballantyne, and Captain Marryat. He was also influenced by his father who read to him in a loud voice James Fenimore Cooper's the *Leatherstocking Tales* (Roosevelt, 1985: 14-19).

After his graduation from Harvard University in 1880, he ventured to the Dakota Territory and there he developed his image as a frontiersman, and encountered cowboys and Indians. So the vision Roosevelt had for America and Americans was derived from his personal experience. According to Richard Slotkin, Roosevelt used his personal experience as example and justification for his interpretations as a statesman and historian for the critical role the frontier served in American history (Slotkin, 1992: 42).

Between 1885 and 1897 Roosevelt produced a significant body of work about the role of the American frontier in the development of the nation and manhood. This body of literature consisted mainly of articles for *Century* magazine that became *Hunting Trips of a ranchman: Sketches of Sport on the Northern Cattle Plains* (1885), *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (1888) a biography of *Thomas Hart Benton* (1886), and the four-volume history of the early frontier *The Winning of the West* (1889-1897) (Morris, 1979: 45). In these articles and books Roosevelt focused on his personal events and connected them with historical antecedents. In these texts, he argued that the American frontier produced particularly American individuals and defined American national and social characteristics. Slotkin claims that the frontier space awakened in Roosevelt the latent qualities of self-reliance, loyalty, determination, courage, and honor that earlier frontier heroes possessed and affirmed the necessity of leading a "strenuous life" that would set him above the selfishness and sloth of the leisured and moneyed class in the East (Slotkin, 1992: 36).

Taking examples from the lessons he learned in the frontier, Roosevelt believed that the continuation of the American Anglo-Saxon's frontier experiences would lead to and shape a modern, virile and vigorous managerial aristocratic class; that a new class-race relationship among American citizens was necessary for future development; and private profit should be subordinated to public interests, national aggrandizement and extension of the American empire abroad (Ibid. 54). Thus, he asked the men of his class to join him in the "strenuous

life" in order to regenerate their exceptionalism and only in the frontier space they can reach such revitalization.

According to Roosevelt, the frontier space was a racial battleground between white Anglo-Saxons and Native Americans and the space where Americans affirmed their exceptionalism. Drawing from his western experience, Roosevelt constructed a new hero-type who is the hunter. A type his friend Owen Wister would develop and shape as the western leader in his novel *The Virginian* (1902). Roosevelt's hero possesses all the needed skills such as courage and virility, things he says that are very essential to successfully manage the nation's affairs.

At the very beginning of *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt links his personal experience with the frontier explicitly when he writes: "for a number of years I spent most of my time on the frontier, and lived and worked like any other frontiersman ... We guarded our herds of branded cattle and shaggy horses, hunted bear, bison, elk, and deer, established civil government, and put down evil-doers, white and red ... exactly as did the pioneers" (Roosevelt, 2004: 6). In his Frontier Thesis Roosevelt sees westward expansion and the colonization of the Great West as the logical extension of larger national and racial forces. In his foreword to *The Winning of the West* he argues "the whole western movement of the American people was simply the most vital part of that great movement of expansion which has been the central and all important feature of American history" (Ibid. 8). *The Winning of the West* which was published in four volumes from 1889 to 1897, clearly illustrates Roosevelt's point of history. In fact, he claims that he has "entirely rewritten Western history (Ibid).

In *The Winning of the West* Theodore Roosevelt describes the American frontier as the crucible in which the white American race was forged through masculine racial conflict.

Moreover, he performs the construction of American manhood and how the latter rose to take power. In other words, he is doing what Judith Butler states in her *Gender Trouble*, where she argues that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1999: 33). She adds "gender is performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (Ibid). And it is in the mythic space of the frontier that Roosevelt performs this gender identity by fabricating a superior masculine identity that will rule over the other races and women alike.

Roosevelt's hero is explicitly male. In other words, he is the manly American race, which was born in violence on the American frontier. As far as his origin is concerned, Roosevelt established the latter at the beginning of his thesis. Chapter one of the first volume of *The Winning of the West* is subtitled "Spread of the Modern English Race," represents the English race as the parent of the American race (Roosevelt, 2004: 11). In this chapter, he traced the Anglo-Saxonist history of the English race from the forests of Germany to the wilderness of England. For Roosevelt, the English race which became effeminate in England ventured to the wilderness of America in order to regenerate its maleness. However, the outcome race was different from its English parents. In this respect he asserts

> Americans belong to the English race only in the sense in which Englishmen belong to the German.... The Modern Englishman is descended from a low-Dutch stock, which when it went to Britain, received into itself an enormous infusion of Celtic, a much smaller infusion of Norse and Danish, and also a certain infusion of Norman-French blood. When this new English stock came to America it mingled with and absorbed into itself immigrants from many European lands (Ibid. 20).

In their act of struggling to win a "virgin" continent they mingled with other races and they formed a new racial stock that is pure American. However, since most of the immigrants who mingled with the English race were from a supposedly superior stock (Germans,

Scandinavians, Irish and Dutch) the new American race retained all the superior traits of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Roosevelt's Frontier Thesis continues the western saga of James Fenimore Cooper where the hero was the pure Anglo-Saxon. In fact, "the frontier romance" as it is called by Louise K. Barnett codified the frontier myth as a way of creating an American literature that would serve "as a vehicle for nationalism by depicting the triumph of whites who were willing to become new people to wrest the land by violence from the native inhabitants and from those whites who held to their Old world identities" (Barnett, 1975: 28). In the frontier romance we find two contradicting aims. The first one is the triumph of civilization over savagery and the second one is the existence of savagery as a precondition for the regeneration of the frontiersman to regain his exceptionalism. So to mediate between the two opposing purposes, the frontier romancers created a new hero-type who is the Indian hunter. According to Slotkin, "as the man who knows Indians, the frontier hero stands between the opposed worlds of savagery and civilization, acting sometimes as mediator or interpreter between races and cultures but more often as civilization's most effective instrument against savagery" (Slotkin, 1992: 16). Moreover, he argues that James Fenimore Cooper was the first frontier romancer who codified the hero of the frontier myth (Ibid. 15). Indeed, by focusing on historical and iconic figures like Daniel Boone he produced his archetypal hero in the name of Natty Bumppo.

Cooper's Natty Bumppo was the precursor new man who will develop in Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* as the "military aristocrat". In his article which is entitled "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bumppo to Batman," David Leverenz says in this version of the frontier myth the middle-class white male hero descends into the world of the other in order to renew not only his own masculinity but the masculinity of all middle-class men (Leverenz, 1991: 759). In *The Deerslayer* (1841), the act of killing an Indian allows Natty

Bumppo to move from boyhood to manhood. Leverenz argues that this act of violence leads to "mythic transformation" and rebirth of the hero in which he receives a new identity, as Deerslayer becomes manslayer" (Ibid. 760).

In *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt followed the rules or the patterns set by Cooper in his *Leatherstocking Tales*. In this respect Slotkin writes

> The hunting chapters ... follow a program of hierarchical and historical stages as Roosevelt stalks and kills ever more dangerous quarry, from deer at the bottom, through grizzly bear and panther near the top. The "most dangerous game" is man himself; Roosevelt figures as a man-hunter in the episodes dealing with his term as deputy sheriff. This pattern follows the pattern laid down by Cooper in Deerslayer, one of Roosevelt's favorite books; as in Deerslayer, the stages of hunting function as preparation for the higher function of the warrior (Slotkin, 1992: 41).

Discussing the effects of the frontier space on the hunter and how the latter is serving his nation by advancing civilization Roosevelt wrote "No form of labor is harder than the chase, and no one is so fascinating or so excellent as a training school for war. Such training stood the frontier folk in good stead when they were pitted against the Indian" (Roosevelt, 2004: 86).

Native Americans are at the centre of Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*. In this point he is like Francis Parkman who argued that the American people achieved their nationality by the use of their weapons. In this respect he stated: "success depends on the heroism of men whose virtues represent and impose on the course of events the latent virtues of their race" (qtd. in Slotkin, 1992: 42). This is the same point of view which is defended by Roosevelt who also believes that the encounter with the Indian other and his defeat is the source of American nationhood and manhood. In this respect he argues

> Instead of biological exchange with savages of another race or folk, the American participate in a spiritual exchange, taking from the enemy certain abstract ideas or principles but accepting no admixture of blood. But since the American already possesses a powerful racial endowment, passed down from the British/German/Viking crossings of the past, this spiritual exchange is able to reinvigorate the American race by arousing forces latent in its blood (qtd. in Ibid. 47).

For Roosevelt this exchange between the white man and the Indian other allows the white male to transform himself into a new man, or in the words of Richard Slotkin to regenerate through violence (Slotkin, 1973: 11). Furthermore, he adds

> Even though the Indian is consistently portrayed as inferior to whites, his presence remains necessary to the revelation of the heroic stature of the Anglo-American hero. The Indian is his foil, the opponent against whom he exercises and develops his heroic powers as a representative of civilization (Slotkin, 1992: 189).

For Turner, the basis of American exceptionalism and progress was the availability of "free land" on the frontier which represented a safety valve. On the other hand, for Roosevelt the land was not free but had to be taken by force from the native other. Whereas Turner argued that the progress reached by the United States was the fact of immigrants who conquered geographical frontiers, Roosevelt instead argues that the crucial factor was the presence of the Indians who caused "the process of settlement to go at unequal rates of speed in different places (Roosevelt, 2004: 20). So American history according to Roosevelt is a battleground between Anglo-Saxons and the Native Americans over the possession of the American continent. In the words of Richard Slotkin "the history of the Indian wars is the history of the American West" (Slotkin, 1992: 55).

In his Frontier Thesis, Roosevelt contrasts the courage and virtues of the Anglo-Saxons with the "savagery" and brutality of the Indians. Roosevelt's Indians are devils not men. These devilish nonmen "mercilessly destroyed all weaker communities, red or white" and "had no idea of showing justice or generosity towards their fellows who lacked their strength" (qtd. in Bederman, 1995: 181). Moreover, for Roosevelt, the frontiersman

> Was not taking part in a war against a civilized foe; he was fighting in a contest where women and children suffered the fate of the strong men.... His sweetheart or wife had been carried off, ravished, and was at the moment the slave and the concubine of some dirty and brutal Indian warrior, ... seared into his eyeballs, into his very brain, he bore ever with him, waking or sleeping, the sight of the skinned, mutilated, hideous body of the baby who had just grown old enough to recognize him and to crow and laugh when taken in his arms. Such incidents as these were not exceptional (Ibid).

For him, the American frontier is something which is won by courageous and strong male leaders. The latter are heroic backwoods frontiersmen like Daniel Boone, "who had a limitless fund of fortitude, endurance, and indomitable resolution" (Ibid. 138). According to Slotkin, Boone's adventures are presented as "a series of initiations, a series of progressive immersions that take him deeper into the wilderness" (Slotkin, 1973: 278). Furthermore, he continues while these immersions "awaken Boone's sense of identity" and deepen his understanding of the wilderness, they also advance the American civilization, for "each immersion is followed by a return to civilization, where Boone can apply his growing wisdom to ordering the community" (Ibid). By so doing, Boone "grows to become the commanding genius of his people, their hero chief, and the man fit to realize Kentucky's destiny" (Ibid. 278-9). More important for Roosevelt, however, is the effect of Americanizing people in the frontier. In this respect he writes

> Long before the first Continental Congress assembled, the backwoodsmen, whatever their blood, had become Americans, one in speech, thought, and character, clutching firmly the land in which their fathers and grandfathers had lived before them. They had lost all remembrance of Europe and all sympathy with things European; they had become as emphatically products native to the soil as were the tough and supple hickories out of which they fashioned the handles of their long, light axes (Roosevelt, 2004: 78).

In this quotation we notice that Roosevelt even anticipated Turner's Frontier Thesis when he suggests that the colonization of the Great West is what American national identity is all about. According to him, the men of his racial stock like Daniel Boone proved their courage and virility in the frontier space and this entitles them to take the position of leaders of the American society.

As far as women are concerned, Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* is a world without women. Here he continues Turner's Thesis where women were absent in the frontier scene. Roosevelt argues that the history of the United States is a continuation of the history of Europe. However, the latter was developed in the American frontier by the Anglo-Saxons who

dominated the other races. In the four volumes of *The Winning of the West*, he denies women their participation of settling the frontier. In his work, we find only the names of military leaders and the names of the battles they fought. In this respect he writes

> The fathers followed Boone or fought at King's Mountain; the sons marched south with Jackson to overcome the Creeks and beat back the British; the grandsons died at the Alamo or charted to victory at San Jacinto. They were doing their share of a work that began with the Conquest of Britain, that entered on its second and wider period after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, that culminated in the marvellous growth of the United States (Ibid. 26).

In this quotation we notice that the figure of the woman is marginalized in Roosevelt's narrative. He is interested only in the paternal legacy of the Anglo-Saxon stock which is passed down from father to son.

Even if the image of the woman is absent in Roosevelt's Frontier Thesis, however, implicitly he makes reference to it through the fear of miscegenation. Indeed, for him the protection of white womanhood from sexual violation by the "savage" other is primordial. Like the progressive men of his era, Roosevelt believed that Americans were obliged to push civilization westward because the very existence of savagery places women in danger and threatens the achievement of a pure Race.

In *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt shares with James Fenimore Cooper the stereotypes of the captivity narratives. For him, white men have the right to take their revenge from Native Americans and domesticate women. To strengthen his argument he relates the story of a typical pioneer

> Whose house had been burned, his cattle driven off ... his sweetheart or wife had been carried off, ravished, and was at the moment the slave and concubine of some dirty and brutal Indian warrior ... his sister then ransomed and returned to him, had told of the weary journey through the woods, when she carried through her neck as a horrible necklace the bloody scalps of her husband and children (Ibid. 68).

From this quotation we understand that in Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier women were just figurative characters, victims of sexual abuse who needed rescue. In other words, the frontier space or the public space is the sole preserve of the frontiersman.

Furthermore, to emphasize the private space (the home) as the appropriate space of women he tells the story of a woman who defends her house against Indian incursions. One night a group of Native Americans attacked and tried to make a hole in her cabin door so

> Mrs. Merrill stood to one side and struck at the head of each as it appeared, maiming or killing the first two or three. Enraged at being thus baffled by a woman, two of the Indians clambered on the roof of the cabin, and prepared to drop down the wide chimney .... But Mrs. Merrill seized a featherbed and, tearing it open, threw it on the embers; the flame and stifling smoke leaped up the chimney, and in a moment both Indians came down, blinded and half smothered, and were killed by the big resolute woman before they could recover themselves. No further attempt was made to molest the cabin (Ibid.).

In his Frontier Thesis, Roosevelt continues the domestic ideology which renders the "naturalness" of women. Moreover, for him, women were heroic only in the service of domestic principles of self abnegation and love. As William Fowler puts it in his *Woman in the American Frontier*, it is only "to relieve, to succor, or to save her dear ones that woman is brave and strong" (Fowler, 2017: 471).

As far as the role of women is concerned, for Roosevelt, the men and women of the American race clung tenaciously to "natural" sex roles: "the man was the armed protector and provider, the woman was the housewife and child-bearer. For him the best woman is the dependent and submissive housewife who gives birth to lot of children. In his speech which is entitled *The Strenuous Life* (1899), he compared women who refused to bear children to soldiers who fled from the battlefield. In this respect he claims

> The man must be glad to do a man's work, to dare and to endure and to labour; to keep himself, and to keep those dependent upon him. The woman must be the housewife, the helpmate of the house maker, the wise and the fearless mother of many children ... when men fear work or fear righteous war, when women fear motherhood, the tremble on the brink of doom; and well it is that they should vanish from the earth (Roosevelt, 2011: 5).

For Roosevelt men and women of his class must unite their forces to win the race war which is a Darwinian one.

In his Frontier Thesis, Roosevelt continues the Puritans original myth which saw the frontier as the space of the God's chosen people where they would fulfil their Manifest

Destiny. And all the ones who stood against the will of God, either the Indians who slowed the pioneer's advancement westward or women who refused to procreate were committing a sin. In one of his presidential messages, he declared that a woman who has one or two children should be considered sterile. And a woman who chooses wilful sterility by abortion should be considered as a traitor to the nation (qtd. in Dorsey, 2013: 443).

The anxiety of Theodore Roosevelt came from his fear to be outnumbered by the new immigrants who came from Eastern and Southern Europe after 1880s. According to the 1890 census, the birthrate of Americans from the Anglo-Saxon stock was decreasing significantly, while the birthrate of the immigrant population dramatically increased (Dyer, 1992: 123). So for Roosevelt the welfare of the American state depends on the healthy and numerous children of the Anglo-Saxon families. He claims

> No piled-up wealth, no splendour of material growth, no brilliance of artistic development, will permanently avail any people unless its home life is healthy, unless the average man possess honesty, courage, common-sense, and decency, unless he works hard and is willing at need to fight hard; and unless the average woman is good wife, a good mother, able and willing to perform the first and greatest duty of womanhood, able and willing to bear, and to bring up as they should be brought up, healthy children, sound in body, mind, and character, and numerous enough so that the race shall increase and not decrease (Roosevelt, 1987: 143).

Furthermore, in another essay he wrote in 1917, he linked the heroism of women who were giving birth to lot of children to the bravery and courage of soldiers fighting in the battlefield when he says: "there is no more fearless and danger-defying heroism than that shown by some women of the true heroic type, in walking through the valley of the shadow to bring into life the babies they love." For him motherhood was one of the highest military honours:

> I know of one girl who has just for the second time eagerly faced motherhood; and to bring the second baby to join her first she had to show a splendid courage which (and I speak accurately) ranges her beside any of the men who in their ragged blue and buff and their gaping shoes followed Washington, or any gaunt confederate who charged with pickett, or any of the sailormen who held the sinking launch steady while Cushing torpedoed the Albemarle (qtd. in Dorsey, 2013: 445).

Theodore Roosevelt cannot imagine another place for women rather than the home. In other words, he saw women as only capable of being wives and mothers. This is why in February

1909, when he transmitted The Commission on Country Life Report to the US Congress, he annexed a special message where he declared

> If the farm woman shirks her duty as housewife, as home-keeper, as the mother whose prime function is to bear and rear a sufficient number of healthy children, then she is not entitled to our regard. But if she does her duty she is more entitled to our regard than the man who does his duty; and the man should show special consideration for her needs (qtd. in Ziegler, 2012: 80).

Furthermore, in his address to the National Congress of Women in Washington he made things very clear for the ones who did not seize his position concerning the woman question when he claimed

> There are certain old truths which will be true as long as this world endures, and which no amount of progress can alter. One of these is the truth that the primary duty of the husband is to be the homemaker, the breadwinner for his wife and children, and the primary duty of the woman is to be the helpmeet, the housewife, and mother (Roosevelt, 1987: 143).

After all, Theodore Roosevelt was a man of his time. A man of the progressive era who saw in the emergence of the New Women as a threat to the Victorian ideals and the patriarchal society.

With the announcement of Turner that the frontier was closed, Roosevelt intervened to supply Americans with new frontiers beyond the American borders. He did this because for him the danger was not the closing of the continental frontier but the loss of manliness which was regenerated in the frontier battles with the Indians. So to continue their progress and to renew their virility, Americans needed new frontiers to fight for. As Bederman argues "American men must struggle to maintain their racially innate masculine strength, which had originally been forged in battle with the savage Indians on the frontier; otherwise, the race would backslide into overcivilized decadence" (Bederman, 1995: 187).

To avoid decadence, Theodore Roosevelt started to take different internal and external measures. At home, he launched conservation measures to protect America's lands, forests, and wildlife in order to allow his Anglo-Saxon race to train themselves for the future wars they will fight. In other words, these reserves would be used as arenas for hunting, "among the

best of all national pastimes, in order to cultivate that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as an individual, the possession of no other qualities would atone" (Roosevelt, 2004: 7-8).

As far as the external measures are concerned the most important one was urging his countrymen to embrace a virile imperialism for the good of the American nation. The outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 gave Roosevelt the chance "to embody his philosophy of manliness through imperialism (Bederman, 1995: 190). To justify turn of the century imperialism as the logical extension of the Westward Movement, Roosevelt argued that "the United States finished the work begun over a century by the backwoodsman, and drove the Spaniard outright from the western world (Roosevelt, 2004: 7). Moreover, in his speech entitled *The Strenuous Life* (1899), he called on the United States to build up a strong army and take imperial control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Annexing these countries and controlling their populations did not violate the principles of justice according to him because the aim was the protection of the Anglo-Saxon race and the pursuit of the American progress on new frontiers (Roosevelt, 2011: 13-14).

To encourage his countrymen to take imperial ventures beyond the American borders, he started his historical narrative by glorifying the domination of the Anglo-Saxons in the American continent. In this respect he asserts

> During the past three centuries the spread of the English-speaking people over the world's waste spaces has been not only the most striking feature in the worlds' history, but the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance (Roosevelt, 2004: 11).

By speaking only about the Anglo-Saxon element as the colonizer of the American wilderness, Roosevelt's history excludes other nationalities and women in the colonization process thus ensures his voice to be dominant. In other words, by excluding other voices in his Frontier Thesis, he asserts his version of frontier history as authoritative and definitive.

In *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt glorifies American imperialism, justifies the domination of women and the extermination of the Native Americans, "the most formidable savage foes ever encountered by colonists of European stock (Roosevelt, 2004: 20). In other words, he celebrates the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race over the Indians. And for him it is the definitive history of the American frontier thus excluding any other reading of western history. According to Richard Slotkin, "the shift from one form of frontier expansion to another ... provided a metaphoric anticipation of Roosevelt's polemic on behalf of overseas imperialism, which he saw as the necessary continuation of the 'Winning of the West'" (Slotkin, 1992: 51).

2- Austin and Roosevelt: The Other's Share

In the introduction to this chapter I said that Austin and Roosevelt were rather good friends during the 1910s. The two authors corresponded and exchanged on different issues of the time. In her memoir *Earth Horizon*, Austin tells us that she visited Roosevelt at his home during that time and tried to persuade him to intervene in the Indian Bureau's effort to inhibit Indian music in the schools (Austin, 2007: 324). However, the response she got from Roosevelt was not a satisfying one; as Roosevelt was more interested in other governmental issues he said "I wish you would write another Indian book; a book I could read aloud to my grandchildren" (Ibid. 325). This shows that Roosevelt was not enthusiastic to settle the Indian question. So after the visit Austin commented "nothing had happened. It was the last talk I had with him; I wish it hadn't occurred" (Ibid).

Roosevelt took the presidency of the United States from 1901 to 1909, and it was during that time that Austin published the bulk of her frontier fiction. Their works were in dialogue with one another as the two authors were involved in the same debate in terms of women suffrage and Native American rights. In other words, the political problems that Austin tackled in her writings such as suffrage and Indian rights were the same issues that Roosevelt

faced as President and western writer. However, despite their similar interest in the influence of the American frontier on the character of the American people, their future projects for the American society were in fact divergent ones. While Roosevelt resorted to the myth of the frontier to justify his ideology of the "big stick" and the subordination of women, Austin appealed to the same grand narrative to claim the woman's share of the other and the liberation of women.

Austin's first contact with Native Americans took place in the Tejon region in California. During her sojourn in Beale's ranch she sympathized with the neighbouring Indians and

> She began to learn how Indians live off a land upon which more sophisticated races would starve, and how the land itself instructed them. As she saw these things, the whole basis of her philosophy and economy altered beyond the capacity of books to keep pace with it. She was altered herself to an extent and in a direction that nothing she has yet written fully expresses (Ibid. 198).

The lesson Austin learned from the Native Americans was one of self expression and personal regeneration. Moreover, as she rode on horseback the Tejon region exploring and making new acquaintances with cowboys, Indians, and sheepherders she understood the importance of Indian culture for the American society.

Austin's ties with Native Americans were solidified when she moved with her husband to the Owens Valley. There she was immersed in the Indian culture; as she lived with Paiute neighbours she learned their language, their customs and traditions. When she gave birth to her daughter Ruth, Austin became ill and received little help from anyone except Indian women. A Paiute woman helped her nurse her child and even supplied her with some medicinal knowledge. In the Owen Valley, Mary Austin deepened her knowledge of the Indian culture and history as some of her Native American friends:

> Recalled when the Paiutes in their last stand were driven into the bitter waters of the lake, and dying, sunk there. There were Indians who had stories to tell of the last great struggle between Paiutes and the Southern Shoshones and of the gathering-up of the clans when Beale became Indian Commissioner and removed them to Tejon. Older and older there was myth and legend, and all up and down that country the pictoglyphs that

> marked the passage of ancient migrations, and strange outline ruins of forgotten villages in the black rock country (Ibid. 234-235).

Her immersion in the Indian life opened her eyes to the injustices the Natives Americans suffered at the hands of the white colonists.

Her political activism was mainly inspired by the days she spent in the Owens Valley. The racist measures taken by the federal government's Indian school at Bishop transformed her into "a fierce and untiring opponent of its colossal stupidities." Moreover, her endorsement of the Indian question was mainly strengthened by an event known as "mahala chasing." Young unaccompanied Native American girls who were employed as household help in the town were detained and kept for most of the night by groups of Anglo men. Ashamed of the act of being raped by these men the girls committed suicide when they were set free (Ibid. 267). This abhorring act confirmed her own culture's brutality, emotional savagery, and hypocrisy (Ibid). In publications such as *The Land of Little Rain*, *The Flock*, *Lost Borders*, and *Earth Horizon*, Austin recorded her observations and celebrated Native American culture.

As we have seen in the section above, the history of the American Frontier told by Theodore Roosevelt was largely a history of Anglo-American imperialism and the different clashes with the Native inhabitants of the land. Thus the Native American is always portrayed as the other. Carried within the ideology of Manifest Destiny the Indian is represented as demon, brutal, ignorant and "savage" who stood in the way of progress. In other words, in the Myth of The Frontier told by Roosevelt, the conquest of Native Americans and others such as Mexicans and settlers of various ethnic identities was the corner stone in "winning the West" and forging a pure American identity.

Mary Austin's narratives present a version of the American frontier which is an alternative to that provided by the stereotypical accounts of Roosevelt. In other words, in her version she introduces a woman centered narrative of the frontier which is opposed to the

stereotypical male hero and she presents her ideal of racial and ethnic inclusivity as opposed to stereotypical versions of conquest and erasure of racial and ethnic difference. Indeed, throughout her whole Frontier fiction, she argues that the true American experience was the one which took place in the contact zone between multiple races rather the theory of civilization progress and the domination of others developed by the two historians cited above. Her frontier is a space where a variety of inhabitants participated in the development of American culture.

In the frontier narratives of Roosevelt the Anglo-Saxon culture is the dominant or at the centre whereas all other cultures are marginalized. For example Roosevelt starts his *Winning of the West* by noting

> During the past three centuries the spread of the English-speaking people over the world's waste spaces has been not only the most striking feature in the worlds' history, but the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance (Roosevelt, 2004: 11).

By focusing only on the English-speaking people as the founders of the American nation, Roosevelt is just expressing his racism and ethnocentrism. In other words, by defining American identity only in terms of Anglo-Saxon heritage, Roosevelt excluded all the other ethnic groups and the Indians alike from the process of constructing the Nation.

However, Mary Austin suggests that this formulation is a distorted history or a false historiography because except the Indians all the others came as immigrants to the New World. To resist and revise the male grand narrative of the frontier she places Native Americans and their culture at the centre of her narratives. In her preface to her book of nature essays entitled *The Land of Little Rain*, Austin writes that she prefers the custom of Indian name-giving in which

> Every man is known by that phrase which best expresses him to who so names him ... No other fashion, I think, sets so well with the various natures that inhabit in us, and if you agree with me you will understand why so few names are written here as they appear in geography (Austin, 1987: 3).

Similarly, in *Lost Borders*, the narrator starts noting that the appropriateness of "the Indian name for that country – "Lost Borders" as "you can always trust Indian names to express to you the largest truth about any district in the shortest phrases" (Austin, 1987: 156). By the act of retaining the Indian names, Austin is just supporting the Indian legacy and shows that she is against her male cotemporaries who wanted the extermination of the Native Americans, their languages and their traditions. Moreover, she is against the Anglo-Saxon imperialism and its naming practices. In fact, rather than to describe the details of the place, the white imperialists named places in honour of the persons who discovered them. In this respect Austin says

> If you agree with me, you will understand why so few names are written here as they appear in the geography ... if the Indians have been there before me, you shall have their name, which is always beautifully fit and does not originate in the human desire for perpetuity (Ibid).

Mary Austin's frontier is the space of "Lost Borders" and conventions. She argues that the space of the West is rather the space of various cultures rather than the space of domination of the Anglo-Saxon culture. In her Frontier fiction, she resists the imperialist assumptions of Roosevelt which claimed the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon culture by including in her narrative different minorities. Moreover, she claimed that the different ethnic groups who were marginalized in the masculine frontier narratives were not at the margin but they played a very important role in the development of American culture.

Austin's writings about the Indians come from her personal experience and her immersion within the Native American culture. In the Owens Valley she lived with the Paiute Indians, learned their language and stories, she even placed their culture at the top in comparison with the Anglo-American culture. In her autobiography *Earth Horizon*, she wrote

> Mary would see the women moving across the mesa on pleasant days, digging wild hyacinth roots, seed gathering, and, as her strength permitted, would often join them, absorbing women's lore, plants good to be eaten or for medicine, learning to make snares of long, strong hair for the quail, how with one hand to flip trout, heavy with

> spawn, out from under the soddy banks of summer runnels, how and when to gather willows and cedar-roots for basket making (Austin, 2007: 246-47).

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By using her own experience, Austin was able of bridging the gap between the Anglo-American and the Native American cultures. In other words, she acted as a mediator between the two cultures.

In her Frontier narratives, Austin grants the Indians the historical precedence. In her version Anglo-Saxon heritage and conventions are not central because the borders are lost and "not the law but the land sets the limit" (Austin, 1987: 9). In this space, it is the Native Americans who succeeded first to adapt to the land because of their knowledge and this is why Mary Austin celebrates their culture. Thus, she urges her countrymen to consider the Indians as equal citizens of the United States. To strengthen her argument, she argues

> Before attempting to realize the working of Indian psychology, you must first rid yourself of the notion that there is any real difference between the tribes of men except the explanations. What determines man' behaviour in the presence of fever and thunder is the nature of his guess at the causes of these things. The issues of life do not vary so much with the conditions of civilization as is popularly supposed (Ibid. vii-viii).

So in Austin's frontier there is no ethnocentrism, all the cultures are at the same level, no one is the dominant or superior.

To put Indians at the centre of her narrative, Mary Austin starts her *Lost Borders* with the history of the movement of Paiute, Shoshone, Mojave, Washoe, and Ute Indians in the Great Basin of the Southwest. By so doing she revises the masculine frontier narratives such as the ones of Roosevelt for whom the wilderness frontier was an empty space waiting the white man. In other words, her frontier version proves that the land was inhabited by many groups of people who shared and interacted over thousands of years. Even the title of her book Lost Borders is the name given to the region by the Indians. Putting an Indian name to her book is another way of celebrating Native American culture.

In her story which is entitled “The Basket Maker”, Austin tells the story of a Paiute Indian woman whose name is Seyavi. Rather than to start her story with the murder of whites by Indians as it is the case in male frontier narratives, Austin starts it telling us that Seyavi lost her husband in the battle between the Paiutes and white colonists who wanted to take Indian lands by using force. During the war she took refuge with her son “in the caverns of the Black Rock and ate tule roots and fresh-water clams that they dug out of the slough bottoms with their toes” (Ibid. 61). There she learned to survive by using the meanest of ways. She learned “how much easily one can do without a man than might at first be supposed” (Ibid. 93). When white colonists took the valley and tried to exterminate the buffalo, living became harsh and dangerous. However, “Paiutes have the art of reducing life to its lowest ebb and yet saving it alive on grasshoppers, lizards, and strange herbs; and that time must have left no shrift untried” (Ibid. 94-95). From this experience, Seyavi developed a strategy which like that of the Walking Woman: “A man ... must have a woman, but a woman who has a child will do very well” (Ibid. 95).

In *Western Trails: A Collection of Short Stories by Mary Austin*, the editor Melody Graulich suggests that Mary Austin wrote many artistic Native American women whose roles parallel her own in their respective societies (Graulich, 1987: 25). In fact, the best example of the Indian woman who parallels Austin’s life is the Paiute Seyavi. Like Austin, Seyavi lived in the wilderness and also she is an artist of rare abilities. Austin writes that “Seyavi’s baskets had a touch beyond cleverness. The weaver and the warp lived next to the earth and were saturated with the same elements” (Austin, 1987: 95). Moreover, to show her admiration for Native American art, Austin states:

> Every Indian woman is an artist, sees, feels, creates, but does not philosophize about her processes. Seyavi’s bowls are wonders of technical precision, inside and out, the palm finds no fault with them, but the subtlest appeal is in the sense that warns us of humanness in the way the design spreads into the flare of the bowl (Ibid).

This shows that Native Americans are not demons or "savages" as they were portrayed in Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*, but human beings and artists with their own proper civilization.

In the frontier fictions of Austin the barbarians and the brutes were not the Indians but rather the Anglo-Americans who cheated Indians and stole their lands. In her historical account she relates how peaceful Pueblos were forced to bloody revolution by greedy white colonists who plundered and destroyed their villages. For her the Native Americans represented

> The vase, the cup in which had mellowed for a thousand years the medicine for want of which the civilized world is tearing out its own vitals. For in the cultural frame which we hold so obstinately that it can never refill from its original sources, and so stupidly that the precious content is spilled and fouled by the least creditable elements of our own culture, lies the only existing human society that never found, and kept for an appreciable period, the secret of spiritual organization (Austin, 2007: 238).

For Austin Indians and their culture represented the best model to follow in order to live in osmosis with the American environment.

Conclusion

At a time when Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt popularized mythic images of the frontier as the crucible where the frontiersman forged his manhood and exceptionalism mainly through conquering other races, Mary Austin presents another image of the frontier as the contact zone where different ethnic groups worked together for the development of American culture. Countering the patriarchal and imperialist ideologies embedded in Turner's and Roosevelt's Frontier Myth, Austin produces another kind of Frontier Myth where communion, cooperation, and women are at the centre. In attempting to write the frontier from the woman's point of view, she wrote what Faith Jaycox has called "a transformative western." The latter is a type of western work that manages to transform its protagonists without resorting to violence and paternalistic hierarchy inherent in the traditional western (Jaycox, 1989: 10).

In her collection of stories entitled *Lost Borders* (1909), Mary Hunter Austin produces a more equitable space for women. Unlike Turner and Roosevelt who wanted to confine women in the domestic space under the pretext that the frontier is not the suitable space for women, Austin's women enjoyed their movement in the public space and even participated in the development of the American nation. In her frontier narratives Austin repudiates the androcentric and ethnocentric masculine monologic myth with its dichotomies of (Culture/nature, civilization/savagery, male/female, Anglo-American/Native-American, East/West). Unlike Turner and Roosevelt who celebrated an idealized frontier past where the established social hierarchies favoured the domination of man over women and the other races, Austin celebrates the present and a future space where all these strict borders will be erased. Titling her frontier narrative the Lost Borders is very significant indeed. With the closing of the historical frontier, Austin found it as a boon to produce a new space and social

relationships where all the marginalized others such as women and Native-Americans will have a voice.

Mary Austin's *Lost Borders*, offers not just an alternative vision of the myth of the frontier but also a framework for reading works that describe the frontier experience. The importance of Austin's work lies in the way she bridges myth and experience by dismantling the simplistic binary oppositions between East and West, culture and nature, men and women, and Anglo-American and Native-American through which cultural mythology has misrepresented and marginalized western experience in America. Her writings give us a broader, more nuanced, and more dynamic understanding of the American frontier and its significance for cultural and national identity; serving as an empowering role model for individuals who are overlooked or stereotyped by the prevailing national ideology.

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Chapter Four

The New Woman in the Frontier: Willa Cather's O Pioneers! and the Fiction of Owen Wister and Zane Grey

Introduction

By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a collection of literary works had been written imagining the frontier as a dominant transformative space where American identity and nation were formed. As discussed in the previous chapter, this imaginative space is mainly engaged by male writers to support the ideology of separate spheres and to affirm male courage, independence, and self-reliance. Although women were sometimes included, as is the case in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt, their place was the margin compared to the masculine hero who took the centre. Female characters were just included to support the white masculine hero's physical acts of endurance and invasion. This literature focused mainly on how the masculine hero regenerated his virility in the wilderness.

In literature, the masculine vision and ideology of the Frontier reached its apogee, however, after the turn of the century. Male frontier fiction written during that period transformed the mythic character of the *Leatherstocking Tales* into the heroic figure of the cowboy. The two best examples to illustrate with are Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), two novels which were among the most popular and well-known westerns of the period. For example, *The Virginian* led the best-seller list in America in 1902 with 300, 000 copies sold and by 1968 it had sold over 2 million copies and was perhaps the single most read novel written in America (Wister, 1998: vii). As far as Grey's novel is concerned, it had sold over a million copies on first appearance and brought its author to the top of the best-seller list where he stayed for nine of the next ten years (Mitchell, 1994: 236).

Turn of the twentieth-century America also saw the emergence of women activists who claimed equal rights for women. Their actions coincided with the emergence of one of the most emblematic figures of the modern woman who is called the New Woman. As the symbol of emancipation, The New Woman asserted her sexual and economic independence and fought for progressive reforms. In their fiction, Owen Wister and Zane Grey return to the imaginative space of the frontier landscape to remember self-reliant men who subdued the wilderness and women. In their narratives, they exclude the (New) Woman from the public space and affirm the domination of men. Their works are just a continuation of the frontier master narrative to affirm that the public space is the male's space, and the private space is the woman's space.

In this chapter, I read Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913) as a direct response to her male contemporaries namely Wister and Grey. I argue that Cather dialogizes Wister's and Grey's portrayal of female and male characters. Indeed, her representations of the New Woman oppose the domestic roles assigned to them in the two male authors' respective narratives. Furthermore, she draws the portrait of Carl Linstrum as a parody of male heroism, since this character is just a weak person without power and will. Through her text Cather produces a new space and social relationships where women find their place in the American society. In other words, her frontier spaces are filled with potentiality for her women characters. Empowered by the visual boundlessness of their environments, they reject the domestic sphere and defy the strictures of the patriarchal society. Alexandra Bergson the heroine of *O Pioneers!* is a New Woman who loves the open space of the frontier. In the novel, she is the one who acts, supervises and directs the action. Rather than to be the reward to fight for as is the case in the frontier fiction of Wister and Grey, she is the one who helps and saves other men. Indeed, for Cather the place of the woman is in the public space to assume her full citizenship.

Before starting the discussion of Cather's revision of the master narrative of the Frontier, it is of order to define Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism that will be used in the analysis. For Bakhtin, the novelistic discourse is inherently dialogic and involves a number of utterances belonging to speaking subjects and interacting within the wider social context. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), he foregrounds the social dimension of language and the simultaneous interactions of utterances within a given background:

> The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements – that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object (Ibid. 281).

As for the dialogism at the heart of novelistic discourse, it is explicated by Tzevetan Todorov in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*, where he argues that the core of all discourse, according to Bakhtin, is its dialogic essence. Todorov writes

> The most important feature of the utterance, or at least the most neglected, is its dialogism, that is, its intertexual dimension. After Adam, there are no nameless objects nor any unused words. Intentional or not, all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates. A single voice can make itself heard only by blending in the complex choir of the other voices already in place. This is true not only of literature but of all discourse (Todorov, 1984: x).

The Frontier is one of the most important myths in American history, representing a master narrative that comments on the formation of the country's identity and the development of its culture. As an "authoritative discourse", as such types of narrative are called by Bakhtin, it exercises a tremendous power on American thought, because it implicitly conveys a set of assumptions and an underlying worldview that assigns action, authority, courage and freedom to men and silence, passivity and submission to women (Afettouche and Guendouzi, 2018:

359). However, in spite of its authoritative discourse, the Frontier Myth can be resisted, challenged, and changed as will be demonstrated in Cather's frontier narrative.

The dialogue with which this chapter is concerned relates to the woman resistance to the Male discourse of the Frontier, as illustrated in Cather's appropriation of the Frontier narrative to foreground the woman voice and redefine feminine spatiality. Furthermore, it relates to the hidden polemic present in male and female frontier narratives. According to Bakhtin, the hidden polemic is considered a rejoinder or reply to someone else's words. Bakhtin writes

> In hidden polemic the author's discourse is oriented toward its referential object, as any other discourse, but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme, at the other's statement about the same object. A word directed toward its referential object, clashes with another's word within the very object itself. The other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied (Ibid. 195).

As an alternative to the masculine frontier fiction where the progress of the New Woman in the public space is subverted and undermined, Cather's frontier narrative supports the new status of the autonomous and independent woman. In her frontier version women enjoy their appropriation of the public sphere where they have their proper role. They are not the reward to be won by the male hero but they are the ones who decide about their fate. Unlike Wister and Grey who support violence against the foreigners to halt the rush of new immigrants, Cather proposes tolerance towards the new comers. As far as the issue of marriage is concerned, unlike the sentimental heroines of Wister and Grey who run behind their passions to reach the status of the angel in the house, Cather's New Woman proposes a companionate marriage where the wife and husband share the status of equality.

I- The Progressive Era: A Historical Background

Before starting the discussion and the analysis of the two novels and how they exclude the woman from the public space, I will start first by outlining the different changes that took place at the turn of the century. As a matter of fact, what happened in the last decade of the nineteenth and the two first decades of the twentieth century bear too many links with Wister's and Grey's fiction works. The last decade of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed massive changes in the United States. With the shift of the United States from an agrarian rural country to an urban industrialized one, amplified anxiety over the changing features of the American social, economic, political and cultural fields started to bother every American mind.

First, the swift changes in manufacturing and the introduction of diverse machines started to menace the essential position of the farmer and the cowboy in the American society and economy. The period between 1890 and 1910 saw the fall of the exportation of agricultural products. Their amount decreased from 70% to 40%. This led many farmers to abandon their farms and to search for jobs in the industry, as a result, the number of American farmers was cut into two. In 1880 they represented 50% of the American labour force, however, by 1910 their number decreased to 30% (Jaycox, 2005: 7). The general atmosphere of the agricultural domain and the inner side of the American farmer is best portrayed by the author of this magazine article when he says

> The railroad builder, the banker, the money changer, and the manufacturer underlined the farmer …. The manufacturer came with his woolen mill, his carding mill, his broom factory, his rope factory, his wooden-ware factory, his cotton factory, his pork-packing establishment, his cunning factory and fruit-preserving houses; the little shop on the farm has given place to the large shop on the town; the wagon-maker's shop in the neighborhood has given way to the large establishment in the city where men by the thousand work and where a hundred or two hundred wagons are made in week; the shoemaker's shop has given way to large establishments in the cities where most of the work is done by machines; the old smoke house has given way to the packing house, and the fruit cellars have been displaced by preserving factories (Peffer, 2010: 56).

This move from the small artisan husbandman who was lauded by Thomas Jefferson to mass production and the crisis it generated for the farmers led to the spread of anxiety not only among the farmers but it touched whole parts of the American society. All this took place at the same time Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt praised the farmer and the cowboy as the true heroes of the American Frontier Myth. Another major event which took place in the 1890s was the decrease in cattle industry. The latter was monopolized by large ranchers, as a consequence many cowboys found themselves unemployed because they could not race with prosperous ranchers. Furthermore, the decline in Trail drives which was quickly replaced by a system of railroads, pressed many cowboys to roam to the urban centers to find jobs or become rustlers (Allmendinger, 1992: 9).

In addition to the rush of farmers and cowboys to the cities searching for employment, by the 1880s, a massive influx of new immigrants from South and Eastern Europe had entered the country and had settled in the major cities. The extraordinary migration of many racial and ethnic groups coupled with a rise in nativist sentiments among older Americans who saw these new comers as impossible to assimilate due to their foreign religion and cultural practices. In fact, many nativists saw the new waves of immigration as a threat to Anglo-Saxon bloodlines, traditional American culture, and their livelihoods. They started to worry that they would soon be outnumbered due to the high birthrate of the new immigrants. Others worried that what they perceived to be south and eastern European race might contaminate the Anglo-Saxon bloodline (De Corte, 1978: 2).

In response to this nativism, Frederick Jackson Turner wrote his Frontier Thesis. In other words, Turner's hypothesis might be seen as a rhetorical barrier preventing the integration of the new comers. If the enormous open space of the western frontier which served as the crucible where varied people from a variety of nationalities were transformed

into remarkable American was declared closed, this indicates that no additional new immigrants will be permitted to settle in America.

This nativist anxiety was also shared by Owen Wister who expressed his racism and xenophobia first in an essay which is entitled *The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher*. To denounce the rush of New Immigrants to the United States, Wister writes

> No rood of modern ground is more debased and mongrel with its hordes of encroaching alien vermin, that turn our cities to Babels and our citizenship to a hybrid farce, who degrade our commonwealth from a nation into something half pawn-shop, half broker's office (Wister, 1998: 331).

Moreover, to urge the American government to shut the doors in the face of the new immigrants like Poles, Huns, and Russian Jews, Wister followed Turner by emphasizing the vanishing frontier. He claims

> Had you left New York or San Francisco at ten O'clock this morning, by noon the day after to-morrow you could step out at Cheyenne. There you would stand at the heart of the world that is the subject of my picture, yet you would look around in vain for the reality. It is a vanished world. No journeys, save those which memory can take, will bring you to it now (Ibid.).

Because of this growing anxiety, the American Congress started passing laws to keep out these supposedly "undesirables." Congress also passed exclusion laws based on literacy and national origins quotas, in addition to exclusion acts for contract workers and Orientals. To stop the "menace of the foreign-born," The American Protective Association and The Immigration Restriction League were founded in the 1890s (De Corte, 1978: 7). the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, a fervent supporter of the league's mission to safeguard the nation's blood from the contamination of "inferior" racial strains; warned his colleagues Congressmen that Americans did not fully understand the menace from the fact that "immigration of people of those races which contributed to the settlement and development of the United States was declining in comparison with that of races far removed in thought and speech and blood from the men who … made this country great" (Ibid.). For

Lodge and his conservative supporters, the new immigrants threatened to change "the very fabric of their race", and observed that these new comers were "people whom it is very difficult to assimilate and do not promise well for the standard of civilization in the United States" (Ibid.).

In addition to the labor unrest, the immigration threat, the Progressive Era witnessed another key event which was the appearance of the New Woman. The latter advocated for women's rights to work outside and to obtain positions that are typically held by men. She desired a public position that would help progress American society through her efforts. The New Woman, a self-assured and tolerant figure, supported women's rights to economic independence, political selfhood, and the ability to put their intellectual and artistic objectives above domestic duties. The New Woman was frequently wary of marriage, but if she did, she was associated with the idea of companionate marriage, in which the husband and wife treated one another with equal respect and shared responsibilities; after the turn of the century, she started to be associated with greater sexual freedom (Schneider, 1993: 18). The New Woman's actions were primarily a response to the Victorian era's True womanhood ideology, as described in Barbara Welter's seminal argument; she replaced the purity, piety, domesticity, and obedience of that social type with a model of womanhood dedicated to women's social, political, and sexual equality.

During the aforementioned decades, American women made a great move from the home space to the public sphere. When the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was founded in 1890, all of this was enhanced (Patterson, 2005: 5). The latter demanded that women be allowed to vote and be treated equally with men. The New Woman's acts and her yearning for the public sphere were comparable to the deeds of the masculine frontier hero who rushes to the frontier space to affirm his individuality and independence. However, Wister and Grey take the New Woman from their present world and

situate her in the mythic space of the frontier not to affirm her freedom and independence; instead, they do this to exclude her from the public space and to place her under the domination of man. In fact, Wister's and Grey's reaction was a direct response that answered the anxieties of the bourgeois society.

II- The Domestication of the New Woman in Wister's *The Virginian*

Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, published in 1902, was a best-seller at the time and is still used as a standard western reference today (White, 1991: 621). As a literary masterpiece in its depiction of life in the Wild West, *The Virginian* served as a model for many later western fiction works. This story, which takes place in the vast Wyoming Territory in the late nineteenth century, contributed to the development of the West's code of ethics and archetypal figures. Through *The Virginian*, Wister presents the ideology of the American "Eastern Establishment" which is the use of the Frontier mythic space to reimaging a new American society run by the aristocracy; a society where women and all the races should be subordinated to the white Anglo-Saxon men.

Wister's *The Virginian* tells the story of a cowboy who leaves the East alone and unidentified to live and work in the energizing vast openness of the western plains. Although he did not excel in school, he was successful at his job as cattleman and eventually rose to prominence as an entrepreneur in Wyoming. Because of his intelligence, principles, and independence, he was able to rise to this high position in the Wyoming society. Two significant events involving the white male Anglo-Saxon dominance of other races and women drive Wister's plot forward. The first narrative revolves around the tension and fight between the Virginian and the bad guy Trampas, whom he ultimately kills at the end of the confrontation. The second narrative turns around the Virginian and the school teacher from Vermont Molly Stark Wood whom he domesticates and marries at the end of the story.

With the Westward Movement, and mainly after the Homestead Act of 1862, many women migrated to the American frontier, either following their husbands or alone searching for a new life. Through this law every American man or woman who attained the age of twenty-one years could claim 160 acres of land for free. The law required continuous residence on, and improvement of, the land for five years, at which time proof for final title could be made (Patterson, 1976: 67). Since western territories were opened to both sexes many single or unmarried women were enthusiastic about pioneering and interested in the opportunities of freedom and self-dependence which were offered by the American frontier. By 1880s women were moving west in large numbers and continued to do so until the First World War (Hallgarth, 1989: 24). As far as the women's role in the frontier is concerned, the latter revolved around private and public concerns. In other words, in the frontier space the public and the private spheres were permeable. So rather than to be a burden on her mother or to marry for money Molly chose the venture of the American frontier and following the American Dream.

When the heroine Molly Stark Wood was first introduced in the fifth chapter entitled "Enter the Woman," she is portrayed as a self-reliant and educated woman from an eastern noble middle class family who went to the West "... with a spirit craving the unknown" (Wister, 1998: 69). For Wister, Molly represents the New Woman who wanted independence and freedom. In fact, Miss Wood did not go to the frontier for pleasure but she went to search for a job to help her family who experienced bad financial conditions after their mills failed (Ibid. 49). Unlike most eastern women of her class who consider working as inferior and the ensign of the lower class or the colored people, Molly took different jobs before moving to the west to support herself. For example, she gave music lessons to pupils and did embroidery to earn money (Ibid. 67).

Moreover, to show Molly's subversion of the eastern social conventions, Wister writes

> It is not usual for young ladies of twenty to contemplate a journey of nearly two thousand miles to a country where Indians and wild animals live unchained, unless they are to make such journey in company with a protector, or are going to a protector's arms at the other end. Nor is school teaching on Bear Creek a usual ambition for such young ladies. But Miss Mary Stark Wood was not a usual young lady (Ibid. 65-66).

Indeed, Molly is an independent and strong woman who controls even her suitors as Lin McLean, Molly's first suitor and one of the Virginian's friends claims, "She can take care of herself" (Ibid. 84). Both industrious and open-minded, Molly is the prototype New Woman described by Caroll Smith Rosenberg when she writes that "the New Woman is the single, highly educated, and economically autonomous woman who questioned the legitimacy of the bourgeois social order" (Smith Rosenberg, 1985: 245-246).

However, far from advocating women's emancipation or independence, Wister brought Molly to the mythic space of the American frontier just to domesticate her. In other words, he wants to return her to the private space or to the traditional role of the dependent and submissive wife. This plot reminds us of one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594); where the central issue is the domestication of the woman rebel. In his play William Shakespeare tells the story of a strong, fierce, and independent woman whose name is Katherine (Kate). Kate is the daughter of a wealthy gentleman from Padua who has no suitors because of her shrewish behaviour and her scolding tongue. Like the New Woman of the Progressive Era, Kate likes to make her own decisions and assert her subjectivity. However, to restore the patriarchal social norms Petruchio enters the scene and succeeds to marry and tame Katherine the shrew. In other words, by the transformation of Kate from the defiant, outspoken rebel to the submissive and obedient housewife at the end of the play Shakespeare reinstates the patriarchal hierarchical gender order.

To show that the public space of the frontier is not the suitable place for women, before the Virginian ever sees or meets Molly, he expresses his suspicion on her by saying "What

would she be doing on Bear Creek?" (Ibid. 50). In the similar spirit, his fellow cowboys see the schoolhouse which stands for eastern civilization (as represented by women and institutions) as a menace to the frontier open space. Their concern is clearly seen when:

> They came upon the schoolhouse, roofed and ready for the first native Wyoming crop. It symbolized the dawn of a neighbourhood, and it brought a change into the wilderness air. The feel of it struck cold upon the free spirits of the cowpunchers, and they told each other, what with women and children and wire fences, this country would not long be a country for men. They stopped for a meal at an old comrade's. They looked over his gate, and there he was pottering among garden furrows (Ibid. 70).

For the Virginian and the other cowpunchers women should only stay at home to take care of their husbands and children.

To demonstrate the vulnerability of women in the public space, upon arriving in the wilderness, Wister shows Molly in a situation of peril and need of rescue. Wister writes

> The new driver banished the first one from the maiden's mind. He was not a frank-looking boy, and he had been taking whiskey. All night long he took it, while his passenger, helpless and sleepless inside the lurching stage, sat as upright as she possibly could; nor did the voices that she heard at Drybone reassure her. Sunrise found the white stage lurching eternally on across the alkali, with a driver and a bottle on the box and a pale girl staring out at the plain (Ibid. 73).

In fact, when Molly stares out at the plain she is looking for her protector or saviour because her stage is nearly overturned. Then "a tall rider appeared, and took her out of the stage on his horse so suddenly that she screamed. She felt splashes, saw a swimming flood herself lifted down upon the shore" (Ibid). In this scene Owen Wister is just continuing the masculine frontier narrative of Cooper, Turner and Roosevelt where women are used as frail characters to show the bravery and strength of the male hero.

In the first encounters between the Virginian and Molly we learn that Molly sees men and women as equal and she even considers the Virginian as her inferior mainly in the question of intellectual ability. However, since the Virginian is that kind of man who moves up he will succeed to be her equal and even beats her on several occasions. For example,

when Molly rejects his love by saying “I am not the sort of wife you want.” The Virginian retorts “I am the judge of that” (Ibid. 98). Then, he showed her the contradiction between her belief that “all men are born equal” and her superior condescending manner towards him. Furthermore, to show that he is her superior and the one who understands the real meaning of human equality, he says

> Well, it is mighty confusing. George Taylor, his your best scholar, and poor Bob, he’s your worst, and there is a lot in the middle – and you tell me we’re all born equal! ... equality is a great big bluff. It’s easy called .... I know a man that mostly wins at cyards. I know a man that mostly loses. He says it is his luck. All right. Call it his luck. I know a man that works hard and he’s getting rich, and I know another that works hard and is getting’ poor. He says it is his luck. All right. Call it his luck. I looked around and I see folks movin’ up or movin’ down, winners and losers everywhere. All luck, of course. But since folks can be born that different in their luck, where is your equality? No, seh! Call your failure luck, or call it laziness, wander around the words, prospect all yu’ mind to, and yu’ll come at the same old trail of inequality (Ibid. 99).

Playing with words, the Virginian suggests that he is the ‘quality’ that Molly desires as a lover. He adds “I know what yu’ meant [...] by saying you’re not the wife I’d want. But I am the kind that moves up. Then, Molly’s fortress began to shake (Ibid. 100). In fact, Molly’s rejection of the love of the Virginian is just a mask or role she plays because when she is alone she finds it easy to play the part which she had arranged to play regarding him (the guide, superior, and indulgent companion). But when the Virginian is besides her things become difficult. Her woman fortress was shaken by a force unknown to her before (Ibid. 98).

In another scene, to underscore the superiority of men over women, Wister shows how the Virginian, who has no formal schooling, manages to undermine Molly’s better cultural background thanks to his natural gentility and verbal skill. His explanation of Browning’s poem on the soldier’s pride and honour is a strong example of his command of both rhetoric and intellectual discourse (Ibid. 228). Indeed, by providing Molly with a new interpretation of Browning who is considered as her idol, the Virginian establishes himself as her intellectual master. Wister writes,

> Her worshiper still, but her master, too. Indeed she was no longer his half-indulgent, half-scornful superior. Her better birth and schooling that had once been weapons to keep him at his distance, or bring her off victorious in their encounters, had given way before the onset of the natural man himself (Ibid. 292).

The Virginian succeeds to put away all the obstacles between himself and his beloved by using his intelligence and wild prowess. At last Molly decides to love him sincerely as the narrator claims

> Had she surrendered on this day to her cowpuncher, her wild man? Was she forever wholly his? Had the Virginian's fire so melted her heart that no rift in it remained? So she would have thought if any thought had come to her. But in his arms to-day, thought was lost in something more divine (Ibid. 234).

By presenting Molly's shift from the position of the New Woman who struggles for independence and freedom to that of the sentimental woman who submits to her feelings, Wister suggests that the proper role of women is that of submission and subordination. In other words, for Wister women find enjoyment only when they submit to their lovers as Molly asserts "Now I know how unhappy I have been (Ibid. 233).

It is through Molly then, that Wister expresses his vision toward the women's position in the American society in order to reinforce the Victorian role of women as subservient housewives taking care of their husbands and children. For him, the frontier space is not the space of freedom and liberation for women but it is rather the space that transforms New women into docile and submissive housewives. Indeed, Molly Wood is the perfect example of the New Woman who is transformed by the American west. From a schoolmarm who is looking for liberty and self dependence she moves to the position of the subordinate wife who "in her complete love for the Virginian found enough" (Ibid. 323).

Before the showdown between the Virginian and the cattle rustler Trampas takes place, Wister organizes the first rhetorical showdown between the Virginian and Molly just to reaffirm the power of men over women. So before facing Trampas, a discussion is taking

place between the Virginian and Molly where the latter tries to convince the Virginian to give up his decision to meet Trampas. She argues

> But you can come away! [...] It's not too late yet. You can take yourself out of his reach. Everybody knows that you are brave. What is he to you? You can leave him in this place. I'll go with you anywhere. To any house, to the mountains, to anywhere away (Ibid. 308).

Then the Virginian explains to her that he will face Trampas because the latter spread fake news about him. And in case he gives up his decision he will be considered as a coward by his friends and others. So he has to show that he is a brave man. Then, Molly says "There is a higher courage than fear of outside opinion" to which the Virginian responds "Cert'nly there is. That's what I'm showing in going against yours" (Ibid. 309).

For the Virginian, it is not only a question of courage or bravery but it has to do with honour. So he has to punish Trampas for the rumour he spread in Bear Creek to save his honour and to strengthen his dominant position in the society

> If any man said I was a thief and I heard about it, would I let him go on spreadin' such a thing of me? Don't I owe my own honesty something better than that? Would I sit down in a corner rubbin' my honesty and whisperin' to it, 'There! There! I know you ain't a thief'? No, seh; not a little bit! What men say about my nature is not just merely an outside thing. For the fact that I let 'em keep on saying' it is a proof I don't value my nature enough to shield it from their slander and give them their punishment (Ibid).

What others say about him and how others see him are the two very important things for the Virginian because one's status in society depends on his sense of honour.

At the end Molly uses herself as her last weapon to try to convince the Virginian to give up his decision of facing Trampas by threatening him to put an end to their relationship "when I think of to-morrow, of you and me, and of – If you do this, there can be no to-morrow for you and me" (Ibid. 310). However, the Virginian does not listen to his sweetheart and goes killing Tramps. When he killed the latter, he returns to Molly who was overwhelmed by her

emotions found herself in his arms kissing him (Ibid. 314). This scene symbolizes the complete surrender and submission of Molly to her beau.

Throughout the entire novel, Wister underscores how The Virginian subdues Molly Wood through his innate gentility, firm sense of manhood and decency. When describing his personal perspective on the correct concept of equality between men, the Virginian makes it clear to Molly that equality does not include women since they are inherently inferior to men (Ibid. 98). The Virginian thus represents Wister's hostility to the emerging social type of the New Woman. For him, women should not go beyond the domestic space of the house, and would be always under the subordination of men.

III- The Taming of the New Woman in Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*

In *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Zane Grey recounts a story of a woman who is threatened by a Mormon community in the Utah desert. Jane Withersteen is a woman who inherited a very big ranch from her father and her situation as a single woman undermined her power. Her possessions are threatened by a very greedy Mormon leader whose name is Tull. The latter wanted to marry her by force to take all what she possesses. Fortunately for her, a hero whose name is Lassiter came and saved her from the different scheming of the Mormon Community leader. The novel ends with the marriage of Lassiter and Jane and the return of Jane who symbolizes the New Woman to the domestic space.

In *Riders*, Grey adopts the dominant patriarchal spatial codes that confined women to the domestic space. For him, only in the house or the private space women can find safety and protection to assume their role as wives and mothers. In this issue, he sounds like Gaston Bachelard who in his *The Poetics of Space* emphasizes the protection of the space of the house when he claims

> If I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace

> ... life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house (Bachelard, 1994: 6-7).

For Bachelard, the place of women is at home to maintain and polish the house, he adds:

> A house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been rebuilt from the inside; it is as though it were new inside. In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside, and they know little or nothing of the "wax" of civilization (Ibid. 68).

By gendering space outside/male and inside/female Bachelard confines women to the domestic space, and idea dear to Grey that he defends in his frontier narrative.

At the first sight, Jane Whithersteen is the heroine of *Riders of the Purple Sage*. She is the owner of a very large ranch that she inherited from her father in a frontier settlement in Utah in 1871. The first chapter of the novel establishes the authority of Jane. Grey writes:

> She owned all the ground and many of the cottages. Whithersteen house was hers, and the great ranch, with its thousands of cattle, and the swiftest horses on the sage. To her belonged Amber Spring, the water which gave verdure and beauty to the village and made living possible on that wild purple upland waste. She could not escape being involved in whatever befell Cottonwoods (Grey, 2002: 1-2).

In this passage, Grey is making reference to a female frontier tradition. In the character of Jane he portrays a strong self-reliant woman who possesses everything in her ranch. She owns her land and exercises her authority on many men who work as cowboys in her ranch. However, to establish her vulnerability and her need for a male hero for protection as is the case in male frontier literature I have examined in the previous chapters, Grey notes that her venture in the public space undermines her safety. In fact, we discover that she is surrounded by danger, represented by the men of the Mormon Community who wanted to undermine her power and a band of outlaw rustlers who wanted to steal her livestock.

Jane Withersteen is a Mormon-born woman who owns a very vast ranch where so many Gentiles were employed. Her possession of her ranch is threatened by the Mormon community leader Tull who wanted to marry her by force. Tull is easily recognized as the

villain of the novel, he is like Trampas in The Virginian. As a reaction to Jane's employment and defence of the Gentiles like Venters, Tull tells her:

> Jane Withersteen, your father left you wealth and power. It has turned your head. You haven't yet come to see the place of Mormon women. We've reasoned with you, borne with you. We've patiently waited. "We've let you have your fling, which is more than I ever saw granted to a Mormon woman. But you haven't come to your senses. Now, once for all, you can't have any further friendship with Venters. He's going to be whipped, and he's got to leave Utah! (Ibid. 7).

With a slow voice Jane implored Tull to let Venters free and do not whip him, she says "Oh! Don't whip him! It would be dastardly!" (Ibid). However, her massage is not heard by Tull who ordered his men to carry on their mission of whipping Venters. This passage suggests that the frontier is not a suitable place for single women, their voice is not heard and they need the protection of men.

Furthermore, to show the fragile situation of women in the immense open space of the frontier, Grey adds

> In her extremity she found herself murmuring, "Whence cometh my help!" It was a prayer, as if forth from these lonely purple reaches and walls of red and clefts of blue might ride a fearless man neither creed-bound nor creed-mad, who would hold up a restraining hand in the faces of her ruthless people (Ibid. 8- 9).

In this passage Zane Grey continues the Frontier Myth of James Fenimore Cooper where women are portrayed as fragile and dependent on men's rescue. For instance, the quote above is a direct reference to Alice in *The Last of the Mohicans*. In one of the scenes when the Huron Magua and his friends captured the Munro sisters, Duncan Heyward, and David Gamut, Alice also started to pray for help. Cooper writes

> Her hands were clasped before her in prayer, but instead of looking upward to the power which alone could rescue them, her unconscious looks wandered to the countenance of Duncan, with infantile dependency (Cooper, 1985: 593).

Like Alice Munro who asks help from man, Jane also demands the rescue of the masculine hero. So rather than to rely on themselves and to use their courage and wisdom they wait only

to see their beau coming for the help. In a few moments, her dream comes true when Jane Withersteen wheeled and saw a horseman, silhouetted against the western sky, come riding out of the sage. He had ridden down from the left, in the golden glare of the sun, and had been unobserved till close at hand. An answer to her prayer! (Grey, 2002: 9).

Jane Withetsteen is portrayed as a Victorian woman. In other terms, she represents the heroine of the sentimental novel, who encapsulates the Victorian piety and domesticity. In fact, she reminds us of one of the famous heroines of charlotte Bronte Jane Eyre. Like Jane Eyre, Jane Withersteen is a good Christian who believes in love and forgiveness, in self-effacement, obedience to authority, and the sanctity of the family. She dresses in white and loves children (Tomkins, 1992: 174). Jane did not only pray to be saved from her captivity in the Mormon community, she prays also "to be immune from that dark, hot hate ... to do her duty by her church and people ... to hold reverence of God and womanhood inviolate (qtd. in Ibid. 175).

Unlike Jane, Lassiter, the frontier hero is described as the man of the wilderness, the saviour who brings justice and protection for women. Grey writes: "He stood tall and straight, his wide shoulders flung back, with the muscles of his arms rippling". To emphasize his physical traits, he adds:

> reach the rider reined in his mount and with a lithe forward-slipping action appeared to ground in one long step. It was a peculiar movement in its quickness and inasmuch that while performing it the rider did not swerve in the slightest from a square front to the group before him ... The rider dropped his sombrero and made a rapid movement, singular in that it left him somewhat crouched, arms bent and stiff, with the big black gun-sheaths swung round to the fore (Grey, 2002: 9-15).

In *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Lassiter is portrayed in the same way Cooper describes Natty Bumpo. Like the latter who saved the Munro sisters from the Indian captivity, Lassiter saves Jane Withersteen from the Mormon captivity.

In his novel, Grey borrows the genre of the captivity narrative from James fenimore Cooper to demonize the Mormon culture. He uses this trope to justify the intervention of the masculine hero to save the endangered captivated woman. Besides by alluding to the Mormons as empire builders inside the structure of his frontier narrative, he positions Mormon culture as pernicious colonialists that colonize ladies' bodies and will. As a response, Lassiter comes as the saviour and the emancipator. Amy Kaplan contends that this trope is used in numerous sentimental novels at the turn of the century. She clarifies that "The heroines in this manner prove their own modernity by subduing themselves to some 'real live man'" (Kaplan, 2000: 230).

To support the stereotype of the woman as someone who cannot take control of her passions and desires, Jane is portrayed as very sensitive woman who cannot control her love passion for Lassiter. Grey writes

> Jane Withersteen rushed to the silence and seclusion of her room, and there could no longer hold back the bursting of her wrath ... lying upon her bed, sightless, voiceless, she was a writhing living flame. And she tossed there while her fury burned and burned, and finally burnt itself out (Grey, 2002: 91).

Unlike Lassiter who likes the vast open space of the frontier where he shows his self-control and physical prowess, Jane retreats to the domestic space to try to tame her desires. Unfortunately for her, she cannot subdue her wild desires for her beau which undermines her power and agency.

Jane is a persistent proponent of non-violence, whereas Lassiter is a man known for his violent hatred and vengeance against the Mormons. Jane spends a great part of the account endeavouring to control her own body, as well as Lassiter's too, by persuading him to repudiate violence. In one of the scenes, Jane uses her body to persuade Lassiter to surrender his weapons:

> Jane slipped her hands down to the swinging gun-sheaths, and when she had locked her fingers around the huge, cold handles of the guns, she trembled as with a chilling

> ripple all over her body ... Jane felt his hard, strong hands close around her wrist ... As if her hands had been those of a child, he unclasped their clinging grip from the handles of his guns, and pushing her away, he turned his grey face to her in one look of terrible realization, and then strode off into the shadows of cottonwoods (Ibid. 194-195).

This seduction is repeated during the showdown scene. When Lassiter left her and went to kill the Mormon leader Tull, Jane uses all her power and persuasion to change the mind of Lassiter, she says: "take me – hide me in some wild place – and love me ... Spare him and take me away ... Kiss me! ... Are you a man? Kiss me and save me!" (Ibid. 373-374). Rather than to hear her massage of tolerance and peace, Lassiter turns his back on Jane and says:

> This thing I'm about to do ain't for myself ... it's not because of anything that happened in the past but for what is happening' right now. It's for you! .... I can reach down an' feel these big guns, an' know what I can do with them (Ibid. 375).

From this quote we understand that all what Lassiter is doing is for the protection and domination of his sweetheart.

Jane Withersteen is not the only woman of *Riders of the Purple sage*. In fact, there is another woman in the text whose name is Bess. As a New Woman, Bess appreciates access to the manly domain of activity and opportunity and is perceived as the best rider of the region. However, her romance with Bern Venters undermined her powers and restored her to the Victorian ideology of womanhood. In one of the scenes Bern shoots a mysterious masked rider and he became shocked by discovering that the rider was not having a gun. He says: "A rustler who didn't pack guns! He wears no belt. He couldn't pack guns in that rig.... Strange! ... He's alive! ... I've got to stand here and watch him die. And I shot an unarmed man." (Ibid. 68). He became more disheartened when he removed the rider's mask and sombrero and finding that the rider is very young he adds: "Oh he's only a boy!... What! Can he be Oldring's Masked Rider? (Ibid). As the rider started to regain his consciousness, Bern opens his blouse to check his wound. Then, he saw the graceful, beautiful swell of a woman's breast! ... "A woman!" he cried. "A girl! ... I've killed a girl!" (Ibid. 70). As the girl recovers

from her situation she says to Bern “Do what – you want – with me” (Ibid. 125). Then, Bern takes the injured Bess to a detached valley where he nursed her and he restored her to the domestic state of womanhood.

In his frontier fiction, Grey continues the Frontier Myth of Turner and Roosevelt when he portrays the woman body as that of the frontier landscape. In the first example, Jane is tamed and subdued by Lassiter. And in the second instance, the body of Bess is like the space of the frontier. It is explored and dominated by Bern which led Bess to declare: “I’ve discovered myself – too. I’ young – I’m a live – I’ so full – oh! I’m a woman” (Ibid. 257). Like in the master narrative of the frontier, the New Woman Bess discovered her femininity and returned to the domestic space to serve her lover. The one who took benefit from the frontier space is her lover Ben Venters who affirmed his manhood.

To support the ideology of separate spheres Jane is not included outside during the showdown. The event is related to her by one of her riders. For Grey the place of women is the home not the public space. In fact, for Lassiter, the sensitive women cannot witness such events. Thus he says to Jane: “don’t – look – back! (Ibid. 384). Furthermore, he declares the “past is dead. In my love for you I forgot the past” (Ibid. 375). By accepting not to look back to the past, Jane loses her identity and she is only indentified through her lover Lassiter.

In the end of his novel, Zane Grey celebrates the marriage of Lassiter and Jane. The couple continued their march westward, escaping the corruption of the Mormon community. Their destination is the Edenic valley where Bern and Bess passed their honeymoon and were restored to the Victorian ideology of womanhood. Lassiter and Jane do not simply journey off into the sunset, but they moved to Indian caves to acquire another identity. In other words, Lassiter takes Jane to the domestic space of the caves to put her in her proper place which is the private space of the home and to push her to relinquish the traits of the New Woman.

In *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Zane grey restores the Victorian "cult of womanhood" in the American society through Jane Withersteen and Bess. In fact, he used the mythic space of the Frontier to allow his frontiersmen to subdue and dominate the New Woman and to take her back to her proper place of womanhood.

The stereotyping of women continued in Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), and Zane Grey's *Rider's of the purple Sage* (1912) which are among the most popular and well-known frontier novels of the twentieth century. They still perpetuate the myth of the frontier as a male space where women should be under the authority and control of men. In other words, in both novels power is defined through male control of land, cattle, women and the other races. There are women in these novels, but the frontier of *The Virginian* and *Riders* is also a highly gendered space. In other words, everything is structured around the nineteenth-century ideology of the separate spheres where men are assigned the public or the outside space and women are kept in the private or the domestic space.

In the two frontier narratives men consistently maintain dominance and assert their supremacy over women. In a similar way, they are afraid of what the feminine stands for and how it can undermine their own autonomy. In Owen Wister's *The Virginian* what the hero worries mainly is the loss of his manliness and independence after marrying Molly. This female menace is represented in the figure of the school that Molly is constructing. Wister writes

> The new school symbolized the down of a neighbourhood, and it brought a change to the wilderness air. The feel of it struck cold upon the free spirits of the cowpunchers, and they told each other that, what with women and children and wire fences, this country would not long be a country for men (Wister, 1998: 70).

Likewise, in Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*, what Lassiter was troubled with was Jane's continual attempts to take away his guns from him. This act represents a menace to both his bodily and sexual domination. Grey writes, "'where would any man be on this border

without guns?'" He asks Jane. "'Gun-packing' in the West since the Civil War has growed into kind of a moral law. An 'out here on this border it's the difference between a man an 'somthin' not a man'" (Grey, 2002: 207).

Additionally, men in the two novels are defined by their force and independence. Their value is based on their aptitude and competence to face and triumph over diverse challenges. As a result, these men rely entirely upon arms and the use of violence. On the other hand, in the world of these male heroes, women stand for the community and the social order that these persons identify themselves in opposition to. In other terms, Molly and Jane who embraced the domestic ideology in their communities in their roles as teacher and mother figures symbolize a danger to their individualism.

Finally, in both frontier fictions, the personality of women characters frequently shifts and is determined by their interaction with men while the latter have constant personalities. For example, in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, Molly is largely defined by her role as a schoolteacher, however, her position as the Virginian's fiancée undermines her independence and freedom and she is under the dominance of her man. The similar thing happens to Jane in Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*. At the commencement of the novel, she is portrayed as a sturdy, self-reliant woman, but by the conclusion of the story she retained nothing of these traits. She lost even her identity because she defines herself through Lassiter. The woman frontier experience is absent in these narratives. Women are just present as sexual objects.

Serving the dominant ideology of the separate spheres, Wister and Grey cannot imagine an independent, self-reliant woman heroine who can live alone in the frontier space without the protection of a male hero. The two novels stick strictly to the traditional borders of social identification which were mythologized by Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore

Roosevelt. In conclusion, what should be kept in mind in the light of what has been said so far is that through their novels, Owen Wister and Zane Grey expressed the anxiety of the American Eastern Establishment during the Progressive Era. The white, middle class Anglo-Saxon men were afraid of losing their virility and becoming over civilized, so they resorted to the Myth of the Frontier to try to find solutions to this problem and to create a new society where the other races and women would be subordinated. Through their cowboy heroes rhetoric, strong sense of righteousness and chivalry, they celebrate the racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxon bloodline in America and the subordination of women.

IV- Alexandra Bergson and the Liberating Space of the Frontier

The American feminist writer Willa Cather is a very important figure in the history of the American Frontier. Unlike her male counterparts such as Owen Wister and Zane Grey, she discards the dictates of the popular western narrative. As an alternative to the male Myth of the Frontier her frontier fiction is based on independent female protagonists such as Alexandra Bergson and Antonia Shimerda. In her frontier version women have their proper role. They do not only participate in the frontier process, they are its basis. In opposition to Wister and Grey who considered violence to be the main means for building up human progress, Cather sees cooperation, tolerance and freedom for women as the main characteristics of the American frontier process. Cather's dialogue with her male counterparts is not a question of literary rivalry as it is a debate on the woman question and her place in the American society. In other words, her frontier narrative uncovers something about the cultural context of its time and provides readers with a critical commentary on the nature of male-female relationships of the Progressive Era.

The similarity between Cather's, Wister's and Grey's novels is very striking. The three authors use the figure of the New Woman in their narratives. For example, the three women

characters Molly Wood, Jane Whithersteen, and Alexandra Bergson represent the New Woman in the American Frontier. Both Jane and Alexandra take the homesteads of their parents and Molly follows the opportunities offered by the American West to fulfil her dreams. However, Wister and Grey as discussed above took just the New Woman to the Frontier space in order to domesticate her and to strip from her the garments of independence and freedom. As a response Willa Cather uses the Frontier space to affirm the independence and the important status of the New woman in the American society

Like Wister and Grey, Cather situates her novel, *O Pioneers!* (1913) in the Frontier space of the 1870s. However, unlike her male counterparts who visited the West as tourists, Cather's Nebraska landscape is the space and place where she grew up as a young girl and affirmed her status as a New Woman. Though the place of her birth is Virginia in 1873, Nebraska was the place where she was raised and grew up. At the age of ten, she moved with her family to join her grandparents on their farm in Red Cloud. As far as her education is concerned, she first joined the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. After her graduation, she moved to Pittsburgh where she was hired in one of its high schools to teach English. After this experience, she moved to the city of New York in 1906 to join *McClure's* Magazine where she worked as writer and editor. While in New York City, she met a woman whose name is Sarah Orne Jewett. The latter became her friend, and in 1908 she advised her to write about her frontier experience. As a result, she wrote her famous Nebraska trilogy or frontier novels which are: *O Pioneers!* (1913), *The song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Antonia* (1918). The latter are based on her childhood memory and on the stories of men and women she grew up alongside (Magagna, 2008: 13). In one of her interviews in 1921, Cather explained why she decided to write *O Pioneers!*: "I had searched for books telling about the beauty of the country I loved, its romance, and heroism and strength and courage of its people that had been

plowed into the very furrows of its soil, and I did not find them. And so I wrote *O Pioneers!* (qtd. in Wurzel, 1993: 17).

Cather's familiarity with the region and time period is the basis for the construction of the different contradictory elements in her novel *O pioneers!*. Unlike Wister and Grey who made reference to the closing of the Frontier in their narratives to support immigration restriction, Cather's West is still an open space which welcomes new people and women. Her novel is not isolated with what happens in America during the Progressive Era. In fact, it is full of characters who depart and come back on trains and bring information from the urban centers. New immigrants travel to the western lands following the American Dream. This interconnection of wilderness and urban centers, traditions and innovation, Americans and new immigrants subverts the narrative of national exceptionalism present in Wister and Grey.

Cather's frontier is full of immigrants who come from different horizons and various cultural backgrounds. They speak many new languages and practise several religions. In *Willa Cather and the Myth of American Migration* (1995), Joseph Urgo suggests that "Cather's childhood was spent among various dislocated peoples – Virginians, Germans, Swedish, Irish, English, Danish, and Bohemian" (Urgo, 1995: 36). Therefore, Cather's past provides her with a reminiscence of the frontier as a space of different identities who took the trail of the Westward Movement following the American Dream. In the same way, like Wister and Grey, Cather's novel is based on movement in the frontier space. However, unlike her male counterparts who emphasized only the movement of the masculine hero, Cather's emphasis is put on the movement of the woman heroine and how she is fascinated and freed by the frontier space.

As said above, Cather's frontier version and vision is shaped by both her contemporary present and her past years spent in the Nebraska frontier. Lisa Marcus suggests that Cather's activity at *McClure's* magazine "gave her intimate exposure to the culture wars of her day,

specifically the nativist salvos about the threat immigrants posed to American culture" (Marcus, 2005: 67). This discourse is the one which is supported by Wister and Grey in their narratives. As an answer, Cather's portrayal of various immigrant settlers on the frontier prairie who live peacefully is a counter discourse to the male master narrative of the frontier.

In her frontier narrative, Willa Cather imagines women who have agency over their fate. Alexandra Bergson the pioneer woman of the story is the opposite of Molly Wood and Jane Whithrsteen. She is the prototype of the New Woman. She possesses a very vast homestead that she inherited from her father. She is also a well educated woman who manages perfectly her farm business and ranch. As a result, she attains her financial independence. Like Jane Withersteen, Cather's heroine – Alexandra Bergson – inherits her father's ranch. However, unlike Jane who inherits a flourishing homestead, Alexandra takes her father's farm in a state of bankruptcy. So the distinction one can make here is that Alexandra uses all her managing competences to flourish her affairs, whereas, Jane remains passive without producing anything and at the end gives her possessions to her lover Lassiter.

Cather's first description of her frontier heroine runs as follow,

> She was a strong tall girl, and she walked rapidly and resolutely, as if she knew exactly where she was going and what she was going to do next. She wore a man's long Ulster not as if it were an affliction, but as if it were very comfortable and belonged to her; carried it like a young soldier (Cather, 1983: 6).

This portrayal of Alexandra bears a lot of analogies with Cather's own experiences as a youth. Between thirteen and nineteen, Cather endorsed a masculine persona renaming herself 'William' and dressing in boy's clothing (Lindemann, 1997: xiv). Alexandra's corporeal stature and bodily attitude are represented as appropriate with her chosen clothes. In other words, the way she clothes herself and the way she moves in the frontier space resembles the frontiersman. Unlike the women who are portrayed in western narratives and paintings who are fragile, dependent, and every time looking to the domestic space, the gaze of Alexandra is

towards the horizon. Directing her sight on the open spaces rather than the closed private ones allows Alexandra to appropriate the space of the Frontier.

In Cather's novel the women who endorse the domestic ideology are not heroines. In fact the maternal figure who symbolizes this ideology is abandoned in the first pages of the narrative. Mrs. Bergson who represents the ideal frontier woman described by Annette Kolodny in *The land Before Her* (1984) is put at the margin rather than the centre of the action. Little is provided about her personality, even her name is not provided. The only thing we know about her is that she is from a lower class than her husband, and that she is a good housewife (Cather, 1983: 28). Mrs. Bergson always long to the old country and the domestic space. Cather writes

> She had never quite forgiven John Bergson for bringing her to the end of the world; but now that she was there, she wanted to be let alone to reconstruct her old life in so far as that possible. She could still take some comfort in the world if she had bacon in the cave, glass jars on the shelves, and sheet in the press (Ibid. 30).

From this quote, we understand that Mrs. Bergson wants to restore the Victorian ideology of the Old world in the New World. In one of the scenes when Alexandra asks her mother whether the conditions were hard when they came to this new territory, Mrs. Bergson remembers only the things that disturbed her domestic space. She says: "Drought, chinch-bugs, hail, everything! My garden all cut to pieces like sauerkraut. No grapes on the creek, no nothing. The people all lived like coyotes" (Ibid. 60). In part two of the novel which is entitled "Neighbouring fields", we learn that "It is sixteen years since John Bergson died. His wife now lies beside him, and the white shaft that marks their graves gleams across the Wheatfields. Could he rise from beneath it, he would not know the country under which he had been asleep" (Ibid. 75). As the representative of the Victorian ideology of womanhood, this is the last time we hear of Mrs. Bergson in the novel.

Unlike her mother who longs for the domestic space, Alexandra longs for the vast open spaces of the frontier where she finds her freedom and joy. Cather asserts

> For the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning. It seemed beautiful to her, rich and strong and glorious. Her eyes drunk in the breath of it, until her tears blinded her. Then the Genius of the divide, the great free spirit which breaths across it, must have bent lower than it ever bent to a human will before. The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or woman (Ibid. 65).

To stress the symbiotic connection between Alexandra and the frontier space, Cather adds: "She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun. Under the long saggy ridges, she felt the future stirring" (ibid. 71).

The prairie or the frontier space represents a source of freedom and inspiration for Alexandra. In *Space and Place: The perspective of Experience* (1977), cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan emphasizes the opportunities of freedom and independence found in space. In this respect he claims

> Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. Being free has several levels of meaning. Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced (Ibid.52).

Furthermore, he contends that "space, a biological necessity to all animals is to human beings also psychological need, a social perquisite, and even a spiritual attribute … Space means escape from danger and freedom from restraint" (Ibid.58).

The vast open space of the frontier shapes and transforms the identity of Alexandra Bergson. In other words, the open frontier space gives her "enough room in which to act"; as a result, she is empowered with the force which allows her to move beyond the domestic space and defy the patriarchal strictures and restrictions on women. As far as the "spiritual

attribute" is concerned I suggest the bravery of Alexandra is inspired from the frontier landscapes. Indeed, like the latter which do not allow domestication, Alexandra also refuses to be under the domination of men.

Alexandra Bergson dislikes the closed spaces of the home and it is in "the big out of doors, and in the soil that she expresses herself best" (Ibid. 87). Moreover, to emphasize her New Woman traits, Cather adds: "Any one there abouts would have told you that this was one of the richest farms on the Divide, and that the farmer was a woman, Alexandra Bergson. If you go up the hill and enter Alexandra's big house, you will find that it is curiously unfinished uneven in comfort" (Ibid. 83). Throughout the whole novel, Alexandra devotes herself for the development and the working of her ranch and it is with joy that she cultivates her land: "The brown earth, with such a strong, clean smell, and such a power of growth and fertility in it, yield itself eagerly to the plow; rolls away from the shear, not even dimming the brightness of the metal, with a soft, deep sigh of happiness" (Ibid. 74). Furthermore, she adds: "there were certain days in her life, outwardly uneventful, which Alexandra remembered as peculiarly happy; days when she was close to the flat, fallow world about her, and felt, as it were, in her own body the joyous germination of the soil" (Ibid. 204).

Cather's frontier narrative is a subversion of the discourse of Wister and Grey. Unlike Molly and Jane who wait for their beau to come to their rescue, Alexandra is the heroine who saves other people. In other words, rather than to depend on men, it is men who depend on her. The first man who asks for her help in the novel is her brother Emil. In one of the scenes, his kitten was chased by a dog up the pole and he cannot save her so he started crying: "My Kitten, sister, my kitten! (Ibid. 7). In this episode, it is Alexandra the heroine who comes to the rescue. She takes the place of the frontiersman on whom others depended. Moreover, to subvert the stereotypes associated with frontier women, she uses an important stratagem. The latter consists in gendering the kitten as female and Emil as her master. So normally it is Emil

who will save the endangered kitten, however, the tables are turned and it is Alexandra who assumes the role of the master. So through Alexandra Willa Cather disrupts the contradictory power relations expanded in the frontier narratives of Wister and Grey.

For Cather, the traits of frailty and weakness are not the property only of women, since men, too, can have the same attributes. To support her argument, she portrays Carl Linstrum as a person who is fragile, powerless and childlike. She writes: “He, too, was lonely. He was a thin, frail boy ...There was delicate pallor in his thin face, and his mouth was too sensitive for a boy’s” (ibid. 10). Through her portrayal of Carl, Cather disrupts the gendered binaries of the male Frontier which associates women with silence, weakness, dependence and domesticity and men with courage, independence, freedom and power.

Emil is not the only male who is helped by the frontier heroine Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!*. In fact, she rescues various other masculine characters. One of these is her father, John Bergson. “Before Alexandra was twelve years old she had begun to be a help to him, and as she grew older he had come to depend more and more upon her resourcefulness and good judgment ... it was Alexandra who read the papers and followed the markets” (Ibid. 22-23). Though he has two sons, Lou and Oscar, Alexandra is the one to whom her father cedes his ranch because in her he recognizes “the strength of will, and the simple direct way of thinking things direct out” (Ibid. 24).

She helped also her family by making their farm flourish again. Alexandra is the kind of person who likes new experiments and to take chances. She is not the kind of woman who stays at home waiting for others to come to help her. To save their ranch from bankruptcy she goes to take advice from Crazy Ivar because she thinks that he was the best person who knows about animals on the Divide. Unlike her brothers who do not know what to do with their homestead, Alexandra proposes that they should take risks and mortgage it because she is certain that the value of the land will raise and this will help them to prosper again. And this

is what happened, after a period of time the Bergson's ranch becomes one of the richest homesteads on the Divide.

Besides her brothers, Alexandra also helps and rescues the old man Ivar from being sent to an asylum. In fact, as Ivar grows older, he loses the ability to provide for his different needs so Alexandra takes him to her ranch to take care of her animals. Though her brothers are against her action and propose that the old man should be put in an asylum, Alexandra laughs at their suggestion and decides to stick to her will. Through this action, we understand that Alexandra favours tolerance, protection, and love. Cather emphasized these traits in her frontier heroine just to express her discord towards her contemporary male figures who support the ideology of nativism and American exceptionalism.

In most male frontier literature including the works of Wister and Grey the female body is used as a sexual object. To revise this trope and express her discord, Willa Cather's text is full of instances where Alexandra the heroine rejects all references to sex. The only woman in the text who does not control her desires and submits to her beau like it is fashion in male frontier narratives is killed. The first example where Alexandra rejects the sexual gaze is when

> A shabby little travelling man, who was just then coming out of the store on his way to the saloon, stooped and gazed stupidly at the shining mass of hair she bared when she took off her veil; two thick braids, pinned out her head in the German way, with a fringe of reddish-yellow curls blowing out under her cap. He took his cigar out of his mouth and held the wet end between the fingers of his woollen glove. "My God girl, what a head of hair!" he exclaimed .... She stabbed him with a glance of Amazonian fierceness (Ibid. 7-8).

Alexandra's rejection of the masculine gaze which connects her hair to her sexuality is a direct response to the works of Wister and Grey where the woman is just incorporated to control her and to allow their heroes to consume their sexual desires. Alexandra's rejection of the male gaze is also another way to deny men the possession of women through the power of their sexuality. Indeed, throughout the whole novel Alexandra refuses to be portrayed as a

sexual object, and to be situated in the binary opposition Male/Female, because what is important for her is what the person can do to improve the situation of his community or country. In her view, women must have an equal status as men.

To show that biology is not the most important thing that should define the place of women in American society, Cather crafts Alexandra as a woman who can appropriate both spaces the public and the private at the same time. Cather writes

> Alexandra herself has changed very little. Her figure is fuller, and she has more color. She seems sunnier and more vigorous than she did as a young girl. But she still has the same calmness and deliberation of manner, the same clear eyes, and she still wears her hair into braids wound round her head. It is so curly that fiery ends escape from the braids and make her head look like one of the big double sunflowers that fringe her vegetable garden. Her face is always tanned in summer, for her sunbonnet is oftener on her arm than her head. But where her collar falls away from her neck, or where her sleeves are pushed back from her wrist, the skin is of such smoothness and whiteness as none but Swedish women ever possess; skin with the freshness of snow itself (Ibid. 45).

It can be noticed in this passage that Alexandra appropriates many characteristics of the Frontier hero. For example, she likes dwelling in the open space of the frontier and looking to the horizon; she also controls her actions, and affirms her independence. She works in the fields without putting her sunbonnet and we know that the latter is the sign of the Victorian woman.

The second example where Alexandra represses and controls her passion and desires happens in the dream episode. Indeed, even in dreams Alexandra cannot accept the flame of love and passion. Cather writes

> It was a man, certainly, who carried her, but he was like no man she knew; he was much larger and stronger and swifter, and he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf of wheat...She could feel him approach, bend over her, and lift her, and then she could feel herself being carried swiftly off across the fields. After such a reverie she would rise hastily, angry with herself, and go down to the bathhouse...There she would stand in a tin tub and prosecute her bath with vigor, finishing it by pouring buckets of cold well water over her white gleaming body which no man on the Divide could have carried very far (Ibid: 206).

In this quotation, we understand that Alexandra controls her desires and sexuality because for her they represent a way of submission to the masculine power. Through her frontier heroine, Cather sends a message to the American women to advise them to follow their minds rather than their passions

The third example which shows that Cather is against female submission to passion and desires is when she dooms Marie Shabata. Some critics such as Cynthia A. Schneider considers *O pioneers!* as Cather's response to Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. She says that Cather wrote a virulent review in *The Pittsburgh Leader* on July 8, 1899 where she derided Edna and compared her to Madame Bovary (Schneider, 2005: 1). Although I agree with her, I will add that *O Pioneers!* is also Cather's response to her male counterparts such as Owen Wister and Zane Grey. In their frontier narratives these two authors use women as sexual objects. Their women cannot control their burring passions and every time they submit to their lovers.

Marie Shabata is the opposite of Alexandra. In describing her, Cather says that "Marie was incapable of lukewarm about anything. She simply did not know how to give a half-hearted response" (Cather, 1983: 217). At the age of eighteen following her passions she run away to wed with Frank Shabata, "the buck of the beer gardens" (Ibid. 143). Sooner, she discovers that her marriage is wrong. Unsatisfied with her relationship with her husband, Marie starts a love relationship with Alexandra's brother Emil. When Frank Shabata discovers the affair he decides to take revenge by killing them. One day, he suspects that they will meet in the orchard so he followed them and

> He began to act, just as a man who falls into the fire begins to act. The gun sprang to his shoulder, he sighted mechanically and fired three times without stopping, stopped without knowing why ... He peered again through the hedge at the two dark figures under the tree. They had fallen a little apart from each other, and were perfectly still – No, not quite; ... a man's hand was plucking spasmodically at the grass. Suddenly the

> woman stirred and uttered a cry, then another, and another ... She was dragging herself toward the hedge! Frank dropped his gun and ran back along the path, shaking, stumbling, gasping. He had never imagined such horror. The cries followed him. They grew fainter and thicker, as if she were choking ... A woman mutilated and bleeding in his orchard (Ibid. 136-137).

After Frank has killed Marie and Emil, the responsibility of the killing is put on Marie's burning Passion and desire. Alexandra is the first person who blames Marie for the killings. She cannot understand how Marie can bring "destruction and sorrow to all who had loved her". Then she connects the murders to Marie's uncontrolled passions (Ibid. 270). Carl supports her point of view when he says: "there are women who spread ruin around them through no fault of theirs, just by being too beautiful, too full of life and love. They can't help it. People come to them as people go to a warm fire in winter" (Ibid. 304). Alexandra avoids taking revenge from Frank because violence for her is something that must be erased from the American soil. Cather's frontier heroine does not regenerate through violence as it is the case in *The Virginian* and *Riders of the Purple Sage*. As Louise H. Westling puts it

> Arguably the dominant narrative tradition in American culture is the violent one described by Lawrence, Fiedler, and Slotkin. This is the realm of renegades from civilization, those Deerslayers and Ishmaels associated with wild adventure and bloody predation. This whole tradition is at odds with the calm, philosophic Virgilian mood Cather created around her Nebraska material. While the violent adventure of the frontier hero might have reasonably linked with the classical epic that hovers in the shadows of Cather's practice, her purpose was to erase this element of the American story (Westling, 1997: 64-65).

Even in the land, Willa Cather projects her refusal of women submission and subordination. Cather opens her novel by portraying the land as hostile space for the ones who wanted to tame her and subdue her. In part I of the novel she writes: "The little town of Hanover, anchored on a windy Nebraska tableland trying not to be blown away" (Cather, 1983: 3). Alexandra and her father have two opposing relationships with the Frontier. The

narrator tells us that “In eleven years John Bergson had made but little impression upon the wild land he had come to tame ... Bergson had the Old World belief that land, in itself, is desirable. But this land was an enigma. It’s like a horse that no one knows how to break to harness, that runs wild and kicks things to pieces. He had an idea that no one had understood how to farm it properly” (Cather, 1983: 20-21-22). This representation reminds us of the first pioneers described by Annette Kolodny in *Lay of the Land*. This traditional trope which describes the land as a woman who needs impregnation and submission is not the kind of representation favoured by Willa Cather. Instead, the communion relationship Alexandra adopts with the land allows her to succeed where her father and brothers fail. Sixteen years after the death of her father, the Bergson’s farm becomes one of the richest in the Divide (Ibid. 83). Lucy Hazard describes this relationship as “peculiarly intimate dedication and communion”, and adds “this artistic expression through the soil provides a passionate ecstasy of union which takes the place of emotional ruptures in her personal life .... Her own life is merged with the larger passion, the more abundant fruitfulness of the earth” (Hazard, 1970: 74)

Alexandra’s peaceful relationship with the land is mainly influenced by the old man Ivar, who encourages the ideology of non-violence and the protection of the environment. Describing him, Cather writes: “He disliked the litter of human dwellings: the broken food, the bits of broken china, the old wash boilers and tea-kittles thrown into the sunflower patch. He preferred the cleanness and tidiness of the wild sod” (Cather, 1983:37). From him Alexandra takes advice and thanks to his teachings she prospers in the Divide.

By representing the land as a female who resists submission and domestication, Cather wants women to follow her lead and refuse male domination. Susan Rosowski writes: “Rather than writing about a virgin land waiting to be despoiled, Cather conceived of the West as female nature slumbering, awakening, and roaring its independence...in doing so she

reclaimed materiality for women, rewrote the captivity myth into a story of liberation, and divorced the plot of sexuality from its gendered confinements" (Rosowski, 1999: 7).

The question of marriage is also something which is very important for Cather. In her novel, she encourages women to take a companion rather running behind lovers, because in such a case they will lose their independence and autonomy. In one scene Alexandra tells her brothers that she is thinking of marrying Carl. Their answer is that she should not marry this person because he is just running after her money. A woman of forty should not act this way which makes the family look ridiculous (Cather, 1983. 166). When Alexandra asks whose business is it but my own the brothers remind her that in case she marries Carl they will lose their property. They add, "The property of a family really belongs to the men of the family, no matter about the title...We were willing you should hold the land and have the good of it, but you got no right to part with any of it. The property of a family belongs to the men of a family...because they do the work" (Ibid. 167-169). The legal rights of the title of the land are in her name but in case she marries these will pass to her husband and this is what annoys her greedy brothers. After this confrontation Alexandra tells them that "the authority you can exert by law is the only influence you will have over me again" (Ibid. 86). Cather's reference to the protection of law is a direct reference to her contemporary Women Rights Movement which asked for women' vote and equality.

Unlike Molly and Jane who are dominated by their lovers, Alexandra Bergson is a woman who knows how to control her emotions and desires. Throughout the whole novel there is no romantic relationship between Alexandra and Carl. The stratagem which is used by Cather to avoid romance is to make Carl absent for most of the time. His absence allows Alexandra to strengthen her independence and to pursue her career as a successful farmer and rancher. To show that Alexandra is a woman who controls herself like the frontiersman,

Cather gives us some examples. For instance, when Alexandra talks with other men she is formal, distant, and avoids any gesture that can suggest or make reference to her femininity.

Unlike the social relationships of domination and submission which are expanded by Molly and the Virginian and Jane and Lassiter, the relationship between Alexandra and Carl is more one of friendship and companionship. When they plan to marry Alexandra says to Carl: "I think we shall be very happy. I haven't any fears. I think when friends marry, they are safe. We don't suffer like those young ones" (Ibid. 308). Throughout her novel, Willa Cather criticizes the male master narrative of the frontier which sets binary oppositions mainly Male and Female. In this grand narrative the woman is incorporated as a sexual object to fight for. So to subvert this view she introduced a heroine who from the beginning until the end does not accept submission and domination.

Conclusion

The frontier space in Cather's narrative offers her heroine the opportunities of freedom and independence. Rather than to be a sexual object for men she is the one who helps and comes to the rescue of endangered masculine characters. Rather than to try tame and subdue the land by force as it is the case in the male tradition, she works in communion with the land and, as a result, succeeds where others fail. In Cather's account the males who want to tame the land by force fail. In other words, their frontier process is not a regenerating one but a failed attempt.

Cather's frontier account proposes a mixture of gender. In other words, the traditional binaries are absent in her narrative. Unlike Wister's and Grey's frontier, where binary oppositions are fixed mainly the one of the male who is represented as active, courageous, independent and the female who is portrayed as passive, silent, and submissive. Cather suggests a world of plurality and difference. Where women exercise their agency like men and can move in the two spaces the private and the public without problems. Her heroine Alexandra Bergson fits this role. In her ranch she is the master who supervises the work of many men who work for her and she enjoys also the fact of being with the women who work for her domestically.

In *O pioneers!* Willa Cather revises and subverts the male Myth of the Frontier. She is in direct dialogue with her male counterparts mainly Owen Wister and Zane grey. In the works of the latter the woman is represented as submissive and passive. She is incorporated as a sexual object to fight for. To subvert this myth, Willa Cather introduced Alexandra Bergson as an active and successful frontier heroine. In the whole novel she is the one who acts, supervises and directs the action. She is also the one who helps and rescues men. For Cather the place of the woman is in the public space to assume her full citizenship.

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Chapter Five

The Frontier Reconceptualized: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House Series

Introduction

Stereotyping women is the most prevalent feature of male frontier history and literature of both the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The two (male frontier history and literature) support the image of the frontier space as Hisland (Armitage, 1987: 9). In the latter men are given voice, action, authority, adventure, freedom and independence whereas women are kept voiceless, submissive and dependent. These stereotypes of women in the frontier space which are created by men serve the perpetuation of the ideology of separate spheres in which men are assigned the public/outdoor space and women are relegated to the domestic/indoor space.

Many American female writers among them Laura Ingalls Wilder understood that the frontier had become an ideological space in which the place of women in the American society was debated. Thus, to challenge the stereotyped image of the silent woman in the frontier and to answer her male counterparts, she entered that debate by substituting a female heroine in the place of a male hero. She also used the frontier as an ideological space to give voice to women, to free them from the stereotype of the "angel in the house" and to conquer the public space or the outside space.

This chapter puts into dialogue Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series with O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. Wilder and Rolvaag may seem to possess little in common in their backgrounds and biographies, but much of their fiction focuses on the impact the open spaces of the frontier had on early settlers of the Great Plains. Add to this, as these frontier narratives are situated within the culture of homesteading which is a national narrative about space, I argue that the debate between female and male writers is about who has the right to

claim the public space. Whereas Rolvaag defends the ideology of domesticity by claiming that the public space of the frontier is not suitable for women as it is the sole preserve of man, Wilder responds by subverting his claim and encouraging women to claim the public space as they are full partners of their husbands.

Wilder's *Little House* series has been favored by much critical scholarship. The latter focuses mainly on three areas which are: the biographical concerns including the collaboration of Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane, the representation of Native Americans and content oriented studies. One of the most important historians who wrote extensively on the biographical elements of Laura Ingalls Wilder is William Anderson. The latter has published a dozen of short biographies of Wilder where he traces her life history and accomplishments. Anderson's booklets such as *Laura Ingalls Wilder's Country* (1990) and *The Story of the Ingalls* (1993) contain letters and artifacts from the Wilder Museum and are destined mainly to a youth audience.

In a study entitled *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman behind the Legend*, john E. Miller tries to fill a gap in Wilder's biography by focusing mainly on her adult years in Missouri from 1894 to 1957. He starts his book by asking a question, "How did this seemingly ordinary woman come to produce such extraordinary work?" (Miller, 1998: 3-4). So throughout his whole study Miller's attempt is to try to indentify the different events and circumstances that led Wilder to produce her masterpiece. He argues that "the key to Wilder's success as a storyteller lies in the dramatic, engaging way in which she transformed the remembered facts of her own life into the materials of imaginative fiction" (Ibid. 9). Moreover, the importance of Miller's work lies in his description of the relationship between Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane. A relationship which is demystified by Rosa Ann Moore who in "Laura Ingalls and Rose Wilder Lane: The Chemistry of Collaboration," attempted to show how Wilder was influenced by her daughter in the writing of her

narratives. Of the *Little House* series Moore writes: "they are the legacy of a unique mother-daughter team, one providing objectivity and the craft [Lane], the other bringing the life and the perspective [Wilder] (Moore, 1980: 108).

As far as the theme of the representation of Native Americans in the *Little House* books is concerned, the latter is dealt with from different perspectives by Frances W. Keye, John Kilgore, Dennis McAuliffe, and Rachel Seidman. Other Wilder scholars include Anne Romines and Anita Clair Fellman. In her book entitled *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls* (1997), Romines devotes a full length study to the *Little House* novels, however she focused more on the cultural perspective rather than the feminist one. Besides, Fellman's book entitled *Little House, Long Shadow: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Impact on American Culture* (2008), focuses more on the cultural and social implication of the narratives rather than the resistance of the main character Laura.

Most of the literature written on Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* focuses mainly on the issue of uprootedness of the Norwegian American community and the difficulties the latter faced in the Promised Land. For example, in *Beyond the Frontier: Writers, Western Regionalism, and a sense of Place* (1989), Harold Peter Simonson devotes a chapter to *Giants in the Earth* to explore the tragic costs of immigration to the United States. For him, the direct cause of Beret's Madness is her cultural deracination. The immigrant, "especially the Nordic," cannot uproot himself and move to a new land without paying the ultimate price, the sacrifice of his cultural soul (Simonson, 1989: 98). This is why Beret advised her children to speak their native language, to stick to their traditions and someday to inspire in their own children the same cultural loyalties she was fighting to retain (Ibid).

Another scholar who was interested in the costs of assimilation of the Norwegian American community in the mainstream of the Anglo-American culture is April Schultz. In

"To lose the Unspeakable: Folklore and Landscape in O. E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*," Schultz situates the novel in the long-standing debate in the Norwegian American community over assimilation and Americanization. For her, *Giants in the Earth* is Rolvaag's direct message to his Norwegian community and mainly his academic folk-group in Minnesota whom he considers as "becoming something apart, something torn loose, without any organic connections either in America or in Norway" (Schultz, 1992: 92). They are like Beret who became mad as a consequence of her separation from her land and her culture (Ibid. 93). So by imbuing his novel with Norwegian folkloric references Rolvaag wanted his countrymen to stick to their past and be faithful to their race (Ibid).

Continuing in the same vein, Eric Haugtvedt tackles the issue of identity in his article entitled "Abandoned in America: Identity Dissonance and Ethnic Preservationism in *Giants in the Earth*." For him, Rolvaag's novel is a direct response to Anglo-American nativism by advocating a culturally pluralistic American vision in which ethnic American enclaves would be allowed to co-exist and thrive (Haugtvedt, 2008: 147). And it is through Beret that he expresses his preservationist ideology. Indeed, it is Beret who advocates a return to the "indispensable" traits of Norwegian ethnicity such as respect for one's parents, love of home, and an appreciation of a collective ethnic past (Ibid).

As far as the issue of race is concerned, it is mainly dealt with by Sara Eddy in "Wheat and Potatoes: Reconstructing whiteness in O.E. Rolvaag's Immigrant Trilogy." Eddy argues that to construct their superior whiteness Norwegian immigrants transpose the inferior racial traits of the Indians or Afro Americans on other whites such as the Irish

> Throughout Rolvaag's novels, Norwegian characters use the same racist language to describe the Irish that they use to describe Afro Americans or American Indians; and in crucial moments, African American or American Indian characters are introduced for comparison, creating a novelistic form of minstrelsy that reflects Blackness or Redness on the putatively white faces of the Irish (Eddy, 2001: 132).

The question of ownership of the land is very important for the Norwegians, so to claim their right to the land Per Hansa describes the Irish as "rougher and wilder than anything, savages, and scoundrels" (Ibid. 140).

From the review of the literature above, we notice that Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series and Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* have received a great bulk of critical literature. The works of the two authors have been interpreted in different ways, however, the issue of the production of space and social relationships which is embedded in their dialogue is not yet tackled as far as I know. This is why I have decided to tackle this issue. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre suggests that the potential to change social space and transform social relationships is to be found in the artistic sphere (Lefebvre, 1991: 349). For him it is within the domain of art that the socio-political aspect of space is revealed. In other words, it is through the works of artists and writers that we can expand the ideologies of social space and critique them at the same time (Ibid. 405). In the words of Henry Lefebvre, the texts discussed here put up resistance to the male master narrative of the frontier; they also inaugurate the project of a different space (either the space of a counter-culture, or counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing real space) (Ibid. 349).

In this chapter, I argue that Wilder's novels present the Frontier as a stage of resistance to the limiting social roles allowed for women by Rolvaag's frontier narrative. For example, the female heroine in her novels uses her relationship with the frontier to challenge the limited domestic roles prescribed for women. At the same time, the *Little House* series highlights the ways in which the frontier itself is not a neutral space since the main character, Laura, directly engages the mesh of ideologies that define American pioneer's relationships with the Frontier. Through the actions of the protagonist, the series implicitly challenge the gendered representation of the Frontier inherent in the masculine narrative by negotiating a new

relationship with the landscape based on exposing the oppression of women inherent in that grand narrative.

I- Biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder

The American pioneer and writer Laura Ingalls Wilder has been called one of the most popular children's authors of all times (Hines, 1991: 15). She was born Laura Elizabeth Ingalls on February 7, 1867 in a little house in the Big Woods in the Wisconsin frontier. She is the second child to Charles Philip Ingalls and Caroline Lake Quiner Ingalls who had already a daughter named Mary, born two years earlier. The Ingalls family was living in a log cabin which was isolated from the rudiments of civilization. In the words of Laura, their place of living had no houses, no roads, no people – just forest and the wild animals inhabiting it (Wilder, LHBW 1971: 1). Like many pioneer families, the Ingalls were concerned about caring for animals, clearing land, hunting, tending crops and storing food.

After the American Civil War (1861-1865), and the depression that swept America mainly between 1867-1871, the depressed economic conditions of Wisconsin pushed Charles and Caroline to move West to try their luck under new conditions (Miller, 1998: 21). As a Victorian woman who wanted to preserve the ideal of domesticity, Caroline was sceptical about the move, but Charles convinced her that this was a good plan as they can start a new farm in Kansas where land was open and good. With the law of the Homestead Act 1862, which stipulated that any American citizen could claim 160 acres of land for free if certain conditions were satisfied, thousands of pioneers including men and women rushed westward among them Charles Ingalls who wanted to become a homesteader (Sickels, 2008: 23).

In 1868, Charles sold his property to a Swedish settler, then one year after the Ingalls family headed West to Kansas. In Kansas Laura and her family settled in the Osage Indian Reservation where Charles built the family's cabin next to an active Native American trail

(Berne, 2008: 27). Helped by his neighbours, Charles built a log cabin, a stable, dug a well, and started farming the land. This experience in the prairies of Kansas was the source of her third book *Little House on the Prairie* (1935) where Laura recounts how she felt liberated by the space of the open frontier. Unfortunately for the ingallses, they had to leave their farm because the American government ordered all the illegal squatters off the land.

In 1870 the Ingalls family packed their things and came back to Wisconsin where they joined their family in the big woods. There, Charles cultivated his fields and hunted deer for the subsistence of his family, but when he felt that Pepin was overcrowded by new settlers he started thinking of moving westward for a second time. So in 1873 Charles and Caroline sold their farm for one thousand dollars and in the spring of 1874 they started their journey to Walnut Grove, Minnesota (Miller, 1998: 30). As a frontiersman who liked open prairies and long horizons, Charles settled his family in a prairie farmland. In *On the Banks of Plum Creek* (1937), Laura recalls the delights of wading in the creek, walking through dazzlingly colourful beds of wildflowers, and watching beautiful sunrises. Mary and Laura attended the town school which was an opportunity mainly for Laura to develop some of the personality traits that would become so prominent later in life, such as spunkiness, generosity, and competitiveness. Laura was a bright student who wants to know everything. Unlike Mary who was reserved and looking ladylike, Laura enjoyed running and playing games and baseball with boys (Ibid. 31).

In the spring of 1875, Charles planted his field with wheat hoping to get a good harvest to pay his debts, but unfortunately for him hordes of grasshoppers destroyed everything in his farm including his wheat and garden. So once again the Ingalls family decided to leave Walnut Grove and they moved to Burr Oak in Iowa where they joined the Steadmans a couple of friends. The Steadmans who managed a hotel offered shelter and work for the Ingallses. Even Laura and Mary helped with waiting on tables and doing the dishes. Worried about the

saloon next door to the hotel bad influence on the girls, the Ingallses rented a house on the edge of the town. Laura enjoyed living there mainly when taking their cow out to pasture every morning and bring it back every night. In *Pioneer Girl*, she wrote about her love for wandering along the creek, look at the flowers, and wriggling her toes among the cool, lush grasses (Ibid. 38).

After one year in Burr Oak and nothing but only temporary jobs and few money to save, the Ingalls family decided to return to Walnut Grove to try their chance another time. They were warmly welcomed by their friends mainly by the Ensign family which invited the Ingallses to stay with them until Charles will be able to build a new house. In Walnut Grove, Charles took different jobs while his daughters attended school again. Laura enjoyed her studies and became one of the best spellers in her class. As an independent minded girl, she emerged as a natural leader. Even the boys noticed her athletic competence so they asked her to play with them baseball. In spite of taking various jobs, Charles earned just a very little money so he could not pay his debts or buy land. One day, his sister Docia came to Walnut Grove with a tempting job offer that he happily accepted (Sickels, 2008: 47).

Before moving to the prairies of the Dakota Territory in 1879, Mary became blind so Laura became her surrogate eyes. Laura described as much as she could to Mary: the landscape, people, colours, and lights. Serving as Mary's eyes helped her to increase her ability and leadership skills (Ibid. 45). Before their journey to the Dakota frontier, Charles Ingalls promised his wife that this move will be the last one in order to have her consent. So when they reached the Dakota frontier, they settled first at the Silver Lake railroad camp where Charles worked as the bookkeeper and timekeeper for the Dakota Central crews. Then one day, Charles heard that land to homestead was available in De Smet so he bought 160 acres and relocated his family. Plenty of work was needed on the claim. Charles dug a well,

built a stable for the horses and livestock. He also broke several acres of land where the family planted corn, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, turnips, and pumpkins (Ibid. 51).

As a woman who enjoys the outdoor space, Laura helped her father on the farm on different occasions. For example, all summer Laura helped Pa cut and stack prairie grass for hay (Anderson, 2004: 18). She also took different jobs to help her family and to contribute in the education of her sister Mary. In De Smet School Laura obtained high marks and garnered praise from her teachers. As a result, in 1882 Mr. Bouchie who was the head of a small school about 12 miles south of De Smet offered her a teaching job for twenty dollars a month. As the school was far from her home, she was housed by the Bouchies. On the weekends, when she visited her parents she was accompanied by a young homesteader whose name is Almanzo Wilder. At the end of her teaching contract in the Bouchie school, she came back to De Smet and continued her studies. Then thanks to her brilliance and intelligence she was offered another teaching job at the Perry School that she accepted happily. The money she earned from her teaching job went to her family (Miller, 1998: 63).

Laura and Almanzo Wilder continued to see each other frenquently in De Smet. The two went several times on long drives along the lakes mainly when Almanzo bought a pair of spirited horses. Laura enjoyed the ridings in the open prairie where she feels liberated from all the constrictions of society. In Almanzo she found a good partner and Almanzo liked her independence and competence. So when he offered her and engagement ring she accepted without hesitating. However, although she was only seventeen and he was twenty-seven, she clearly already was emerging as the dominant partner. Laura and Almanzo married on August 25, 1885. During the ceremony Laura refused to say the word obey a part in the wedding vows which was unusual for women during that time. Furthermore, the use of her maiden name Ingalls and the name of her husband Wilder in her first published book shows her belief in the equality between wife and husband and in her independence (Sickels, 2008: 59-60).

After their marriage, the Wilder couple lived in their homestead in De Smet. They devoted all their energy to make their farm successful. Laura spent much of her time outdoors assisting Almanzo in the different farming tasks. From the beginning, she insisted on collaboration as she considered the wife and husband equal. In her union, Laura acted as a full partner who shared all the important decisions with her husband for their economic success. In one of her interviews she said: "I learned to do all kinds of farm work with machinery. I have ridden the binder, driving six horses. And I could ride. I do not wish to appear conceited, but I broke my own ponies to ride. Of course they were not bad but they were broncos" (qtd. in Miller, 1998: 83). On December 5, 1886, Laura gave birth to a daughter who was named Rose.

In 1890 the Wilders left South Dakota and moved to Spring Valley, Minnesota to stay with Almanzo's parents for a while. In 1891 they journeyed to Florida, a place Laura found mysterious and dangerous which obliged her to carry a revolver in her dress. Realizing that it was a mistake to stay in Florida, they boarded a northbound train and headed to De Smet in 1892. When the Wilders heard about the virtues of the Ozark Mountains in Missouri they decided to try their chance there. The idea of moving to that place was mainly crystallized when Laura and Almanzo listened to promotional literature that heightened the fruit growing potential of the area (Miller, 1998: 88-90).

On July 17, 1894 the Wilders began their trip to Missouri. Along their way to the Ozarks Mountains, the Wilders encountered several other immigrants who came to the Midwest looking for rich land among them: Germans, Swedes, Canadians, and Russians. After a long trip, the Wilders reached their promised land on August 25. Upon reaching the land Laura saw its potentiality. In September 1894, Laura and Almanzo bought land in Mansfield, that Laura named Rocky Ridge Farm (Sickels, 2008: 70-71). Laura devoted most of her time in working in the farm with her husband. After hard work the Wilders started to

enjoy the fruits of their labour. But the most important enjoyment for Laura was the fact of being in the open space of the frontier.

Her writing career started the day she sent her speech to be read by someone else in the farmer's club. Among the audience John Case, the Editor of the *Missouri Ruralist*. Case was impressed by Laura's descriptive prose and clear convictions, so he invited her to submit articles for the paper. In February 18, 1911 Laura's first article appeared under the title "Favors the Small Farm Home." As an expert on farm life, Laura was offered a column in the Newspaper "As a Farm Woman Thinks" where she encouraged women to be active partners with their husbands (Berne, 2008: 83-84). All this happened at a time when American women all over the country were organizing and marching to ask for their rights, including the right to vote which they obtained in 1920 after the passage of the Nineteenth amendment to the American Constitution. Her experience with the *Missouri Ruralist* was not the only one, she also wrote articles for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Kansas City Star*.

The second part of Laura's writing career started when her daughter Rose urged her to write her memories in 1930. She was mainly pushed by the Great Depression and its effects on many American farmers. As many farmers lost their farms, Rose was afraid that her parents will experience the same situation. So she advised her mother to write her story as a pioneer woman in the frontier to earn money. Laura took her advice and started writing her autobiography entitled *Pioneer Girl*. Rose took the manuscript, typed it and sent it to some publishers. At first, she met some difficulties in publishing the book. But one day good news came from the editor of Harper and Brothers who promised to publish it under certain conditions. He asked Laura to rewrite and restructure the book. As the famous author who masters the techniques of writing and storytelling Rose helped her mother in restructuring the book which was published under the title *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932) as the first book of a long series (Anderson, 2004: 28).

In what has been popularly called the *Little House* series, Laura Ingalls Wilder chronicled the first twenty years of her life as a pioneer girl and young woman in the American frontier during the 1870s and 1880s. The seven books of the series that include *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932), *Little House on the Prairie* (1935), *On the Banks of Plum Creek* (1937), *By the Shores of Silver Lake* (1939), *The Long Winter* (1940), *Little Town on the Prairie* (1941), and *These Happy Golden Years* (1943) became very popular and reached audiences of all ages from many parts of the world. The sales figures on their own were impressive. Sixty million copies were sold, and they were translated into more than forty languages. In the 2001 list of all-time best-selling children's books, the *Little House* novels were listed among the top fifty-four paperbacks (Fellman, 2008: 5). The airing of the television series *Little House on the Prairie* from 1974 to today, starring Michael London as Pa, Karen Grassle as Ma, and Melissa Gilbert as Laura renewed interest on the books. References to Wilder's series are ubiquitous in American life and letters. The latter range from newspaper articles and cartoons to Editorial writers and novelists. All have used the books to launch their own discussions of American values (Ibid).

II- Rolvaag's Frontier as Unsuitable Space for Women

The Norwegian American writer O. E. Rolvaag is not a well known writer today as is Laura Ingalls Wilder, but his themes bear many similarities to her. In fact, in his frontier saga he concerned himself with what he called "the great settling" of the prairie and how this process influenced American identity. Like Laura, Rolvaag also immigrated to the Dakota Territory. He was born in 1876 in the island of Donna in Norway. In 1896 he immigrated to the United States, landing first in New York City, then he moved westward to settle with his uncle in South Dakota. Before deciding to pursue his education, he spent several years in farming. In 1905, he graduated from St. Olaf College in Minnesota where he continued as a faculty member. He also served as the head of the Norwegian department in the same faculty

from 1916 until his death in 1931. The years he spent at St. Olaf College were very productive. In fact, he wrote most of his novels during that period. They were composed in Norwegian then translated to an American audience. He is well known for his frontier trilogy that includes *Giants in the Earth* (1927), *Peder Victorious* (1929), and *Their father's God* (1931) (Solum and Jorgenson, 1939).

In *Giants in the Earth*, Rolvaag continues the frontier version of Cooper, Turner, Wister and Grey. In other words, he continues the frontier saga which excludes women from the frontier process. In fact, from the beginning of his story, he clearly demonstrates the marginalization of women in his frontier narrative. In the epigraph to his saga Rolvaag writes: "there were giants in the earth in those days, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown" (Rolvaag, 1955). From this passage, we understand that Rolvaag's women have only one role in the society which is the one of child bearers. The giants in *Giants in the Earth* are the frontiersmen who headed West to found their own kingdoms in the "promised land." In his introduction to Rolvaag's novel, Einar Haugen writes that

> We are invited time and again to see our immigrants against a pageant of the past. The very title of the book, which is drawn from Genesis, compares them to ancient heroes of Israel. The quotation is printed on the flyleaf, and is somewhat clearer in its reference in the Norwegian original than in the English version. The original omits an intervening passage, leaving only the following: "there were giants in the earth in those days ... mighty men of old, men of renown." Here it is clear that the "giants in the earth" are the pioneers themselves. The Norwegian title of the first book "In those days" was drawn from the same quotation. This keynote suggests a stature like that which the Jews attributed to those legendary ancestors of men who lived before the deluge (Ibid. Xxi).

The hero in Rolvaag's frontier version is Per Hansa. To emphasize his virtues, Rolvaag contrasts Per with his wife Beret. Per is a giant who hopes to settle on the prairie and the space of the latter offered to him freedom and independence. In other words, he is delighted

with the immense expanses of the frontier. Unlike her husband, Beret is portrayed as a delicate figure who is frightened by the frontier space and longs for enclosed spaces. Her hope is to leave the prairie. In his idealization of the frontiersman, Rolvaag expands the Victorian ideology of the separate spheres and enforces the expectations of male dominance and female subordination. Ernest E. Leisy notes that "to Per Hansa the Dakota prairie means life, and exhilarating struggle, and freedom; while to Beret his introspective wife, it brings loneliness, terror and despair (Leisy, 1950: 197).

The novel opens with Per as the leader of an important caravan and from the beginning Rolvaag notes that his purpose is to found his kingdom in the "promised land," to do something remarkable out there, which should become known far and wide" (Rolvaag, 1955: 5). Per is the first who set the trail for others to follow he is like Daniel Boone or Kit Carson who are legendary figures in the American Frontier Myth. Per as Reigstad suggests is "the askeladd of the Norwegian fairy tale. In his optimism he imagines himself in quest of the castle of Soria Moria; his adversaries on the prairie – storm, misfortune, Beret illness – are the trolls he must overcome along the way (Reigstad, 1972: 122).

As the patriarch of his family, Per leads the caravan until Spring Creek in the Dakota Territory. There he greets the openness of the frontier space with a sense of possibility and potential. In other words, in a place which lacks established laws and traditions all that might be dreamt might be achieved. Per Hansa looks at the frontier space and proclaims, "Endless it was, and wonderful! (Rolvaag, 1955: 112). In this empty space he sees his beautiful homestead. In other words, he imagines a bountiful place full of fruits. Moreover, he imagines a kingdom with endless fields of wheat and livestock that he and his children will rule over. In this respect Rolvaag claims

> There would be houses for chickens and pigs, roomy stables, a magnificent storehouse and a barn ... and then the splendid palace itself! The royal mansion would shine in the

> sun – it would stand far and wide! The palace itself would be white, with green cornices; but the pig barn would be as red as blood, with cornices of driven snow. Wouldn't be beautiful – wasn't it going to be great fun!... And he and his boys would build it all! (Ibid. 110-11).

In this passage, Per Hansa continues the garden mythology which was started by the first explorers who followed the American Dream in the wilderness.

Per is a progressive man who thinks about the future and what he can do with the land. He is the opposite of his wife who thinks about the roots and religion of one's homeland. Per thinks about the roots to be established in this new territory of the prairie. Rolvaag writes

> Was he really to own it [the land]? Was it really to become his possession, this big stretch of fine land that spread here before him?" Then, he adds: "this vast stretch of beautiful land was to be his – yes, his – and no ghost of a dead Indian would drive him away! (Ibid. 32- 33).

So determined to possess the land, Per travels fifty-two miles to Sioux Falls to fill his application for a quarter-section of land (Ibid). To emphasize determination as one of the virtues of Per Hansa, Rolvaag says

> Now it had taken possession of him again – that indomitable, conquering mood which seemed to give him the right of way wherever he went, whatever he did. Outwardly, at such times, he showed only a buoyant recklessness, as if wrapped in a cloack of gay, wanton, levity; but down beneath all this lay a stern determination purpose, a driving force (Ibid. 42).

Before building a barn and a house, Per started first by plowing the land. This work gave him lot of joy because he felt that he dominated the land. In fact, by representing the land as a woman, he just continued the work of the first explorers who saw the land as a virgin woman who awaits impregnation. Indeed, Per Hansa draws his pleasure from the land

> Again Per Hansa thrusts his hand into the bag and his fingers closed on the grain. He felt profoundly that the greatest moment of his life had come. Now he was about to sow wheat on his own ground!... As long as the daylight lasted, Per Hansa kept on

> seeding .... After supper he sat at the table without moving; he didn't want to get up; a pleasant feeling of languorous exhaustion had settled on him, the reaction from his excitement (Ibid. 289-90).

Per is a dreamer like his wife Beret. But unlike Beret who dreams of the past, the roots of her native land and her family, Per dreams only of the present and the future and what he will build in this new "Promised Land." His whole thought is about dominating the land and what the latter can offer to him. Rolvaag writes

> Was he not owner of a hundred and sixty acres of the best land in the world? Wasn't his title to it becoming more firmly established with every day that passed and every new broken furrow that turned? ... Such soil! Only to sink the plow into it, to turn over the sod – and there was a field ready for seeding .... And this was not just ordinary soil, fit for barely, and oats, and potatoes, and hay, and that sort of thing; indeed, it had been meant for much finer and daintier uses; it was the soil for wheat, the king of all grains! Such soil had been especially by the good Lord to bear this noble seed; and here was Per Hansa, walking around on a hundred and sixty acres of it, all his very own! (Ibid. 110).

After subduing the land and taking all what he wanted from it, Per meets another challenge which is to follow the cows which strayed to the Indian encampment. Through this adventurous task he shows his knightly virtues. Indeed, he did not only return with the cows, but he brought more animals to the settlement: a bull, a rooster, and two hens. Per is the typical frontiersman who enjoys moving in the frontier space. Shortly after Per accomplishes his chivalrous mission, Rolvaag writes: "that summer Per Hansa, was transported, as carried farther and even farther away on the wings of a wondrous fairy tale – in which he was both prince and king, the sole possessor of countless treasures" (Ibid. 110).

Per is the pioneer of pioneers, his is always moving westward to explore new areas. He is the force of the frontier. In the words of Erling Dittman, Per "is the embodiment of the spirit of adventure, the incarnated 'frontier spirit.' Like a royal eagle he sails on strong winds,

looking and searching for a prey where he can strike. He is prepared to fight the elements of nature, and he is set on wrestling a living from the new soil." (Dittman, 1952: 22).

Per Hansa as the mythical hero of Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* even transcends death at the end of the novel by looking westward. Rolvaag writes

> On the west side of the stack sat a man, with his back to the mouldering hay. This was in the middle of a warm day in May, yet the man had two pairs of skis along with him; one pair lay beside him on the ground, the other was tied to his back. He had a heavy stocking cap pulled well down his forehead, and large mittens on his hands; in each hand he clutched a staff .... To the boys it looked as though the man were sitting there resting while he waited for better skiing .... His face was ashen and drawn. His eyes were set toward the west (Rolvaag, 1955: 452-53).

From this passage, we understand that the West to which Per's eyes are still looking represent the unknown and the unexplored frontier space which is the future of America. In other words, this undominated land may include California, Alaska, Hawaii, the Philippines, Korea, the moon and Mars as the last Frontier.

To show that the public space of the Frontier is not suitable for women, Rolvaag emphasizes Beret's conflicted behaviour about how to function in a world where she must not only take charge of the inside space of the home but also live in a vast open space of the prairie. In other words, throughout his whole novel, Rolvaag shows that the undomesticated space of the prairie is a non-felicitous space for women. For him, the Frontier is the space of the male adventurer. In her book entitled *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), Doreen Massey contends that the division of space into public and private spheres is one of the forces which supports male dominance over women and confine the latter to certain gender roles. She writes

> The limitation of women's mobility, in terms of both identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover, the two things – the limitation of mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to

> particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related (Massey, 1994: 179).

From the beginning of his story, Rolvaag demonstrates the non-felicitous space of the frontier to women. In other words, from the beginning Beret finds little safety and comfort in the outside space. Beret Hansa and her family were heading West with other Norwegian families but when the Hansa family separated from the other families, Beret started to be scared by the thought of being lost in the open space. To portray their situation, Rolvaag writes that the whole family "might just as well have dropped down out of the sky because their course was always the same – straight toward the west, straight toward the sky line" (Ibid. 6). Unlike her husband Per Hansa who finds freedom and excitement in the frontier space, Beret is dismayed by the emptiness of this open space. She grumbles to herself and her children that their journey "seems to be taking us to the end of the world ... beyond the end of the world! (Ibid. 9). In fact, Beret experiences the outside space as one of erasure and desolation. Rolvaag writes

> The vague sense of the unknown which she feels closing on them so strongly from all directions translates into stillness, vastness, and silence that is to her cold, dismal, and terrifying (Ibid. 10-11).

Rolvaag biographers Solum and Jorgensen note that the relationship of Beret and the prairie is very important to the understanding of Beret. Quoting Rolvaag they write

> In Beret, the wife of Per Hansa, I have tried to picture such a character one with a sensitive soul. Some people get out of patience with her, and I in turn with them because of their lack of understanding. For generations Beret's forebears have lived on the shore of the restless North Atlantic. They had been lulled to sleep by the swash of the sea; they had awakened to the same sound. Small wonder that the song of the sea should live in her blood. At the mountains stood nearby. What could be more natural that Beret after coming into the flat, open reaches of the Dakota Territory should miss them and experience the feeling of being lost – here she could find nothing to hide behind (Solum and Jorgenson, 1939: 396).

To support the Victorian ideology of the separate spheres, Rolvaag repeats the statement "here she could find nothing to hide behind" several times in the text. For example, in the chapter entitled "Home-Founding" Rolvaag stresses the threat of the open space for women. In fact, when Beret arrives to Spring Creek her new home, she muses

> ... Was this the place? ... Here! ... Could it be possible? ... She stole a glance at the others, at the half-completed hut, then turned to look more closely at the group standing around her; and suddenly it struck her here something was about to go wrong .... How will human beings be able to endure this place? She thought? Why there isn't even a thing that one can hide behind! (Rolvaag, 1955: 28-29).

In the same chapter, when Per goes to Sioux Falls to bring supplies to their homestead, Rolvaag stresses the mental condition of Beret. He says: "all the while, the thought that had struck her yesterday when she first got down from the wagon, stood vividly before her mind: here there was nothing even to hide behind (Ibid. 37). Later on the same refrain is repeated: "how could existence go on, she thought desperately? If life is to thrive and endure, it must at least have something to hind behind!" (Ibid. 38). Furthermore, in the chapter which is entitled "Rosie! – Rosie!" Rolvaag repeats the same motif when he writes

> All night long Beret has been lying there with her eyes wide open, staring up at a picture that would not go away; a picture of a nameless, blue- green solitude, flat, endless, still with nothing to hide behind .... It seemed plain to her now that human life could not endure in this country (Ibid. 101).

For him the place of women is the private space or the space of the home. There they can find things to hide behind and they are under the protection of men. As cited above the sense that there is "nothing to hide behind" becomes Beret's refrain throughout the whole story. For her the prairie or the frontier space represents waste and silence, it is outside human civilization. Rolvaag writes

> This formless prairie had no heart that beat, no waves that sang, no soul that can be touched ... or cared ... All along the way, coming out, she had noticed this strange thing: the stillness had grown deeper, the silence more depressing, the farther west

> they had journeyed ... Had they travelled into some nameless, abandoned region? Could no living thing exist out here, in the empty, desolate, endless wastes of green and blue?(Ibid. 37).

Moreover, scared by the emptiness of the prairie, she believes that "people had never dwelt here, people would never come, never could they find a home in this vast, wind- swept void" (Ibid. 144).

When per returns from his trip to Sioux Falls, Beret tries to hide behind Per:

> Oh, Per, it's only this – I'm so afraid out here! She snuggled up against him, as if trying to hide herself. It's all so big and open ... so empty .... Oh Per! Not another human being from here to the end of the world (Ibid. 43).

From this passage, we understand that for Rolvaag women cannot survive in the frontier space without the protection of men. In other words, men and home represent the security for women. Beret's desire to hide herself from the vast prairie space reinforces the connection that women have with closed space of the home. Judith Fryer says that these pioneering women "found in the journey west the challenge of maintaining domestic order against the disordered life of the frontier (Fryer, 1986: 247). Per Hansa defends this principle when he says to his friend Hans Olsa, "for you and me, life out here is nothing; but there may be others so constructed that they don't fit into this life at all; and yet they are finer and better souls than either one of us" (Rolvaag, 1955: 43). Beret is one of these finer souls who cannot survive in the vast space of the frontier.

Unlike Per who finds security and independence in the vast open space of the prairie, Beret feels that she is lost and longs for the patriarchal strictures of the Old World to hide behind. In fact, even when other families struggled to find a place for themselves in the frontier space, Beret sticks to the idea of the impossibility of the venture. For her, "the facts were unchangeable – it was useless to juggle with them, or delude oneself; nothing but an eternal, unbroken wilderness encompassed them round, about extending boundlessly in every

direction; that these vast plains, so like infinity, should ever be peopled and settled, would be a greater miracle than for dead men to rise up and walk!" (Ibid. 149).

Like Laura, Beret participates with her husband in some outdoor tasks. For example she helps Per in planting potatoes. But unlike Laura who finds satisfaction and freedom when she helps her father in his outdoor tasks, Beret finds no joy, she even becomes annoyed with this work. This lack of satisfaction and joy in working outside shows Beret's influence by the ideology of domesticity which places men outside and women inside. In other words, Beret dislikes working outside because the open space of the prairie is the most uncomfortable place for her.

Beret's mental became very fragile because she cannot understand the land and find the safety and freedom Per finds. In one of the scenes when Per goes to search for timber he asked her to take care of the children and go to visit her neighbours, but Beret does not dare go outside after dark. For her the prairie represents the "whole desolation of a vast continent ... centring ... and drawing a magic circle about their home" (Ibid. 57). Beret became scared with the thought that she and her family will be destroyed by the emptiness, that they will become "wild beasts" in this inhumane landscape and that "everything human in them would gradually be blotted out" (Ibid. 215).

Beret is not the only one who is afraid of the open space of the frontier in Rolvaag's novel. Indeed, all the women in one way or another show their fear of the prairie. Per Hansa believes that "the women were the worst off; Kjersti feared the Indians, Sorine the storms, and Beret, poor thing, feared both – and feared the very air" (Ibid. 65). All the elements mentioned in this passage pertain to the outside space. This means that for Rolvaag the outside space is not suitable for women because their place is at home. Most of the women portrayed in *Giants in the Earth* are of the same type: helpless women who have been brought west against their better judgements, nesters who are dependent upon their husbands for

almost everything, women who anxiously and helplessly await the returns of their husbands whenever they, in their traditional role as hunter, venture forth to locate firewood or building materials, or money (Paterson, 1976: 70). In fact, nowhere in the homestead is there a single woman who can venture in the frontier space without being afraid. Furthermore, in Rolvaag's story no woman can function independently without the help and protection of man.

In Rolvaag's novel, the Hansa family is the perfect symbol of how space is divided between men and women. The inside or the domestic space is relegated to women whereas the outside or the public space is allocated to men. For example, when Per Hansa leaves his home to explore other new areas, he gives the outdoor tasks to his oldest son Ole. To Ole, Per gives the outdoor chores of taking care of the cattle and the wood supply, while "Store-Hans should serve as handy man to mother indoors" (Rolvaag, 1955: 166). Store-Hans did not enjoy the task given to him because this will be done in a contracted space. This shows the male resentment of the closed feminine space. Rolvaag writes: "The disappointment hit Store-Hans the harder; here he would have to go pottering around like a hired girl – just like another woman! (Ibid). Even the reaction of the father who pitied his son (Store-Hans) shows that the notion of space is something which is passed from father to son.

Unable to find a felicitous space in the frontier, Beret becomes the Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar describe in their book which has the same title. In other words, unable to cope with the open space of the prairie she becomes mad and feels that this space is trying to kill her. Her trauma led her to hallucinate and to see evil in every place. For example, she sees the face of evil in the sky. Rolvaag writes

> Her eyes were riveted on a certain cloud that had take on the shape of a face, awful of mien and giant-like in proportions; the face seemed to swell out of the prairie and filled half the heavens. Now she could see the monster clearer. The face was unmistakable! There were the outlines of the nose and mouth. The eyes – deep, dark caves in the cloud – were closed. The mouth if it were the open, would be a yawning abyss. The chin rested on the prairie.... Black and lean the whole face, but of such gigantic, menacing proportions! Wasn't there something like a leer upon it? ... And the

> terrible creature was spreading everywhere; she trembled so desperately that she had to take hold of the grass (Ibid. 321).

Her trauma led her to suffer a breakdown; she hardly eats and lies "awake the greater part of the night" (Ibid. 202). She didn't even bother to wash herself (Ibid. 209). Furthermore, she lost even the power to manage her domestic space, as Per Hansa notices Beret losing commonplace items or things though they are right at hand. Her son Store-Hans comments: "it looks as if your eyes were in your way!" (Ibid. 211).

In *Giants in the Earth*, Rolvaag portrays a pioneer woman who cannot cope with the frontier space and its demands for changes in culture, sexual roles and daily living. In fact, women who survived in the American frontier had to shift from a perspective that was basically submissive to one that was primarily aggressive. However, Beret is not capable to make this required shift in sexual roles and adopts the most common trait of Victorian women which is aggressive submission. She submits to everything that surrounds her; her husband and the forces of nature. In the words of Paul Olson, "she does almost nothing in the book but listen to the voices and do what they tell her, accepting the leash of God when it is thrown to her (Olson, 1981: 271). She is one of the types Barbara Howard Meldrum describes in "Images of Women in Western American Literature" where she observes: "although certainly not all men were constitutionally and temperamentally suited for such an adventure, those who were not seldom made the effort; whereas the women, in their roles as followers of their husbands, might find themselves forced to make adaptations for which they were not well suited (Meldrum, 1976: 258).

In Beret Rolvaag represents a silent, dependent, and submissive woman who leaves everything to follow her independent husband in his trip to the "promised land." Rolvaag's drastic limitation of Beret's options – insanity as an alternative to coping, religiosity as an escape from intolerable reality – may be read as a value judgement on how women can cope

with difficulties. In his article which is entitled “Pioneers to Eternity”, Eugene Boe reports that life on the prairie was very demanding and madness, drinking and religiosity were an all too common release for both men and women (Boe, 1971: 52). However, in his novel, Rolvaag dooms to insanity only Beret and another woman whose name is Kari. The other strong characters mainly men do not succumb.

Whereas Per, his sons and others in Spring Creek participate in the process of conquering and subduing the land and those who would wrest it away from them, Beret cannot participate because she is afraid of the vast expanse of the frontier space. For her, it seemed as if the prairie were swallowing up the people, the wagons, the cows and all (Rolvaag, 1955: 320). Furthermore, she even questions God and his wisdom in attempting to populate the infinities of the prairie:

> Those poor folk were straying somewhere out there, under the towering clouds. Poor souls! The Lord pity the mother who had left a part of herself back east on the prairie! How could the good God permit creatures made in his image to fall into such tribulations? To people this desert would be as impossible as to empty the sea. For how could folk establish homes in an endless wilderness? (Ibid. 320-21).

Beret cannot cope with the frontier space because, for Rolvaag the place of women is the domestic/private space and not the outdoor/public space which is the place of men like Per Hansa. Glenda Riley argues that

> The early tradition of strong literary frontierswomen was expanded during the twentieth century by such writers as Willa Cather, Vardis Fisher, Mari Sandoz, and Bess Streeter Aldrich, though their representations of women who displayed great stamina and ingenuity. During the early decades of the twentieth century, this longstanding trend to picture frontierswomen as able and self-reliant received a serious challenge from the works of two writers who had little experience with the West and its women. One of these is Ole E. Rolvaag, who himself never homesteaded ... Yet, with his heartrending lamentations concerning women’s work loads, hostility to the frontier, and tendencies toward insanity, Rolvaag etched the picture of a helpless, hopeless drudge into the minds of generations of American readers (Riley, 1988: 9).

In her book, Riley studies Rolvaag's challenge and response to Cather. However, she ignored women's challenge and resistance to male frontier literature in the 1930s and this is the aim of this chapter.

III- Laura and the Felicitous Space of the Frontier

In her essay, "The Frontier of the Little House," Ann Romines argues that Wilder's frontier novels function as a space where transformations take place. She writes

> Now the Little House has become a serial, not a static locale, and it offers possibilities of continuation and growth that give Laura, as a frontier girl protagonist, space to run and think and grow (Romines, 2002: 36).

In her frontier novels, Laura Ingalls Wilder portrays a society of pioneer women. By writing about the woman's movement into the frontier space and her response to the latter, Wilder establishes her first challenge to Rolvaag's frontier narrative. Throughout the books, the protagonist is a woman; her name is Laura Ingalls. She is described as being brown as an Indian (OBPC, p. 143) which differentiates her from the submissive blond who awaits rescue by her beau in Rolvaag's frontier saga. Her voice is at the centre of the whole narrative. By giving voice to the woman who is silenced and stereotyped in the male frontier narrative, Wilder is just expressing what the feminist Hélène Cixoux asked for in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" where she writes

> Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement (Cixoux, 1976: 875).

So, Laura Ingalls Wilder understood that one of the ways by which she can extend the woman's sphere or to put her in the public sphere is by writing about her frontier experience. In a speech she delivered in Detroit in 1937, Wilder says

> I realized I had seen and lived it all-all the successive phases of the frontier, first the frontiersman then the pioneer, then the farmers and the towns. Then I understood that in my own life I represented a whole period of American History. That the frontier was gone and agricultural settlements had taken its place when I married a farmer […] I wanted children now to understand more about the beginnings of things, to know what is behind the things they see - what it is that made America as they know it (qtd. In Fellman, 2008: 65).

Thus, as she tells her story in the *Little House* books, she transfers the agency from the pioneer to herself. In other words, she reconfigures the signifier of the myth of the frontier from male to female.

By jaxtoposing laura's freedom with the frontier space, Wilder revises and challenges the masculine frontier tradition which associates the American frontier with manhood, including such iconic figures as Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Natty Bumpo and Buffalo Bill. In fact, the *Little House* novels engage a dialogue and show that the frontier space is a liberating space for women. The prairie or the frontier space is a source of inspiration for Laura. Moreover, for her it is "a felicitous space" or the space we love to borrow Gaston Bachelard words in his *Poetics of space*. In *Little House on the Prairie*, Laura the heroine connects quickly to the frontier space. In this respect, Wilder writes

> Laura was very happy. The wind sang a low, rustling song in the grass. Grasshoppers' rasping quivered up from all the immense prairie. But all these sounds made a great, warm, happy silence. Laura had never seen a place she liked so much as this place (LHP, p. 49).

After her joyous connection to the prairie, Laura starts to associate the expansive horizon of this frontier space with a sense of freedom. In his book entitled *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, the cultural geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan describes space as the unknown landscape, a geographic area of abstract openness and place as the area to which one is attached, the center of felt values where biological and emotional needs are satisfied (Tuan, 1977: 4-12). Tuan also describes the potentiality of freedom found in space, a potentiality that

I argue shapes and transforms the American woman writer discussed here: “spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act (Ibid.52). In this study, the woman writer and the woman character Laura finds in the geographic reality of the frontier “enough room in which to act”, and she finds room in which to defy the cultural restraints of gender. Her ventures in the prairie contribute to her confidence and independence. As a result, Laura starts to resist her mothers domesticity and disrupt nostalgia for the traditional family.

The Ameican Frontier as a space which is defined by ever shifting borders, empowered women to question the ideology of separate spheres and allowed them to transgress the patriarchal strictures of the American society. Susane Naramore Maher writes

> In the frontier space gender roles underwent considerable revision. Setllers daughters enjoyed the outdoors, contibuted to men’s work, felt themselves part of a national experiment. These daughters of first wave women questioned their mothers’ practices and often identified strongly with the male members of their circles – fathers, brothers and uncles (Maher, 1994: 131).

In his book *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (1989), Elliott West develops the same idea when he asserts that though frontier daughters worked and passed leisure time among women, much of their labour was alongside boys and men in the fields, countryside, and boomtown streets. Their feelings of accomplishment came largely from helping with men’s work those transforming tasks and celebrated changes linked to a grand national purpose (West, 1989: 257). Furthermore, he contends their play, too, was mostly out-of-doors, away from the houses that were their mother’s domain. In short, they often identified less with women than with fathers, brothers, and uncles. That left them freer to question the attitudes and roles that defined and in many ways limited their mother’s lives, and it may have contributed to a strong sense of independence and self-confidence among girls who grew up western (Ibid.).

Laura, the heroine of the *Little House* series, likes the outdoor frontier space. Rather than to identify with her mother who satisfies the four pillars of "true womanhood" that we have mentioned earlier in this study, she identifies with her father's love for the wild. In *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, Laura takes the role of the pioneer when she says "Let's go west" (BSSL, p. 126). In *Little Town on the Prairie*, wilder writes "Laura wanted nothing more than just being outdoors. She felt she never could get enough sunshine soaked into her bones" (LTP, p. 8). In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura prefers the outdoor space of the prairie rather than the safety of their dugout home, "Laura would rather sleep outdoors, even if she heard wolves, than to be safe in this house dug under the ground" (OBPC, p. 17).

In contrast to Beret's fear of the open space of the prairie, Laura is delighted with the freedom and independence the frontier space can offer to her. The relationship between her father and mother gives her the opportunity to realize that the public space of the frontier can be rewarding to women. *In Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier* (1981), Joanna Stratton writes that

> To the Pioneer woman, home and hearth meant work loads that were heavier than ever. And yet that work was the work of survival. In its isolation, the pioneer family existed as a self-sufficient unit that took pride in its ability to privide for itself and persevere in the face of hardship. Men and women work together as partners, combining their strengths and talents to provide food and clothing for themselves and their children. As a result, women found themselves on a far more equal footing with their spouses (Stratton, 1981: 57).

To survive in the frontier space, men and women should combine their efforts and work together. This situation offered advantages and opportunities to women. In fact, working alongside men gave them the opportunity to conquer the outside space. For example, the injury of Laura's mother during the construction of the house walls shows Laura that women can work outside their domestic space and be equal to men.

Even though Mary is the eldest daughter of the Ingalls family, it is Laura who helps her father in performing different outdoor masculine tasks. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, laura filled her apron with the fresh, sweet semelling chips to help her father smoking meat for the long and hard winters (LHBW, p. 7). In *Little House on the prairie*, Laura helped Pa make the door. Mary watched, but Laura handed him his tools (LHP, p. 100). In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura helps her father in the construction of their new home and catch fish (OBPC, p. 14- 93) and in *The Long Winter*, she helps her father make hay (TLW, p. 10). The open space of the prairie offers Laura the opportunity to conquer the masculine space. Her gender develoment conicides with the description of Glenda Riley, when she writes

> Sex-role divisions could become flexible when there were not enough males to perform the outdoor labor. Females were then looked upon as reserve labor force. Girls therefore often joined boys as stock herders […] In other families, the girls rode horses that were pulling a binder, shocked grain, and helped to threash wheat. They also hunted and trapped wild game (Riley, 1997: 53).

By helping her father in his different tasks outdoor, Laura moved from the private space (the home) to the public space (the frontier space). And being exposed to the public space, Laura the heroine of the *Little House* series discovers the freedom of the open space which led her to question the ideology of the separate spheres.

In *Gendered Spaces* (1992), Daphne Spain contends that to be independent and enjoy a life of full citizenship, women must have access to the public sphere. She writes

> Spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with lesser power. By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced. Thus spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women. For women to become more knowledgeable, they must also change places (Spain, 1992: 15-16).

For Laura, the place of the woman is not only the home but she must go outside and take a job in order to reach her financial independence. The latter will free her from the conventional pressures and the dominance of the patriarchal society. In this respect, Wilder writes

> All the weak, she looked forward to the pleasure of bringing home her wages to Ma. Often she thought, too, that this was only the beginning. In two more years she would be sixteen, old enough to teach school. If she studied hard and faithfully, and got a teacher's certificate, and then got a school to teach, she would be a real help to Pa and Ma. Then she could begin to repay them for all that it had cost to provide for her since she was a baby (LTOP, p. 48).

In the *Little House* series, Laura takes different jobs. She works as a teacher and in her extra-time she works as a seamstress for the town's dress maker Mrs. Mc Kee. With the wages she earns, she helps her family that became very indebted because of draught and grasshoppers which destroyed their wheat crop. She even contributes in sending her sister Mary to college for the blind in Iowa. Yet, her real satisfaction in taking these jobs is the fact of being free and independent.

Throughout the whole series, Laura, the protagonist, is portrayed as someone who is courageous, rebellious, intelligent and questioning her surounding world, the contrsat of her sister Mary who is docile, submissive and always minds her manners. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, the first book in the series, Laura is portrayed as someone who is brave and strong. In one of the games they played with their father called Mad Dog, she saves her sister Mary who is so frightened that she could not move (LHBW, p.35). After her act of bravery, her father congratulates her by saying "Your only a little half-pint of cider half drunk up, but by Jinks! You're as strong as a little french horse! (Ibid.).

In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura is fascinated by the creek from the first sighting. Even though she knows that her mother will not allow her to play there when the creek floods, Laura quietly slipped outdoors without saying anything to Ma (OBPC, p. 101). In the creek she immerses herself in the raging waters and she even saves herself from drowning. This

experience in the creek encourages her to rely on herself because the creek had not got her. It had not made her scream and it could not make her cry (Ibid. 106). In other words, this experience taught her that she is strong for she has not cried for help and she has not been defeated by the creek.

After showing her physical strength and bravery, Laura started to use her voice to show her rebellion against the patriarchal rules which she sees unfair and repressing for women. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, Laura shows her first act of defiance of these patriarchal strictures. On Sundays, the girls must not run or shout or be noisy in their play (LHBW, p.84). The only things which are allowed to them to do are sewing and knitting, two works which are associated with "true womanhood." But, one Sunday after supper, Laura could not bear it any longer. She began to play with Jack, and in a few minutes she was running and shouting. Her father tells her to sit in her chair and be quite, but her response was crying and kicking the chair with her heels (Ibid. 86). From this response, we understand that Laura the heroine of the *Little House* series chooses defiance rather than submission.

In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura disobeys the instructions of her mother. When Laura and Mary go swimming in the creek, their mother tells them to stay near the edge and do not go where it's deep, but Laura defies her and went deeper and deeper (OBPC, p. 23). After her act of disobedience, her father ducks her in the creek but rather than to show her fright, Laura asks him to duck her again. This shows that Laura is someone who is sticking to her opinions and assumes her acts. But the most important act of her defiance in this book is when she disobeys both her mother and Mary the two women who represent "true womanhood" in this novel. One day, a storm is getting near their house and their woodbox is empty, so Laura decides to go out to bring wood but Mary grabbed her and says: "you can't!" "Ma told us to stay in the house if it stormed." Laura jerked away and says: "We've got to bring in wood before the storm gets here, hurry!" then, the two girls went out but since Laura

is quick and mobile, she is the first to run to the woodpile; piled up a big armful of wood and ran back with jack behind her (Ibid. 287). This instance shows Laura as an intelligent woman; a woman who uses her mind and knows when it is time to act.

Another example of Laura's defiance and challenge to the traditional woman is her hatred of her sunbonnet which is one of the most important symbols of "true womanhood." When she plays outdoor, Laura lets her sunbonnet hang down her back because "when her sunbonnet was on she could only see what was infront of her, and that was why she was always pushing it back and letting it hang by its strings tied around her throat" (LHP, p. 123). One day, When the girls were walking to school together and Laura as usual lets her sunbonnet hang down her back, Mary says

> For pity's sake, Laura … keep your sunbonnet on! You will be as brown as an Indian, and what will the town girls think of us? I don't care! Said Laura, loudly and bravely (OBPC, p. 143).

In *These Happy Golden Years*, the last book of the series, Laura shows her autonomy and independence. Moreover, she even redefines the institution of marriage. The first thing she starts with is the wedding dress. Rather than to choose a white wedding dress which is fashion among the traditional women, Laura decides to wear a black dress even if her mother objected. The second thing she changes is omitting the word "obey" in the vows of the wedding ceremony. Wilder writes

> Laura summoned all her courage and said, "Almanzo, I must ask you something. Do you want me to promise to obey you? ... "Well, I am not going to say I will obey you," said Laura ... I cannot make a promise that I will not keep, and Almanzo, even if I tried, I do not think I could obey anybody against my better judgement (THGY, p. 269-270).

Conclusion

To conclude, this study shows that throughout the *Little House* series, Laura Ingalls Wilder resists and challenges the male Myth of the Frontier. As discussed above, masculine frontier literature, such as Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* empowers the male hero who finds freedom, independence and regeneration in the frontier space. At the same time it also marginalizes and stereotypes westering women. In this grand narrative, women are portrayed as silent, docile, and submissive and they occupy the private realms of domesticity. For Rolvaag, women should be kept inside the house because the frontier space is unsuitable for the "weaker sex." Unlike Rolvaag, in her masterpiece work, Wilder gives voice to women and challenges the dichotomized sexual roles and the values associated with them. By portraying a heroine who, from childhood to adulthood defies the patriarchal strictures and challenges the ideology of separate spheres, Wilder redefines gender roles and feminine spatiality. In other words, throughout her *Little House* Books, Laura Ingalls Wilder encourages American women to subvert the ideology of separate spheres and to take jobs outside the domestic domain to be independent and to assume their full citizenship.

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General Conclusion

The present research has attempted to demonstrate that the American frontier was not exclusively a masculine monolithic space or the sole preserve of the white male hero where he regenerated his virility and domesticated women. Drawing on Henry Lefebvre's notion of "representational space" as the sphere of artists and writers who critique, resist, and transform spatial ideologies and social relationships (Lefebvre, 1991: 349), it has been argued that this imagined space is engaged by American women writers to question and destabilize conservative gender roles. In other words, women authors reclaim this ideological stage in order to subvert the domestic ideology and free women from the stereotype of the "angel in the house" cliché.

Using the nineteenth- and twentieth-century frontier narratives of Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Mary Austin, Willa Cather and Laura Ingalls Wilder, I argued that these women writers resorted to that grand narrative of American identity and manifest destiny to respond to their male counterparts and participate in the debate on the place of women in American society. To produce a new space and social relationships where women have agency and affirm their subjectivity, all the authors cited above transcribe movement or mobility in their texts. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre contends that those who influence and change the spatial ideologies and social relationships of a given society are the ones who have the power to move themselves (Lefebvre, 1991: 170). Furthermore, he points out that by their act of moving they put up resistance and inaugurate the project of a different space (either the space of a counter-culture, or counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing real space) (Ibid. 349). Applying this argument to the frontier fiction of these American women writers, enabled me to analyse how these women authors and their characters produce a sense of identity that is different from the one assigned to them by their society.

The study of the issue of the production of space and social relationships in the selected nineteenth-and twentieth-century women's frontier narratives through the lens of spatial theory reveals that the concept of movement or mobility has always played a major role in their texts. All the women authors discussed in this thesis use movement to create a different space in which female characters enjoy full citizenship in the public sphere. In other words, all of the texts explored in this study depict women on the move within the frontier space in order to subvert the eastern domestic ideology that has otherized them.

In the first chapter, entitled Historical Background and Theoretical Framework, I first traced the development of the Myth of the Frontier from the first English adventurers and explorers to Frederick Jackson Turner. I have argued that throughout history, Americans resorted to that myth to try to solve their contemporary crises and express their own ideologies. Among them: an expression of America's difference from England, and thus the necessity for separation; a justification for the subjugation of the Native American population and the domination of women; and a justification for the imperial ventures of the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then, I defined and explained the different theories used to analyze and discuss the fiction works of Sedgwick, Austin, Cather and Wilder.

In the second chapter, entitled Early American Literature and the Call for a New Nation: the Frontier, Gender and Ethnicity in the Fiction of Catherine Maria Sedgwick and James Fenimore Cooper, I have attempted to put in perspective Sedgwick's and Cooper's frontier narratives. As the two authors wrote during a time when the newly independent and fledgling United States was struggling with the creation of a national identity, I have argued that the two writers engaged the frontier idea to disseminate their ideologies concerning the place of women and the racial other in the American society.

In his *Leatherstocking Tales*, Cooper resorted to the myth of the frontier to silence the woman question that challenged the patriarchal society of post revolutionary America and to exclude the racial other from the American Dream. Sedgwick's frontier novel *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827), is a direct response to Cooper's construction of American nationhood and the place of women and the racial other in American society. By giving voice to her female characters and placing them in the public space rather than confining them at home, she rejects the separate spheres ideology that is lauded by Cooper. In her frontier narrative, she produces a new social space where her heroines affirm their own subjectivities and participate as active agents in the construction of the new nation. Sedgwick's use of the Indian Question in her fiction is an appeal for equality and the inclusion of all the ethnic groups in one body politic which is the American nation.

The third chapter entitled Mary Austin and the Post-Turnerian and Post-Rooseveltian Gender Rewriting of the Frontier, attempts to put into dialogue Mary Austin's frontier narratives with Frederick Jackson Turner's and Theodore Roosevelt's frontier myth. In this chapter, I have argued that Austin's use of female characters to construct an egalitarian society in the frontier space is a promotion of a new spatial ideology that might reconfigure the western space and social relationships.

In the same period that Turner and Roosevelt popularized mythic images of the frontier space as the crucible where the white male hero forged his manhood and affirmed his exceptionalism mainly through the subordination of women and conquering other races, Austin portrays a different image of the frontier the "contact zone," in Mary Pratt's words, where women and other minority groups worked together to fulfill the American Dream. To critique the progressive era's spatial ideology that constricted the liberties of women, she foregrounds her female characters walking and moving in the frontier space. By titling her

frontier fiction the Lost Borders, she celebrates the erasure of the sexist borders between men and women and the racial borders between white Americans and the other ethnic minorities.

In the fourth chapter entitled The New Woman in the Frontier: Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* and the Fiction of Owen Wister and Zane Grey, I have attempted to put into dialogue these three prominent frontier authors. In this chapter, I have argued that the stereotyping of women which continued in Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), and Grey's *Rider's of the purple Sage* (1912), two among the most popular and well-known frontier novels of the twentieth century, pushed Willa Cather to write back and to defend the cause of women.

As spokespersons of the eastern establishment who saw the New Woman as a threat to the old Victorian values, both Wister and Grey brought this social type to the imagined space of the frontier just to subdue her and to relocate her in the private space. Writing against this dominant ideology, Cather returned to the imaginative space of the frontier to remember self-reliant new women who asserted their subjectivity and affirmed their place in the American society. In her text, Cather produced a new space and social relationships where women enjoy the fact of being in the public space as leaders who manage their proper affairs. Throughout her frontier narrative she supports the feminist cause and consolidates the achievements of the New Woman.

In the fifth chapter entitled The Frontier Reconceptualized: Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series, I have attempted to put in perspective Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books with O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. By situating their frontier fiction within the culture of homesteading which is a national narrative about space, I argued that the major issue between the two authors is who has the right to claim the public space and frontier history.

In *Giants in the Earth*, Rolvaag continues the masculine frontier saga which asserts patriarchal dominance and lauds women's subservience. In his narrative, women are

portrayed as silent, docile, and submissive and they occupy the private realms of domesticity. For Rolvaag, the woman has only one role to satisfy in the American society which is the one of child bearer.

Dialogising her male contemporary's discourse, Wilder's novels present the Frontier as a space of resistance to the limiting social roles allowed for women by the masculine frontier narrative. By portraying a heroine who, from childhood to adulthood defies the patriarchal strictures and challenges the ideology of separate spheres, Wilder redefines gender roles and feminine spatiality. In other words, in her *Little House* Books, Laura Ingalls Wilder encourages American women to subvert the ideology of separate spheres and to take jobs outside the domestic domain to be independent and to assume their full citizenship.

The women writers discussed in this thesis, namely Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Mary Austin, Willa Cather, and Laura Ingalls Wilder, appropriated the space of the Frontier to put the woman's voice in the public space. They understood that the mythic space of the American Frontier is the place where the destiny of American women is discussed, so they wrote about their frontier experiences to subvert the ideology of separate spheres and to extend the woman's sphere so as to free her from the Victorian "cult of womanhood" or "the angel in the house." In their writings, they encourage women to ask for their rights, to appropriate the public space, and to assume their full citizenship. The analysis of the bodily movements of the female characters depicted in the frontier fiction of these American women authors demonstrates that they had begun to put up resistance and inaugurate the project of a different space.

Throughout the study of these women's frontier narratives in the light of spatial theory, we notice that literary texts play a significant role in either enforcing spatial ideologies and social relationships or resisting and critiquing the dominant ones. This reinforces Lefebvre's assertion that "any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise:

enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, and speculated about" (Lefebvre, 1991: 15). In fact, literature is the mirror of every society, as it reifies spatial ideologies and their concomitant social relationships. Moreover, since literature is that space of the imagination that seeks to transport people into new worlds, it has the capacity to influence the minds of readers and the way they view the world around them.

Resorting to the frontier space or "the West of the Imagination," as William Goetzmann called it, did not wane after the 1930s and 40s. Reference to this grand narrative of American identity and manifest destiny continued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As an ideological concept that shapes the American imagination, its use has never ceased to inspire Americans, be they authors, artists, politicians, or ordinary people. In other words, as a powerful idea that is so deeply woven into the nation's consciousness, it is still produced in a variety of genres such as environmental literature, road narratives, science fiction, Hollywood westerns, and other film genres. In speaking about the persistence of frontier mythology in American culture, Mathew Carter writes

> Frontier mythology has never really 'left' the United States, although the terms by which it is rendered or assessed may have changed. Neither has the myth been absent from its popular culture, although equally its preferred terms may oscillate in popularity and productivity, depending upon a given period's cultural perceptions and moods and the popularity of particular genre cycles (Carter, 2014: 2).

As a result, there will always be room for more research and discussion about the process of continuity of the frontier idea and how it is adapted and reshaped by women writers by tackling other writings and issues.

The women authors presented in this thesis are the literary foremothers of writers and film directors like Diane Smith, Gretel Ehrlich, Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko, Annie Proulx, Judith Merril, Maggie Greenwald, Kelly Reichard and others. All these women engaged the frontier of the imagination to speak about their contemporary issues and

anxieties. All their works are, in fact, about the production of space and social relationships through movement. In other words, movement is a critical strategy for creating a new space in which women and minority groups in the American mosaic can find their rightful place.

Diane Smith, for example, follows in the footsteps of the women writers examined in this thesis, particularly Mary Austin and Willa Cather. Her (1999) novel, *Letters From Yellowstone*, reminds us of the nature writings of Austin, and her protagonist, Alexandria Bartram, is a reference to Cather's heroine, Alexandra Bergson. Like Austin and Cather, Smith engages the frontier of the imagination to produce a new space and social relationships in which women appropriate the public space.

Smith's novel tells the story of the adventures of a brilliant and independent woman named Alexandria Bartram. In 1898, Dr. Bartram embarked on a long adventure by joining a Smithsonian mission to Yellowstone Park as a botanist. When she arrives to Yellowstone, she is hardly accepted by her colleagues because she is a woman. The male sexist attitude towards women is mainly revealed in the correspondence between Pr. Howard Merriam, the expedition leader, and his mother. He writes,

> Remember that Dr. Bartram I wrote to you about? Well he has arrived. Only he is a she ... dear mother, what am I to do with a woman? ... If she were to join us in the field, I fear the entire enterprise would be put at risk. Where would she sleep? With whom would she travel into the backcountry? How would she endure ... such primitive conditions? I desperately need the manpower (Smith, 1999: 27).

However, through her movement, her rides, and her explorations in the frontier space, she proves her competence and equality with men. Moreover, through her hard work and scientific rigour, which sometimes exceeds her supervisor, Pr. Merriam, she undermines the nineteenth-century stereotype that considers women unsuitable for intellectual and scientific endeavour.

Unlike the dainty and frail woman of male frontier literature who waits to be rescued by her chivalrous cowboy knight, smith's heroine is a self-reliant woman who enjoys the outdoor

space and fends for herself. She is not interested in marriage or the home space as it is prescribed by the Victorian ideology. For example, when her family sends her fiancé to bring her home, she refuses to follow him and prefers to follow the career of a scientist exploring the American frontier. In this respect, Alexandria Bartram says: "I cannot predict the future ... I too will travel down that narrow, windy road out of the Park with a great sense of expectation ... you must travel west" (Ibid. 226). In writing about a protagonist who prefers to go west rather than returning to the east, Dianne Smith subverts the spatial ideology of separate spheres that confined women in the private space. Thorough the movement of her female heroine she creates a new space and social relationships in which women enjoy their full citizenship. By imagining a brilliant and independent woman who finds freedom in the frontier space, Smith is just asking her contemporary American women to occupy the public space by following their professional careers.

Another woman who continues in a similar vein is Maggie Greenwald. Like the women authors presented in this thesis, in *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993), Greenwald appeals to the frontier of the imagination to subvert the masculine frontier narrative and to put the woman's voice in the public space. In an interview she accorded to Tania Modleski, where she is asked why she made a western, Greenwald replies:

> From a very young age, I felt what I consider a very primal connection to the landscape of the West; to the idea of surviving against nature, in nature, to images of someone riding across a plain on a horse. I refuse to accept that these are male images. I think they are human images (qtd. in Modleski, 1998: 359).

As this passage suggests, Greenwald reclaims the frontier space to undermine the ideology of separate spheres that otherized women when it considered them second-class citizens.

Greenwald's film tells the story of a real pioneer woman named Josephine Monaghan who was living in New York. After an adultery relationship and a child out of wedlock, her father threw her out, so she decided to go west to start a new life. In the west she assumed the

identity of a man and took different jobs such sheep farmer and miner, until she succeeded to have to her own homestead.

Like the writers examined in this thesis, it is through the movement of her heroine in the frontier space that Greenwald creates a new space and transforms the spatial ideologies that constricted the liberties of women. The first scene of the film shows an eastern society girl with baggage walking alone on a road in the frontier space, following the American dream of liberty and independence. This image contrasts with the one we find most of the time in masculine westerns, where women are showed at home rearing their children and taking care of their husbands. Moreover, unlike the frail and whimsical women of male westerns, who always need a male protector to save them from danger, Josephine saves herself from soldiers' rape. Furthermore, to subvert the Victorian ideology of "true womanhood," which is behind the otherization of women, Josephine decides to change her Victorian clothes for male pants, mutilates her face and assumes the male identity of Jo.

From that moment on, she appropriates the role of the pioneer or the cowboy hero who enjoys riding in the open frontier spaces. Throughout the whole film, Joe is shown moving and performing outdoor tasks like searching for gold in one of the mines, working as a sheep farmer in a farm, leading other homesteaders in the Great Plains, shooting bottles to improve her shooting skills, and successfully managing her own homestead. As she succeeds in performing these supposedly masculine tasks, she proves to her male counterparts that women can also conquer the public sphere.

In the same interview cited above, to the question "So are you simply putting women into the genre without changing its conventions or are you critiquing the genre by, as it were changing the subject? Greenwald replies: "when I stumbled upon information about the reel Little Jo I saw that her story was a classic western story about a rugged individualist who carves out for herself a place in the American West. Moreover, she continues that Ballad is a

metaphor to herself as a woman film-maker conquering a “male terrain” (Ibid. 360). From this quotation, we understand that Greenwald is urging her female contemporaries to embrace the supposedly male professions and assume their real place in American society.

The migration of the Frontier Myth to other genres such as environmental literature, road narratives, science fiction, Hollywood westerns, and other film genres proves that it will never stop inspiring Americans. As an idea that is so entrenched in the American psyche, it maintains a firm grip on the nation’s imagination. All Americans resort to the frontier of the imagination to express their anxieties and their dreams. With this idea in mind, I can say that it has good days ahead.

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Résumé

Cette thèse examine les représentations littéraires féminines de la frontière américaine dans une sélection de romans du XIXe et du XXe siècle. Elle étudie la question de la production de l'espace et des relations sociales qui est ancrée dans leur discours dialogué. Répondant à leurs homologues masculins qui voient l'espace de la frontière comme le lieu du renouveau masculin et de la domestication de la femme, de nombreux auteurs féminins tels que Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Mary Austin, Willa Cather et Laura Ingalls Wilder ont engagé l'espace de la frontière pour discuter du genre, des questions liées telles que les rôles sociaux, les espaces privés et publics. Empruntant le concept d'espace de représentation à Henry Lefebvre, elle soutient que ces femmes écrivains ont recours à ce grand récit de l'identité américaine et de la Manifest Destiny afin de montrer leur résistance et de participer au débat sur la place des femmes dans la société américaine. Pour montrer leur discorde avec l'idéologie de la frontière dominante qui représente la femme comme silencieuse, délicate et soumise, elles promeuvent une image contrastée, celle d'une femme indépendante courageuse qui apprécie l'espace extérieur. Pour atteindre son objectif et enquêter sur les manières dont ces écrivaines américaines ont produit l'espace et les relations sociales, révisé le récit de la frontière masculine et remis en question le statu quo qui contraignait la mobilité des femmes, la présente recherche adopte une conjonction de perspectives, emprunte à l'espace, au dialogue et aux théories féministes. La manière dont ces auteures américaines ont produit l'espace et les relations sociales est étudiée à la lumière de la théorie spatiale d'Henry Lefebvre développée dans son livre *The Production of Space* (1991). Dans ce livre, Lefebvre explique que c'est par le mouvement que les idéologies spatiales se produisent et se transforment. Le discours dialogué des écrivaines étudiées est examiné à travers le prisme de la notion de dialogisme de Mikhaïl Bakhtine expliquée dans ses livres *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981) et *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). Quant à leur position féministe, celle-ci est traitée à la lumière des postulats féministes de Victoria Walker expliqués dans son article « Feminist Criticism, Anglo-American » (1993).

ملخص

موضوع هذه الأطروحة هو التمثيل الأدبي للمرأة للحدود الأمريكية في القرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن العشرين. تدرس مسألة إنتاج الفضاء والعلاقات الاجتماعية التي هي جزء لا يتجزأ من الخطاب الحواري. واستجابة لنظيرها الرجل الذي يرى أن الفضاء الحدودي هو المكان الذي يشهد تجدد الرجل وترويض المرأة، قامت العديد من المؤلِفات مثل كاثرين ماريا سيدجويك، وماري أوستن، ويلا كاثر، ولورا إنغلز وايلدر بإدراج الفضاء الحدودي لمناقشة القضايا المتعلقة بالجنس مثل الأدوار الاجتماعية و المجالات الخاصة والعامة. وباستعارة مفهوم الفضاء التمثيلي من هنري ليفبفر، يقول أن هؤلاء الكاتبات يلجأن إلى هذا السرد الكبير للهوية الأميركية والمصير الواضح من أجل إظهار مقاومتهن والمشاركة في النقاش حول مكانة المرأة في المجتمع الأمريكي. لإظهار خلافهم مع الأيديولوجية الحدودية المهيمنة التي تمثل المرأة على أنها صامتة، لطيفة، و خاضعة. فهن يعززن صورة متناقضة، صورة امرأة شجاعة مستقلة تتمتع بفضاء خارج البيت. لبلوغ هدفه المتمثل في التحقيق في الطرق التي أنتج فيها هؤلاء الكاتبات الأمريكيات الفضاء والعلاقات الاجتماعية ومراجعة سرد الحدود الذكورية وتحدي الوضع الراهن الذي قيد تنقل المرأة ، يتبنى هذا البحث مجموعة من وجهات النظر، مستعارة من الفضاء النسوي والحوار والنظرية. تتم دراسة الطريقة التي أنتج بها هؤلاء المؤلفون الأمريكيون الفضاء والعلاقات الاجتماعية في ضوء نظرية الفضاء لهنري ليفبفر التي تم تطويرها في كتابه *إنتاج الفضاء (1991)*. ، يشرح ليفبفر في هذا الكتاب أنه من خلال الحركة تحدث الأيديولوجيات المكانية وتتحول. يتم فحص الخطاب الحواري للكاتبات بالدراسة انطلاقا من خلال منظور مفهوم ميخائيل باختين للحوار الموضح في كتابيه *الخيال الحواري: أربع مقالات* (1981) *ومشاكل شعرية لدوستويفسكي (1984)*. أما بالنسبة لموقفهم النسوي، قد تم التعامل معه في ضوء افتراضات فيكتوريا والكار النسوية الموضحة في مقالتها "النقد النسوي ، الأنجلو أمريكي" (1993).