

THE MYTH OF LAURA SECORD
IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY ARTISTIC (RE)PRESENTATIONS
TO TWENTIETH-CENTURY POPULAR CULTURE

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THE MYTH OF LAURA SECORD

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ABSTRACT

This investigation explores the mythification of Laura Secord based on an interdisciplinary fusing of Victor Turner's ritual anthropology with literary approaches emphasizing semiotic responses to art. The theoretical framework is explored by an analysis of the artistic works signaling the myth's developmental phases: Sarah Anne Curzon's Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 (1887), Lereine Ballantyne's Heroes of History (192?), Alexander Maitland Stephen's Laura Secord (1929), Merrill Denison's Laura Secord (1931), and other minor works. In addition, Frank P. O'Connor's appropriation of Laura Secord for his Candy Company is considered. The study's central premise, posed in the preface and introduction, is that the various portrayals of Laura Secord form a mythic tradition which functions as a reflector of communal interests and concerns. Chapter One provides an historic and artistic overview of this premise, narrative's *rite de passage* toward public recognition. Chapters Two, Three and Four continue this exploration in relation to specific works and demonstrate that society's active participation in the myth-making process reflects its own communal development. The interdisciplinary framework investigated here contributes to an understanding of myth as an indicator of social, cultural and political change, as well as communally empowering.

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PREFACE

The turning point came in a run-down warehouse in Winnipeg's red-light district. Before that moment I had always intellectualized my experiences by cutting myself off from life's intuitive, emotional reality. But during that humid night in Winnipeg the years of emotional deprivation somehow found a gap, a silence large enough to allow its repressed *jouissance* to escape laughingly.

My newly-formed theatre company -- Parnassus -- was participating in Winnipeg's first Fringe Festival. We were performing Labyrinth, an experimental play I had written the previous year. My involvement in the production as an actress was not on account of any great acting skill but as a result of the company's inability to pay for an extra airline ticket. Our lack of funds, indeed, shaped the production by eliminating the modern over-reliance on external props. Instead, we used our bodies as a means of animating the narrative and creating a nightmarish quality as we transformed from character to object and back again.

Overall, the Fringe was a wonderful exercise in play. It provided us with an artistic outlet in which we could play with the mechanics of production without a university support

system insuring our success. But for me it became much more, as it changed my relationship to and understanding of the dramatic medium forever. One flash of insight on the stage awakened me to the possibility of my artistic desires and my theoretical understanding merging into a new critical awareness. The moment's profundity came from the fact that all our actors involuntarily encountered similar sensations. What occurred could only be vaguely described as an "out of the theatrical-body" experience, whereby my actor-ego was completely usurped by the character ego(s) I was portraying. The eclipsing of my actor-ego -- which I define as the individual's professional knowledge of the acting environment -- by the character-ego generated an intuitive, interpretative awareness which connected me to the work's complete humanistic significance. This significance introduced me, in a real sense, to the concept of multiplicity in which I felt an affinity with the other characters and their struggles against forces greater than themselves. But as quickly as the sensation appeared it was gone, leaving behind only a cognitive trace of imaginary contentedness.

Since this sort of encounter was not defined or explicated in any theatrical handbook, I created my own terms to help verbalize an otherwise purely intuitive experience.

The actor-ego recognizes -- while pretending not to -- the stage, the audience. She has knowledge of the future, of the dramatic story. In other words, the actor has access to that which is closed off from the character. In contrast, the character-ego only realizes the moment and follows a path of action which is inevitable -- inevitable because of the text's dramatic logic -- but not preknown.

The difference between the two egos is the difference between Oedipus and Tiresias, between passion and reason, between the semiotic and the symbolic - two terms which I define in the Introduction. Oedipus is an ego inscribed in a tragic script of which he is comically unaware and unable to escape. Tiresias, on the other hand, is an ego participating in a comic script of which he is tragically aware, but distanced from because of his belief in symbolic permanence and the Law's inevitability. Tiresias leaves Oedipus Rex unscathed; it is Oedipus's relationship to the body, his belief in its metonymic connection to the community, and his understanding of the relationship's temporal instability which make the tragedy a triumph of the human soul and which mark its semiotic potentiality.

What happened in Winnipeg was the deposing of symbolic foreknowledge by semiotic spontaneity. Even audience members encountered this emotional energy, which overrode their analytical abilities. Since our audiences were embarrassingly

small, we became bold in our invitations. As a result, Sharon Pollock accepted our offer and came to the show. In the reception area the next evening, she told our company that the experience was like a continual emotional assault which kept her spellbound as well as intellectually off-guard. She said that only later -- away from the images, the poetry, and the "body language" -- did she want to re-organize the experience cognitively. During the moment of performance the semiotic sensations were enough. As the playwright, I can boast that Pollock's experience was exactly what I had intended. Since it was a play which had to be written, I could not analytically justify all its parts, but I felt their necessity. I felt that they were essential to the vision in a manner which resembled dream logic rather than the typical logic of continuity and coherence. In assisting the other actors, or answering the audience's questions about the play, all I could do, then, was suggest they feel the text with their bodies and go from there. Of course, none of the actors understood what I meant until they experienced their semiotic encounters.

Their initial puzzlement about my directorial advice stems from the fact that such semiotic privileging contradicts most acting theories and all academic training. Educators have succeeded in removing emotional bonds from our analytical repertoire. During our company's many post-performance discussions I have witnessed the inability of audiences to

express their intuitive responses. Instead they disguise their responses in elaborate intellectualizations. Rather than openly admit that they connect with the drama's semiotic flow, they displace their feelings onto the author or director by making moralizing comments which leave them safely out of the theatrical configuration, so that in some cases, they seriously alienate themselves from the production. For example, when one woman commented on my "traumatic Catholic upbringing" she reduced the play's feminist message concerning Man's exploitation of the female body to a supposed personal neurosis of the author which excluded her from the production's *communitas*.

Like these audiences, I too learned to rationalize the inexplicable. If I felt my comments would reveal too much of myself, I would ignore the magical thrill theatre gave me. I was left to express myself in a untruthful way by squeezing my intuitive responses into traditional academic discourse. Ironically, the sense of possessing an inadequate language stemmed from my theoretical background. Formalism was helpful -- most of the time -- but it lacked the spirit I felt beating beneath the work. Roland Barthes was sufficient for a while, as were Jacques Lacan, Derrida, Feminism and Marxism. At one point, I resorted to creating my own language, much to the horror of American, Lesbian feminists who thought I was appropriating their discourse, and to the appreciation of

British, experimental theatre practitioners who understood my linguistic struggle. The "love it or hate it" responses which indicated a deep rift between academics and artists was evident at the Second International Women Playwrights' Conference in Toronto in 1991 where some artists wanted to ban academics and critics from attending certain sessions and future conferences. The more I tried to fill my linguistic void, the deeper it became.

As an artist and an academic, I felt betrayed by both sides. If artists would not allow me, as an academic, to participate in their communities how would I discover the missing link between art's passion and academia's reason? Likewise, if academics would not allow me, as an artist, to experiment with unorthodox language systems in revealing my truthful thoughts, how would I ever be able to express my discoveries to a larger audience?

Surprisingly, and totally without warning, I found my missing link. I found a precise vocabulary in which my artistic soul and academic voice could be united in a passionately intelligible manner. This discovery came from the seemingly unrelated field of anthropology: specifically, Victor Turner's re-investigation into tribal ritual and its relationship to societal events which he later called social dramas.

* * *

According to Canadian history and mythology, Laura Secord was a woman who never foreclosed on her individual potential. Using this courageous woman as my artistic focus, I shall test my new-found interdisciplinary strategies in an attempt to balance critical perspectives. This thesis will trace the creation and development of the Secord legend to demonstrate how the historical and literary accounts are about a ritual event whose Performative function highlights a specific world vision (Chapters 1 and 2). On a second interpretative level, I will show how these accounts reveal a ritual structure which is repressed by the Narrative function in order to indoctrinate audiences in a Canadian nationalism based on imperialist ideology and "conformist" tendencies (Chapter 3). Emphasizing cognition over emotion, the repression of the Ritual function by educational drama's Narrative and Performative functions makes theatre's revolutionary effect serve rather than challenge mainstream ideology. In contrast, my investigation of Laura Secord in a popular context (Chapter 4) reveals how her subversive potentiality has been caught within a commercially liminal whirlpool which forecloses on all three dramatic functions.

Furthermore, the negation of semiotic *jouissance* and ritual "play" assists in the dominant social structure's dismissal of certain literary works, and their Narrative strategies, which have the potential to subvert oppressive

cultural practices. This point signifies that the Secord myth itself has been subjected to a ritual process in order to reverse its radical effect on society. My examination of the myth-making process in connection with the Laura Secord story will show the tripartite Narrative-Performance-Ritual configuration and its attendant ideology to function as a schema that I believe may be discerned in other texts. Since we are surrounded by narratives and dramas, my critical approach may prove to be valid for a variety of myths -- from Joan of Arc to Margaret Trudeau and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis -- which function as indicators of social, cultural and political change.

INTRODUCTION: POINTS OF CONTACT
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

A twig snapped.

Still she ran deeper into the tangled woods. Eventually, she stopped thinking that every cracking branch was the sound of an American gun. She never stopped fearing, though, the bullet or tomohawk that would tear her flesh between the shoulder blades and lodge near her heart.

Confused and disoriented she stumbled. Had she not passed that tree before? That stump -- was it not the same one she sat on and cried twenty minutes earlier? Was the path going in circles?

No. There was no path.

But she was following her own footsteps into the labyrinth.

Dangerous shadows, evil sounds, repulsive smells. Even the sparrows mocked her journey. Her journey. Why? What was the purpose?

To warn. To warn whom?

To warn. Yes, but whom? of what?

A root snatched at her foot and pulled her down near the base of a Beech. Bones and fur lay half buried among the trilliums. Or was it fabric, hair? Her fabric. Her hair. The

bones, dried of their marrow, pointed at her. She would be next.

To warn was her purpose.

They continued to point; to pierce her eyeballs with their bleached warning. She was to warn -- to warn Fitzgibbon -- to warn of the Americans' attack.

Smashing the bones with her scratched fist, she rose and continued deeper into the labyrinth. It was hotter, the air thicker, the branches sharper, the ground steeper. Leaning against a tree she forgot why she had come. Then a trickle of sweat traced its way from her matted hair, down her forehead, along her brow and into her eye. The same eye pierced by bone. She remembered the journey.

She must travel to the centre and follow her own steps back. The battle would be won or lost, but she would have journeyed to a place she had never been.

Then a twig snapped.

* * *

Laura Secord's twenty-mile trek through the woods from her home in Queenston, Ontario to Beaver Dams is an unforgettable moment in Canadian history. Generations of poets, dramatists, biographers, historians and journalists have perpetuated the legend. All -- except the biographers -- focus on her key moment in history and leave the rest to speculation. The "facts" surrounding her life before and after

her heroic walk in June of 1813 are of little consequence because her significance rests with that one exceptional action.

The walk has also captured the imaginations of diverse Canadian communities. The sequence of events and corpus of publications on the Secord legend outlined in Appendix One span many generations as well as diverse political climates. This chronological list shows that Canadians -- from Gilbert Auchinleck to Jane Urquhart -- have returned to the historic period and repeated Laura Secord's courageous action. Although it is a rather simple narrative, its total impression speaks a universal message which transcends the historic moment. Her role as wife and mother does not detract from her feeling of responsible for the fate of her fellow Canadians at Beaver Dams. Laura Secord's journey "to warn" addresses the human condition by showing us that she has the ability to transgress socially-imposed inhibitions and fears. Her decision to undertake the journey, then, is a radical transgressive action because it makes visible the constructed limitations of conventional behaviour. Thus, the journey is noteworthy not for what it accomplished historically or militarily but for what it shows individual desire capable of achieving.

Literary critics have treated the distinct artistic representations of the Laura Secord story as isolated works. Only two adult or "serious" works were written during the

myth's formative years. Their extensive treatments of the legend, as well as the public's access -- past and present -- to these works makes them the normative texts on the Secord story. Sarah Anne Curzon's poetic drama Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 (1887) and Merrill Denison's radio play (1931) -- have never been compared explicitly. Murray Edwards's analysis (1963) of the Curzon text focused on its literary merit, its entertainment value and Curzon's position in a Canadian dramatic tradition. Anton Wagner renewed the public's interest in this play by including it in his series Canada's Lost Plays (1979). A recent analysis of the play is that of Celeste Derksen (1994), whose evaluation approaches the text with a contemporary theoretical model: feminist criticism and its relation to nationhood. Similar individual analysis has been done on Merrill Denison's radio series in which Laura Secord is one of the episodes. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly mention both the Curzon and Denison versions of the story in English-Canadian Theatre (1987) but only as titles in a survey of the field.

Canadian literary research has marginalized other artists' works on Laura Secord. Alexander Stephen's educational dramas (1929) are mentioned as a whole unit in the reference books, whereas Lereine Ballantyne's pageant (1920s) is not discussed at all. Copies of Ida Marion Davidson's educational drama about Laura Secord have vanished from

Canadian libraries. Yet together these texts constitute an ideological appropriation of the Secord story. Likewise, the Secord poems of Charles Mair, Agnes Maule Machar, Charles Jakeway, and "Pen of John" display Laura Secord's dual image as a domesticated and a heroine. Not major works, these texts do not warrant separate research. Similarly, the biographies by Emma Currie (1900) and Ruth McKenzie (1971) have been reviewed, but not scrutinized as literature.

The largest body of analytical material, by far, concerns the actual historical facts and their appearance in popular culture. A steady stream of articles written by newspaper journalists has appeared since the first mention of Laura Secord in 1853 by Gilbert Auchinleck. After the uproar instigated by W. S. Wallace's attack on Laura Secord in 1932, articles still appeared in newspapers, but now they fused the historical evidence with commentaries about the Laura Secord Candy Company. The main objective of the articles was to retell the story -- sometimes incorporating the artistic tradition -- in order to alert the public to an anniversary, a grand opening, a new company product. They consistently fulfilled -- and continue to do so -- a public service obligation.

The interpretative corpus pertaining to the (re)presentations of Laura Secord raises many questions while answering few. Who was Laura Secord really? What exactly is

she now? A cultural symbol popularized by the people for the people? A national symbol propagated by a colonial government in order to legitimize imperialist authority? A name in history which arbitrarily became a commercial symbol? A combination of all, or a subversion of none? Analyzed separately, the various artistic works reveal time-specific features -- such as epic discourse and melodramatic stereotypes -- which modern artistic expectations deem unvaluable.

While other topics have been the focus of literary discussions, critics have not addressed the continual presence of Laura Secord in Canadian culture. Some of Canada's leading critics have explored literary patterns as signposts of Canada's development. For example, D.G. Jones explores the Canadian sense of exile and estrangement from the land in Butterfly on Rock (1970). In the Bush Garden (1971) Northrop Frye attacks the issue of identity, while Linda Hutcheon views irony as a mode of Canadian self-definition in Splitting Images (1991). Margaret Atwood explores the Canadian preoccupation with survival and victims in Survival (1972). Anthropological studies focus on recurring images of Raven, Turtle, Adam and Eve and other figures in order to trace society's symbiotic relationship with its mythology. Nature, Natives and Women have been confronted in scholarly works, while Laura Secord as a cultural symbol within a mythological

structure has been ignored.

A possible reason for this analytical oversight is Laura Secord's origins in history. As a referential figure, she is accepted as a "given" despite the creative embellishments in the different versions of the story. Disciplinary distinctions establish the division between history and fiction, thereby intensifying the critical reluctance to transcend the boundaries between these seemingly diverse fields. The current trend in research, however, is to integrate separate areas of study in order to dislodge the fallacy of self-contained disciplinary systems. T.S. Eliot argues in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) that artists do not have significance in isolation, but that they work within a tradition which precedes them and in which they are also a transformative part. Similarly, in discussing the artistic work itself, Northrop Frye calls the public's interest in continuing to read a given text the "persuasion of continuity." By uniting these complementary ideas I intend to show that the Secord texts collectively demonstrate a continuity of tradition which establishes them as a myth which seeks to explain certain features of Canadian life.

More than just an interesting story, "Laura Secord" is an indicator of Canada's social, cultural and political past. Her image is a product of the late nineteenth century. Its continuous "re-packaging" signals the public's changing

sensibilities toward issues such as the Loyalist Tradition, Imperialism, Canadian nationalism and the Women's Movement. Attentive to the alterations in Laura Secord's image, as well as the myth's shifting emphasis, I explore how generations of Canadians used Laura Secord to (re)establish codes of social conduct and to (re)interpret Canadian cultural and political life.

As a part of a tradition, the individual works on Laura Secord form a continuous myth which functions as a blueprint of Canadian society's evolution from an imperialist colony to a self-determined nation. Viewed as a myth, the Secord tradition challenges the boundaries between historical gossip, referential history and legend. As a myth, the Secord tradition ritualizes on one level one woman's process toward self-empowerment while allegorically paralleling a community's journey toward self-discovery.

Focusing on the (re)presentations of Laura Secord across temporal and generic borders, I argue that she is a cultural symbol journeying through a *rite de passage*¹ determined by the society's active participation in the myth-making process. This process itself reflects Canadian society's ritual development. On one level, this study discloses the Secord story's symbolic development. On another level my study reveals the myth's participation in the nation-building process. But most importantly, this investigation uncovers the

symbiotic process by which the ritual symbol and society are defined.

Adopting Victor Turner's anthropological studies on the ritual process, I propose to show that although Laura Secord originated in historical fact she is a product of the populace's creative impulse. Her co-existence in historical "truth" and artistic "fictionality" discloses the constructed nature of both realms and brings our coherent understanding of the past into sharp focus. Indeed, Laura Secord's turbulent history as a cultural symbol reveals the community's changing intellectual and emotional responses toward the various works' themes and characterization as well as toward the issue of objective "truth" and subjective "fiction".

The critical tradition of privileging Reason over Passion creates a static interpretation of the power of ritual. The symbol's symbiotic process is displaced by a causal hierarchy in which the audience/reader becomes a passive consumer rather than a creative agent. Attaching ideological convictions to the symbolic image de-emphasizes its heterogeneity and the radical potentiality in the encompassing myth-making ritual. When (re)presentations link "Laura Secord" to a specific ideology -- such as imperialism -- she loses her symbolic power. Ignoring the community's vacillating responses to that ideology, the (re)presentation glacierizes the ritual context into an rigidifying social activity. Ronald Grimes points to

this view of ritual as conservative and resilient to change: "ritual had been portrayed as the most backward-looking, foot-dragging of cultural forms. It was hardly capable of acting on society; rather it was a 'repository' or 'reflection' of it. Always it was passive, inert" (144). The erection of the Secord monuments (See Chapter 1) reflects conservative ideology by trying to trap Laura Secord in a stationary image legitimized by authoritative bodies.

But if ritual is to be viewed as containing symbols which function as cultural indicators, the symbol and the ritual must reflect society's intellectual and emotional changes. Dominant symbols, then, must fulfil more than one ideological purpose. Victor Turner's definition of a dominant cultural symbol regards them

not merely as means to the fulfilment of the avowed purposes of a given ritual, but also... to values that are regarded as ends in themselves, that is, to axiomatic values... [they] are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by associations in fact or thought (1967 20,28).

Victor Turner's anthropological work among the Ndembu subsequently led him to inquire into social drama's point of contact with performance. Through this connection he was able to redefine ritual: to "paint another picture, that of cultural 'agent', energetic, subversive, creative, socially critical" (Grimes 144). By blending his anthropological field work with modern Western society's cultural dramas, Turner re-

establishes the classical function of ritual as a repetitive performance that settles internal conflicts within a culture and regenerates social unity.

My investigation into the centrality of the Secord myth to the Canadian community sees the myth-making ritual as a process with radical potentiality. Working within the dominant system, ritual imposes a formal coherence on cognitive excess while simultaneously subverting that system's authority by appealing to a sensory awareness. The privileging of Reason divides and separates reality into inert concepts. Passion on the other hand engages one's intellectual and imaginative sense by involving the individual in a living process. This experience of art as living process depends on what Julia Kristeva calls the semiotic. Makiko Minow-Pinkney sums up Kristeva's semiotic by saying that it "irrupts as the domain of rhythm, sounds, intonation, colour, shape" (161). Within this space exists the chora -- "a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is full of movement as it is regulated....the chora as rupture and articulations (rhythm), [that] precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality and temporality" (Kristeva 1986 92-93). These rhythmic sensations "cannot be entirely grasped by conceptual thought... cannot but have an aesthetic aspect" (Lechte 28). The consistent return to and repetition of the Laura Secord story by Canadians since it was first mentioned

in James Fitzgibbon's 1820 Certificate² signifies that it contains a semiotic appeal stronger than the rational evidence disputing its historical and political importance.

Although I see the semiotic as the key to this artistic (re)working of the Second experience, Kristeva's term is limiting because it depends upon the authority of a patriarchal binary system which privileges Symbolic Law. The problem, then, with Kristeva's semiotic reinscription is that it replaces one restrictive system with another. According to Judith Butler, the idea is not "to transcend power relations, but to multiply their various configurations, so that the juridical model of power as oppression and regulation is no longer hegemonic" (51). By synthesizing Victor Turner's reinsertion of ritual play into social drama with Kristeva's semiotic/chora, I conceptualize a liberating schema which subverts oppressive systems by sabotaging their seriousness with semiotic *jouissance*. Through this experience of *jouissance*, oppositional terms -- such as semiotic and symbolic -- make playful contact and speak to each other while participating in art's Narrative-Performative-Ritual [N-P-R] configuration. This configuration encourages a unifying playfulness that resolves ideological discrepancies while appreciating individual distinctiveness.

Together with narrative coherence and performative techniques, ritual's semiotic energy engages the community in

a dynamic experience which can challenge or reinforce authoritative structures. Ritual's Janus-faced quality, then, is the key feature for the symbiotic process in which the symbol and the individual (re)presentations of that symbol are formed by, as well as formative of, their respective communities.

In the following chapters I outline the various attempts made in art and history to re-define the Secord story in accordance with the current political environments. By investigating the differing (re)presentations of Laura Secord in historical discourse (Chapter 1), dramatic discourse (Chapters 1-2) educational dramatic discourse (Chapter 3) and in popular culture (Chapter 4), this project emphasizes Laura Secord's function as a cultural symbol where -- according to Turner -- "the symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behaviour; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context" (1967 19). Thus, despite the representational frames placed around her, Laura Secord is a complex or multi-faceted symbol comprising of ritual's playful potentiality.

As a symbol within artistic discourse, Laura Secord contains a heterogeneity of meaning and significance which makes her relevant to the nineteenth century as well as the late twentieth-century. In Desire in Language Kristeva says

this heterogeneousness to signification operates through, despite, and in excess of it and produces in poetic language "musical" but also nonsense effects that destroy not only accepted beliefs and signification, but in radical experiments, syntax itself, that guarantee of thetic consciousness (of the signified object and ego) (133).

This description also applies to Turner's appropriation of Arnold van Gennep's notion of "liminality": a term which describes -- in anthropological studies -- a "betwixt and between" state. This state can be applied to Laura Secord's referential walk as well as her positionality in a Canadian mythic tradition. Liminality is a space in which a subjunctive mood is foregrounded in order to "generate unprecedented performances" (Turner 1982 57) capable of re-structuring society. Both terms suggest a loss of ego while instilling a heightened sense of awareness and solidarity with others and the environment, resulting in the creation of a positive self-image. Liminality and its connection to the semiotic endorse heterogeneity by providing a communication model that abolishes restrictive dichotomies. This model emphasizes art's heterogeneous playfulness where "although 'spinning loose' as it were, the wheel of play reveals to us... the possibility of changing our goals and, therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality..." (Turner 1986 168). In chapter 2 I explore extensively Sarah Anne Curzon's closet drama about the heroine. My specific interest is in Curzon's use of the wilderness as a liminal state where Laura's

"ritualized" gestures act to suppress the external chaos around her. Her prayers and philosophical exercises reduce the threat to her cultural paradigms by placing the chaos in a socially-recognizable form. However, Laura Secord's conventional gestures -- like the Quaker's in the play's opening -- reveal liminality's paradoxical state, giving her an awareness of self which allows play its full reign of possibilities as she recognizes her gender's limitations to be socially constructed.

Yet ritual playfulness is a serious ideological matter. Also in chapter 2, I discuss how Laura Secord's symbolic function -- portrayed by Curzon as a feminist ideal -- is negated by Merrill Denison in order to reinforce the current trend toward Canadian nationalism which simultaneously promotes a patriarchal version of history. Since ritual playfulness, then, can reinforce and/or subvert mainstream authority, Laura Secord is both a stabilizing and a volatile cultural symbol capable of multiple subversions under the guise of innocent activity.

Nowhere is play's subversive character more evident than in the seemingly unpolitical dramas written for children. The two educational dramas about Laura Secord explored in chapter 3 disclose how hidden political agendas may infiltrate childhood's liminal space in order to instill Canadian youngsters with specific cultural paradigms. For example,

Lereine Ballantyne's Heroes of History (Chapter 3) reveals play's subversive eroticism in her tableaux only to repress this semiotization of the symbolic (language) by limiting the scenes' participatory quality. The tableau's open-ended possibilities become fossilized by the explicatory poem which tells the audience and the performers how to "read" the action. Yet Ballantyne's framing of the pageant counters the individual scenes' poetic rationalizations of the semiotic experience, thereby emphasizing theatre's ritual transformations.

By adapting Turner's ritual play to the Secord myth, I will show how play subverts the univocal understanding of ritual by injecting semiotic flow into myth's cognitive inertia. This "inertia" is discussed in chapter 4. There I explore the fossilized state the myth has entered through its induction into popular culture. Ironically, my exploration of Laura Secord as a commodity demonstrates ritual play's potentiality as a liminal space which abolishes ideological restrictions -- such as our preoccupation with sex, class and social distinctions. As an excess of language which respects the chaos it temporarily contains, ritual liminality provides a theoretical framework and discourse wherein the marginal, the semiotic and the traditional can be discussed equilaterally.

For Turner the key to social and psychological change

lies in liminality's privileged space. His emphasis on ritual as an anti-structural component is, according to David Raybin, "a structure for showing how artistic activity can and indeed does offer an individual or people a controlled means for (re)evaluating and even (re)structuring a social order" (22). The distinct (re)presentations of Laura Secord exemplify myth's ability to involve the community in a unified experience which transcends gender, class and political differences. Addressing the human condition, the Secord myth generates a *communitas* capable of (re)evaluating and (re)structuring society. This experience of *communitas* is a return to/of ritual theatre's symbiotic flow. A flow which

denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement ... [it is] a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part ... we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future (1982 55-56).

Communitas's internal logic and rhythm metonymically link the public to an environment, a narrative and a symbol opening a window to a semiotized-symbolic communication system. Turner's (re)evaluation of ritual and my appropriation of his anthropological findings and Kristeva's literary concepts become a point of contact in which Laura Secord is more than a historical figure, an artistic character or a name on a

chocolate box. Mirroring her referential walk from Queenston to Beaver Dams and reflecting Canada's *rite de passage*, Laura Secord as a ritual symbol has the potential to unite Canadians in a "brief ecstatic state and sense of union... [in which] a sense of harmony with the universe is made evident, and the whole planet is felt to be *communitas*" (Turner 1990 13).

Since most Canadians know Laura Secord in one form or another, she is possibly our most popular cultural symbol. More than just an interesting story, Laura Secord is an indicator of Canada's social, cultural and political past. Her image is a product of the late nineteenth-century. Its continuous "re-packaging" signals the public's changing sensibilities toward issues such as the Loyalist Tradition, Imperialism, Canadian nationalism and the Women's Movement. Attentive to the alterations in Laura Secord's image, as well as the myth's shifting emphasis, I explore how generations of Canadians used Laura Secord to (re)establish codes of social conduct and to (re)interpret Canadian cultural and political life. What she means to us now, however, compared with her meaning to the public who first encountered her in the late nineteenth century and then in the early twentieth century is a telling indicator of how we have developed as a nation, as a people, and neither the symbolic figure of Laura Secord nor the mythic story surrounding her has completed its journey.

ENDNOTES

1. The first mention of Laura Secord's heroic action was actually made by James Secord in his 1820 petition to Lieutenant-Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland for a "licence of occupation." However, the document was confidential, and the public remained unaware of Laura Secord's deed. James Fitzgibbon's 1837 Certificate, then, was the first "public" document on the incident. In a sense, Fitzgibbon's Certificate "confirms" the Secords' story, and assisted them in obtaining recognition and "just recompense for their war services" (McKenzie 1971 74).

CHAPTER ONE: THE MYTH OF LAURA SECORD AN HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC OVERVIEW

War's desperate environment breeds stories of courage, sacrifice and horror. Most of these wartime narratives remain unnoticed while others enter the chronicles of history; fewer yet move to the plateau of myth. The War of 1812 is no exception. From the many possible social dramas generated by that crisis only three figures -- Isaac Brock, Tecumseh, and Laura Secord -- have been mythologized by artists and historians and memorialized by the Canadian people. Yet their journeys from the referential world to a mythic one are diverse. For the moment, Tecumseh has faded from the public's memory, while Brock will enter the next century through his eponymous recruitment of young adults to higher education. Laura Secord's name also honours educational institutions, but her transformation from an historic figure to a cultural symbol has been more controversial. In essence, the "idea" of Laura Secord as a myth has undergone a difficult journey mirroring the one the actual woman made from Queenston to Beaver Dams. This chapter provides an overview of the Secord story's development toward Canadian mythic status: a journey replete with obstacles which threatened the myth-making process.

Although it is impossible fully to understand why certain stories or figures become cultural myths, Turner's anthropological research provides a framework making possible a discussion of Laura Secord as a cultural symbol. My thesis -- and this chapter in particular -- will carry out an exploration of Laura Secord's power as a ritual symbol by examining what the anthropologist Victor Turner calls the "action-field context" surrounding various Secord (re)presentations: a term Victor Turner uses to define the circumstances which permit a given performance of ritual and "in turn help to determine the meaning of symbols" (1967 45). In fact, the events following the referential walk from Queenston to Beaver Dams (See Appendix 1) can be demarcated into six action-field contexts marking the myth's key phases.

Changes in the populace's action-field context will of necessity alter the way the symbol is received. These phases represent different levels in the myth-making process and Laura Secord's changing function as a reflector of communal interests. The myth's potential to change with the times is a result of ritual play's ability to multi-code the original conservative "facts." This multiple coding permits texts to be temporally resilient and spin the artistic work -- as well as the myth itself -- beyond historical linearity. This chapter

will provide a broad vision of the Secord myth's journey through the mythification process. By outlining the six levels, I reveal Julia Kristeva's concept of heterogeneity (See Introduction page 20) to be a property of the Secord myth: a property which makes the narrative empowering through its stimulation of the community's repressed desires.

Although Laura Secord's task has been depicted by various artists as a patriotic duty, an errand, and the fulfillment of her husband's desires, Laura Secord's solitary journey is transgressive. Her gender, her maternal role, her familial obligation, the location of her home in occupied territory and the War of 1812 provide her with sound reasons to remain at home. In Sarah Anne Curzon's "master" narrative, the widow Secord reminds Laura of her primary function: "Think of your little girls,/ Should they be left without a mother's care;/ Your duty is to them, and surely not/ In tasks like this. You go to risk your life/ As if you had a right, and thereby leave/ Those who to you owe theirs, unpitied,/ Desolate " (116). Laura's response -- "You see it wrong; chances of war to those/ Would murder be to these, and on my soul,/ Because I knew the risk, and warned them not" (118). Despite the journey's various (re)presentations Laura Secord's action signals her refusal to be passive, to be victimized, to be

guilty of complacency. No matter what her motive, then, she gathers the strength to reach her destination. No matter what her arrival may accomplish, she succeeds at what others thought was impossible. In this regard, the Secord myth illustrates that the potential to overcome obstacles -- be they related to gender, class, or cultural background -- is within the individual's desire to do so. The emphasis placed on this theme of empowerment depends on the atmosphere in which the myth is produced and received.

Reception, then, plays as equally vital a role as production in determining a narrative's significance. In discussing Deconstructive theory and its questioning of causality Jonathan Culler says that "if the effect is what causes the cause to become a cause, then the effect, not the cause, should be treated as the origin" (88). The Secord myth exemplifies this inversion of the causal schema. Chronologically, the official documents written by James Fitzgibbon and Laura Secord between 1827 and 1861 are the first narratives about the event. Their transformation into reference material detailing the war of 1812 follows logically. Of course, the official documentation is important only because of the story's significance to later artistic, educational and commemorative works. Since the "effect" of the

Secord story is experienced in the receiver's realm the myth's "origins" are displaced from its privileged state: "if either cause or effect can occupy the position of origin, then origin is no longer originary; it loses its metaphysical privilege" (88). What this questioning of causality does to the Secord myth is place both its cause and effect in the public's as well as the historian/artist's control. This circular pattern not only challenges the concept of origins but reveals that the stages of myth development -- although chronologically displayed in appendix 1 -- are involved in a dynamic process in which events overlap, reflect and/or anticipate one another.

The second chronological moment in the mythification process occurred in the 1880s. The flurry of interest in Laura Secord during this period instigated a (re)examination of the referential evidence, an activity which is a feature of subsequent mythic stages -- specifically when we reach the dark years of the Depression. At the end of the nineteenth century, though, individuals such as Sarah Anne Curzon, Charles Mair, Agnes Maule Machar and Charles Jakeway aestheticize the historical accounts, and by so doing officially elevate the figure of Laura Secord to a symbol and her story to a legend.¹ This artistic level overlaps with a

third nationalistic phase in which artists and historians lobby for Secord's canonization. Between 1887 and 1910, an enthusiastic few stimulate the imaginations of many by successfully erecting monuments to Laura Secord in Drummond Hill Cemetery and Queenston Heights. As a result, the regional story is transformed into a national myth, and Laura Secord becomes a ritual symbol reflective of the average Canadian. The success of this period culminates in the myth's fourth developmental stage, evidenced by the formation of the Laura Secord Candy Company in 1913. Initially an excrescent of the myth's public recognition, the company familiarizes the symbol through its commodification, and hence (re)directs the myth's course. Once Laura Secord is initiated into popular culture her image reaches its peak in the 1920s.

During this fifth phase Secord is accepted as a role model for Canadian school children. The educational drama of this period played a major role in indoctrinating young Canadians in imperialist belief systems. The complex politics underlying these seemingly innocent works contributed to the myth's next chronological phase. The critical backlash which occurred during the Depression is marked by hostile challenges to the myth's authenticity, as well as to the symbol's integrity. Although the skepticism of the 1930s was quickly

silenced by loyal Secord followers, the murmurs and snickers of this phase effectively de-politicized Laura's earlier image. As Canadians subsequently distanced themselves from their Loyalist and/or imperialist roots, Laura Secord's increased visibility as a chocolate figure supported the parodic insinuations made by Wallace, Wood and Denison in the 1930s. These various phases illustrate, then, the importance of a community's perception to myth's development.

As an overview of the Secord legacy, this chapter argues that Laura Secord's centrality to Canadian culture reflects changing cultural attitudes and cannot be accepted without question, for to accept Laura Secord unconditionally reduces her to a static entity by estranging the public from their active role in the mythification process. In its uncorrupted form, this process encourages the public to participate in a complete relationship with myth: a completeness which emphasizes equally myth's narrative, performative and ritual configuration as it affects the community. This configuration includes the public's ability to create and alter myth's signification. This self-reflexive aspect² illustrates Brooks's "notion of desire as that which is initiatory of narrative, motivates and energizes its reading, and animates the combinatorial play of sense-making" (48).

The mythification of Laura Secord's referential journey, then, is significant as a communal indicator because the desire which initiates the referential walk, and the narrativized walks, is aroused also at the pole of narrative reception. In discussing narrative Peter Brooks claims that

desire is always there at the start of a narrative, often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun (38).

Desire, then, is a stable presence in the signification process while its content is anything but stable. In fact, during different action-field contexts Laura's journey reveals how the context of war can be interpreted as having aroused Laura's latent, socially unacceptable desires and behaviour. This type of reading, however, can be either highlighted -- as is the case with Curzon's use of the myth as a model for the Suffragist movement -- or hidden -- as is the case with Mair's, Wallace's and Denison's works. The ideological desires of the artists/historians and readers determine the emphasis.

A work's creation during one action-field context can and will alter its meaning when it is received during another. When a ritual symbol is culturally appropriated, the desire aroused by the symbol's previous private reception is no longer individual but is transformed into a collective

experience in which one person's reaction builds on another's *ad infinitum*. In this group environment the symbol's heterogeneity, then, is given free rein by the liminal space created by the group's self-awareness. The "audience's" collective desires are played out in a liminal space outside the traditional artistic arena where semiotic jouissance and ritual play are permitted to surface. When the myth-making process is not distorted by forces such as government and economics, it can be a means of communal empowerment.

Laura Secord's long-lasting posthumous distinction seems to indicate her relative ease in becoming a part of Canada's historical hagiography. Indeed, Laura Secord is a regular entry in history texts.³ Despite her historic constancy the six stages I identify as key moments in the myth-making process reveal Laura Secord's symbolic instability. These stages show her symbol's Janus-faced quality: her precarious position as a national heroine earlier in this century and her current, new-found popularity in popular culture.

The myriad (re)presentations of the Laura Secord myth contain two constant ingredients. In June of 1813 Laura Secord walked from Queenston, Ontario to Beaver Dams, Ontario. She intended to warn the Canadian forces of an impending surprise attack by the Americans. These unchanging kernels of

information are present in every (re)presentation; even skeptics such as W.S. Wallace do not refute these points. The journey "to warn" -- established by the official documentation written by Fitzgibbon and Secord -- becomes the story's core meaning. Details -- such as how she obtained the information -- collect around this core as the story piques the public's imagination. Since Laura Secord's positioning as a ritual symbol began only after her death in 1868, the story contains many narrative gaps. According to her grandson, James B. Secord, as cited by Sarah Anne Curzon, Laura "was [of] a modest disposition, and did not care to have her exploit mentioned, as she did not think she had done anything extraordinary" (1887 vi).⁴ Her other remarkable actions, such as searching for her wounded husband on the battlefield, hiding Spanish doubloons in a cauldron of water, and predicting an American soldier's death, were known by family and friends. Yet they are not essential in the core myth. The possible reason for their narrative exclusion⁵ may be that -- being not accurately documented -- they are unverifiable. Another reason may be that they do not contain what Victor Turner's anthropological schema refers to as a "polarization of meaning." What Turner means by this phrase is the ritual symbol's ability to appeal to individuals on both a sensory

and ideological plane. For example, Laura's retrieval of her wounded husband from the battlefield contains only a domestic meaning. Her love for James Secord has no implicit ideological connection. These other actions function as narrative expansions of her cardinal purpose, which is the journey "to warn." Such actions, then, add a vibrant background to her mythic frame's sensory pole while ideologically signifying little. That is, these events arouse emotional responses but fail to convey an ideological "arrangement of norms and values that guide and control persons as a member of social groups and categories" (Turner 1967 28). They may even diminish the journey's extraordinary nature by revealing that Laura was predisposed to idiosyncratic behaviour. J.B. Secord's recollection of his grandmother's complacent attitude is understandable when we consider her colourful history. Of course, these other actions have the potential to be the yet underdeveloped narratives for a whole range of empowerment myths centring on a Canadian woman.

Nevertheless, the initial phase in the myth-making process must not only establish a repeatable narrative but seek narrative legitimacy by rooting the facts in a plausible past. Peter Brooks claims that every narrative seeks its authority in a return to origins. The reference books which

mention Laura Secord confirm Brooks's observation by focusing on her genealogy. All the reference material I consulted more or less agrees on the basic facts. Ideally, by relating these "facts" to the historical gossip -- such as the narrative expansions mentioned above -- we can balance one against the other in order to arrive at a probable consensus of Laura Secord's formative years. Yet even the most rudimentary facts are subject to debate, making the historical process as constructed as the artistic process. For example, Laura Secord was born on September 13, 1775 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. A direct descendent, however, places her birth in December. Her parents, Thomas and Sarah Ingersoll, came to Upper Canada after the American Revolution. According to the descendent and Mrs E. J. Thompson, Laura's mother was not Sarah Whiting but Thomas's first wife Elizabeth Dewey. Even Sarah Anne Curzon -- writing during the myth's aesthetic and national phases -- lists Sarah as Laura's mother. Further confusing the genealogy, Curzon describes Laura as the "infant daughter... growing up, sharing hardships [in Canada] of which the present generation know nothing" (1898 9). This is an impossibility since the Ingersolls came to Canada in 1795, a date confirmed by Emma Currie's (re)evaluation of the evidence in her biography of Laura Secord (1900).

The contradictions in genealogical material reveal that the desire for legitimacy is a recurring feature in the myth-making process. Established during the myth's infancy is the "fact" that the Ingersoll clan -- along with eighty other families -- came to Canada at the invitation of Thomas's friend Governor Simcoe and founded the settlement in Oxford County presently known as Ingersoll. Later, Mrs E.J. Thompson -- an advocate for Laura Secord's official canonization -- claims, however, that "Col. Ingersoll was not a United Empire Loyalist as he served with the American forces during the Revolutionary War" (1). This statement, given at a lecture in 1913 to the Niagara Historical Society, contrasts with other claims, for example in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature (1967), that the Ingersolls were Loyalists. Curzon claims also that "Laura Secord came of loyal blood" (1887 i) and repeats this phrase in relation to the Ingersoll line in "The Story of Laura Secord" in 1898. The Oxford Encyclopedia of Canadian History (1928) lists Laura as "wife of James, one of a family of United Empire Loyalists" (583). Here the Secord line's Loyalist connection is indisputable and also insignificant, since James Secord is not the myth's dominant symbol. However, originally a Seacard or Sicard, -- James' family anglicized the name when they came to

America and settled in New Rochelle in 1681 -- his French ancestry contributed to Laura Secord's popularity in French Canada.

The discrepancies in the Secord genealogy reveal that a reciprocal relationship between the public and the myth-making process also exists in the historical process. The objective recording of historical "fact" is predetermined by the presence of an underlying subjective desire which introduces the element of value to the signifier/signified equation. History as the linear recollection of the past is merely another form of semiotic repetition. Both mythic and historic forms, then, continue the narrative's progression by involving the public in a relationship to a past and future *communitas*. This establishment of a cross-temporal community is achieved not by the objective "facts" but by the semiotic spirit energizing those facts in the public's imagination. Carl Berger confirms this observation by quoting William Canniff's 1893 address to the Canadian Institute of Toronto:

to obtain a correct account of the inner life of a community, the historian must belong to the community and be imbued with the feeling, the longings and the aspirations of the people (90).

The historian's latent emotions not only form history's manifest objectivity, but strive to involve the public in a *communitas* which erases temporal distance. Like a theatre

audience, then, the public's unconscious participation in history's subjunctive mood gives them the power/authority to alter the historical "performance" by accepting or rejecting the data. Amateur genealogists demonstrate this ability because they may be personally affected by factual variations -- variations which may prove or disprove their relationship to the past. Hiding their personal motivations behind seemingly nonpartisan research, amateur genealogists reflect the public's attitude toward history. As meta-characters, they may select and interpret the facts in order to create or alter their narrative's coherence.

Society's need to organize and control the external environment represses self-reflexive awareness and positions the reader/recorder of history in a self-deceptive state. When self-deception is accepted as truth, a condition which Victor Turner identifies as a danger of the subjunctive mood, history -- or myth -- is caught in a naturalizing process. This process shrouds the creative selection and impassioned interpretation of past events by previous communities in order to present the illusion of a continuous master narrative which legitimizes certain values and beliefs. Historical coherence is a discourse which, like art, becomes ideologically manipulative and explicitly tied to social power.

History and myth's lack of ideological innocence is revealed in the way the mythification process exploits Laura Secord's referential ordinariness. Unlike the myths of, say, the Jesuits, Sir John A. MacDonald or John Diefenbaker, in which various legends of childhood, youth and maturity consistently surround the figure's central performances, the myth of Laura Secord involves only her one key moment in history. Unlike Brock and Tecumseh, Laura held no special rank or romantic position in Canadian society. On the CBC 1994 episode of Just a Minute, Heather Jones comments that the deed "was perhaps typical of the kinds of things women did during the War of 1812 [that] we have remaining to us." Since women often functioned as informants, Jones implies that the "fuss" surrounding the incident makes it unique.

Heather Jones's description of Laura Secord as a typical woman reveals why her symbolic image would need more assistance in reaching the national level. She may reflect the average Canadian but she cannot be average. Further complicating the symbolization process during this early stage was her regionality because, in general, the War of 1812 was "in the end...a local conflict" (Brown 216). In order for the public to accept her specific action as truly mythic, her eminence needed to extend beyond the Niagara Region. In

effect, Laura Secord's provincial celebrity status needed to be identified with a national-universal concept. Such a concept, according to David Kertzer "can take place only through the use of symbols that identify the one [the local] with the other [the national]" (21). National myths need tangible local subjects which the Canadian people can identify with in order to create a national *communitas*. Myth's existential values must find the appropriate mythic candidate capable of embodying those values by familiarizing the universal and aggrandizing the personal. Although any act is by its nature local, and can then become national by virtue of its political significance, not all local-political activities are capable of transplanting their semiotic appeal to the nation's diverse regions. While Madeleine De Vercheres is Quebec's quintessential mythic figure, English-speaking Canadians have not embraced her story. Yet Laura Secord has been appropriated by French Canada because of her husband's French ancestry.⁶

In order for "Laura Secord" to be accepted as a Canadian national symbol, she needed to capture not only the public's passion but their ideological convictions as well. French-speaking Canada's embrace of Laura Secord is based on her involvement in a myth whose rite of passage stems from the

European persecution of the Huguenots and their subsequent flight to North America. Laura Secord's rise as a heroine and her potential as a mythical figure in English-speaking Canada are marked by the escalation of Canada's Imperial-nationalism during the late 1800s. The increased interest in imperial unity corresponded with and was strengthened by the Loyalists' Centennial celebrations. Although the myth of the War of 1812 preceded the Centennial's ritual activities, the numerous public events created the proper forum for local celebrities to be invested with national signification. Laura's association with the Loyalist tradition gives her local notoriety the greater appeal necessary to elevate her to a national realm.

Sarah Anne Curzon's "Memoir of Mrs Secord" illustrates how a figure from the past is invested simultaneously with emotional gravity and ideological significance. Curzon is especially apt to do this because she straddles the myth's aesthetic stage and its nationalist stage. Acknowledging the universal attraction in searching history for present inspiration, she begins her paper:

It is at all times an amiable and honourable sentiment that leads us to enquire into the antecedents of those who, by the greatness of their virtues have added value to the records of human history. Whether such inquiry increases our

estimation of such value or not, it must always be instructive, and therefore inspiring (i).

This quotation shows that Curzon sees Laura Secord as a valuable part of Canada's heritage. It also reveals that Curzon realizes others may not view the "heroine of 1812" in the same manner. It is difficult to say whether or not, as a Suffragist, Curzon is anticipating a patriarchal denial of Secord's importance as demonstrated by Col. Wood in 1931, or whether as an imperialist, Curzon is preparing for the rejection of Secord due to her affiliation with the Loyalist tradition.

Nevertheless, while Curzon looks to the past in order to justify her choice of Laura Secord as a role-model, her efforts also create a nationalist literature based on imperial values. The Secord poems written by Machar, Mair, Jakeway, "Pen of John", and Curzon all contain this nostalgic component which colours our literary tradition. Curzon's appreciation of the past, then, parallels the political motivation behind the Loyalist tradition's invention and recollection of their golden age. Curzon combines historical statement with artistic flamboyance:

That Mrs Secord should be brave, ready, prompt in action, and fervent in patriotism is not surprising, seeing that all the events of her childhood and youth were blended with those of the settlement of Upper Canada by the U.E. Loyalists,

in whose ranks her family held so honourable a position (ii).

Not only does this passage situate Laura socially, it shows the Loyalist tradition's anglocentrism by linking behaviour to heritage. Curzon perpetuates the tradition's superiority complex by connecting imperial loyalty to Laura's heroic character. This corroborates Carl Berger's observation that the loyalist tradition "bolstered the status of loyalist descendants by associating their ancestors with the foundations of national greatness" (78).

The historical discourse surrounding Laura Secord follows a logical, coherent path, connecting personality and loyalty with national grandeur. In contrast, artistic discourse differs by adding the illogical element of religious devotion to the causal equation, since a major factor in the Loyalists' perception of their greatness was their belief in God's countenance. Although the concept of the Loyalist covenant is certainly present in historical discourse, it becomes a major sensory player in artistic works. It is particularly prominent in those texts that want to identify Laura Secord ideologically with the community's spiritual values. Curzon's Laura Secord (1887) and Lereine Ballantyne's educational pageant entitled Heroes of History (1920s) both display Laura's behaviour as sanctioned by God.

But the concept of a Loyalist covenant is nowhere as evident as in "Laura: The Heroine of Beaver Dam," a poem "From the Pen of John, a Suffolk Herd Boy." Written in 1949, this poem depicts the journey as a religious ritual arranged by the God of Abraham as a test of his chosen people. The poem's political motivation is evident in the frontispiece, which cries out nostalgically: "Long live the United Empire Loyalist!/ Long live the King!/ Long wave the Union!" Drawing on Laura Secord's Loyalist tradition, and phase two's imperialist focus, the poem places Laura in the centre of the theological revival that occurred after World War II. The following stanzas establish the covenant, identify Laura Secord with the Biblical Ruth, associate the task's difficulty with the Goliath legend, and accredit Laura's success to God's deliverance:

Now she look'd at her kin full face to face,
 And with firmness spake, "What heed,
 Is not our God sufficient for our cause,
 And a stay in time of need?...

And like Orpah the one burst into sighs,
 Then broke down and sorely wept,
 But like Ruth the other turn'd to the way,
 And into the hidden step't....

Ah, but the God she served was Abram's God,
 Who had seen and knew her trail,
 And like Abram's ram in the thicket caught,
 A way for her had been made....

Yet deliverance sure was here at hand,
 Yea, she faced it face to face,
 For of the forest a giant had been fell'd,
 And flung right across the creek....

Now indeed was the hand of God here seen,
 And His word in her fulfill'd,
 "Of the weak things of the earth had He chos'n,
 To bring to naught things mighty.... (5-8).

Loyalist values and the belief in a religious covenant are features in the Secord legend. Essential in battling the specific threat to Canada of American annexation in the late 1800s, the sentiments underlying the Loyalist tradition -- as well as the Secord myth -- are transferrable to the community in which "Pen of John" writes. Thus, his 1949 poem echoes certain elements of Mair, Curzon, Jakeway and Machar's Secord texts. The imperial revival of the late 1800s and the continuation of Loyalist sentiments along with a spiritual revival in the twentieth century -- as illustrated by the above poem -- shows that the myth's initial action-field context is still relevant in post-World War II Canada. This context has influenced the process of symbolization enabling "Laura Secord's" regional fame to reach mythic proportions by linking the symbol's sensory and ideological poles to a rich Loyalist heritage.

Framed within a colonial action-field context which existed until 1967, Canada's national figures require certain

qualities. Laura Secord fits the requirements because of her quiet self-sacrifice, unviolent heroism and reluctance to draw attention to herself. According to Sara Sabrina Swain, Laura's American equivalent is Fanny Doyle, a woman who, on failing to free her husband from the British, retaliated by taking an active role in attacking them. Unfortunately for Fanny Doyle, she "has been unhonoured and unsung, except in local tradition and the official message of Col. McFeeley" (Swain 5). Doyle's action does not fulfil the nineteenth-century's tradition of United States' mythical domestic women, hence her possible failure to progress up the mythic ladder. Swain's lamentation over the country's neglect, however, illustrates that by the 1920s Americans are looking for symbols that reflect women's new participation in social affairs. Their search for a female empowerment myth begins almost 40 years after Curzon discovers and reveals Laura Secord's importance to Canadian women. While contrasting with the Pocohantas and Betsy Ross traditions, Doyle is part of a new tradition which recognizes women of action, such as Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley, Helen Keller and Amelia Earhart, as symbolic figures. Doyle's activities during the War of 1812 make her suitable for a twentieth-century American myth which advocates daring feats, retaliatory action and visible heroism bordering on

vigilantism.

A comparison of Doyle and Secord legends defines each nation ideologically by illustrating the kind of mythic behaviour acceptable to their specific cultures. Doyle's anti-social actions reveal the predominance of twentieth-century American heroes being cast as criminals, misfits and social rebels. Only in very loose terms can Secord's behaviour be seen as that of a social rebel, since she is considered to have been successfully reintegrated into society. Furthermore, her "rebellious" breaking of gender boundaries is presented as a countermovement to an even greater anarchist threat: American domination. In other words, Laura's temporary transcendence of the domestic realm and her entrance into the male public realm is accepted by a conservative nineteenth-century society because Canada is in jeopardy. Her breach, then, is not viewed as an example of self-empowerment, but a means of re-establishing imperial social order.

Various historical texts which traverse the myth's six key stages de-politicize Laura's personal transgression and her political empowerment. This is achieved through their emphasis on reporting the historical "facts" while ignoring their semiotic attraction. During the myth's peak in popularity, The Oxford Encyclopedia of Canadian History (1928)

describes Laura as overhearing the Americans' plan and undertaking the journey, "braving all dangers to warn her people of their peril" (583). The citation ends without mentioning the result of her efforts. This gap implies that her role terminated with the journey, thereby reinforcing the myth's cardinal points and avoiding an embellishment of the "facts." By 1928, then, the public was sufficiently aware of the myth to make further elaboration unnecessary. W. Stewart Wallace, editor of The Encyclopedia of Canada Vol V, (1948) ends his segment in a similar manner. This decision, however, may have been an attempt to avoid controversy over his belief -- voiced in his 1932 essay -- in Laura's cultural insignificance. In 1957, the Encyclopedia Canadiana combines material from Curzon (stages 2-3), Thompson (stage 3), and Wallace (stage 4) for its entry on Laura Secord: "The news had already reached Fitzgibbon...but this fact in no way detracts from the heroism of her exploit" (265). Here the editor demarcates historical fact from cultural signification by suggesting that Fitzgibbon's foreknowledge is inconsequential. The balance between historical integrity and the maintenance of a national myth is feebly attempted in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature (1967). The biography says: "He had already learned of the plan, but Laura Secord has been

recognized as a heroine" (753). Grammatically the "but" turns the sentence back to Secord's importance. Structurally it introduces an ironic tone in the entry, a tone which aligns itself with such works as Merrill Denison's parodic radio play and W.S. Wallace's historical paper. The echo of phase six's challenge to the myth indicates that even at this relatively neutral stage in the myth's development, skepticism is still present.

Ruth McKenzie's entry in The Canadian Encyclopedia is interesting in that it acknowledges, without legitimizing, the myth's skeptical phase. She writes: "Years later, historians questioned Laura's story, but found confirmation of it in three testimonials by Fitzgibbon. Monuments to Laura Secord stand in Lundy's Lane, Niagara Falls and on Queenston Heights" (1972).

Another example of historical discourse precedes the other entries in publication and is from James Taylor's Cardinal Facts of Canadian History (1899). Here he lists the military importance before the cultural significance. However, quoting from Adam's "History of U.S. VII" at great length, Taylor interprets the events for the public by drawing attention to Laura Secord's personal sacrifice:

We must not forget that Mrs Secord, the wife of a wounded Canadian militiaman, at great personal

risk, had walked 20 miles...to apprise Lieut. Fitzgibbon of Boerstler's approach (100).

These historical references confine Laura Secord's symbolic importance to objective facts, and by so doing, they manage to erase her empowering potentiality. In contrast, artistic discourse creates a subjunctive (re)presentation which foregrounds semiotic *jouissance* and ritual play's self-deception through the usurpation of "factual" coherence. The Secord myth, then, enhances a history-versus-art, or fact-versus-fiction antagonism characterized by opposing portrayals of the same dominant symbol. Laura Secord's case confirms Deniz Kandiyoti's observation on history and women in that history relegates Secord "to the margins of the polity even though [through the art] centrality to the nation is constantly being reaffirmed" (Kandiyoti 377).

Although the documentation of historical evidence -- especially since it is being (re)worked continuously -- is essential in identifying potentially important stories, the artistic transformation of this material is the impetus behind mythification. Sarah Anne Curzon contributed the most to the Secord legend through her dramatic work and her historical articles. Her appropriation of Laura Secord as a vehicle for her Suffragist politics -- an issue I discuss in chapter 2 -- demonstrates the narrative's potential as an empowerment myth.

Yet Curzon was not the only artist attracted to the Second story.

Charles Mair features her in his poem "A Ballad for Brave Women" (1888). The poem contains elements popularized in the myth. Mair incorporates the cow and milk pail in his (re)presentation; two features which are not found in the original source. Most sources attribute the pail to E.A. Cruikshank who detailed the Battle of Beaver Dams in his lecture entitled "The Fight in the Beechwoods" (1889). The famed cow, however, made its debut in William Coffin's book 1812: The War and its Moral (1864). So Mair incorporated Coffin's cow and added the pail himself -- a feature Cruikshank picked up on the following year. Nevertheless, both additions assist the fictional portrayal and indicate artistic discourse's reliance on details which are extraneous to historical accounts. I would add that the wolf and snake have also become prominent figures in the narrative. Mair, Curzon, Machar and "John" include these creatures to highlight the task's dangers.

The wolf and snake also have symbolic significance as their threat is associated ideologically with the Biblical loss of paradise and Canada's potentially parallel political fall to America.

The best example of this is in Mair's "A Ballad for Brave Women" where the American/Serpent/Satan analogy is the most condensed. Stanza three presents the American forces as "the foe, full of craft and guile." Since the Americans were lurking in the woods, they also become associated with the "shadowy forms" which "seemed to flit through the glades,/ And beckon her into their limitless shades." These Miltonic overtones position Laura as a nineteenth-century Eve facing the temptation of Republicanism. In stanza eight Mair links the Paradise tradition to Canada's contemporary political threat of annexation:

For a moment she faltered, then came to her side
 The heroine's spirit - the Angel of Pride.
 One moment she faltered, Beware! What is this?
 The coil of the serpent! The rattlesnake's hiss!
 One moment, then onward. What sounds far and near?
 The howl of the wolf! Yet she turned not in fear
 (146).

Mair's condensation of the image of Eve with that of Satan demarcates the Biblical tradition's use of Pride as a Deadly Sin and the poem's "Angel of Pride." Through ironic inversion, Satan and Eve's personal pride, which expels them from Paradise, is transformed into Laura's justifiable nationalist pride. For Mair, it is legitimate self-assurance which affords the battle's success and protects the Canadian-Imperial paradise from the evil foe: Paradise regained!

As the Secord myth gained in popularity, these simple colorizations became an inseparable part of the story, closing some of the narrative gaps while moving Laura Secord closer to mythological fame. In 1970 John Burke-Gaffney -- in making a plea for a general standard of presentation for Laura Secord, asserts: "We may be able to persuade a new generation of Canadians that Laura Secord did not go into battle disguised as a cow" (10)! While the cow has contributed to Laura's comic persona, it does not damage the myth ideologically. Over the years the cow, like the other minor additions, has carried the same sensory and ideological message: embellishments of the journey's primary significance.

Another element featured in most artistic (re)presentations is the tradition of depicting a nation as symbolically female. The nation/female analogy is made explicit in Mair's final stanza:

Ah! faithful to death were our women of yore.
 Have they fled with the past, to be heard of no
 more?
 No, no! Though this laurelled one sleeps in the
 grave,
 We have maidens as true, we have matrons as brave;
 And should Canada ever be forced to the test-
 To spend for our country the blood of her best-
 When her sons lift the linstock and brandish the
 sword,
 Her daughters will think of brave Laura Secord.
 (147 my emphasis)

Like Curzon, Mair is linking past glories to present

potential. But, in addition, he is reinforcing "the merging of the nation/community with the selfless mother/devout wife" (Kandiyoti 382). This association reconciles wifely duty with national duty. By setting up this parallel, Mair conceals nationalism's control over the individual by fusing the domestic and the political. By foregrounding this socially-constructed relationship, "John" and Mair reflect the dominant apparatus even though Laura's actions challenge woman's restrictive social definition. Using the language of love to strength the bond between nation and individual, Mair's poem, like the historical references, successfully de-politicizes her journey: "Laura had eyes for her duty alone" (145 my emphasis).

Mair's Laura is not Curzon's feminist pioneer. For him, Laura's behaviour is marred by her gender: "woman is woman where'er she may be" (146). Agnes Maule Machar's 1899 poem, on the other hand, reveals semiotic play's ideological duplicity where Laura is portrayed as both a conventional and an independent figure. In "Laura Secord" she writes

But Laura, bending o'er her babes,
Said, smiling through her tears:
'These are not times for brave men's wives
To yield to craven fears' (3).

On one interpretive level, the stanza reinforces Mair's patriarchal stance by establishing the conventional female

pose. Yet the division of lines three and four indicates that the social crisis has dissolved all social boundaries. The stereotypical wife is out of place during times of war, and if she finds herself in this impossible situation she must behave in an unconventional way, reflecting the unconventionality of the times. This breakdown in gender roles is reinforced by the proximity of Laura's forceful assertion that she will undergo the journey in the next stanza:

'You cannot go to warn our men,
Or slip the outposts through,
But if perchance they let me pass,
This errand I will do.' (3)

Like Curzon's use of role reversal, Machar also depicts an independent woman who "soothed [James'] anxious doubts and fears:/ She knew the forest way" (3). However, the stanza's last two lines and the next stanza (re)position Laura in a weak feminine pose:

She put her trust in Him who hears
His children when they pray!

Soon as the rosy flush of dawn
Glowed through the purple air,
She rose to household task-and kissed
Her babes with whispered prayer. (3)

Lacking the nation/woman parallel, but containing the past/present connection, Machar's poem, then, can be interpreted along two ideological lines: Mair's patriarchal endorsement or Curzon's feminist challenge.

The poem's radical potential is neutralized, however, by Machar's (re)positioning of Laura and her depiction of the journey. In the stanzas which follow Laura's "escape" from the sentry's gaze, Machar -- like Denison and Stephens -- concentrates on the natural surroundings, and ignores Laura Secord's inner world:

The rising sun's first golden rays
 Gleamed through the forest dim,
 And through its leafy arches rang
 The birds' sweet morning hymn.

The fragrant odour of the pines,
 The carols gay and sweet,
 Gave courage to the fluttering heart,
 And strength to faltering feet (34).

The poem's style undermines Laura's gender breach and the journey's empowerment. The dangerous journey is viewed as an "errand", and not only are the heart and feet nondescript through the use of the word "the" instead of "her," but the poem's rhythm and ABCB rhyme scheme create a poetic "fluttering" which trivializes Laura's heroic action.

Machar's forfeited radicalism and Curzon's successful subversion of the conventional nation/woman analogy indicate that the myth of Laura Secord is an ideological wild-card. Its dual ability to challenge, while seemingly perpetuating, conservative values demonstrates myth's ritual playfulness. Myth's trickster nature, then, threatens the constructed

fact/fiction dichotomy through its "innocent" appearance as a cultural symbol.

Changes in the populace's action-field context will of necessity alter the way these symbols are received. For example, in an imperialist context such as that of the 1800s, Laura's association with the Loyalist covenant sanctions her transgression of social boundaries. According to Deniz Kandiyoti, "women participating in nationalist movements were likewise prone to justify stepping out of their narrowly prescribed roles in the name of patriotism and self-sacrifice for the nation" (379). Lereine Ballantyne's school pageant is a case in point. She clothes Laura's transgression in national loyalty and devotion in order to indoctrinate young women into a restrictive mindset. This same oppressive pattern is displayed in the work of Mair, Denison, Stephens and Curzon. A Suffragist context, however, subverts this patriotic action into a radical (re)evaluation of socially restrictive roles and the political system sustaining them.

The proponents of linear history do not stop exerting their influence on myth's playful threat to social order. Most historical discourses identify Laura by her marital status. Linked to her husband, she is in turn associated with his Loyalist heritage and/or his Canadian military career. This

lack of self-identification automatically contributes to the devout wife/nation correlation. Ironically, R.E.A. Landing, in his desire to canonize Laura Secord, reinforces this oppressive connection by recounting Laura's saving of James's life on the battlefield. He converts her display of self-sacrifice and wifely devotion into national duty in order to gain the community support he needs:

This grand example of what Canadian womanhood has been and should be is too valuable to be allowed to fade away into the mists of the past. It is our desire to perpetuate the memory of our heroine for all time. It is believed that one of the best means of doing so is by the erection of a National Monument (13).

The idea of erecting a National Monument is an unequivocal attempt to limit a ritual symbol's polarization of meaning and to control its semiotic play by reducing the symbol's ritual play to a monoglot vision. Of course, there are some interesting exceptions. Even Laura Secord's monument exceeds, somewhat, the political aim of limiting semiotic play as the "readerly dynamics" must take in the total theatrical atmosphere. Her bronze bust is located in a section of the Drummond Hill Cemetery decorated predominately with male military memorials. Her presence, then, emphasizes her task's extraordinariness, as well as the possibility of a woman leaving the private domain and successfully entering the

public/male arena.⁷ The primary example of this transcending of gender roles is, of course, the ubiquitous Canadian statues of Queen Victoria.

David Kertzer's analysis of how the Roman Empire solved the problem of governing its vast communities is transferable to the British-Canadian experience, where Canada's regional diversity and local veneration of figures like Secord intensifies the dilemma. The Roman Empire found "part of the solution was to construct monuments that served as perpetual reminders of imperial ties. Equally significant, popular participation in rites of allegiance became a regular feature of community life" (22) I would add that the rites which precede the raising of a monument assist in the nation-building process by making the community feel responsible for the mythification process and in that way a part of the historical continuum. This too may be an attempt to control, in advance, the way monuments are received.

Nevertheless, the first step toward Laura Secord's public recognition came from school children in 1887. As I will discuss in chapter 3, a child's excitement and enthusiasm creates a secondary mimicry in the parents, reawakening them to possibly dormant cultural paradigms like national duty. Funds raised by these school children formed the nucleus of

the Monument fund: a fund later procured by adults. Attracting children first, the desire for a monument then spread to the female population in a further attempt to control the symbol's free-wheeling message and to tether it to an imperialist/patriarchal ideology. Landing, President of the Laura Secord National Monument Committee, "confidently expected, that the people especially the women will respond to [the Committee's] call [for donations]" (15).

In its appeal to women, the movement to canonize Laura Secord solidified the artificial connection between woman and nation by externally displaying the association in bronze and by hence further internalizing the patriarchal ideology motivating the project. Emma Currie contributed to this method of control by donating the proceeds from the sale of her book The Story of Laura Secord to the Monument fund. Currie's book could be interpreted as a ritual activity naturalizing the patriarchal oppression of women by reinforcing Laura's symbolic connection to the national context and its colonial discourse.

In effect, Laura Secord's subversive potentiality was controlled by the Committee's voluntary (mis)identification of a local symbol with a national philosophy. While legitimizing the public's attraction to the Secord narrative, the committee

was investing Laura ritually as an imperialist symbol/monument "worthy of the nation, and erected by its citizens" (Landing 14). By 1901, the date of the monument's erection at Lundy's Lane, Laura Secord's radical signification had begun to be neutralized by the patriarchal myth machine. This radical signification is not based on her referential action. A social breach, with its topsy-turvy atmosphere demands unconventional behaviour from its characters. Rather, her subversive importance -- an issue I discuss in relation to Sarah Anne Curzon's poetic drama -- lies in the subjective potentiality artists have subjunctively attached to the historical walk.

Beginning around 1901, this subjective journey which empowers the Laura Secord image is, however, systematically erased by the dominant social structure. Jane Urquhart's novel The Whirlpool (1986) reflects patriarchal society's appropriation of Laura into a sexual fantasy. In a postmodern way, the novel shows how the ritual symbol is used and abused by male culture. The following exchange -- beginning with Fleda and ending with her husband -- demonstrates this point:

'If you want to play dress-up with me, why not something a little more glamorous? It doesn't take long for a muddy calico dress to become boring. Why not silk or velvet?'... 'But why, for heaven's sake, it's simply research ... you know it's the subject of my next paper.'... (50 ellipses mine).

Urquhart's historian continues:

'Then I imagine ... that Fitzgibbon would dismiss his colleague so that he could speak to Laura alone ... confidential military information and all that. Then I imagine ...' he began to undo the small buttons on the front of her dress. 'Then I imagine... (53 ellipses in text).

The ritual spirit, however, as it is embodied by Fleda, slips beyond social conventions until it disappears into the woods altogether, possibly to (re) emerge in another form, in another artistic work: "Yet an idea was forming, taking vague shape. Departure. She could no longer live the closeted life of the recent past. And she could not live, forever, in the dream house of this grey, obsessive landscape" (Urquhart 218).

Earlier in the novel, when Fleda is unaware of her capture within the male gaze, she undertakes an existential journey which parallels the Second myth's rite of passage. Once she is conscious of her seizure she evades patriarchal control by "playing" for the gaze. When the poet/birdwatcher realizes her subversion of his gaze, he destroys her by anticipating and possibly initiating her physical disappearance. Since he wants her only as the perfected object of his fantasy, he must deny her emotional and physical existence. This denial mirrors the various attempts made by artists and historians to discredit Laura as a ritual symbol by erasing her absent presence as a person. For example, Merrill Denison's radio play not only appropriates the myth

but empties the mythic signifier and signified by portraying Laura as the object of a male quest instead of the narrative's independent subject.

W.S. Wallace's attempt to divest Laura of national-historical symbolism can be interpreted along similar lines. In order to counter the symbol's feminist potentiality, Wallace uses his masculine, analytical voice to assert that "Mrs Secord's claim that she enabled Fitzgibbon to 'save the country' is too absurd for further discussion" (25). His attack can also be linked in a more positive manner to a rise in Canadian nationalism which opposes the myth's ideological "backwardness" in suggesting that Laura's heroism is a result of the Loyalist tradition. Wallace begins the paper by drawing attention to the narrative's romantizing of "the patriotism of the Canadian loyalist during the War of 1812" (3), but his reliance on temporal accuracy is too feeble a reason to destroy one of Canada's few national legends. Furthermore, factual accuracy -- which is itself an illusion -- has little relevance in mythic communication. Colonel Wood, another sceptic, unintentionally discredits Wallace's scientific integrity by imposing his own agenda on the text. Reviewing Wallace's work, Wood concludes

If after this, the public still wants a Laura Secord who 'saved the country' in 1813, it must go exclusively to those writers of alluring fiction whose works will not sell at all unless they drag some woman in (66).

Not only does this passage reveal Wood's masculine agenda, it points to Wood's disapproval of the public's emotional embrace of the Secord myth. His condescending tone emphasizes the antagonism caused by the symbolic/semiotic breach.

The public's preference for the narrative's semiotic portrayal inverts the social structure's privileging of Symbolic cognition and prompts Wallace and Wood's rational countermovements. Ironically, Wallace's attempt to dethrone Laura Secord's ritual signification merely increased her symbolic popularity, for people were outraged by his exercise in historical evidence. (William Perkins Bull published his own historical evidence in From Brock to Currie (1935) as a direct response to Wallace's essay.) Wallace, like Urquhart's historian, uses the facts to harness Laura's sensory appeal and halt the image from whirling beyond his intellectual control. However, Urquhart's historian and his relationship with the myth are more complex, for his sexual confiscation of Laura's image in the novel indicates that he is emotionally involved also. His relationship with "Laura" parallels the public's psychic confiscation of the myth, implicitly

explaining why Wallace's attempt to derail its ritual journey failed.

In attacking Laura Secord, Wallace was attacking more than just historical data; he was attacking Canada's cultural integrity and financial autonomy. The Laura Secord Candy Company, which I discuss in chapter 4, was by this time an established institution, selling an ideal as well as chocolates. Thus, Wallace's historical evidence was presented twenty years too late, since the myth was reified in the public realm in 1913, the year of the company's formation. Before this date the myth's liminal existence in art, lectures, and social rituals did little to alter its peripheral, cultural function. For that matter, even Wallace's paper is not as malicious as it first seems. He does not dispute that the journey was made. He does not dispute that Mrs Secord presented Fitzgibbon with information. He does not dispute that Fitzgibbon was forewarned of the Americans' attack. He does, however, challenge the conclusions drawn from various ambiguous documents, such as Fitzgibbon's 1837 Certificate and a statement made later to his grandchildren. He also draws his conclusions from Laura's 1839 ferry application and 1841 pension petition. The public's hostile reaction to Wallace's scrutiny of these documents, evidenced

by letters to editors and a renewed search for historical "memorials" and certificates, may signify the paper's possible validity and/or Canadians' loyalty to the Secord myth.

Before the public challenge to the Laura Secord myth, Secord was merely a topic implemented in these ritual dramas and only a marginal national symbol. She had not yet matured; the myth's ritual journey was not complete. Then Senator Frank P. O'Connor formed the Laura Secord Candy Company. The company's formation in 1913 brought the Secord image to the public level. She was no longer a metaphor hovering in poetry's elite atmosphere or a statistic in history's "truthful" realm. In a sense, O'Connor's commercialization of Laura Secord signalled the myth's "coming of age" as it seemingly completed its liminal journey through various developmental stages. Its struggle to survive diverse literary (re)presentations and its stamina in withstanding the politics surrounding its historical acceptance were "rewarded" by its reincorporation into society as a candy. This reincorporation capitalized on the Laura Secord tradition familiarized in the minds of the Canadian people by Sarah Anne Curzon's "master" narrative. However, as the next chapter will illustrate, Curzon's seemingly conservative portrayal of Laura Secord is merely "sugar-coating" for the myth's message of empowerment;

a message that, once made explicit, is relevant to contemporary Canadians.

ENDNOTES

1. The artistic elaborations in the late 1880s was, however, anticipated by a prior demonstration of interest in Laura Secord during the 1860s. See Appendix 1 for specifics.
2. The myth's self-reflexivity as a cultural indicator is epitomized in the Curzon text when her feminist agenda is reflected in the fictional character's arousal by the Quaker's narrative. See Chapter 2 for a specific discussion of the this element as well as the text's feminist political message.
3. The major exception to this generalization is A History of the Canadian People (1930) written by W.S. Wallace. His exclusion of Laura Secord in the entry on Beaver Dams infuriated the myth's followers who accused Wallace of attacking their beloved heroine. Wallace's response to their claims marks the climax of the myth's fifth key moment toward mythification.
4. During Laura Secord's lifetime she used her wartime action to obtain financial compensation. The "memorials" she wrote in 1839 and 1841 were not unlike those written by other veterans of the War of 1812 who sought recompense from the Crown. Here, too, only the core narrative is required. As a result, Laura Secord never takes the opportunity to fill in the event's missing details.
5. These narrative expansions are, however, included in the biographies. Also, Sarah Anne Curzon includes the battlefield incident in her play Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 (1887).
6. According to Barbara Flewwelling -- Communications Manager for the Laura Secord Candy Company -- Laura Secord is a recognizable historic figure in Quebec because they view her through her French connection. In fact, 50% of the company's total sales are made in Quebec. In addition, Laura Secord has been artistically (re)presented in Quebec in the 1975 drama by Claude Roussin entitled Marche, Laura Secord!.
7. Unfortunately, the commercialization of Niagara Falls provides another frame for her monument: one that includes Ripley's Believe It or Not, and wax figures going over the Falls in a barrel. There is, however, yet another readerly dynamic occurring in the area. Across from the Cemetery lives a contemporary "heroine" -- Miss Ruth Redmond. Amidst hotel chains, Burger Kings and water slides, this 90 year old woman has turned her commercially viable property into a quiet garden in honour of those who fought on that very site in The Battle of Lundy's Lane. Now, Miss Redmond is involved in her own battle to pass on her unspoiled vision to generations who would rather buy salt and pepper shakers in the shape of a woman with a cow than contemplate the past and its relation to their future.

CHAPTER TWO: ESTABLISHING RIGHTS/RITES

Within a span of less than fifty years five plays were written about Laura Secord. Three are educational dramas written during the 1920s by Alexander Stephen, Lereine Ballantyne, and Ida Marion Davidson. The other works were written for adult audiences but in two very different mediums during two distinct phases in the mythification process. Sarah Anne Curzon's Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 (1887) and Merrill Denison's Laura Secord (1931) are the authoritative texts in the Secord tradition primarily because no other dramatist created "serious" work on the topic during the myth's formative years.

Curzon's 1887 closet drama and Denison's 1931 radio play use the same ritual framing device of the War of 1812 to present the same narrative subject -- Laura Secord's journey to warn Fitzgibbon. However, the different portrayals of Laura Secord generate ideological dichotomies in which the earlier text's theme of self-empowerment creates Secord's mythic image while the later text parodies that normative (re)presentation. The earlier work legitimizes the mythic process by immortalizing in art the historical records pertaining to

the event. The radio play seriously challenges Curzon's "heroine" by replacing the earlier text's romanticism with twentieth-century realism.

The texts' ideological oppositions are established through the subversion of 1) the active/passive roles the different "Lauras" play in the confiscation ritual and 2) the narrative functions allotted to James Secord during the *parole d' honneur* ritual. In the confiscation ritual Denison's active, yet ignorant Laura is associated with powerlessness, while Curzon's passive Laura gains both knowledge and power. During the *parole* ritual James Secord's function in the Denison text is cardinal to the story's causal chain, while Curzon's James fulfils a secondary function of heightening narrative tension while never threatening to alter Laura's symbolic importance. In effect, these discrepancies in characterization and in the treatment of the expositional rituals illustrate that the difference in the time of writing contributes to symbolic signification. Thus, as a semantic and referential symbol, Laura "becomes associated with human interests, purposes, ends, means, whether these are explicitly formulated or have to be inferred from the observed behaviour" (Turner 1967 20). Ritual

interpretative strategies reveal, then, that the human concerns within these texts are not fostering synonymous cultural myths.

I THE RITUALS OF WAR

An investigation of the confiscation and *parole d'honneur* rituals, as well as the dramatists' treatments of the journey, illustrates that Denison's dramatic strategies overshadow Curzon's myth-building (re)presentation. Merrill Denison's early twentieth-century radio drama is considered to "depict and interpret the Canadian scene in a critical and objective manner and with dramatic flair" (Anthony 136). In comparison, Michael Tait has labelled Sarah Anne Curzon's play as having a certain "formlessness, ineffective characterization, pretentious moral attitudes, lack of stylistic distinction [and] stupefying prolixity" (Benson and Conolly 11-12). Being neither objective nor critical of the historical facts, Curzon's text has been marginalized by critics. However, by abandoning the conventional methods of analysis, I find Curzon's drama to be not as unliterary and unintriguing as a formalist

analysis indicates. Likewise, Denison's play is not as objective as conventional criticism suggests.

I am not suggesting that The Heroine of 1812 is better theatre than Laura Secord. Certainly Denison's play is dramatically preferable because of its entertainment value. The characters are colourful and easily recognizable; they are realistically portrayed as individuals with private as well as public agendas. Denison shows them grappling with their individual crises, thereby reducing the journey's legendary status to the familiar, the parodic and the comic. Demythologizing the tale, then, makes it more accessible to a national audience devoid of political consensus. Curzon's stereotypical characterization reflects the Victorian era's absolutist values where anything non-Imperial is considered barbaric.

A comparison of these texts as ritual performances reveals their diverse ideological agendas and how the (re)presentations of the myth's core "facts" reflects the social, cultural and political climates of their specific communities. As rituals in the mythification process, Curzon's text forms a "master" narrative which Denison's work seriously challenges. Yet the dialectic pulsating

between the two texts has not been addressed by critics because of their reliance on standard strategies of evaluation. These strategies often privilege Reason over Passion and foreclose on the texts' historic and gender specific moments of production and reception.

The Laura Secord canon -- if we can call it such -- belongs to a larger mythic process in which is told the story of Canadians. Victor Turner's work on the ritual process and its connection to social dramas assists in foregrounding how the Curzon and Denison texts participate in the creation of this larger, communal myth. The earlier text fulfils the function of familiarizing the public with the Secord story, while the later work reinvestigates the story's cultural influence. Serving these purposes, the texts should not be read in isolation, but as an ongoing part of the mythic process in which the differences between the Laura Secord images reflect the issue of gender and its relation to genre can be addressed. When we focus on gender and genre, the texts' histories of production and reception become clear, together with their differing structures and the consequently different mythification functions they were intended to serve.

This chapter, then, interprets the Secord plays as *rites de passage* in a larger Canadian mythic structure.

Like narrative, rites of passage are found in all societies; they

accompany every change of place, state, social position and age ... however, as van Gennep ... and others have shown, *rites de passage* are not confined to culturally defined life-crisis but may accompany any change from one state to another, as when a whole tribe goes to war (Turner 1967 94-95).

In general, this quotation can be applied to dramas that follow the conventional crisis pattern. The plays about Laura Secord fall into this category, but my approach to the texts develops the anthropological rite of passage as the myth's structural pattern. This pattern creates a dynamic ritual in which the Secord myth is reflective of its audience, and as such it can never reach a final destination if it is to remain a central myth of Canadian society.

The cardinal "facts" of the Secord myth are encompassed by narrative embellishments which contribute to the myth's communal importance. This relationship between Laura Secord's symbolic image and the ritual activity in which the image is presented accounts for the Secord plays' contextual/subtextual discrepancies: discrepancies which are further complicated by the symbol's dual status as culturally axiomatic and personally individualized. As a result of the dominant symbol's oppositional values in relation to cultural and

personal understanding, each text develops a different relationship to the avowed rite of passage which, in turn, is created differently by each audience member.

Just as the Secord texts are framed by the "breach" of the war of 1812, so too are the playwrights framed by their epochs' answers to the symbolic/semiotic literary breach. Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 reflects the colonial trend of pouring new wine into old skins; that is, Curzon explored an indigenous subject matter through the established form of poetic drama. Curzon's text -- typical of this type of art form -- is philosophically dense and poetically heavy-handed, thereby illustrating the form's intention to be read rather than performed. Laura's subjective journey through the Canadian woods -- while rich in romanticism but poor in narrative hinge-points or cardinal functions -- would have difficulty in keeping an audience's attention. Its lack of action and direct physical conflict would have bored an audience accustomed in that period to political satire and foreign farces.

Despite the fact that by the 1870s every town and city had some form of theatre, indigenous playwrights and subject-matter were not usually on the programme. Although Curzon's play was not intended for the stage, its ten-year delay in publication shows the same lack of

interest. Compounding the lack of interest in the development of Canadian drama was the puritanical attack on theatre. Closet dramatists avoided this charge by disguising their plays in the textual production. Curzon, then, could hardly be accused of participating in the sinful world of mimesis when her drama was never intended for the scandalous stage. Further protecting Curzon from theatre's scandalous label is her heroine's religious conviction. Laura Secord bases her decisiveness on the doctrine: "Love thy neighbour as thy self."

Merrill Denison, however, was creating during a period in Canadian literary history that was receptive to Canadian content and Canadian theatre. His connection with Hart House Theatre gives him and audiences the opportunity to explore an indigenous content in a realist fashion. Presenting an unidealized vision of Canadian life, Denison's mastery of the one-act play extended to his radio drama. Noted as the country's finest dramatist, Denison put a new wine in new skins with his exploration of the radio as a means of taking theatre to the masses. While Curzon, then, was reshaping imported forms into new subject-matter, Denison was developing an independent voice. Reading Laura Secord as a parodic treatment of history reflects the early twentieth-century's belated

challenging of Victorian values, and behaviours, as well as the Canadian tradition of romantizing its imperial past.

Curzon and Denison wrote their Second plays during two different developmental stages in the myth: stages which are characterized by differing motivations and treatments of the subject. Curzon is involved in the initial aesthetic transformation of the historical facts. In following the Romantic tradition, she presents the idyllic wilderness depicted by other Canadian poets. She also conveys a spiritual tone to the heroine's life, thereby connecting the protagonist to the Loyalist tradition and herself to the religious writings flourishing in the mid 1800s. But Curzon also uses this manifest spiritual journey as justification for her Suffragist agenda. Thus, the text's religious maxims support Curzon's fight for women's rights.

In comparison, Denison is involved in an artistic reevaluation of the facts and fiction surrounding the story. His text reveals a mischievous wilderness -- reflecting a change in attitude toward the land -- in which Fitzgibbon plays the role of a military Puck. In fact, the text carries this trickster element throughout: the discourse is comically heteroglot and the previously romantized version of history is doused with realism. The

religious context, as well as its message of equality, are downplayed in order to present a realistic depiction of the past.

Despite their differences, these writers are joined by a sense of Canadianism that -- although historically specific and politically diverse -- in itself reflects our literary tradition's rite of passage. Comparing the two plays -- separated by approximately fifty years -- demonstrates how Canadians were (re)interpreting and (re)establishing their social and political relations.

Such a comparison can be made because both texts are framed by the "breach" of the war of 1812. Their crisis points are syntactically similar and involve the Americans' planned surprise attack on Beaver Dams. However, the similarity is semantically opposed: Curzon presents the attack as a regular war strategy, typical of the Americans' unethical behaviour, which includes living "upon the civilians [sic] failing store" (102). Denison presents the plan as a widening of the social breach based on the Americans' personal desire to rid themselves of a nuisance. The attack -- doomed to fail because it is motivated by Boerstler's personal hatred of Fitzgibbon -- illustrates the danger in mixing personal revenge with public duty:

Boerstler: There's no point in taking half-

measures, sir. Advance on Beaver Dams as rapidly as possible, batter down the house if necessary, and disperse the garrison (124).

Boerstler's desire to teach Fitzgibbon a memorable lesson results in his military overkill and enhances Fitzgibbon's victory.

Laura's reputation as the heroine of 1812 is based on her success in fostering redressive action. The semantic differences in the treatments of the crisis, however, ripple through each text and create not only contrasting interpretations of Laura's reintegration into society, but an irreparable schism between one text which is myth-making and another which is myth-breaking. This major discrepancy between the texts is a result of the playwrights' discordant emphasis on Laura as a dominant symbol, a discordance which discloses their opposite ideological agendas, as well as their placement in differing stages of the mythification process and Canada's literary tradition.

Both texts conform to the accepted sequencing of events on June 22 and 23, 1813. (The Denison play begins a few days earlier -- a telling detail which I will discuss in relation to the play's focalization.) The Battle of Queenston is over; General Brock is dead and the Americans are regrouping at Fort George. Lieutenant

Fitzgibbon is holding the post at Beaver Dams, and although it is a strategically important location only a few soldiers and Native warriors accompany him. The American forces at Fort George outnumber the Canadians by approximately 500 men. Their planned surprise attack on Beaver Dams should yield an easy victory. Such a victory would give the Americans unchallenged access to the Great Lakes and territory deep within Canadian borders. Laura Secord -- a United Empire Loyalist living in the American-occupied territory -- warns Fitzgibbon of the impending attack. He prepares for the attack and cunningly defeats the Americans through his use of intelligence rather than force.

Both texts must establish two rituals before introducing the units associated with the rite of passage. These ritual traditions which precede the historic walk are essential to the narratives because they allow certain events to occur. First, the confiscation ritual means all towns and villages within conquered territory become the property of the invader. Thus Laura says "We live within the Yankee lines, and hence/ By victor's right our home is free to them" (Curzon 133). In the Denison version, the narrator explains the tradition: "Among the loyalists remaining in the town, following the American occupation, are James

and Laura Secord,... Laura Secord is sought by American officers when in Queenston to act as their enforced hostess" (126). The second rite -- the economical *parole d' honneur* -- sends wounded and captured men back to their families with a signed certificate stating that they will no longer participate in the war. This explains why James Secord is at home when knowledge of the surprise attack reaches the Secords. Although these rituals are not the dramas' main focus, their treatments establish dramatic tone by indicating how the audience should respond to Laura as a dominant symbol.

In the Curzon drama the military custom of paroling the wounded acts as a catalyst, rather than a cardinal function, in the narrative. James's presence fills in "the narrative space" separating Laura's encounter with the Americans and her subjective journey. He is merely a foil allowing Laura to recount offstage action -- "Oh, sit you down and rest, for you will need / All strength you may command to hear me tell" (103) -- and to demonstrate the social values of Curzon's age. There is little doubt that Laura will undertake the journey to Beaver Dams; the fact that James Secord is home is inconsequential. His helpless lamentations over his crippled body and his tender protestations over Laura's fragile sex do nothing to alter the narrative:

My God! and here am I, a paroled cripple!
 Oh, Canada, my chosen country! Now -
 Oh now, in this thy dearest strait, I fail?
 I who for thee would pour my blood with joy -
 Would give my life for thy prosperity -
 Must I stand by, and see thy foe prevail
 Without one thrust?...
Putting his arm round her tenderly.
 How can I let thee go? Thy
 tender feet
 Would bleed ere half way was done. Thy
 strength
 Would fail 'twixt the rough road and summer
 heat, (104-05)

To be a cardinal function, James's objections must present a point of risk in the narrative, which they do not. His objections do, however, heighten the discourse's semantic tension by saying "that there has been, that there is going to be, meaning" (Barthes 95).

Furthermore, his futile arguments -- functioning as informants -- situate the play in the real world and enhance the transgressive nature of Laura's decision. His protest against Laura is based on patriarchal ideology and its emphasis on female inferiority: "Did I not promise in our marriage vow, / And to thy mother, to guard thee as myself...I meant to guard thee doubly, trebly more" (105). This ideology is, in turn, subverted by her reference to "what saith in [sic] the Book" (106) and her undertaking of a task which reveals that both Christian and national duty is beyond gender oppositions: "it is our country calls" (105, my emphasis). Here,

Curzon uses the Bible to challenge patriarchal attitudes.

The debate between the Secords -- which helps establish the significance of Laura Secord as the play's dominant symbol -- contains also implicit signifieds or indices which "involve an activity of deciphering" (Barthes 96). The patriarchal ideology which positions the play in 1813 and in the pre-suffrage Canada of the 1880s is gradually transformed through the discourse into what Anton Wagner describes as the "reversal of active male and passive female roles" (93). However, Céleste Derksen claims that Curzon's play is not so much a role reversal as an attempt to *integrate* these two spheres. The play itself establishes the parameters constituting masculine and feminine behaviour:

Mr. Secord: Heaven speed thee, then, dear
 wife. I'll try to bear
 The dreadful pangs of helplessness
 and dread
 With calm demeanour, if a bursting
 heart.

Mrs Secord: Then will you taste a woman's
 common lot
 In times of strait, while I essay
 man's role
 Of fierce activity. We will
 compare
 When I return. Now, fare-thee-
 well, my husband (107).

Curzon prepares the reader for the characters' role reversals by drawing attention to the double standard promoted by patriarchal ideology. Before James agrees to

allow Laura to undertake the journey, she rebukes him by saying, "But why raise up these phantoms of dismay? / I did not so when, at our country's call, / You leapt to answer" (105). In fact, she reminds him: "I blenched not, / But helped you clean your musket, clasped your belt, / And sent you forth, with many a cheery word. Did I not so?" (105). James, then, is left at the gate in a passive female role: "Heaven speed thee, then, dear wife. I'll try to bear/ The dreadful pangs of helplessness and dread/ With calm demeanour, if a bursting heart" (107).

Laura begins her exploration of the masculine position before leaving her yard:

Fearful of being observed, they part without an embrace. Mrs Secord walks down the garden slowly, and gathers a few clove pinks; at the gate she stops as though the latch were troublesome, raises the flowers to her lips, and makes a slight salute to her husband, who yet stands within the porch watching her (107).

This dramatic gesture -- recalling the tender moment in Dickens's Little Dorrit (1855-7) -- initiates the masquerade by positioning her in a subjunctive mood which abuses the masculine, indicative code. Although Laura has not yet entered a liminal space -- a Victor Turner concept defined by Kathleen Ashley as a "realm of possibility where new combinations of cultural givens could be playfully tested" (xviii) -- her dual

positioning illustrates the subjunctive's potential to enter and alter the indicative world. In From Ritual to Theatre Turner says a "blurring and merging of distinctions may characterize liminality. In mid-transition the initiands are pushed as far toward uniformity, structural invisibility, and anonymity as possible" (26). However, later audiences encoded by a modern-macho generation, would read her gesture with the flower as extremely feminine. Either way, it cannot be mistaken as anything other than a character striking a pose for the sake of preparing for the hard task ahead.

Merrill Denison's use of the *parole d' honneur* tradition differs quite drastically from Curzon's. James Secord's presence at home and his "breaking" of the *parole* agreement are essentially what save Canada. The ritual tradition, then, is used as a cardinal function in the narrative. Scene six displays James's military mind as he quickly takes command and interrogates Pete. While eliciting the facts, James even goes so far as to chastise Laura for asking what appears to him to be a question beyond young Pete's capabilities:

Laura: How many do you think there'd be,
 Pete?

James: How can you expect him to know?

Pete: Oh, Ah know somep'n, Mass Secord. Ah
 ain't dumb (136-137).

Incidentally, Pete only exaggerates the facts by 100 men. In contrast to Curzon's play where Laura discovers the plan and deciphers its meaning in relation to Canada's ability to win the war, Denison places the male in the role of decipherer, thereby diminishing Laura's symbolic potential:

James: Ah! This means but one thing, Laura. They're going to attack Beaver Dams.... They could have no other objective than Beaver Dams. A force of 700? Laura, Fitzgibbon must be warned. If Beaver Dams falls, the whole country right to Burlington is open to them (137).

As in Curzon's play, James curses his crippled leg -- "Oh! If it wasn't for this abominable leg...." (138) -- yet, he does not dwell on what cannot be changed. When Laura, however, seizes the opportunity to dote on him -- "Now, that is a very good leg, my dear, and it was wounded honourably" (138) -- he has no time for such nonsense and rather than succumbing to a role reversal he becomes the scene's dominant figure: "Sh! Listen!" (138). This shifting of symbolic personas from Laura to James reinforces the patriarchal values associated with male power symbols and signals the reader to interpret the text in a traditionally phallocentric fashion.

A further distinction between the texts is that Denison's Laura does not volunteer to go to Beaver Dams

at all. Instead, she says she will go to St. David's and ask her brother to continue the journey. In Curzon's play James and Laura debate the inevitable for 86 lines, thus heightening Laura's heroic act. Denison's character merely says, "No, no. You can't do that...through the enemy's lines..." (137). The use of ellipses indicates that his "no" is used phatically, for his mind is already going over the journey she will have to take. His following questions are a strategic means of working through the details and not a means of obstructing her task: "But how will you get by the sentries?...But you'll have to make a long detour. You cannot go straight down the road through the Beechwoods. The Americans will be following that road...." (138) As the receiver of the male's questions, Laura becomes a pawn of the masculine symbol's control, since her suggestions -- "Oh, I'll tell them I'm going out to milk. Tell them I'm going to St. David's to visit my sick brother. Tell them anything" (138) -- are greeted by Secord's command to be silent. His final line in the play -- "They're here all right" (138) -- reinforces his military focus and contrasts sharply with the feminine positioning Curzon gives her male character.

Whereas Curzon's scene is a combination of indices and informants, Denison's scene clearly stresses the

informant function. No deciphering of signifieds is necessary. The characterization reinforces patriarchal ideology by embedding this historical event in conventional gender distinctions. It not only diminishes Laura Secord's heroism, but places her in a situation which forces her to become the ritual object of the historical event rather than its active subject. James's military fantasy is a masculine objectification of the woman which, in fact, parallels the Lacanian subject's capture and manipulation within the field of vision. What Denison accomplishes by using this narrative strategy is an erasure of Curzon's feminist narrative agenda of telling

new stories so as to inscribe into the picture of reality characters and events and resolutions that were previously invisible, untold, unspoken (and so unthinkable, unimaginable, "impossible") (de Lauretis 11).

Since Laura is objectified in the Ritual-Performative functions and subjectified by the masculine Narrative, a feminization of history remains unspoken, thereby perpetuating the social breach between masculine voice and feminine silence. The playwrights' opposing use of ritual reverses the narrative function of paroling the injured in each text. In Curzon's Laura Secord the ritual tradition is positioned as a catalyst, while Denison's version elevates the ritual to a cardinal function.

The two playwrights also locate the confiscation of property quite differently. Denison positions this act as a catalyst because it merely bridges the military scenes with scene six. On the other hand, since Curzon's heroine gains valuable knowledge during the sequestering of her home, the ritual becomes a narrative nucleus. The significance of these textual differences arises from the characters' understanding and manipulation of the ritual activity's rules in obtaining their goal.

In the Curzon play, scene two's cardinal function demonstrates an economy of narrative interference surrounding the drama's points of risk. Aside from what Wagner calls comic relief in relation to Pete's cowardice, the scene is direct and brief. In contrast, the parole ritual -- especially when the Secords use Biblical discourse to further their unnecessary debate -- is inundated with narrative interference, which helps to justify "the suspicion that early Canadian theatre lacked literary significance" (Edwards ix). Scene two opens with Laura's benediction to the peaceful evening as a metaphor for a more tranquil past:

After a weary day the evening falls
 With gentle benison of peace and rest.
 The deep'ning dusk draws, like a curtain,
 round,
 And gives the soul a twilight of its own;
 A soft, sweet time, full of refreshing dews,

And subtle essences of memory
 And reflection. O gentle peace, when - (101).

Her reminiscing in the indicative mood is disturbed by the invasion of an anti-structure in the form of the Americans' arrival. What follows can be classified as indices and informants with which Curzon gives the complicated political crisis a symbolic face. Through the abrupt and malicious behaviour of the Sergeant, Curzon embeds the play in war stereotypes, as well as creating an atmosphere of brutality and savagery meant to signify and simplify the American threat to Imperialist Canada.

Ritually, then, Curzon symbolizes the anti-structure's negative consequences to structural order by presenting the Americans as a barbaric anti-structural force. This force disrupts the private domain's harmonic order, thereby forcing Laura into the wilderness's neutral liminal arena. However, the text hides the anti-structural realm of the Secord home when considered from the Americans' subject position. Their failed rite of passage -- since they stumble in their liminal space which is the Secord's home -- prompts Laura to undertake her own ritual journey in order to redress their aggressive initiative. Their blunder amplifies the social breach into a crisis situation which has now penetrated the private domain.

But even the Americans' invasion of the private domain involves specific rules which dictate both the Sergeant and Laura's actions. In entering the Secords' home, the Sergeant can lay claim to everything in it -- including Laura and her daughters. While this fact of war is only implied at this point, Laura admits its reality to James in Scene three:

...My risk was greater
 Then than now - a woman left with children
 On a frontier farm, where yelling savages,
 Urged on, or led, by renegades, might burn,
 And kill, and outrage with impunity
 Under the name of war (105).

After showing both her understanding of the ritual's rules and her disdain for the Americans, Laura retires and leaves the men to eat and drink her "children's food" (102).

However, Laura discovers the Americans' secret as a result of their own inability to follow the rules set out by their violent, anti-structural entrance into the private domain. Her "Well, sir!" (102) signifies that they are unwelcome and in a hostile realm. Similarly, her retreat into another room emphasizes her physical and moral distaste for their presence in her home. Yet, either drunk on wine or their own egos, the men transgress the ritual by confusing Laura's private domain with their public realm. Although the Americans control

the area outside the Second home, they are powerless to control the internal domain.

Entering an area where the loyalties are clear, the Americans are separated from their community. The subsequent impotence they experience in the liminal space of the Second home forces them to overcome their marginalization by threatening Laura. Taking over the private domain, they establish a pseudo-community by expelling the "enemy," Pete and Flos. Now, rather than sharing the space with the enemy and thus keeping the rules of confiscation in the open, the men eclipse the rules by thinking they have conquered the loyalists by removing them from their sight/site. This attempt at mimicking the conquering of external territory within the internal, private domain cannot succeed because, although the anti-structure can lead to structure, it cannot be identified as such. Such an apparent identification is in fact a dangerous misidentification. The Americans' inability to realize this error leads to their fatal error of believing they are safe within their newly established community. As Laura later tells James:

Pete and Flos I left
To wait on them, but soon they sent them off,
Their jugs supplied, - and fell a-talking,
loud,
As in defiance, of some private plan,
To make the British wince. Word followed word,

Till I, who could not help but hear their gibes,
 Suspected mischief, and, listening, learned
 the whole. (103 my emphasis).

By ignoring the ritual codes in her discourse, and transferring external behaviour to the internal realm, the Americans betray themselves into overstepping the bounds of the confiscation ritual.

In Denison's play the confiscation ritual is portrayed very differently: it functions as a catalyst bridging the cardinal functions of the earlier scenes with scene six. However, its role as a "filler" does not mean it is an excessive element in the narrative. Through the confiscation ritual, Denison furthers his nationalistic philosophy by complicating the war issue. His realistic presentation of the Americans signifies that there are no absolutes in war and politics, for their anti-structural role never materializes. First, the narrator informs the audience that Channing and MacDowell "express their intentions of dining that evening at the Secords" (126). The narrator's diction turns the event into a friendly gathering. Not only are the Americans depicted as being polite - "I hope we have not inconvenienced you by being so late" (127) - but they are also embarrassed by the same ritual that Curzon's Americans exploit - "You make us doubly conscious that we

are imposed guests" (127). Their embarrassment, then, introduces structure to an apparently uncivilized anti-structural military practice.

Later in the play, Denison reveals that social bonds ignore territorial boundaries. While Laura sits in the parlour with the men, Channing discovers Laura's grandfather to be a family friend:

Now what do you think of that, MacDowell? The old gentleman was a great friend of my fathers. A great friend. And here we are fighting his grand-daughter. That gives you an idea how sensible this business is (132).

Channing's final line, however, -- "Canada ought to join the States and stop this foolishness" (132) -- is ironic in that his keen perception is so quickly clouded by the United States' "expansionist" politics. This line also signifies that it is Canadians' behaviour which is disrupting social order. This reversal of structure/anti-structure alignments works to further cloud war's politically-constructed breach.

Denison's portrayal of the Americans is in sharp contrast with Curzon's treatment of them. One reason for Denison's characterization may be that his father was American and that Denison was born in Detroit and spent many years there before writing Laura Secord. Another more probable reason for the portrayal is Denison's attempt to parody Imperial sentiments and their

romanticized treatment by early Canadian writers such as Curzon.

By making Laura a caricature of a Canadian imperialist, he implies that Canada's "romantic" age has passed and that it is time to create an indigenous art which reflects an indigenous nationalism. Through parody, then, he simplifies -- while critiquing -- Imperialist politics for the radio's large, national audience. Furthermore, Denison's tactic of popularizing rather than mythologizing Laura works "to build political solidarity in the absence of consensus" (Kertzer 11). Since the radio play was a national event, many Canadians who were not particularly interested in this regional story would hear it. Thus, Denison's parodic representation removes Laura from her regional symbolic state in order to reflect the national crisis facing all Canadians.

Besides this strategy there is the issue of historical accuracy. Curzon's valorization of Laura through poetic discourse manifests Imperialist values. All the characters -- except the Americans -- are working for the security of British colonialism. This version of the Second myth serves Curzon's political ends. In contrast, Denison places the myth, as told by the narrator, against the possible truth/facts as told by the narrative. This narrator-narrative juxtaposition

heightens awareness of the Imperialist versus Nationalist issue, thereby emphasizing the political manipulation of history.

Unfortunately for Curzon's Suffragist agenda, the other indices in this scene reinforce a stereotype that Curzon does not endorse: the idea that war is a man's affair. Curzon proves this concept's fallibility. Denison's conventional treatment of this issue is illustrated by his demythologizing of Laura. While Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly praise Denison for making "no attempt to glamorize Laura Secord's heroism" (48), his depiction of her is not even flattering. For example, in a gesture of supposed "self-respect" Laura uses her best china for the enemy. The praises which the Colonels lavish on her efforts and MacDowell's remembrance of her being "a famous belle when the Governor-General held court at Newark" (129) raise suspicions about her ability to comprehend the situation's magnitude. This suspicion -- raised repeatedly throughout the scene -- is reinforced by her failure to discover the Americans' secret. When James asks her what she discovered, she replies, "Not a thing, dear" (135). Yet as Channing and MacDowell are leaving the Secords, MacDowell tells Channing to "stop talking and come along" (135) because he fears Channing is revealing their secret in piecemeal fashion.

Fortunately for MacDowell and Channing, Laura's behaviour indicates that she does not fully understand the rules of the confiscation ritual. She mistakes her private domain for a sympathetic replacement, rather than a hostile alternative to the Americans' own homes. This confusion is emphasized by Channing's observation that Laura's hospitality "Makes you *think* you're way back home in Maryland" (my emphasis 128). His language indicates that he knows this pleasant atmosphere is only an illusion. But her polite greeting and her hospitable invitations throughout the scene further the illusion and seem to imply that -- in following social decorum -- Laura is not only confused about how she should conduct herself, but that her confusion builds into self-deception.

The Americans also use the sophisticated and polite language of the hospitality ritual. But, unlike Laura, the men realize this language is inappropriate for the confiscation ritual they are really participating in. When Channing becomes too liberal in his conversation MacDowell quickly reminds him of the situation: "Sh! Easy, easy! Channing. These people are more loyal than the king himself. And how they hate Americans" (129). His paradigmatic description of the Secords as "These people" clearly signifies he does not consider himself a member

of their community. Thus, while Laura is out of the room the men demarcate their political positions by restating the rules of the confiscation ritual.

In the next scene Laura's behaviour indicates she is capable of understanding the ritual's rules to a certain degree. She is cautious about the Americans' presence and anxious that they do not find her with James. Like the Americans, Laura separates herself from the other community by saying she will not have Pete beaten "by any Yankee" (130). However, Laura's over-excitement and the scene's slightly comic tone work to reinforce Denison's patriarchal ideals about women and war. Denison's Laura talks too much to be taken seriously as an heroic symbol. Her "chattiness," of course, may be a condition of radio drama.

Nevertheless, James displays the same characteristics in scene four as he does in scene six. He asks a series of questions before making any observations or decision. At this point in the play, his behaviour seems to demonstrate an inability to grasp the significance of the situation unfolding in the other room. Only in retrospect of scene six can his endless questions be understood as a method of assessing the circumstances properly:

Laura: I don't know where they've been I tell you. But I'm going to find out...

Secord: How?

Laura: I don't know. I might open that bottle of cherry brandy in the sideboard.

Secord: (explosively) What?

Laura: Sh! Sh!

Secord: If you waste any of that thirty-year-old stuff on two Americans I'll...Laura! Laura!

Laura: Don't fret now, James.

Secord: Laura! (131).

In this scene she appears to be completely deluded by the subjunctive mood's game of espionage. Appearing like a child at play, Laura is oblivious to the situation's indicative seriousness. Her self-deception colours the way James's behaviour is interpreted, and his outrage at his brandy being given to Americans seems another misguided response. Thus both wife and husband appear incapable of properly assessing the situation.

However, James' response works on another level. Offering something as valuable as thirty-year old cherry brandy to the enemy is a transgression of the confiscation ritual. As I stated earlier, this ritual includes the acquisition of all property. To give more than is required changes the confiscation ritual into "a

rite of incorporation, of physical union" (van Gennep 29) which may include sexual privileges. Laura's surplus giving, then, enhances the Americans' polite embarrassment. Furthermore, it is a direct transgression of the rules because, as van Gennep claims, "to accept a gift is to be bound to the giver" (29), and since Laura and the Americans are enemies, no such bond can exist between them without a confusion and misinterpretation of ritual codes. The fact that the gift is *cherry brandy* may lessen the transgression by down-playing the "privileges" that it signifies. If a similar offering were made in the Curzon play, -- which the narrative discourse would not allow -- the brutish Americans would have accepted the surplus as their right and -- without misinterpreting the code -- would have taken the sexual liberties such surplus giving implied.

Curzon's confiscation ritual, on the other hand, uses the harsh language appropriate to the circumstances. Act one scene two illustrates Curzon's conventional treatment:

Sergeant: Why don't you kill that lamb,
 Ma'am Secord?.

Mrs Secord: 'Tis a child's pet.

Sergeant: O, pets be hanged!
 Exit Mrs.Secord.

Corporal: Poor thing! I'm sure none of us
want the lamb.

A Private: We'll have it, though, and more,
if Boerstler - (103)

Laura's silent exit and her earlier curt responses and cautious behaviour shows Curzon's understanding of the power of the theatrical gesture over language. Laura's composed behaviour also demonstrates that Curzon is aware of the qualities nineteenth-century Canadians want to see in their cultural symbols. Certainly, the genre partially dictates how each playwright can (re)present the heroine. A closet drama -- like a radio performance -- can rely on the reader's interpretation of stage directions since the linguistic viewing comes close to paralleling the physical viewing. Denison's medium is more challenging in that his gaps and silences are neither filled by authorial directions nor actorial gestures.

Furthermore, Denison's treatment of the ritual language is more complex than in the Curzon version because he is parodying the "master" narrative's romanticized image of Laura Secord. Denison complicates the ritual by transferring the language of an incorporation ritual to the confiscation ritual:

Laura: Will you come in, Captain
MacDowell?

MacDowell: Thank you, Mrs Secord. I hope we
have not inconvenienced you by
being so late. (127)

Two things need to be pointed out here: one, Laura's question ends with the conventional symbol, while MacDowell's "hope" -- terminated by a period -- becomes an imperative sentence. These linguistic signs indicate that Laura misunderstands the power position she and MacDowell hold. The Americans' graciousness and Laura's acceptance of their flattery are explained by Arnold van Gennep's observations of such rites in primitive tribes. The transference displayed in the scene shows that "a person identifies himself in one way or another with those he meets, if only for the moment" (33). Laura's reputation as a good hostess, according to the narrator, sets the tone for the Americans' behaviour. For them to act like Curzon's Americans would be incongruous with the hospitality Laura offers them. Unfortunately for Laura, the men never forget which rite they are participating in, while she not only confuses ritual discourses, but her ritually inappropriate actions alert the Americans to her transgression of the confiscation ritual's rules. The scene's movement, then, verifies Todorov's observation about genre, in that to break a convention "the transgression requires a law - precisely the one that is to be violated" (14), thus reinstating its authority. Comically, then, the Americans reverse the roles and try to gain information about Fitzgibbon from Laura.

Ritual discourse's heteroglossia is revealed in Denison's scene five in which the discourse of one rite is transferred to another. The scene begins with the discourse of an incorporation rite. Laura is invited to join the men and become, temporarily, a member of their community. A false *communitas* is established by this episode's reference to the Secords' American roots and by Channing's discovery of Laura's grandfather's identity. The first use of confiscation discourse occurs when Laura says "I think that we're on a topic better not discussed" (132). In order to maintain this false *communitas*, which does not recognize individual distinctiveness, politics must be dropped from their discourse. However, after reinstating the confiscation ritual, Laura immediately returns to the use of the communion ritual's discourse: "Perhaps, instead, you gentlemen would care to have some cherry brandy that came from my grandfather's in West Barrington" (132).

The brandy becomes more than a means of manipulation. Since it is linked to her grandfather it becomes a symbolic object in the incorporation ritual. Its consumption unites the Americans and Laura in a celebration of the past, a past in which Laura's father fought in the revolutionary army. The only aspect which makes this celebration appropriate for the Secords'

current role is Laura's refusal to drink with the men. If her refusal is interpreted in terms of the confiscation ritual, its meaning is diminished for two reasons. One, her plan will not work if she also becomes inebriated, and two, as an occupant of enemy territory she is not entitled to share in what is "rightly" theirs. On the other hand, if we interpret her refusal in terms of the incorporation ritual, its significance increases as her refusal to share in a social drink ironically reestablishes the boundaries that separate them and, thus, returns them to the ritual of confiscation.

The proximity of the offering to the statement asserting their political differences alerts the men to Laura's manipulation of the ritual language. Her desire to entice them backfires as they turn her enticement back on herself and politely refuse her overeager surplus offering. Unfortunately, Laura is not alerted to the Americans' double code and is, therefore, playing a game without understanding all the rules. Channing says "Well, now, that's mighty gracious of you, ma'am. Mighty gracious, isn't it, MacDowell?" (132). MacDowell responds: "Thirty-year-old brandy? It's the height of graciousness" (132). While Channing may be taken in by the offering, the repetition of "mighty gracious" is redundant unless it is understood as a warning to

MacDowell. Likewise, the question mark after brandy is excessive in the incorporation rite, but extremely significant in the confiscation rite. Preceding MacDowell's observation of Laura's graciousness, Channing's phrase signals his recognition that Laura is transgressing the rules. In addition, Laura's "Will you help yourselves?" (132) is seriously inappropriate because, as Curzon's sequestering Americans point out, "We don't order; we command..../ We'll have it, though, and more..." (102-103).

Ironically, while Laura is embedded in the discourse of an incorporation rite, the men try to gather information from her. When she tries to return to confiscation discourse they quickly remind her of the incorporation ritual she initiated with the brandy:

Laura: If [Brock] had lived, you...

Channing: Now, now, my valiant loyalist.
That was the subject better not
discussed (133).

By doing this, MacDowell and Channing continue to interrogate her -- which is their right in the confiscation ritual -- under the guise of an incorporation rite. The men, therefore, never forget which semantic code they are dealing with and why. They play successfully with the subjunctive "as if" while never forgetting their positions in the indicative realm.

Interestingly enough, Channing -- who thought he was in Maryland -- almost gets caught up in the illusion and reveals their mission. But, once again, Laura's over-eager, inappropriate discourse forecloses on her opportunity to gain the desired knowledge and become a hero.

Denison's Laura Secord actively disregards the rules of the confiscation ritual by initiating the rules of an incorporation rite. This causes her to abuse the scene on the level of discourse, which results in her misunderstanding of the situation and of what is at stake. She becomes self-deluded by her subjunctive playing with power, and forgets her restricted indicative position as a woman and as a Loyalist living in occupied territory. Since the Americans do not overlook her positionality, her transgression of conventions inadvertently alerts the enemy by reinforcing the War of 1812's social breach. As a result, Laura remains in a passive, ignorant position which emphasizes Denison's philosophy that war is a man's affair and which further entrenches the text in a patriarchal referent.

In contrast, Sarah Anne Curzon's Laura passively accepts the ritual of confiscation and, by doing so, escapes its power. By acquiescing, then, to her inferiority in war, Laura subverts the patriarchal

ideology enforced by this orthodoxy, and becomes a spokesperson for Curzon's political agenda. Her correct interpretation and use of the rules of confiscation lead to her opportunity to abuse the system. It is her postmodern use and abuse of the confiscation ritual that elevates her to a position of power in which she becomes the agent of the narrative as well as an historical heroine.

The Articles of War, as they relate to paroling the injured and confiscating enemy property, frame the narrative situations of these two plays and allow the discourse to take its specific form. Their combination within the literary texts reveals the ritual activities to be interstructural in that they can only exist as symbolic acts within a larger structural system: the social crisis of the War of 1812. Without the macrocosmic system the rituals' significations would change because, as Turner claims, "symbols [are] social and cultural dynamic systems, shedding and gathering meaning over time and altering in form" (1982 22). This macrocosmic structure contextualizes and symbologizes the text's ritual activities into a stable consensus of interpretation which corresponds to the conventions of war. According to Stephen William Foster, "symbols do not come with meanings in tow; meaning is actively attributed

to symbolic forms on particular occasions under particular political and historical circumstances" (123). The rituals' symbolic meanings in the Secord plays are determined by the social disturbance without which signification would be altered or lost altogether. The fact that the ritual activities preceding the events in the plays were given different narrative functions reinforces Turner's observation that "a single symbol, in fact, represents many things at the same time: it is multivocal not univocal. Its referents are not all of the same logical order but are drawn from many domains of social experience and ethical evaluation" (1969 52). The symbol's multiplicity and its connection to social experience is important to my focus on the ritual structure encompassing both texts and may account for the narrative differences which alter Secord's symbolic meaning.

II THE RITUAL JOURNEY

Laura Secord's key moment in history and the narrative embellishments concerning her other "unconventional" acts may be part of an empowerment myth centring on a Canadian woman. Yet the narrative's movement from a domestic state to a public one follows the conventional quest tradition which is usually associated with a male's *rite de passage*. Assuming the

movement of a quest, one may conclude that a subject/subjectivity (focalization) equivalence exists in the myth's two normative texts; therefore, one may attribute symbolic meaning and ritual signification to narrative elements which may or may not be ritualistic in nature. As Mieke Bal says,

the question who, in a given text, can be considered the subject of a given narrative act, pertains not only to narrative analysis itself....those questions have their bearing on the decision whether, and to what extent, the concept of ritual applies. What functions as a ritual symbol for one subject may be devoid of such a function for another (9).

Bal's observation helps explain not only the different narrative functions each playwright assigns to the two interstructural rituals, but the discrepancies in the depictions of Laura.

In Chapter One I stated that the Laura Secord myth contains two constant components: the "journey" and the reason for the journey, which was "to warn." The latter element is social in that Laura Secord is temporarily integrated into the public realm. The "warning" scene has a lot of theatrical potential because it involves individuals interacting with one another. The "journey" is private and, although it contains many dramatic possibilities, has been either tangentially dealt with or ignored altogether. Most (re)presentations concentrate on filling narrative gaps, such as how Laura Secord obtained

the information, and the impact that information had on Fitzgibbon.

The narrative's central mystery, however, is Laura Secord's personal experience *while journeying* to Beaver Dams. Charles Mair, Agnes Maule Machar and "John" include Laura's journey in their poems. But their treatment of this core ingredient focuses on the physical environment rather than on Laura's psychical perception of that environment. The Secord dramas, on the other hand, are divided according to gender on this issue. Both Lereine Ballantyne and Sarah Anne Curzon portray Laura's subjective journey, while Alexander Stephen's referential text anticipates Merrill Denison's radio drama on Secord. Denison, choosing to frame his version in the realist genre, ignores Laura's liminal experience while Curzon's text highlights the journey's subjunctive possibilities.

To assign ritual signification in Denison's text to the same acts as in the Curzon text is to ignore the importance focalization plays in determining what, in fact, a narrative is about. Using interdisciplinary strategies, I intend to show Curzon's text to be an attempt at a Canadian female empowerment myth, while Denison's version is a combination of male quest and picaresque elements, focusing not on Laura Secord, but on the symbolic condensation of Fitzgibbon and James Secord into one representation of masculine authority.

This section, then, will use the differing treatments of

the journey in order to determine 1) the subject of focalization in each text and 2) whether the origin of focalization is the narrative's protagonist or some other determining consciousness. At this point I will state that while the subject of both narratives is female, only the Curzon text illustrates a subject/subjectivity equilibrium. The subject/subjectivity disparity between the texts, then, creates an irreducible difference on the syntactical level which, transferred to the semantic level, may account for the critical privileging of the Denison text over the Curzon text.

Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 can be interpreted as a woman's rite of passage. According to Coward and Ellis, the macrostructure encompassing any society and its narratives "sets in place an experience for the subject which it includes" (3). Laura is "always already subject-ed to the structure" (Coward and Ellis 3), but the social structure's upheaval has not yet contaminated the private domain and decentred the subject. Reinforcing the ego's transcendental illusion, the play begins with a peaceful tableau:

Queenston. A farmhouse. John Penn, a Quaker, is seated on a chair tilted against the wall. Mr. Secord, his arm in a sling, reclines on a couch, against the end of which a crutch is placed. Mrs. Secord, occupies a rocking-chair near the lounge. Charles a little fellow of four, is seated on her lap holding a ball of yarn from which she is knitting. Charlotte, a girl of twelve, is seated on a stool set a little in rear of the couch. and she has a lesson-book in her hand. Harriet, a girl of ten, occupies a stool near her sister and has a

slate on her lap. All are listening intently to the Quaker, who is speaking (97).

The sling and crutch convey little of significance about the social crisis until the Quaker's war narrative locates these props in the fictional referent. Although William Gass claims "language is...more powerful as an experience of things than the experience of things....[words] have a reality far exceeding the things they name" (Hutcheon 149), the war is still beyond the family circle because the tale is affected by the peaceful, domestic circumstances surrounding the telling. As Linda Hutcheon points out, "the art of enunciation always includes an enunciating producer as well as a receiver of the utterance, and thus their interrelations are a relevant part of the discursive context" (75). In the Second home, the potentially tragic tale is "de-horrified" by the teller, the listener, and the peaceful environment.

A visible pre-set -- with music and lighting -- would initiate the performative function by telling the audience how to "read" the still inactive narrative function. In the theatre, then, Gass's power of language is usurped by the mimetic power to signify. In order to make the crutch and sling signify war before the play begins, sounds of war could be played, or military articles -- such as a bloodied uniform, sword, hat -- could clutter the stage. However, the Curzon text complicates the theatrical pre-set function by being a

closet drama. In a sense, the play's tranquil opening scenario is duplicated by the reader's referential environment; as the Quaker's narrative brings the war into the Secord home, so too does the Curzon text bring the events into the reader's home. The physical book, then, is the Curzon drama's pre-set. Since the fictional work is framed by the "Memoir of Laura Secord" and "Notes" to the drama, this textual pre-set adds a "deceptive" truth value to the play which reinforces its position as a "master" narrative.

Denison's text also lacks a conventional pre-set, although the introduction to the series -- no doubt accompanied by tell-tale music -- acts as a pseudo-performance indicator. Nevertheless, Denison's play --like Curzon's -- is tempered by the receiver's private domain. This pre-set adds to Denison's portrayal of Laura Secord as an average person who becomes a hero due to circumstance rather than any innate characteristics. Thus, while Curzon presents an elevated heroics deeply contrasting with the text's method of reception, Denison plays with his medium's home-reception in order to de-emphasize Laura's saintly tradition and emphasize the myth's hyperbole.

Furthermore, performance's removal from routine space and time is obvious in relation to conventional stage shows which are always -- to a certain extent -- special occasions for the audience. But what about radio drama where the performance is

presented within the listener's daily life? It is essential to distinguish between contemporary radio's decentralizing function and the unifying role it once played. Early Canadian radio acted as a means of uniting our diverse nation by establishing a *communitas* of the airwaves. Radio anthologies based on historical matter familiarized Canadian history by making the past reflexive of the present. Merrill Denison's Laura Secord (1931) was received individually in thousands of households across Canada, thus spreading his version of the Secord story from coast to coast.

Radio's centralizing function was paramount in such series, thereby making the time spent around the radio a unique collective experience. This experience reinforces -- through a nationwide understanding of the past -- conventional belief systems. Radio's power to do this arises from what Marshall McLuhan says is its ritual involvement. He writes:

Radio affects most people intimately, person-to-person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer-speaker and listener. The subliminal depths of radio are charged with the resonating echoes of tribal horns and antique drums. This is inherent in the very nature of this medium, with its power to turn the psyche and society into a single echo chamber (261).

Even though Denison's radio drama contradicts other versions of the myth, the fact that his narrative was on the radio gave it an authority which the other plays did not possess.

In contrast, Curzon's closet drama -- although subversive

in its feminist content -- is an individual experience that minimizes its political potential because of its limited audience. According to McLuhan, "literacy had fostered an extreme of individualism, and radio had done just the opposite in reviving the ancient experience of kinship webs of deep tribal involvement" (263). Although Curzon's Laura Secord: The Heroine of 1812 (1887) contains a strong feminist message, it relies on readers actively choosing to read it. Catering to an already converted audience, the political message is silenced by its literary isolation from nationwide audience acceptance. The radio audience also makes choices but in relation to station, time-slot, series. A specific programme's actual content may be a secondary consideration overshadowed by the aforementioned choices. In the Curzon text the opening tale is told not only in the domestic realm, but by a culturally-recognized symbol of peace: a Quaker. However, the words' semiotic power in decentring the subject quickly overwhelms the sanctity of the hearth and forces Laura to question the discrepancy between the teller and the tale:

You speak, friend Penn, as if you saw the fight,
Not like a simple bearer of the news....You did!
Pray tell us how it was; For ever have I heard that
Quakers shunned The sight of blood (98).

In fact, what disturbs Laura is not the tale's violent content, but the incompatibility between the subject who speaks and the subject of the enunciation. A stage performance

could make the Quaker a comic figure through the actor's "over-excitement" in recounting an event obviously at odds with his religious convictions. This extratextual (re)presentation -- extra because it is not explicit in the text -- is directorially plausible because the subject "constructs himself in language as he wishes to see himself, as he wishes to be seen, and thereby alienates himself in language" (LeMaire 64). The self's construction in and through language is a strategy Laura uses in her transitional state later in the play.

At this point in the drama, however, Laura still believes in a transcendental subject. This belief prompts her to question the Quaker's relationship to his narrative because he obviously "identifies [himself] in language, but only by losing [himself] in it like an object" (Lacan 1966 86). He confirms the subjunctive transformation while trying to redefine his indicative subject position:

Mistress, I did [see the end of the battle].
Somewhat against my creed,
I freely own; for what should I, a Quaker,
E'er have to do with soldiers, men of blood (99).

Yet his (re)definition of self becomes a self-reflexive questioning which parallels Lacan's enquiries into the relationship between the subject and the signifier: "It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the

same as that of which I speak" (1966 165). The Quaker's syntax confirms the split subject as it moves from a third-person omniscient position to a first-person intrusive position, in which the Quaker feels "as if/ whatever happed [he'd] had a hand in it" (99). The Quaker's split subject verifies the subjunctive's ability to restructure the indicative mood's limiting definitions and social roles.

Although the Quaker's narrative establishes the macrostructure's existence beyond the domestic realm, its subtext reveals the Quaker to have participated in a rite of initiation. In effect, the Quaker's pilgrimage to sell potatoes during a time of social upheaval positions him as a player in the crisis. He rationalizes his involvement by saying: "innate forces sometimes tell o'er us/ Against our will" (98). His stage presence would reflect his state of crisis as his lively narrative contrasts with his demure costume -- a costume created in the audience's minds. Furthermore, the Quaker's involvement in the war draws attention to every Canadian's civic duty. His eager participation shames those soldiers who -- knowing about the parole ritual --intentionally became wounded or captured in order to sit out the war safely. Although there is little evidence that James Secord belongs to this "crafty" group, such a suggestion would change an audience's estimation of his character -- viewing him as a comic coward -- by elevating

Laura's deed even more.

Nevertheless, the Quaker's transformation from an outsider to an insider illustrates that the social drama does not alter the individual against his/her will; it merely brings to the surface an inner conflict awaiting the proper circumstances for its appearance. As Peter Brooks claims,

plot starts...from that moment at which story, or "life" is stimulated from quiescence into a state of narratability, into a tension, a kind of irritation, which demands narration (103).

The Quaker's narrative, then, parallels the entire play, wherein Laura's passivity is stimulated into a tension point which contributes to and explains her heroic behaviour.

Both characters' personal struggles are narrativized in an attempt to come to terms with the split subject. In his book The Content and the Form, in which he discusses narrative and history, Hayden White "suggests that narrativity,...is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality,...to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine" (14). The Quaker's tale is his attempt to justify his uncharacteristic response to political and historical circumstances. When James Secord interprets his actions as a revelation of his inner desires - "Ha! Ha! friend John, thine is a soldier's brain/ Beneath that Quaker hat" (99) - the Quaker quickly states his (past) subject position as a man of peace and departs¹.

Although this abrupt exit provides narrative closure to the Quaker's tale -- as well as the possibility of humour for a live production -- the internal struggle revealed through the narrative is not resolved. Thus, the rite of passage depicted in the Quaker's narrative parallels Laura's forthcoming ritual involvement, as well as the drama's lack of closure in relation to the issue raised by her ritual transformation.

To recall the statement made by Peter Brooks, at this point in the play Laura's passivity has not yet been stimulated into a state of narratability. Her vision of the domestic realm remains untouched by the crisis and still upholds the social structure. However, her daughters' reactions to the Quaker's narrative illustrate how their vision of the world and their roles in it is "more influenced by symbolic forms than by utilitarian calculations" (Kertzer 3). Yet the rebellion signalled by the daughters' desires to be men and "strike for the King" (100) is harmless since this desire to transgress social boundaries occurs only in language and only within the private realm: "I wish I were a man, to fight/ In such brave times as these" (100).

Their playing with socially-impossible desires while in a safe haven is reminiscent of the theatre's liminal space, where anything and everything is possible temporarily. As Mieke Bal says,

the integration of social norms and individual

desires can be acted out, ideally, through language, since the expression of fantasies in language is culturally validated and allows for otherwise unacceptable thoughts to escape from expression (6).

Their desires are as innocent as the Quaker's war narrative since their eagerness to transgress their gender restrictions is displaced onto a prayer based on patriarchal protection:

Let War's black pinions soar away,
And dove-like Peace resume her sway,
Our King, our country, be Thy care,
Nor ever fail of childhood's prayer.
Calmly, securely, may we rest
As on a tender father's breast. (100)

As long as the private realm remains stable, the public threat of social chaos will not succeed; as long as the desires for social change are contained within the home, they will not affect the dominant apparatus. Likewise, as long as theatre provides society with a space for what Edith Turner calls "controlled disorientation" (168) the social system will not be disturbed by anti-structural forces.

The domestic distance Laura places between the sanctity of the home and the upheaval in the social order is transgressed by the confiscation ritual discussed earlier. The public violation of the private realm stimulates Laura into activity, for she will no longer "be patient" (100). Her decision to inform Fitzgibbon of the Americans' attack provides the narrative's historical context, but it is her evolution from a state of passivity to one of activity --

which is a universal dramatic element -- that is the drama's main theme. What follows is a conventional rite of passage from one social state to another, whereby the social drama afflicting the external environment reflects Laura's personal drama as she separates herself from society and begins to enter a liminal space. But Curzon does not follow the comic format to its end. Instead, Laura Secord is left in this psychical "betwixt and between" state, making her reintegration into a gender-restrictive age highly questionable.

Before undertaking the journey Laura strips away the gendered role restricting her behaviour, thereby paralleling the Quaker's syntactical confusion. Her unified subject position becomes, then, a site of difference as she first claims "[her] sex as [her] protection" (104), then progresses to a male subject position and finally moves into the liminal state of anonymous otherness. This transition unites the female-male and other in a trinity of signification:

I am thy neighbour; loved as thyself:
And as thyself wouldst go to warn Fitzgibbon
If thou wert able, so I, being able,
Thou must let me go - thy other self (106).

Of course, a predominantly Christian audience would recognize her argument's Biblical reference, thus sanctifying Laura's unconventional behaviour.

Laura's rite of passage -- empowered by the public

realm's violation of her domestic space -- signifies a latent conflict between Laura's psychic space and society's gender-specific space. Her internal struggle, then, becomes a ritualized process of self-evaluation and self-discovery wherein she must temporarily deny her role as wife and mother. As a result of her self-imposed decentring, Laura's journey becomes a transformative process in which the struggle to reach Fitzgibbon is secondary to her internal struggle to comprehend her developing subjectivity, and its relation to the subject position which the social structure imposes on her. Laura's desire to risk all shows that:

We are bound by a basic human and social need to escape from the very structures that are the foundations of our social order... human beings have had to create - by structural means spaces and times in the calendar...[and] cultural cycles...which cannot be captured in the classificatory nets of their quotidian, routinized spheres of action. These liminal areas of time and space - rituals, carnivals, drama... - are open to the play of thought, feeling and will (Turner 1969 vii).

Laura Secord's journey in the Curzon text reflects the audience's intentional escape into art's subjunctive mood. Involvement with the subjunctive discloses the individual's heterogeneity and potentiality in superseding restrictive roles.

Laura's visions while in the wilderness reveal a heterogeneous playfulness through her (re)structuring of conventional values and beliefs. First, she envisions herself

in a union based on difference -- "The gladsome Spring ... His happy bride ... The lovely Summer" (119) -- and then a union based on misidentified sameness -- "Like croon of sleeping babe on mother's breast -/ So peaceful lies Fitzgibbon at his post" (121). Re-evaluating humanity's association with sound, Laura abolishes ideological hierarchies and realizes that "the body lives again" (122). Her third vision, then, is a rejuvenating one, in which hopes of resurrection, through semiotic processes, transgress gender limits.

The internal conflict Laura encounters through her rite of passage -- which is indeed a process of self-awareness -- is not present in the Denison text. This lack of internal tension and personal conflict arises from the play's subject/subjectivity opposition, and illustrates that Laura -- while being the subject -- is not the locus of focalization. The first indication of this opposition appears in scenes one and two. These scenes take place in the public realm days before June 22, and centre on Fitzgibbon's exploits. Rather than beginning in Laura's private space, Denison presents the macrostructure's upheaval directly. While the Quaker's narrative brings the war into the Second home, Fitzgibbon's narrative reinforces the social crisis in which the camp is a physical manifestation, and only alludes to the private domain's transgression by mentioning the Innkeeper's lady and "a woman running out of a wee cottage" (118). Since the war is

everywhere -- embedded in the scene as well as in Fitzgibbon's narrative -- no point of contrast is presented in which tensions and conflicts are brought into the forefront. Therefore, the scene's interest does not arise from a private/public dichotomy. Instead, the energy is derived from Fitzgibbon's character and his epic tale. Not only do we see his ingenuity through the reversible coats -- "See Ducharme, red on one side, green on the other... We've got poor Boerstler down at Fort George so bedevilled that he thinks I've got a regiment" (121) -- but this narrative is a personal adventure story in which the lone hero reveals exceptional skills in combatting his adversaries. The picaresque quality of scene one is further enhanced by Ducharme's sexual innuendos: "I don't know, but his sounds bad to me, Fitz. There you were with the innkeeper's lady and a Yank comes along and steals your sword" (118). Ducharme's suggestions elicit Fitzgibbon's honourable nature: "Will I have to be duelling with you to defend me honour?" (118).

Scene two takes place in the Americans' public realm. Here, Denison presents Fitzgibbon's adversaries and illustrates their overwhelming strength as they prepare to rid themselves not of the British, but of Fitzgibbon, "the genius behind all this irritation" (124). Since an audience familiar with the Second story would already know the Americans' plan to attack Beaver Dams, this scene is superfluous to the

narrative. However, it is crucial to the discourse since it reinforces Fitzgibbon's legendary character. Their desire to attack, based less on military strategy than on personal revenge, reflects Hannah Arendt's description of "the society of the nation in the modern world which is that curiously hybrid realm where private interest assumes public significance" (Bhabha 2). Thus, in an attempt to justify their personal actions politically, Boerstler says "*And what's more, General Dearborn, until Fitzgibbon is captured or his Green Tigers driven out of Beaver Dams, you cannot engage Vincent*" (124 my italics).

The first two scenes, then, establish and reinforce Fitzgibbon's heroic character. His rogue-like tactics and Ducharme's allusions to his sexual exploits make Fitzgibbon a colourful warrior. But the public settings depict little other than military conflict. However, Scene two introduces the private/public dichotomy which is the foundation for the text's dramatic tension. This dichotomy places Fitzgibbon's public identity as a Canadian soldier against the Americans' personal desire for revenge. By establishing a public/private conflict, Denison constructs a Canadian myth about a forgotten hero in which Laura -- herself a forgotten hero -- becomes unwittingly and unnecessarily involved. The primary subject of the discourse, then, is the male character, and if a rite of passage is embedded in the text it is the male's, not the

female's, ritual activity.

Laura's action of wandering the countryside can be viewed as a ritual reenactment of Fitzgibbon's solitary exploits and the fulfilment of Secord's desire to evacuate the private realm and enter the public space. In effect, then, Laura is not empowered but becomes the subject of this condensed male focalization, and her journey becomes a manifestation of male desire, since "she is only doing what the male fantasy supposes her to do" (Bal 9).

An interesting variation in the Denison text which reinforces my view that the play's ritual symbols promote a male myth is Laura's arrival at Beaver Dams. Before she enters scene nine, Fitzgibbon is made aware of the Americans' plan: "But I tell you they are, Captain Fitzgibbon. They left Queenston this morning. A dozen of my Indians have seen them". Reacting coolly and with bravado, he thinks the attack "a mighty flattering business....An elephant to crush a mouse" (141). The use of the word "flattering" signifies that he now understands the Americans' action as a personal assault against himself, an assault that strokes his ego. Laura's entrance after this realization becomes a catalyst to the action rather than a narrative nucleus:

Laura: ...I left at dawn. A force of 600
reached Queenston....

Ducharme: You hear, Captain? What have I been ...

Fitzgibbon: Keep your tongue still, Ducharme. Yes,
Mrs Secord, Go on, ma'am... (142)

Without question, then, her journey is now unnecessary since the text's male focalization suggests that -- like Frank O'Connor's creation of Laura Secord as a candy queen -- Fitzgibbon creates Laura Secord "the heroine" by acting like a gentleman, unlike James Secord who reminds Laura of her unimportance: "And your walk was really wasted effort, Laura? Fitzgibbon knew already?" (148).

Scene eleven enhances Fitzgibbon's successful initiation as a great leader. The narrator emphasizes his leadership qualities by commenting that "by recourse to impudent strategy, Fitzgibbon succeeds" (146). Thus, Fitzgibbon, who began as a maverick-like soldier bragging about his exploits, accomplishes a rite of passage (scenes nine, ten, eleven) which transforms him into a respected war hero, future Assistant Adjutant-General of Upper Canada and shamefully forgotten by history. Laura Secord's actions merely add suspense to the text's male quest and picaresque elements.

Once Fitzgibbon recognizes the public threat to his personal self-definition in scene nine he participates in the war ritual with the self-reflexive knowledge required to transform his actions into a rite of passage. This lack of self-reflexivity is the very reason Denison's Laura is a ritual object, subject of the male fantasy, rather than an

empowering, self-aware ritual subject. She never needs to adjust her personal self to the external chaos because, as scene twelve illustrates, -- "But couldn't we afford to be generous, James? " (148) -- she is the same hospitable, forgiving belle of scene three.

The divergent endings support my claim that the Curzon text is about a female rite of passage toward self-empowerment, while the other is not. After Laura gives Fitzgibbon the information she is led off by Ducharme's chivalric gesture of offering her his arm. In the Curzon text Laura is carried out on a hammock. This gesture might be interpreted as Laura's re-objectification, her final consignment into the phallogentric social structure which mythologizes women into icons. Celeste Derksen's feminist reading may be correct in its assumption that the desire to integrate the public and the private, the masculine and the feminine motivates the text, and that Laura's exit therefore demonstrates a male validation of her journey. Derksen writes

one gets a sense of Mrs Curzon's conscious "self-fashioning" of nineteenth century womanhood. In this play, she promotes an image of woman who can move into the public realm and yet maintain traditional "feminine" values (6).

However, I see the dramatic discourse to contain another, more tragic code. According to van Gennep, being carried is

intended to show that at the moment in question the individual does not belong either to the sacred or to the profane world; or if he does belong to one

of the two, it is desired that he be properly incorporated into the other, and he is therefore isolated and maintained in an intermediate position, held between heaven and hell (186).

After fainting, Laura is cleansed by the men in a purification rite signifying her rebirth as not merely 'Laura Secord' as in the Denison text, but "The Heroine of 1812":

The men run out and bring water. Fitzgibbon gets brandy from a buffet, and Mr. Jarvis unloosens her bonnet and collar. They bathe her hands with the spirit and sprinkle her face with the water, and at last Mrs Secord sighs heavily.
Fitzgibbon: She's coming to. Back, men; (135).

Her insistence that "she can find [her] own way" (136) is ignored by the men insofar as they persist in maintaining their authoritative positions in the face of her new-found independence: "Madam, you cannot. Let these carry you;/ An honour I do grudge them" (136). In being carried off, then, Laura is recognized as having transgressed the boundaries of her domestic status through her liminal experience, an experience which is not complete until she is properly reintegrated into society. Laura's personal sense of self, like the Quaker's, has been altered by her "uncharacteristic" indicative experience.

The play ends with Fitzgibbon's authoritative voice validating "a brave woman's glorious deed" (139). Now that the journey is over, Derksen believes that Laura and James "will indeed return to their 'proper sphere' with their understanding of each other's capabilities having evolved, but

with their respective functions not having been seriously threatened" (12). I cannot see the play having such a tidy ending. Laura's absence at the end of the play signifies the open-ended nature of her re-incorporation process, and so our final vision is of her precarious position "between heaven and hell." In a "reading" this position may be overlooked. However, Laura's absence from the stage cannot be ignored easily.

Paralleling the Quaker's abrupt departure, then, Laura's absence symbolizes without explication her changed self-image. Entering the liminal realm, the individual can rework the cultural paradigms which locked them in a socio-psychological position that is no longer compatible with the new environment. But this transformative potential is psychologically and/or politically "a volatile, sometimes dangerously explosive essence" (Edith Turner 168), especially if the individual(s) do not re-integrate into the social body. The uncertainty concerning Laura's return to the passive, domestic realm resonates with a Miltonic cynicism, whereby "the mind is its own place, and in it self/ Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (Milton ll 254-255). No longer able to return to the subject-position she once held, and not accepted completely by the masculine, public realm, Laura remains in an ambiguous wasteland.

Her intermediary position reflects Canada's post-colonial

dilemma: the cultural displacement recognized by Curzon demands a choice between British Imperialist traditions and a Canadian Nationalist future. Her rite of passage, then, can be partially interpreted as a ritual symbol of the personal quest which also politically symbolizes Canada's ritual activity of re-evaluation and re-definition of a sense of self-determination and nationhood.

The fact that Curzon does not suppress Laura's focalization of her rite of passage illustrates Peter Brooks's claim that

Desire is always there at the start of a narrative, often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun (38).

Laura's personal ritual has a political edge in that her reintegration requires an altered community. After her wilderness experience, she cannot return to the passive gender-obedient position she held in Act one scene one. However, like other early "feminist" writers, Curzon sabotages her own political agenda by failing to portray her heroine in her new position of self-empowerment. Despite this explicit failure, Fitzgibbon's ritually significant "I know you not" (133) -- echoing the myth at the foundation of Christianity or Shakespeare's use of the phrase in The Second Part of Henry IV -- marks Laura's spiritual alteration and unworldliness -- a (re)presentation Denison tries to topple through realist

strategies. Once again, Fitzgibbon displays his semiotic connection with Laura's experience by saying: "You have, indeed, performed a woman's part,/ A gentle deed; yet at expense of more/ than woman's fitting means" (134). The task is indeed greater than her patriotic duty; it costs her her accepted identity as a passive female in the social realm, but it illustrates the subject's psychological and physical ability to transgress oppressive ideological constraints in the hopes of instigating social change.

ENDNOTES

1. In Laura Secord: The Lady and the Legend (1971), Ruth McKenzie describes James Fitzgibbon as an unconventional military man: "Disguising himself as a settler with a basket of butter to sell, he visited the American camp, cracked jokes with the soldiers, gave them 'confidential information' on the British forces, all the while casting his sharp eyes around the camp" (38). The possibility of Curzon's Quaker being James Fitzgibbon in disguise adds an intriguing dimension to this chapter's discussion of the subject's transformation from an outsider to an insider.

CHAPTER THREE
LAURA SECORD GOES TO SCHOOL:
THE IDEOLOGICAL MANIPULATION OF CANADIAN DRAMA
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY

The myth of Laura Secord is a wonderful narrative because it contains essential storytelling elements. There is intrigue, suspense, and bravery; wild animals, tearful exits and triumphant entrances. Individuals such as Sarah Anne Curzon, Charles Mair and others combined these elements with their contemporary political concerns in creating works for mature audiences. These narrative components are also ideal for young audiences. In fact, the acceptance of the Secord story as a part of Canada's "official" history is evidenced by its inclusion as a part of the curriculum of Canadian schools. This acceptance signals the narrative's fourth developmental phase in which new pedagogical approaches altered the didactic history lesson into a form of entertainment. Yet, the didactic message did not disappear; it merely went "underground". School dramas, then, became -- like the schools themselves -- an instrument of government propaganda.

Many Canadians remember with either fondness or chagrin their participation in a school production. Impressions about the character they portrayed or the narrative they presented could be carried into adulthood. Wonderfully animated, but

frequently chaotic, these shows are often seen by parents and pupils as "playful" activities because their ideological functions have been overlooked. The peripheral treatment of drama and theatre in current discussions of the educational system's role in creating a national identity has come from a modern failure to recognize ideological functions at work within extra-curricular activities. Educational critics and historians have focused on the more explicit means of converting school grounds into imperialist breeding grounds. J.D. Wilson and Robert Stamp have commented extensively on the government's infiltration of education through the curriculum, textbooks, and mandatory opening exercises which linked the Canadian identity to British values and images.

However, Wilson and Stamp -- like other social historians -- have said surprisingly little about the role extra-curricular activities have had in promoting nationalist sentiments. They have also virtually ignored the loyalist tradition's significance in the indoctrinating process. Young, inexperienced and unquestioning minds formed a "captive" audience for Canadian nationalist propaganda: a nationalism which really advocated British imperialism. However, by recognizing dramatic ritual's Janus-faced power in either initiating radical change or reinforcing the mainstream ideology -- which depends on the performative function's method -- educational drama becomes, as a site of dual

playfulness, a serious ideological matter.

When we begin to look at a text's use of monoglot or heteroglot language, the seemingly neutral narrative function that makes drama an enjoyable interlude is closely associated with the work's latent political function. At the turn of the century, the school play's political function was indeed recognized by politicians as a "strategic position for employing history to arouse national sentiments" (Berger 90) in order to solidify Canada's position against the American threat of annexation. To fulfil this goal the government needed to promote Canadian nationalism at all social levels, especially at the level of formal education.

When this political strategy spills over into school drama the nationalist agenda is overshadowed by the common misperception that "play" is not something done in earnest. However, the ritualized play of drama is both frivolous and serious. Since art and life are reciprocal imitators, the dramatic genre "feeds back into the social process, providing it with a rhetoric, a mode of employment, and a meaning" (Turner 1982 72). Thus, drama as well as narrative provides children with a behavioural frame adaptable to their life experiences. Moving from the indicative mood to the subjunctive, ritual must always return to the indicative,

"though this recovered mood has now been tempered, even transformed, by immersion in subjunctivity" (Turner 1982 82). No matter how good or bad the production, performers and audiences have been altered by the experience. This tempered mode may not always be immediate. Yet the child's capacity to remember the activity's components produces a repository of "cultural root paradigms " (Turner 1982 73) from which the child repeatedly draws. These paradigms are not cognitively organized so that the child consciously retrieves the Secord "lesson" when later encountering some difficult task. Rather, the repository of paradigms becomes an existential pool of values, morals, and behaviours which are acquired, adjusted and reinforced "osmotically" as the child encounters art, life, and the cultural root paradigms of authoritative figures.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Loyalist heritage in Ontario -- whose focal point was the War of 1812 -- advocated the values the dominant social structure wanted to impress upon the populace. The myth of the War of 1812 -- and more specifically the Laura Secord legend -- contained the perfect combination of romance, adventure, nationalism and imperialist ideology to create a dramatic palimpsest of entertainment and politics. The amalgamation of

these elements with theatrical playfulness was a compelling educational tool. Just how compelling will be illustrated by applying my argument of drama's functions to Lereine Ballantyne's Heroes of History (1920's) and Alexander Maitland Stephen's Class Room Plays from Canadian History (1929), both of which focus on the Secord myth. A presumably similar school play by Ida Marion Davidson is lost. By examining their portrayals of Secord, I will focus on two things: the neglected link between early Canadian educational drama and the nation-building process which endorsed a Canadian nationalism based on imperialist ideology, and the suitability of the Secord myth in fulfilling this political agenda.

My contention that the ideological connection between early educational drama and Canada's nation-building process has been virtually ignored by critics is substantiated by the lack of information in Canadian reference books about Lereine Ballantyne. Ballantyne was born in 1891 to Joseph and Catherine Hoffman of Bruce County. She died in 1962. During her lifetime, Ballantyne edited a trade and fashion magazine while serving as director and secretary of publications for Toronto's Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society. In 1926 her book of poetry Firelight Fancies was published, and her novel Spirit Fire appeared in 1932. In addition, she wrote a

seventeen-chapter story on "Native life in 1649" which ran as a serial in The Young Soldier and Crusader. Apparently, the chapters never appeared in book form. Ballantyne also wrote Heroes of History, but only the Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English: 1766 - 1978 mentions this work, and even then it fails to assign a precise date to the fourteen-page pageant, published by Toronto's Educational Publishing Company. The pageant is a mere pamphlet containing a list of "dialogues" that could be purchased for \$0.10 postpaid during the 1920s.

Lereine Ballantyne's limited contribution to Canadian literature may account for the equally minuscule reference entries about her in the standard sources. But the absence of her educational work from the national reference books such as The Canadian Who's Who, The MacMillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography and Plays from Canadian History reinforces the fact that classroom plays suffered from the same "unfortunate stigma that relegates artists working in the form [children's theatre] to second-class citizen status" (Foon 253). Since most children's drama was written by women, her gender may have contributed to the lack of critical attention paid to her work and that of others. Yet this does not account for the limited references to A.M. Stephen's educational drama.

Possibly, then, the critical neglect of educational drama provides an ideal scenario for school officials and government to promote their political messages under the disguise of "child's play." Never being scrutinized closely by the public, dramatists could either challenge or reinforce mainstream ideology. Thus, gender is not the only reason for educational dramas' critical neglect. In turn, this may explain the similar scarcity of references to A.M. Stephen's school plays.

Alexander Maitland Stephen is, however, listed in The Canadian Who's Who as an author, poet and educationalist -- because of his involvement in education reform and not his plays. Born near Hanover, Ontario in 1882, Stephen went west as a young man. He tried a variety of jobs such as homesteading, prospecting and mining. Eventually he taught school in mining camps and remote mountain areas. Later he became president of the Child Welfare Association of British Columbia which assisted in forcing various social reforms through the B.C. legislature. Stephen wrote textbooks and assisted in founding various cultural societies and organizations. He also led movements for radical educational reforms which ultimately resulted in his expulsion from the Vancouver school teaching staff. In the thirties he spent much of his time pamphleteering and lecturing in support of

the CCF. In 1929 he published Class-room Plays from Canadian History, and in 1931 Canadian Industrial Plays. In 1936 he was lecturing on literature and history at the Vancouver Academy. His other works include five books of poetry, two anthologies and two novels. Even though education dominated his career, critical attention has focused on his poetry; [Dr.] Lionel Stevenson referred to "his wide range of allusions, his use of the whole cultural heritage of the race as a source of imagery and symbolism, uniting him with the best poets of our time" (Roberts). His literary contribution is greater than Ballantyne's, access to his work is more readily available, and his school drama is seen as part of his creative output, rather than part of his role as educator.

Despite Ballantyne's and Stephen's relative absence from the reference books, their educational dramas reveal play's Janus-faced qualities. Educational drama, like all drama, involves a series of interconnecting prisms where play's trickster nature penetrates drama's primary Performance - Narrative - Ritual configuration only to disperse into ideologically iridescent arrangements which can be political, social, cultural and psychological "conditioners." The Narrative function -- according to Peter Brooks -- contains desire: the desire to recollect or to repeat a message. At the

core of all art as well as referential action, the desire to recollect a past -- as in the school plays -- demonstrates history to be ideal narrative material. While history is the recollection of a social tension, drama's Performative function transforms narrative recollection into mimetic repetition. Both history and drama, recollection and repetition, convey a tension point between desire and accepted social values. Yet they move away from one another; history, looking to the past, becomes ideological, while drama, in looking to the present and future, becomes affective. Each, containing traces of the other, is distinguishable by the Ritual function; history represses its constructive nature while drama makes visible its creativity through the presence of an actor playing at something other.

The secondary configurations, into which the primary configuration disperses, are volatile elements because of their ability to condition young audiences and performers. The traditional Performance - Narrative - Ritual [P-N-R] alignment may be illusory in that it often conceals, rather than reveals, a text's ideological intentions by reinforcing the public's perception of extra-curricular activity as "child's play." This emphasis on frivolous play highlights the P-N-R configuration's seemingly neutral entertainment value while

disguising or naturalizing play's intentions in fulfilling the text's agenda.

Since selection and organization entail creativity, history is susceptible to overdetermination by the group responsible for its propagation. For example, after the War of 1812 many Canadians feared the influence American teachers and textbooks had upon the impressionable minds of Canadian students. They did not recognize the fact that Canadian historical drama was also a powerful influence.

Through the teaching of history, Canadian students encountered a nationalism based solely on British imperialism. The loyalist tradition in Canada became the principal means of connecting a Canadian heritage with imperialist convictions. According to Carl Berger:

history was the chief vehicle in which the loyalist tradition was expressed and that tradition depended for its credibility upon the assumption that the past contained principles to which the present must adhere if the continuity of national life was to be preserved (89-90).

Since the loyalist tradition is "romantic in outlook, backward-looking in orientation, and shot through with nostalgia" (Berger 90), it is reluctant to break from the past. Although the tradition endorsed a colonial position, we must not overlook the fact that these imperial sentiments established the foundation for building an alternative Canada

which, in breaking with the past, has not forgotten its significance. Unlike the postmodernist subversion of history which operates simultaneously within its conventions, the officially set educational policy used history as a nostalgic endorsement of imperialist doctrines. Through the recounting of the loyalist triumph over adversity, the history taught in Canadian schools reinforced a British way of life.

This nostalgic treatment of history contrasts with Victor Turner's reassessment of ritual and social drama by hiding its discursive reality. In Turner's view, ritual and social drama are transformative in that they are subjunctively indicative; they explicitly say we are *playing* "as if" this "were so," and thereby stating that "history and fiction are both discourses" (Hutcheon 93). History, on the other hand, plays a game that says this "is so," denying its constructed property. Indeed, the whole point of educational drama would ideally be this movement away from the indicative adult world, in which children are inferior, to a subjunctive world which they create. This movement is productive in that the child must return from the subjunctive to the indicative stance, but this time, perhaps, with some knowledge of the skills necessary to cope in the structurally difficult adult world. But if the indicative return is preceded by a backward-looking,

subjunctively-limited mode, the child will learn to imitate rather than to create, to reproduce rather than to initiate. Thus the child will be cut off from drama's transformative potentiality.

In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century schools, this breach happened because of the Narrative function's influence in naturalizing ideologically constructed ideas through its coherent "retelling." The school system was in special need of home-grown, "mythifying" tools such as symbols and heroes in order to cultivate an imperialism which also took pride in things Canadian. Carl Berger observes that

if Canadian nationalism is to be understood, its meaning must be sought and apprehended not simply in the sphere of politician decisions but also in myths, legends and symbols (Tomkins 13).

Dramatizing history connects cultural codes with visual (re)presentations, bringing to life ideas that are often politically complex.

The Laura Secord dramas promote the stereotypical vision of a woman's duty to her husband being linked with her Imperially dominated civic duty. Not only was the Laura Secord myth, then, an effective narrative in teaching students about Canada's past, it also encouraged the proper values of the loyalist tradition. And although this tradition may superficially seem one-sided, it displayed "at its heart... a

yearning for significance and a desire to obliterate the stigma of colonialism....far from denigrating Canadian things, imperialists were positively Utopian in their expectations... of Canadian capacities" (Berger 259-260).

* * *

On the Narrative level, then, drama and theatre was a way of introducing students to a particular version of history and a specific vision of the world. Transmitted through a common narrative discourse, dramatizations, according to John Dewey, helped the student relate to the work's subtext: "Allow him to act out the idea and it becomes real to him" (Bolton 187-188). Since repetition and recollection were signs of efficient teaching, a good narrative should be memorable and (re)transmittable. These qualities are appreciated still in the schools, even if they are not a true test of educational standards.

In fact, there is more to the Secord myth's Narrative function than just an entertaining plot. The differences between the Ballantyne and Stephen texts reveal that historical drama is not immune from the selection process which alters, subverts, and refutes previous accounts of history. The way in which these texts play with the historic "facts" echoes the discrepancies in Laura Secord's genealogy

evidence outlined in chapter 1.

Stephen's text is set in Mr. De Cew's house at Beaver Dams. Fitzgibbon, Jarvis and Ducharme are discussing the possibility of an American attack. Although this scene may suggest that they did need Laura Secord's information, the scene also includes three scouts "engaged in a game of cards" (98). Laura enters, gives her report, is thanked, and then "*Indian scouts burst in with loud cries, 'The Yankees are coming!'*" (99). Laura is praised by Jarvis who takes her to a neighbouring farm. The play is three pages long, has six major speaking parts, one chorus announcing the Americans' arrival and three non-speaking, card-playing roles. With an approximate playing time of five to six minutes -- a manageable time for child-actors -- Stephen's Laura Secord would probably be a part of a larger school production where different classes presented the other historical plays in his text -- plays which include Lief the Lucky, Columbus, Henry Hudson, Radisson, Peace with Pontiac, An Evening in a Loyalist Household, Vancouver and Quadra, The Last Spike, Canada in Flanders, and Canada - A Pageant.

Ballantyne's play is also very brief. However, it consists of only two acting roles and one reciter narrating a poem. The limited cast in the other scenes suggests that one

classroom performed the entire pageant for either another grade or as part of a larger school assembly for a community audience. Similar to Stephen's list, Ballantyne's pageant begins with a group of boys and girls seated around a campfire. They ask for a story, and the various scenes -- Jacques Cartier 1534, Samuel De Champlain 1603, Adam Dulac 1660, The Old Regime 1663, Madelaine de Vercheres 1692, Wolfe captured Quebec 1759, General Isaac Brock 1812, Tecumseh 1813, and The Pioneers -- are recited, each by a member of the campfire group while other students strike the tableaux.

Both Ballantyne's and Stephen's retellings of the Secord myth rely on implicit and presupposed narrative strategies. Ballantyne opens her pageant with a short dramatization:

An American soldier comes on dressed in grey uniform. Laura Secord approached from the other side with milk pail and stool. He cries "Halt." She answered, "Sure, It's a pity you wouldn't let a woman milk her cow!" He says "Pass." So she goes a little way, turns and sees he is not looking back, so she drops pail and stool and takes up her skirt and runs off toward the exit (12).

Visually this scene relays ambiguous information. Since the audience needs to be aware of the ideological polarization presented on the stage by the characters, costuming, body language and the use of space help the audience interpret the scene accurately. The formal uniform, for example, contrasts with Laura's everyday attire, thereby explicitly drawing

attention to their social difference. This diversity would be further enhanced by the characters' gestures and manipulation of the playing space. Laura must approach the sentry in a certain manner: any deviation from the scene's expected cultural behaviour could disrupt the dramatic signals and cause the audience to receive a distorted message. Since the performance text involves multiple interpretive elements, it demands that its signifying system be carefully controlled.

In Ballantyne's play, the performance text suggests a power differentiation between the characters that exceeds the written text's verbal clues. The performance adds a metatheatrical element to the written text's straightforward scenario. By encoding the actor's gestures as he/she moves through the stage space, the performance text suggests that the simple objective of overcoming an obstacle was intended from the beginning. Recognizing this intention, the audience is presented with a power struggle transcending the visual gender/social opposition, by the introduction of a manipulative psychological/political play for power. Laura's looking back, dropping of the pail, lifting of her skirts and running signify her triumph over the blocking figure. But these gestures must not only relay triumph; they must reveal Laura's premeditated intention to deceive. This premeditative

element makes the narrative mythic.

The multi-coded performance text, however, is being played by and for children: children who are inexperienced with such interpretative layerings. Knowing her audience, then, Ballantyne decodes the opening dramatization in the poem which follows: "She, with strategy, took up her milk-pail,/ Thus getting by the sentries of the enemy" (12). Now the milk-pail is viewed explicitly as a strategic device used by the character to overcome the obstacle. In turn, the soldier -- symbolically expanding beyond the scene's temporal moment -- becomes a metonymy of Canada's political obstacles. The dramatization's implicit message, then, is clearly explicated in the poem. Yet the distance between the opening action and the poetic explanation (117-8) signifies that the explanation is redundant; since "the implicit information always depends on an explicit one, it can be understood if and only if (part of) the latter is understood first" (Prince 42). Ballantyne's belated positioning of the explicit information indicates that in the 1920s Canadian students were familiar enough with the Second legend to decode a partially-empty frame. Would an young audience in the 1990s be able to do the same?

Stephen's narrative economy also relies on implicit and presupposed information which indicates familiarity with the

myth. The play opens with a presupposition concerning the War of 1812. Fitzgibbon says: "We shall give the Yankees something to think about" (98). This presupposes the existence of Yankees, which in turn presupposes a negative understanding of the term. Similarly, Ducharme's line, "My Indians are ready for the warpath" (98), presupposes that there is a war and that Natives are prepared to fight on the British side. His statement also reveals an ethnocentricity which erases the Mohawk Nation's political autonomy by referring to them as possessions and as generic "Indians."

But the most telling presupposition in the play involves its geographical references. Specific locations are mentioned by the characters, but their proximity and importance to the story are not. It is presupposed that they exist and that they are relatively close to one another. However their significance is only implied. When Laura states she has "walked from Queenston to warn [Fitzgibbon]" (99), the statement presupposes Queenston's existence in the region. Fitzgibbon's response -- "You have walked from Queenston?" (99) -- conveys implicit information about Queenston's proximity to Beaver Dams. Since Laura must redundantly confirm her previous statement, the narrative exchange implies the task's difficulty and centrality to the narrative. Stephen's

abundant use of presupposition "indicates (parts of) the premise for his narration, premises which he presumably shares with his narratee, which will unconditionally be taken for granted by both of them, and which indicates 'what there is' (Prince 43). The fact of Stephen and the narratee's interchangeability stresses the play's historical truth value.

But the actor's intonation could alter these presuppositions not only by mocking the distance but also by questioning Queenston's existence. Laura's repetition would no longer be redundant but essential to her objective in overcoming the mental obstacle represented by Fitzgibbon. Since the myth lends itself to parody --the cow, slippers, mud -- an acting company aware of the myth is more essential than an audience familiar with the Second narrative. Consisting predominantly of presupposition, Stephen's play demands actors capable of bringing the appropriate tone to the dialogue in order to (re)present the myth in a complementary fashion.

The scene ends with another interesting blend of implicit and presupposed information. Jarvis says to Laura, "while it has women like you, our country can never be taken by an enemy" (100). The statement presupposes that there is a nation to defend, occupied by loyal women. That Canada is the emerging nation is subtly implied. Laura's "I merely did my

emerging nation is subtly implied. Laura's "I merely did my duty" (100) implicitly refers to the loyalist tradition, whereby United Empire Loyalists saved Canada by rejecting American democracy and republicanism for continued ties with Britain. The presupposed information reinforces the anti-feminist maxim that a woman is bound to be dutiful no matter what the personal cost.

Using implicit and presupposed narrative strategies, both texts reveal the pre-existence of historical premises in the audience. By not explaining the details, Ballantyne and Stephen create parsimonious texts which require the performer's and the audience's participation in re-creating the history. This technique, then, elevates the texts' educational value while maintaining their artistic elements. It also indicates that "political socialization, aimed at training the national citizen ... employ such tools as a common language, symbols, traditions, literature, and rituals" (Tomkins 8). These tools, as well as implied cultural codes, reinforce the indoctrinating role played by extra-curricular activities because they require -- especially from the performers -- a kinship with the play's ideology. Without this temporary or permanent relationship, Stephen's Laura Secord could easily become a farce. The teacher's relationship with

the text determines essentially how the students respond to the material. He/she could challenge the play by emphasizing the farcical nature of its latent ideology. On the other hand, the teacher has the power also to strengthen the drama's values and beliefs in the minds of their students.

Stephen's thrifty use of free direct discourse emphasizes the text's realism and possible truth value. But even though the dramatic genre exhibits language's heteroglossia, Stephen's repression of what Jakobson calls the emotive function and the emphasis on the referential function produce an objective, factual monoglot communication. In contrast, Ballantyne's use of free indirect discourse expands the horizon of historical objectivity by poetically creating a subjective, image-rich picture. The pageant's metalingual function -- signified through its pageantry and its poetry -- prepares the audience for the text's emphasis on the emotive and conative functions.

Ballantyne's pageant, then, is a hybrid of heteroglot and monoglot languages. The opening dramatization reveals two opposing language systems whereby Laura -- costumed in conventional women's attire -- "takes up her skirt and runs off" (12), thus transgressing gender's restrictive code. Likewise, the grey uniform implies a specific military

behaviour and attitude. In the dramatization, Laura breaks down the code and is allowed to pass by abusing the conventional language system which defines women as passive, obedient and unthreatening. Her colloquial speech, then, disarms the soldier who has been conditioned to think and speak in the "Halt - Pass" pattern: a pattern which also contains the masculine/feminine, active/passive binary code. Laura's subsequent actions signal her success in duping the soldier and his limited mindset. If the actor includes the audience in these actions, for example by giving a knowing glance, he/she would reveal Laura's cunning by satirizing the American as a monoglot fool incapable of noticing the alleged cow's absence.

Yet the scene is self-reflexive, even without the "knowing glance," because of theatre's Ritual function; the performer is not only acting for an audience, but for him/herself. As Fredrick Turner says -- in pointing out one of Victor Turner's greatest insights --

there never were any innocent unconscious savages, living in a state of unreflective and instinctive harmony. We human beings are all and always sophisticated, conscious, capable of laughter at our own institutions, inventing our lives collectively as we go on, playing games, performing our own being (156).

The ontological doubling which Turner refers to in this

however, disguise this liberating experience by assigning actors and audience specific, unchanging roles. Ballantyne challenges realism's inert ritual in the pageant's opening:

This Pageant could be acted as a campfire scene, with a few boys and girls seated around the fire. One would ask for a story, and as another recited each part those taking the part would cross behind the camp-fire group, acting the scene....The one to recite the following sections sits up with his or her feet crossed and facing the audience (2-3).

Here, Ballantyne establishes a technique suggestive of theatre's ritual transformation. She shows the referential audience that they are "acting" as "audience" by "becoming engaged in a game of make-believe (GMB) in which the words of the text serve as prop" (Margolin 103). Margolin's description seems appropriate to this pageant because the written text -- in that it follows the scenario -- is an adjunct to the actual visual game.

Although the "glance" as stage business is a direct appeal to the audience -- which a director could add to the performance -- it is also a severing of the sensory connection between actor (producer) and audience (receiver). Uri Margolin stresses that in theatre "no breaking of the illusion is ever sustained throughout the text" (107). The glance would insure that no keeping of the illusion is possible either. This pressure/counter-pressure motion is a dynamic usurping of one

realm (Performance) by the other (Ritual) initiating an emotional engagement which leads eventually to a sense of self-reflexive *communitas*. By itself, the "knowing glance" encourages the audience to join a comedic *communitas*. The poem's Narrative function, however, alters this *communitas* and defines it as anti-American by directing the audience's interpretation and thereby foreclosing on the scenario's partially open-ended potentiality.

Ballantyne's pageant, while hardly an example of Realism, tries unsuccessfully to balance the scene's Semiotic tableau with the Symbolic poem. The audience, then, is presented with an ambiguous tableau which can be performed -- hence read -- many ways. The "knowing glance" could be a look of dismay, shock, or no recognizeable emotion at all. In any case, countering the performance's possibilities is the poem which organizes what the audience sees into a conventional narrative. According to Fredric Jameson, the activity of narrativizing our responses is "one of the ways we impose meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of the events" (Hutcheon 66). There is nothing wrong with narrativizing our experiences. That is the way we have been conditioned to communicate. What is problematic, however, is when these narratives become entrenched in a cultural mythology that

forecloses other possibilities.

Ballantyne's opening heteroglot dramatization, for example, digresses into a monoglot soliloquy. Of course, Bakhtin's view of poetry¹ as a total immersion in language suggests that Ballantyne's use of the poetic genre reinforces the social structure's monoglot system. Poetry, then, is the perfect form in which to enforce nationalism's desire for power through the construction of a common history, by a common people, spoken through a common language. Laura Secord, caught in this mindnumbing uniformity, is reduced to an object in a simplistic myth incapable of further progression.

Monoglot or heteroglot language systems used to narrate the Secord story are closely associated with the work's latent political function. Educational institutions' use of the Secord dramas were lessons in nationalist sentiments. Unlike patriotism, nationalism requires a homogeneous concept of one's nation. According to George Woodcock,

Nationalism is essentially political, concerned with the structures and mechanics of power. It seeks always to freeze forms into conceptual patterns; it asserts the general at the expense of the local and particular (4).

The loyalist tradition in English-speaking Canada endorsed a general code of behaviour which Stephen's Laura reinforces by humbly saying "Please do not bother to thank me. I merely did

my duty" (100). Likewise, Ballantyne begins her dramatic poem by asserting that imperial-nationalist loyalty was even displayed by women: "In the early trials of our country/ Many of our womanhood shone forth" (12). The referential ambiguity of "our" in this sentence does not disrupt the line's political intent, since the pronoun is a discursive marker uniting disparate individuals -- in this case the Irish-born Fitzgibbon and the American-born Laura -- in a common cause. Yet the bond they share is not the same as Turner's *communitas*, which "tends to be inclusive" (1982 51), because the "our" works to enhance the social structure's exclusion of those who do not share a Canadian imperialist-nationalism.

The major danger is that these extra-curricular exercises hid their political function from the pupils and their parents. The threat of this concealed agenda is not the false patriotism or enthusiasm the exercises generated, but the false belief that Canada was a homogeneous nation. This belief connects the political function with the activities' social function -- to foster a common understanding of history's role in producing a common people. The primary aim of educational drama's social function is displayed by Reverend George Bryce's comment in 1910 to the Royal Society of Canada:

In these schools the children sing the patriotic songs of Britain and Canada and the reading books

are full of patriotic selections. There is no honour more regarded by these young foreigners than to be called Canadians (Stamp 305).

Of course, the potential for subversion of the form at the local -- classroom -- level is possible. This potential can be instigated as well as terminated by the teacher.

Stephen's preface indicates that his text was intended more for class-room work than formal production. But although there is no record of when Heroes of History was performed, Ballantyne's introduction suggests that it would be appropriate as an Empire Day exercise:

Would you hear of all the heroes gone before us?
 Those who've blazed the trail in forests, facing
 peril
 Those who've made this country mighty with their
 valor; Men and Women, who have come in search of
 freedom,
 Liberty, and ambition high.
 Canada, vast growing country young and free,
 We will tell of those who came - who moulded thee
 (3).

Canada's personification as young, free and ambitious connects the nation with the students themselves and their educational shaping into proper loyal subjects. Likewise, Stephen's creative challenge at the end of Class-Room Plays from Canadian History tests their imperial-nationalist development. He says "why not make some plays for yourselves? You may use my dramas as models....Here is a list of subjects taken from our Canadian history. An interesting drama may be written

about any one of these incidents" (162). The list is unfortunately not included in the text, unless he means that his own plays constitute a list they can repeat. If this is so, then Stephen is drawing attention to history's creative process. Nonetheless, under the masquerade of fun, Stephen encourages students to follow politically motivated literary forms. The student's creative success or failure, then, becomes a measure of the educational institution's effectiveness in endorsing the social structure's exclusive doctrines.

Although Ballantyne's carnivalesque pageant differs from Stephen's objective, realist version, both works -- as well as other educational history plays -- use mythic, monoglot discourse. Echoing one another structurally and thematically, the dramas teach children to adopt a sense of uniformity where, according to Northrop Frye, "everyone 'belongs'... thinks alike and behaves alike [and] produces a society which seems comfortable at first but is totally lacking in human dignity" (iv). Frye's observation reflects S.H. Wood's reservation concerning education in a totalitarian society; in 1955 he wrote that education in such an environment aims "to secure either absolute obedience to a leader or absolute conformity to an ideology, and the method of achieving this

purpose is 'conditioning' "(n.p).

The consistent portrayal of Laura Secord as a dutiful and self-sacrificing woman forms a model which disciplines Canadian girls. The Secord plays' gender-specific conditioning -- which appears also in the poetry and articles -- would not be so distressing if other Canadian heroines were presented or were portrayed differently. However, the only other female included by Ballantyne and Stephen in their collections is Madeleine de Vercheres who, in 1692 at the age of fourteen, defended her family's fort from the Iroquois. Using the same techniques as the Laura Secord scene, Ballantyne combines a tableau with a brief dramatization. In the entire collection, only the Secord and Vercheres scenes incorporate dialogue into the opening:

She comes in so weary she is hardly able to walk, and leans against the wall holding her gun. Suddenly she hears the call of French soldiers, "Vive La France," and she goes forward and meets the rescue party, saying "Sir, I surrender my arms to you, " The soldier salutes and says, "Madam, they are already in good hands" (8).

Although the scene presents the audience with the same visual gender/social opposition as in the Secord scene, Vercheres and the soldier are neither psychological nor political adversaries. The written text -- less ambiguous than the Secord scene -- does not require a heavily controlled

performance text; hence it does not demand actors knowledgeable in the legend. Vercheres's forward movement can only be interpreted one way because it is framed by the cry "Vive La France" and the soldier's salute. Furthermore, viewing the pageant in its entirety, the audience would be able to compare the French-Canadian soldier's heteroglot response to the American's monoglot blunder in the Second scene. Compared to the American, the French-Canadian soldier's linguistic flexibility -- monoglot salute followed by romanticized praise -- suggests the difference between Canada and its enemies.

Using the same opening strategy as in the Second scene, Ballantyne presents Vercheres as the Francophone equivalent of Laura Secord. The pageant provides young audiences with alternative possibilities of female heroism. Although Laura uses cunning she still maintains her femininity: "with every crackling twig; her heart within her started" (12); in the poem Vercheres, on the other hand, fearlessly uses a gun and fires a cannon in the poem. Still, Ballantyne is careful to balance this aggressive behaviour with feminine posturing: in the tableau she leans exhausted against the wall, while the poem begins: "But the dainty maids in powdered hair and satins/ Were not frail as one might think their looks

betokened./ What their slight frames lacked, their courage supplemented" (8).

Despite Secord's and Vercheres's suitability as role models, Ballantyne isolates these heroines from ordinary female society by placing them on a patriarchal pedestal. Each heroine is portrayed as a saint. Vercheres is a Canadian Joan of Arc: "Then at last God sent them aid and soldiers/ To relieve the maiden warrior, brave beyond belief" (9). Further elevating Vercheres, Ballantyne describes her as "matchless and supreme" (9). Secord is similarly described: "Laura Secord rose to heights immortal" (12). The poem ends with epic discourse reminiscent of Milton or the myth of St. George: "And brave Laura Secord saw next day with pride/ The stern foe defeated, captured - Victory for our side!" (12). Their "sainthood" is problematic in that Ballantyne associates the concept with "the 'feminine' as a privileged identity " (Reinelt 51). In the other scenes, Christianity is mentioned in relation to Jacques Cartier and Samuel De Champlain. The difference, however, between these men and our heroines is that the formers' actions bring Christianity to the New World, while the latter are Godliness personified.

In contrast, Stephen's unsentimental portrayal is closer to collapsing the man/woman construction because he does not

privilege Laura as a saint or a masculine double. She reports the facts in a military fashion -- "Over six hundred men, with artillery as well, sir"(99) -- and then confesses her vulnerability -- "It was very dark and I was afraid of the Indians. Thank God I have arrived in time" (99). She is, then, capable of stating the information without "over-dramatization" and of accepting Jarvis's arm as a symbol of his respect for her. Stephen's Laura is presented as a woman comfortable in her "own skin" and capable of altering to suit the situation. In other words, Stephen (re)presents a heroine whose success lies not in saintly perfection but the ability to semiotize the symbolic. Ballantyne's tableau also presents individuals who playfully rearrange, rather than transcend, power relations. However, the poetry's explicative function erases this theatrical multiplicity and presents the young female viewers with an almost impossible ideal.

Although the children are -- for the most part -- oblivious to educational drama's ideological agendas, so too are most parents. Seen by adults as "playful," the drama is able to disguise its ritual indoctrination behind its manifest Apollonian purpose of introducing students to Canadian History. Stephen's preface verifies this function: "this little book is offered as an aid to the teaching of Canadian

history...we do feel that interest has often been absent from the methods by which the story of Canada has been told" (v). Likewise, the bookjacket of Blanch Hume's Ryerson Reader of Laura Secord (1928) quotes the Teacher's Magazine:

The life of a great man [or woman], presented with even a small degree of narrative facility, will be read eagerly by a pupil who will find the account of the same period of years dull and difficult (n.p.).

As long as students are interested and learning, the method is not closely scrutinized.

But educational drama also contains a Dionysian quality which manipulates the historical content in an intoxicating manner. The semiotic appeal can work in two ways to promote a totally indicative, mainstream vision of the world: by revealing drama's ritualized mimicry or by repressing its ritual *jouissance*. Stephen's Laura Secord does the latter by downplaying the acting ritual and foregrounding historical "truth" through its factual presentational style. Ballantyne, on the other hand, stresses theatre's ritual origins by anticipating Brecht's epic theatre; using distancing devices such as the fake campfire, paper costumes, dual acting roles and poetry, the pageant draws attention to the child as character.

When the dramatic production becomes a community event

this representational style is psychologically manipulative and politically potent. This potency arises from the audience's condensation and resulting misidentification of their personal pride in their children with their cultural pride in Canada's past achievements. As with other social rituals, a specific time and place is set aside for the performance. The production, then, becomes more than a school play: it becomes a phase in the child's development where she/he is formally "presented" to the community. In this environment, the child is seldom recognized as his/her own person, but as a genealogical continuum signifying positive communal growth.

Laura Secord is, then, not only a symbol of national growth but a personality who assisted many children in performing the maturation ritual. She also helped adults return to "a voluntary *sparagmos* or self-dismemberment of order, in the subjunctive depths of liminality" (Turner 1982 83). The manner in which this was accomplished was simple. The educational plays about Laura Secord were written during the peak of the myth's popularity. The Ballantyne and Stephen texts concentrate on the myth's core ingredients identified during its initial stage of development. However, the tableau in the Ballantyne pageant shows the playwright's use of

imaginative licence. Despite its extreme brevity in comparison with the poem, it raises the issue of whether children and teachers reproduce a text's ideology or create a new text through their interaction with the old.

Furthermore, these plays reinforced previously established affective and ideological meanings. Their repetitive depiction of earlier (re)presentations avoids narrative embellishments that could alter or subvert the mainstream ideology embedded in the Secord myth. The parents - - and grandparents -- of the children acting in the Secord plays, then, are reminded of the Secord myth's artistic heyday during the 1880s. The adults' experience of the drama provides them with a temporary space in which they can "replay" their own childhood encounters with the myth. Yet the adult is conscious of the mimicry as a self-reflexive awareness where he/she can voluntarily choose the paradigms he/she wishes to carry back into the indicative world. Therefore, this secondary mimicry can be a simple refresher course which reminds them of past imperialist values, or a transforming experience which allows them to re-adjust their previous paradigms within a strictly Canadian-nationalistic environment. Either way, the dominant social structure is spinning its ideological, formative web under the masquerade

of immediate pleasure.

Although historical educational drama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a means of indoctrinating new generations of imperial-nationalists, the audience's secondary mimicry, which is founded in theatre's ritual origins, has the potential to reverse the indoctrinating process. Whether or not theatre's Ritual function is successful in stimulating children to resist and reinterpret this social conditioning is another matter. Nonetheless, the psychological-subjunctive bond between the child and the character -- extended to include the parent/audience -- gives the "child at heart" another opportunity to amend, alter, and re-adjust her or his previously learned cultural paradigms in a manner that can be socially creative and ideologically radical.

ENDNOTES

1. This idea of poetry and its immersion in language is from The Dialogic Imagination by M. M. Bakhtin.

CHAPTER FOUR LAURA SECORD MEETS THE CANDY MAN

Who can resist a Milk Almond Swirl, a York Chocolate Fudge, a Secord Butter cream? When we indulge in these scrumptious treats it is unlikely that our imaginations whirl with scenes of war, secret plans, silent journeys through tangled woods and ambushes in steaming swamps. Yet Frank P. O'Connor -- Canadian entrepreneur and business tycoon -- linked these images to his delicious product. In fact, an early advertising copy -- dated approximately around the First World War -- demonstrates how the Company commodified the public's awareness of the Secord myth's artistic and historical tradition. The company based their marketing strategies on the well-established associations between the dutiful woman, imperialist ideals and a new Canadian nationalism. But a product's image must reflect changes in the consumer if it is to remain popular and competitive. Forty years later, the candy company's advertising campaign relied on the myth's domesticity, in which the name of Laura Secord "has become for Canadians a symbol of courage, devotion and loyalty".

Initially a by-product marking the success of the myth's aesthetic and social phases -- late 1880s to 1910¹ -- O'Connor's commercialization of Laura Secord's name for the new company altered the mythification process. As the company expanded, Laura Secord became less of a historic and/or artistic figure, and more of a familiar presence in Canadian homes. She was becoming -- especially at Easter and Christmas -- a part of a family tradition that gradually removed her from her previous historic context. My concluding chapter traces the Laura Secord myth's re-direction into popular culture after its commercialization by O'Connor in 1913.

The economic appropriation of the myth initially bolstered the name of Laura Secord by rescuing her from poetry's liminal, restrictive realm. During the myth's aesthetic phase, (See Appendix 1) writers such as Sarah Anne Curzon transformed the historic walk into a ritual symbol of the individual's ability to journey beyond gender and ideological restrictions. Other artists, such as Charles Mair, Agnes Maule Machar, and Charles Jakeway portrayed the twenty-mile walk as a symbol paralleling Canada's ritual journey toward a national identity. Even after the Candy Company's formation, the myth's

popularity during the 1920s motivated such artists as Lereine Ballantyne and Alexander Stephen to adapt the story and its nationalist message for educational purposes. In previous chapters, I discussed how some of these artistic (re)presentations downplayed Curzon's initial depiction of the journey's transgressive potentiality in order to promote other ideological agendas. Challenging the Second image established by Sarah Anne Curzon, Merrill Denison's 1932 parodic radio drama dismantles imperialist sentiments in favour of a distinctly Canadian nationalism. Despite the intent, however, these works relied upon a strong connection between the myth's ideological convictions and the ritual symbol's sensory appeal. This semiotic/symbolic relationship, then, transformed the diverse representations of the event's referential "facts" into an indicator of Canadian society's changing attitudes, values and self-perception.

This chapter shows that the dynamic ritual process underlying the artistic representations and their communal significance was fundamental to O'Connor's economic appropriation. Initially, this appropriation of the image used the myth's political associations. Upon

entering popular culture, however, the Secord image's mythic process was gradually sugar-coated in order to reflect a conservative definition of womanhood. Ironically, this alteration to the historic event and its previous (re)presentations is explicative of society's role in creating and maintaining a cultural myth. Using advertisements from the Laura Secord Candy Company archives, I detail the gradual repression of this cultural symbol's ritual playfulness and semiotic *jouissance*. O'Connor's desire to popularize this Canadian heroine has succeeded to the point of de-politicizing her cultural/political signification. In effect, by linking Laura Secord to a consumable product, the Company has unwittingly permitted the myth to be "consumed" by the public, leaving only an empty box for future generations.

By choosing Laura Secord as his company's trade name, O'Connor commodified a national myth. O'Connor capitalized on the Laura Secord tradition circulating in the minds of his clientele. In fact, the tradition's strong semiotic appeal and ideological associations were spread as his business expanded nationally. Simultaneously, the Laura Secord Candy Company's incredible success made the founder almost as legendary

as his trade name.

O'Connor's status is verified by Floyd S. Chalmers's feature in The Financial Post, "Frank P. O'Connor is the Man Behind the Laura Secord Chain." The use of military discourse is appropriate to the Secord myth, but Chalmers uses it to describe O'Connor's financial achievements. Following the practice of Merrill Denison -- who, I argued, symbolized Fitzgibbon rather than Laura Secord in his radio drama -- Chalmers's discursive strategy symbolizes O'Connor by transposing his actions onto the Secord narrative. Laura's dexterity in getting past the American sentry is matched, if not superseded by O'Connor:

Many American business men have extended their business activities to Canada. The number of Canadian business men who have been able to extend their field of operation to the United States is much smaller.... when the Canadian manufacturer starts out to *conquer the United States* - in a selling sense - he is *invading* a sales territory many times as large as his own. The job is no easy one, what with competition and tariffs and so on. Frank P. O'Connor has extended his business from Canada to the United States. He has been successful....And though his business is more important now in the United States than in Canada, he has *resisted every appeal* to move his residence and his headquarters from Toronto to some American city. He is a Canadian and intends to remain a Canadian. To paraphrase the light opera song:

"In spite of all temptations,
To belong to other nations,
He remains a Canadian" (Chalmers; my
emphasis).

This lengthy quotation exhibits the condensation of the Secord myth's past ideological functions into a new, male myth with O'Connor as the focus. The article discloses Canadians' fear of economic annexation by the United States and by doing so echoes the fear which motivated the late nineteenth-century educational dramas (See Chapter 3). Furthermore, as is all too evident today, economic power translates into political power. The article boasts a "local boy makes good" story. But O'Connor's "making good" has political signification, as the hometown boy becomes an example of a twentieth-century financial warrior. The article's appropriation of military discourse -- emphasized by the italicized words -- suggests an antagonism toward the American financial scene, whereby American expansion into Canada is viewed as a diabolical plot undermining Canada's political autonomy. O'Connor's subversion of the American tactic is the one property which separates him from other entrepreneurs, and makes him a modern-day Laura Secord.

The parallel between O'Connor and Secord is evident in two ways. First, Laura carried American information to

the Canadians. O'Connor is taking Canadian knowledge -- in the form of his product -- to the American public. This transferring of knowledge from one place to another can be seen as a ritual journey toward Canada's economic maturity: "He has more stores in the United States than in Canada"(Chalmers). Second, O'Connor's and Secord's loyalty are celebrated in verse. Yet despite the fact that both subjects act of their own volition, Laura's loyalty has been (re)presented as no more than her duty. O'Connor, on the other hand, is (re)presented as making a personal sacrifice. By remaining in Canada, O'Connor willingly and forcefully snubs the American temptation. Since he does so without hesitation or visible "faltering," the O'Connor image illustrates that nationhood's totalitarian ideology need not oppress Canadian businessmen. Charles Mair, writing during the myth's aesthetic phase, had depicted Laura Secord as faltering repeatedly, while Machar, writing during the same period, portrays a "steadfast" Laura seemingly unconscious of her actions. Only Jakeway's poem depicts her "with a firm and fearless footstep and a courage/ stanch and strong." (Unfortunately, the poem has been ignored, and though it was published in The Fourth Golden

Rule Book (1915) its (re)presentation of an unfaltering heroine is subordinated to better known poems in which Laura is shown as simply fulfilling her dutiful obligation).

While the Laura Secord Candy Company's success certainly bolstered the image of F.P. O'Connor, it also popularized the Secord myth by commercializing its mythic position in Canadian culture. In fact, Bruce West comments that the candy company "made Laura Secord far more famous than the history books ever did" (The Globe and Mail 1972). But he goes on to say that Laura Secord is "a name far more familiar as that of a brand of candies than that of an authentic heroine of the War of 1812" (The Globe and Mail 1972). Barbara Flewwelling - Communications Manager at Laura Secord - would agree only in part with West's comments. In an interview in June 1994, Ms Flewwelling said the public had claimed Laura as their own.

Any changes made to the image by the company usually caused public concern. Although their most recent cameo (Appendix 2) has won the O.N.M Canadian composition Gold Award for a Newspaper Single, which reads "There must be something in the chocolate," many customers disapproved

of this younger portrayal. They felt it disclosed society's inability to accept a woman's graceful aging process. In voicing complaints as well as commendations, the public -- notes Flewwelling -- almost always refers to Laura as their personal possession. Which "Laura" they are referring to -- whether Curzon's, Denison's, O'Connor's or some other abstraction -- is impossible to determine.

Changes to the company's image of Laura Secord are a way of dislodging the myth from a dormant, peripheral position by stimulating and revitalizing the public's semiotic *jouissance* and buying practices. In contrast, the public perceives the Company's periodic alterations to the image as a threat to their private appropriation of Laura. Society's new cultural values are, then, reflected in the new image -- values which the public may not be ready to admit openly.

The action-field context surrounding the company's creation and popularization of the Secord myth differs from that motivating the poets and historians. Although their private agendas differ, Curzon, Mair, Machar, Stephens, Ballantyne, "John" and Jakeway are writing generally to retrieve her name from history's dusty files

and to link past triumphs to present political expectations. Denison, Wallace and Wood are writing to undermine her glorification and to challenge the myth's feminist and/or national imperialist connection. However, by the time W.S. Wallace wrote his controversial paper attacking the myth in 1932, the public had incorporated Laura into their cultural paradigms. His attempt to alter the image may, ironically, have renewed Laura's symbolic power by placing her in the centre of public attention once again.

Since O'Connor is working in a capitalist context, his motivation to "borrow" the name/myth is no more innocent than the others. In fact, in Jane Urquhart's 1986 novel The Whirlpool the historian's sexual confiscation of Laura parallels O'Connor's economic appropriation of the myth. Urquhart's Major David McDougal and O'Connor are motivated by national pride with desire at the root of their sexual/economic fantasies. In the novel a reciprocal relationship exists between McDougal's conscious interests and his latent fantasy: "Laura Secord is almost entirely responsible for my career as a military historian....she came to me in a dream, you see, saying *Remind them, remind them*" (82-83).

According to Jane Urquhart, Laura Secord "operates as a sort of Muse" (Just a Minute) for the historian, while Pamela Wallin observes that his sexual obsession with the idea of Laura Secord "is the reason he is interested in all this" (Just a Minute). In fact, Fleda says early in the novel, "Did it ever occur to you... that you married me precisely and only because in some odd way, I remind you of Laura Secord?" (50). After denying her accusation, Major McDougal leads Fleda in a sexual reenactment of Laura's "intimate" interrogation by Fitzgibbon.

Like the novel, Chalmers's article reveals that semiotic *jouissance* plays a powerful role in determining O'Connor's cognitive practices. For example, in the United States, the Laura Secord Company goes under the name Fanny Farmer Candy Shops Inc. Farmer, who died in 1915, was an authority on cookery and founder of the Miss Farmer's School of Cookery in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1896 she edited The Boston Cooking School Cook Book which evolved into the well-known and well-used Fannie Farmer Cookbook. O'Connor's decision to select an American name was not done "because of any fear of offending American feelings. But [O'Connor] did not consider it worth the effort to try to educate the whole American nation to the

story of another country's heroine" (Chalmers). His explication is economically logical because it exposes the importance of appealing to the public's semiotic knowledge rather than its cognitive awareness. Also, his strategy reveals that by using an American figure the U.S. market is less likely to notice a "foreign" company's infiltration of their territory.

The closest American equivalent to Laura Secord was Mary (Ludwig) Hays, better known as Molly Pitcher. She came by this name after carrying pitchers of water to her husband and other thirsty soldiers in the Battle of Monmouth during the American Revolution. Some accounts even have her fighting in place of her husband. Like Laura, who received a £100 gift from the Prince of Wales, Molly received a pension in 1822 from the Pennsylvania legislature in recognition of her heroism. The name Molly Pitcher, however, was not chosen for O'Connor's American stores because "it lacked euphony" (Chalmers), while the alliteration of Fanny Farmer provides a nice musical quality. Furthermore, Fanny Farmer was a well-known name associated with cooking and domesticity rather than any heroic act. An American action-field context may have required a modern professional instead of a past

historical figure, or a fictitious image such as Sara Lee or Aunt Jemima².

There is little doubt that the Candy Company retrieved the myth from a perpetual existence within an artistic liminal realm. But the economic action-field warrants that all companies are conservative institutions working in close alliance with the social structure. As such, the company's success is based on maintaining a uniform image legitimized by the dominant apparatus. Within the corporate world, symbolic heterogeneity could be a playful way around restrictive ideals, but it would be disastrous for the image a company wants to promote. Thus, like the Romantic period's authorial Author, O'Connor had to control the symbol's potentiality by selecting and organizing the right blend of mythic elements in order to manipulate them into reinforcing the social structure's paradigms. Chalmers's 1924 article states that O'Connor felt the company's name had "better be that of a woman...because womanhood suggests homecooking, cleanliness, and good taste."

Yet the company's definition of womanhood hardly explains O'Connor's choice of the name, since the Second myth did not advocate these strictly domestic ideals

until later in its development. During the myth's aesthetic phase in the late 1880s, Laura Secord was consistently depicted as having to choose between her maternal responsibilities and her civic duty. By 1928, however, the fusing of the "master" narrative and the Company's domestic appropriation is disclosed in Blanche Hume's Laura Secord. This school text depicts Secord as an unconventional woman -- even after the war -- while emphasizing her mastery of "feminine" skills such as cooking, sewing and needlepoint. Over time, the company's advertising perpetuated these values by replacing the symbol's playful heteroglossia with a serene domesticity.

Slogans which reinforce Laura's role as homemaker dominate the company's marketing strategy. According to the company video, in 1913 Laura Secord was "synonymous with courage, devotion and loyalty." By the 1930s the company had expanded into drugstores. The individual shops which "sprang-up" in Canadian suburbia were pleasant reminders of simple values. According to the company video, customers "viewed the small neighbourhood Laura Secord shop...as part of the fabric of life in their town" (Company Video). In the 1950s there were 96 shops across the country and the cameo was replaced by "a

young and beautiful Laura Secord in a miniature style painting in full colour rather than the old portrait with an embossed gold frame which had a slightly funereal appearance" (Stewart and Cockburn). In the 1960s the company became involved in a variety of promotional ventures which further enhanced Laura's popular appeal, such as give-aways and appearances in Grey Cup parades. The Laura Secord image was and still is shrouded in conservatism. The following examples of marketing slogans exemplify her association with a feminine stereotype:

- 1 1977: What this world needs is
more old fashioned goodness
- 2 1977: Laura Secord had Come to Town
(Used to introduce a new shop's
opening)
- 3 1978: Their smiles are worth it.
- 4 1978: Christmas means good things to eat,
and good things to eat means Laura
Secord
- 5 1978: Now there's old-fashioned goodness at

- 6 1978: Give your guests the royal treatment
this holiday by serving the excellence
of Laura Secord
- 7 1981: Laura Secord: The art of giving

These advertisements play on her ritual symbol's sensory appeal while promoting conservative values and norms;

slogans #'s 1-3-4-5-7 suggest a passive, stereotypically domestic woman. While the referential act actually transgressed these values, only #2 playfully alludes to her transgression, while #6 retrieves the myth's imperialist connections. The remaining examples manipulate the myth's sensory appeal by emphasizing a past ideology which places the woman within the private realm. By associating words like "old-fashioned" and "goodness" with specific holidays like Easter and Christmas, the advertisements (re)present an image of self-sacrifice and motherly/wifely duty, echoing the traditional (re)presentations made by Denison and Mair.

Ironically, the candy company's concentration on gender conventions has repressed the myth's subversive potentiality, which was illustrated in the works by Curzon, Machar and Ballantyne. The monoglot ideology in these advertisements discloses a discursive weakness in utilizing the myth's full potential. Foreclosing on the myth's radical associations, these ads reinforce a patriarchal, restrictive orthodoxy which succeeds only by restraining the symbol's semiotic *jouissance* and which results in trapping the Second myth in the liminal space of commercial enterprises.

An earlier advertisement (Appendix 3), however, reveals a less inhibited marketing approach which plays with the myth's semiotic excess. This example unites the Second myth's past imperial action-context with a new Canadian self-awareness. The advertisement -- a 5" x 2" folded pamphlet with red, white and blue strips forming the flag -- works by appropriating specific symbolic images in order to sell an indulgence.

Buckingham Palace, The Flag and the smiling soldier are autonomous visual signals eliciting immediate semiotic reactions. Their grouping on the page deprives them, however, of their individual signification by involving them in a new syntagmatic relationship. The pamphlet's distribution in Canada further defines this new relationship by signifying Canada's current role in maintaining Imperial power. Since the palace and the flag are difficult concepts for the public to grasp, the soldier's smile assists in personalizing these elusive ritual symbols.

But even the soldier needs familiarizing since he is (re)presented anonymously, for anonymity is essential if the image is to convey a universal image. This image, however, is delineated by his Christian-European facial

characteristics, which are further defined by his appearance in an imperialist pamphlet, sponsored by a company named after a famous Loyalist.

Emptied of referential meaning, the soldier utters the slogan "You too can serve," which metonymically connects him with the full mythic signification of Laura Secord. The font style and its positioning at the front of the pamphlet link the soldier to "Laura Secord" at the opposite pole. This connection stimulates the Secord tradition's imperial and Loyalist values.

But the slogan contains a dual code which appeals semiotically to both imperialists and nationalists alike. The slogan's emphasis on "too" and its proximity to the -- Anglo-Saxon -- "everyman" image of the soldier connects him to a Canadian nationalism which demands imperial loyalty. Since the soldier is stripped of a specific referential background through his placement on an advertisement, he represents these oppositional ideologies because the reader controls which code -- if any -- he/she wants to repress. Once we read the poem, however, we see that the advertisement is not promoting one political discourse over another. Rather, it is attempting to integrate an Imperialist tradition with a

new Canadian nationalism. This integration is tied once again to the Secord myth, in the way that the artistic portrayal of Laura by Sarah Anne Curzon has been interpreted as an example of gender integration by Céleste Derksen.

The most intriguing aspect of this pamphlet is its self-reflexive quality. While sending a particular message, it also imposes an image on the reader by naturalizing the individual's relation to his/her country and making patriotism every Canadian's duty. The image of the smiling soldier is as constructed as the mythic, commercialized image of Laura Secord. Both are alienated from their pasts, their histories, their subjectivities in order to fulfil an ideological function imposed on them by a mythic communication system. The advertisement, however, reveals this constructed quality by its consumer interactive gimmick whereby the Union Jack is comprised of folding flaps. All the consumer must do is follow the instructions to see how the flag is formed. As the flaps form one flag and then another, the idea of manipulation is extended to the concept of nationhood. The advertisement's self-reflexivity, then, devours its own message by revealing its discursive strategy, whereby the

soldier, Laura Secord, Buckingham Palace and the flag are contrived signs endorsing nationhood's totalitarian demand and a Canadian imperial alliance with Great Britain.

After viewing many advertisements in the Company archives, I believe this "War Bond" advertisement to be the most effective and the most telling in relation to the commodification of the Secord myth's subversive potentiality. The advertisement arguably transforms the myth's gender play into an overt appeal for participation in the macho masquerade of war. Placing its constructed nature in the advertisement actually hides the naturalization process by asking the consumer to interact with the advertisement. This marketing ploy displays each individual's responsibility in the process of gender differentiation and nation-building. The consumer is prevented, then, from deconstructing the entire communication system he/she helps create through the symbolic action of folding the advertisements flaps. Hence, the reader/consumer never uncovers patriarchy's or nationhood's totalitarian agenda.

Another Secord advertisement dated after 1951 (Appendix 4) displays the Secord myth's growing lack of

vitality as her image is connected to a conservative ideal. The advertisement's use of the term "continental" to explain the side Major Ingersoll fought on during the Revolutionary War assists in downplaying the demarcation between American Republicanism and Canadian Imperialism. For the sake of selling chocolates, the advertisement constructs a Continental uniformity, amalgamating two diverse nations into one North American "continent." Bernard K. Sandwell's article states that "no changes in the territory on either side" were made, thus eliminating the projection of past grievances into the present. He furthers this unifying image by stating that "since 1814 the boundary between the two nations of North America had remained undefended." Positioned as a marketing tool, this fact is not only "a tribute to the good relations existing between the two countries" but a self-reflexive commentary on the advertisement's attempt to depoliticize our past.

The reader must make an associative leap from the "national" history to the "business" history where the word "continental" becomes a political ideal shimmering underneath the text. Here, the chocolates are made from the "finest food obtainable," prepared by the "experts in

the art of home cooking," making the candies "famous for flavour and freshness everywhere." These descriptions lack a definite sense of place. Where are the ingredients and the cooks from? The advertisement's "everywhere" becomes a political nowhere, thereby juxtaposing the Canadian identity signified in the "War Bond" example and O'Connor's extreme patriotism depicted by Chalmers in his flag-waving article. Not only is the imperialism, the patriotic appeal of the earlier advertisement missing here, but so too is the myth's gender politics. Instead, a coherent, monoglot version of history is linked to a tradition of quality chocolate making.

By introducing the concept of "tradition," the advertisement de-politicizes Laura's initial transgression by naturalizing the ritual symbol's commodification. This commodification is then extended to the marginal position of women within a patriarchal context. The oppression of women by patriarchal values is demonstrated by the new, younger cameo, a cameo which is feminized further by the portrait's pastel colouration. Rejuvenating the previous cameo's brown-tones, the new cameo emphasizes a sexually alluring Laura, and undoubtedly reflects our culture's changing action-field.

Late twentieth-century consumers, then, can no longer embrace the sugar and spice image which associates the giving of chocolates with wholesome activities. Neither can they endorse a self-empowered woman who transcends the boundaries of gender for higher ideals. Instead, the new Laura whispers of chocolate's mood-altering potential. In fact, the new cameo and the slogan -- "There must be something in the chocolate" -- short-circuits the symbol's semiotic excess, trapping women in a sexual role as restrictive as the homemaking one. If the image of Laura Secord can indeed be viewed as an indicator of alterations in a community's social and political life, the Candy Company's new cameo signals a regressive view of not only Laura Secord but womanhood in general.

ENDNOTES

1. 1910 is when the monument at Laura Secord's Queenston home was erected.
2. As a point of interest the image of the Mammy on Aunt Jemima products has been "politically corrected" to reflect a contemporary woman of colour.

CONCLUSION NEW DIRECTIONS

The Laura Secord myth has participated in a long journey for public recognition: from its historical documentations, its elevation to the artistic realm, its public recognition through monuments and school productions, its challenging by nationalist artists and historians and its commodification from 1913 to the present day. Frank P. O'Connor's commercialization of the Secord myth sustained its presence in the public psyche. His appropriation of the myth discloses that its ritual playfulness is energized by the community. However, upon entering popular culture through the marketplace, Laura Secord's image must cater to the conservative values which govern Canadian economics. In effect, "Laura Secord's" commodification represses its semiotic *jouissance* by veiling its image in conventionally oppressive garbs. Changes to the Secord image trace contemporary Canadian communities' gradual alienation from not only their historic tradition but from the personal empowerment signified by the Laura Secord myth. In essence, O'Connor's Laura Secord is a frail belle with silk slippers, carrying a stool while pushing a cow through the snake-infested, wolf-haunted woods.

Familiarizing the myth and linking it to a consumer product has done more to divest Laura of ritual significance than W.S Wallace's attack based on historical evidence. Although I do not want to discredit the Candy Company's role in centralizing the image of Laura Secord, I think the last stanza of Lini Richarda Grol's "Fondly Remembered Old Queenston" signifies the myth's current dilapidated state:

LAURA SECORD'S
 humble old house
 facing the blue Niagara,
 only whispers of her valor,
 but right next door
 her fame sells galore
 delicious icecream
 and sumptuous candy
 in the little icecream parlor (1993).

As Grol's uninspiring verse suggests, turning Laura Secord into a commodity to be devoured has crippled a potentially powerful dominant symbol by repressing its semiotic playfulness -- a playfulness that could transcend restrictive gender and ideological definitions. Ironically, then, as Laura Secord enters the twenty-first century, her myth's rite of passage has once again been arrested, this time in a corporate liminality. Her ritual signification has lost much of its meaning because she is journeying no longer toward an imperialist revival, or Canada's national autonomy, or, for that matter her own personal empowerment. Instead -- while

wearing a provocative smock -- she is locked in a Scarborough kitchen, making chocolates for Canadian boys and girls oblivious to her past vitality.

As we approach the 200th anniversary of her coming to Canada, it is time to revitalize her symbolic potentiality. The Candy Company's new cameo has increased interest in... maybe nothing but candy, but at least it has reawakened the public's semiotic responses to the image. The company's continued use of the name -- rather than distorting it to appease modern sensibilities in the way that Colonel Saunders has been reduced to "KFC", and Wendy's hamburgers, promoted by the president, Dave Thomas, are marketed as "Dave's Faves" -- indicates that Laura Secord is still central to Canadian culture. As in the 1880s, Canadian artists are returning to Laura Secord and repeating her heroic action in novels, television commercials and stamps. But whether these (re)presentations are utilizing the myth's previous potential needs exploring.

In fact, I suggest that as ritual activities they are inert in stimulating community interests. Ineffective as educational tools, these (re)presentations de-politicize the myth by "freeze-framing" Laura Secord in a liminal position that neither speaks to the young nor echoes to the old.

Yet as an academic and as a playwright, I see Laura Secord guiding us into the next millenium, the next century, the next new-world order. But her message has little to do with cows, snakes or Americans. On one level, Laura Secord's journey "to warn" addresses the human condition by showing us that individual desire is capable of overcoming cultural and ideological limitations. This universal message has been used by Curzon, Mair, Machar, Ballantyne "John" and, even to some extent, Denison.

On a second level, however, I see "Laura Secord" as a post-modern symbol reflecting the community's fears, doubts, interests and concerns. A post-modern (re)presentation, then, would place the mythic process at the centre of the dramatic ritual. By centralizing the process rather than the product, this possible new play would dislodge Laura Secord from the conservative activity of paralleling past events with present concerns. Instead, the symbol would reveal how its fluctuating significance is created, altered and even shed by the audience's semiotic awareness, thereby highlighting the community's role as not only receivers of the myth but as myth-makers. The new direction in which the Secord image could be taken by a post-modern (re)presentation would emphasize the semiotic *jouissance* and ritual play of the Laura Secord myth

in order to retrieve the myth from its sweet lethargic state and send it on its ritual journey once again. All it would take is an individual sensitive to myth's ideological functions as well as its semiotic potential to subvert those functions. As Fleda realizes in Urquhart's novel: "Nobody understood. It wasn't the message that was important. It was the walk. The journey. Setting forth" (Urquhart 219).

APPENDIX ONE
TABLE OF EVENTS¹

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1812	War of 1812 between Canada and the United States
1813	Laura Secord journeys to Beaver Dams to warn Fitzgibbon of an American attack
1820*	Laura Secord's heroic deed is mentioned in James Secord's petition for a "licence of occupation"
1827	Fitzgibbon writes Laura Secord a letter which states the date of the walk to be on June 22 not June 23 (the document is not discovered until 1959)
1835	The Secords move from Queenston to Chippawa
1837	Fitzgibbon gives Laura Secord a Certificate stating the facts of her deed
1839	Laura Secord uses the Certificate for a Ferry petition
1841	James Secord dies Laura Secord petitions for a pension
1845	Letter sent to Editor of a Church newspaper by Chas. B. Secord mentioning the Secord walk
1853*	Gilbert Auchinleck publishes Laura Secord's story in her own words in <u>Anglo-American Magazine</u>
1857	Fitzgibbon writes another Certificate outlining the walk
1860	Laura Secord sends a memorial to the Prince of Wales on his visit to Canada enclosing Fitzgibbon's 1837 Certificate Prince of Wales sends Laura Secord £100 Reference is made to Laura Secord -- but not by name -- in the <u>Niagara Mail</u>

- 1861 Laura Secord writes a letter to Benson J. Lossing detailing her experience of the journey
- 1863 Fitzgibbon dies penniless at Windsor, UK
- 1863-4 William F. Coffin publishes War of 1812 and Its Moral (the cow is first mentioned here)
- 1868 Benson J. Lossing publishes an extract of the letter in Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812
- Laura Secord dies at the age of 93 at Chippawa, Ontario
- 1887* W. Fenwick writes a letter to Toronto World and Mail urging that a monument be erected in memory of Laura Secord
- 1887 Sarah Anne Curzon writes a drama Laura Secord: the Heroine of 1812.
- Sarah Anne Curzon writes "Memoir of Mrs Secord"
- 1888 Charles Mair publishes "A Ballad for Brave Women" in the Toronto Week
- 1889 Col. Cruikshank gives lecture "Fight in the Beechwoods" (the milk-pail is said to have been first mentioned here, yet it appears in Mair's 1888 poem)
- Sarah Anne Curzon writes "A Ballad of 1812"
- 1891 Sarah Anne Curzon writes The Story of Laura Secord, 1813
- 1892 Canon Bull asks for monument contributions by Public and High School students and women in the Counties of Lincoln and Welland
- 1894 Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon publishes A Veteran of 1812, The Life of James Fitzgibbon. The text included Fitzgibbon's 1837 Certificate, and added that Laura Secord was barefoot and carried a milking stool.

- 1897 Mrs Munro writes recollection of Laura Secord's own story as told to her
- 1897 Charles Jakeway publishes "Laura Secord" in The Lion and the Lilies, A Tale of the Conquest and Other Poems
- 1898 Sarah Anne Curzon's The Story of Laura Secord, 1813 goes into its second edition
- 1899 Mrs. Thompson becomes convener of the Monument Committee
- Agnes Maule Machar publishes "Laura Secord" in Lays of the 'True North'
- 1900 Emmie Currie publishes The Story of Laura Secord, and Canadian Reminiscences. The book is dedicated to Sarah Anne Curzon
- 1900 Mildred Peel's design is accepted for the monument
- 1901 R.E.A Land gives lecture "A National Monument to Laura Secord: Why it Should Be Erected"
- Monument erected at Drummond Hill Cemetary
- 1905 Peel portrait of Laura Secord is hung in the Ontario Legislature
- 1907 Rev Bryce gives lecture "A Study in Canadian Patriotism: Laura Secord"
- 1910 Monument erected at Queenston, Ontario
- 1913* Janet Carnochan writes "Laura Secord Monument at Lundy's Lane" Niagara Historical Society No. 25
- Mrs. E.J. Thompson writes "Laura Ingersoll Secord" Niagara Historical Society No. 25
- Frank O'Connor forms the Laura Secord Candy Company
- Emma Currie's biography of Laura Secord goes into its second edition

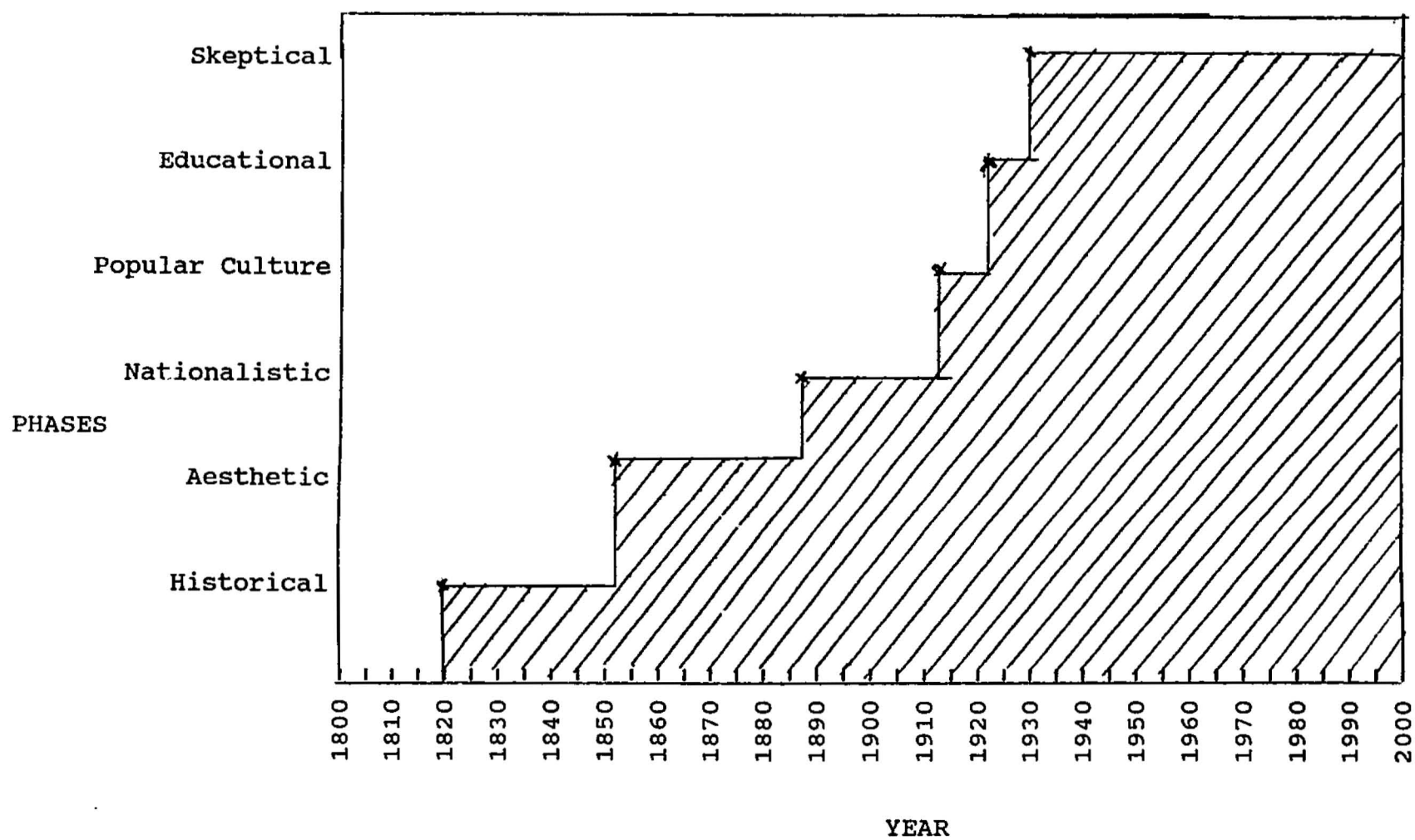
- 1915 Charles Jakeway's poem "Laura Secord" appears in The Fifth Golden Rule Book
- 1920s* Lereine Ballantyne publishes Heroes of History
- 1928 Blanche Hume writes Laura Secord
- 1928 Sara Sabrina Swain writes The Story of Laura Secord and Fanny Doyle
- 1929 A.M. Stephen publishes Class Room Plays from Canadian History
- 1931* Merrill Denison airs his radio play Laura Secord from the Romance of Canada Series of Radio Broadcasts. The radio plays are published in Henry Hudson and Other Plays
- 1932 W.S. Wallace publishes A Study in Historical Evidence
- Ida Marion Davidson writes Laura Secord a drama for children (This drama had disappeared from all Canadian libraries)
- 1934 Henry Cartwright Secord discovers James Secord's 1320 Certificate in the Public Archives of Canada
- 1935 William Perkins Bull publishes From Brock to Currie in response to Wallace's attack
- 1936 Laura Secord's portrait is revealed to have been painted over an old portrait of Sir George Ross
- 1949 "Pen of John" publishes Laura, The Heroine of Beaver Dam
- 1951 New box design and cameo for Laura Secord chocolates
- 1956 Laura Secord Company majorettes march in Grey Cup parade
- 1965 J.Mackay Hitsman publishes The Incredible War of 1812

- 1969 John Labatt Limited acquires the Laura Secord Candy Company
- The Laura Secord Homestead in Queenston is bought by the Candy Company
- 1969 Premier William E. Davis opens the Laura Secord Homestead
- 1971 Ruth McKenzie publishes Laura Secord the Legend and the Lady
- Brock University students do an archeological dig at the Homestead
- 1972 Rowntree Ltd. purchases the Laura Secord Candy Company
- 1975 Marche, Laura Secord! by Claude Roussin is first produced in Quebec
- 1986 Jane Urquhart publishes The Whirlpool
- 1988 The Nestle Group acquires the Laura Secord Candy Company
- 1992 Canada Post issues a Laura Secord Postage Stamp
- 1993 Laura Secord Candy Company introduces new cameo
- 1993 New Cameo wins the Gold Award in the ONM Canadian composition - Newspaper single
- 1994 CBC-NW airs Just a Minute "The History of Laura Secord"

ENDNOTES

1. Listed here are the key moments in the development of the Laura Secord myth. The list by no means covers all the material written and/or spoken about the subject. The asterisk (*) signals the beginning of a phase in the Secord myth's development.

CHRONOLOGICAL PHASES



APPENDIX TWO

Laura Secord Candy Company Cameos



a) 1913

b) 1951



c) 1993

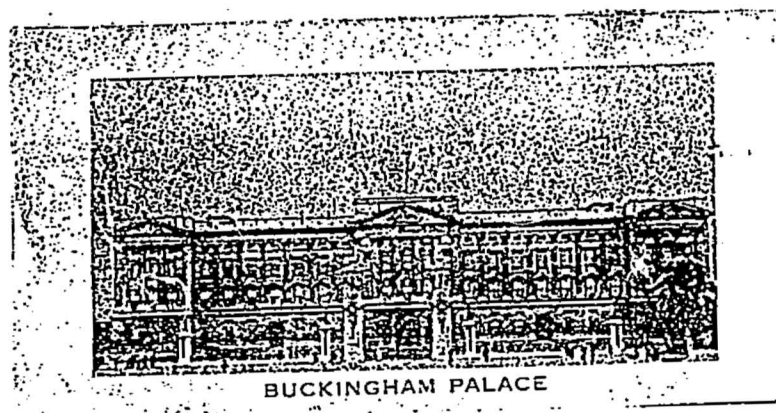


APPENDIX THREE

"War Bond" Advertisement (1910s)
 Laura Secord Candy Company Archives

*You too can SERVE-
 by SAVING!*

BUY
 WAR SAVINGS
 CERTIFICATES

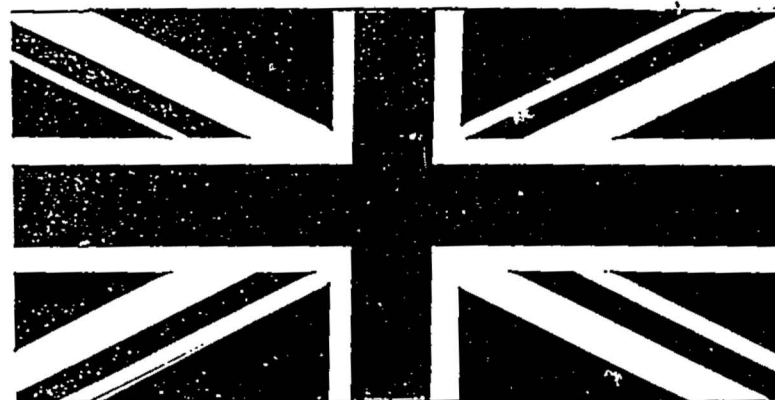



The HISTORY of OUR FLAG

Laura Secord CANDY SHOPS

HOW WE GOT OUR FLAG

1. Lift St. George's cross (England) and turn to left.
2. Lift St. Patrick's cross (Ireland) and turn to right. The cross in the centre is St. Andrew's (Scotland).
3. Replace St. George's cross over St. Andrew's and you have the flag in use on the seas from 1606 and on both land and sea 1707—the union of England and Scotland—until 1801, when Ireland came into the union.
4. Lift St. George's cross, place St. Patrick's cross over St. Andrew's.
5. Replace St. George's. The three crosses thus placed form the British Flag,—THE UNION JACK.



I'm proud of Canada!
 Is Canada proud of me?
 What she wants are citizens
 Loyal as can be.
 I love my land, and Britain's Flag
 That waves from sea to sea.
 O, I am proud of Home and Motherland
 And I'll make them proud of me.

APPENDIX FOUR

"Traditional Quality" Advertisement (1950s)
 Laura Secord Candy Company Archives

The *Laura Secord* STORY
 by B. K. Sandwell *

Early in the morning of a very hot day in June, 1813, a scant year after the outbreak of the War of 1812, a woman "of slight and delicate frame", then in her 38th year, set out from Queenston, on the Canadian side of the Niagara River just below the escarpment on which Brock's Monument now stands. Thus began a long day's journey on foot, through the enemy lines, which was destined to write her name for all time on the pages of Canadian history.

She was Laura Secord, wife of James Secord, a respected citizen of Queenston. She was born an Ingersoll of Great Barrington, Mass., daughter of Major Thomas Ingersoll, who fought on the Continental side in the Revolutionary War but later removed with his family to Canada. The date of their arrival in Canada is not exactly known, but was probably around 1795.

*BERNARD K. SANDWELL

Distinguished author, lecturer and editor. A former editor of the national publication "Saturday Night". Mr. Sandwell was an ardent advocate of the best in Canadian life and made a notable contribution in the development of Canadian culture.

territory on either side. Since 1814 the boundary between the two nations of North America has remained undefended, a tribute to the good relations existing between the two countries.

Two monuments have been erected in memory of Laura Secord's achievement, one at Queenston by the Canadian government, and one at Lundy's Lane by the Ontario Historical Society, but she did not live to see either of them. For forty years her exploit went almost unrecognized. A magazine article of 1853 was the first printed mention of it. In 1860 the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, visiting Canada to lay the foundation stone of the Ottawa Parliament Buildings, spent some days at Niagara Falls, and learning of Laura's story sent her a cheque for one hundred pounds. She died October 17, 1868, and is buried with her husband at Lundy's Lane. "Her name has become for Canadians a synonym for courage, devotion and loyalty."

TRADITIONAL QUALITY

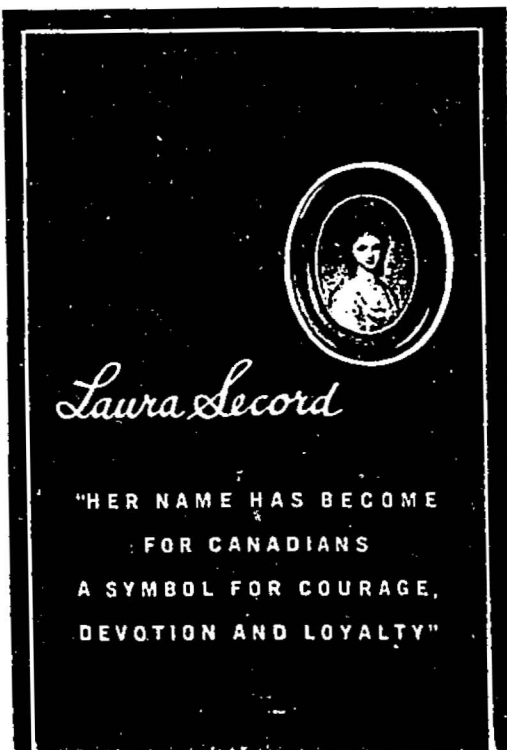
Since 1913, Laura Secord Candies have been a standard of quality. Made from old-time treasured recipes, Laura Secord candies are made from the finest foods obtainable, carefully prepared and blended by experts in the art of home cooking. This same recognized quality has now been introduced in Laura Secord Home Baking Products, which are available in most Laura Secord Candy Shops. This recognized quality of Laura Secord Candies has made them famous for flavour and freshness everywhere.



At the time of Laura Secord's journey the Canadian side of the river, for several miles inland, was in the possession of the American invaders. James Secord had been dangerously wounded in an earlier battle around Queenston, and his wife was allowed to tend him within the enemy lines. Here, on June 23, she learned of the American plan to surprise a British detachment at Beaver Dams, some distance further west, under command of Lieutenant James FitzGibbon. She determined that if possible she would convey a warning to the imperilled troops.

Starting before daylight of one of the longest days of the year, and prevented by the large number of American sentries from taking the direct route, she walked all day and well into the evening before coming to the encampment of the party of Indians who formed part of FitzGibbon's forces. Exhausted by the journey and alarmed by their signs of hostility and suspicion — she came from the American lines and they took her for a spy — she had the utmost difficulty in persuading the Indians to take her to FitzGibbon's quarters. According to one account it was well on into the next morning before she had her meeting with him and communicated her news; but at any rate it was in time to allow FitzGibbon to dispose his troops in the best manner to meet the situation. When the Americans came up about ten in the morning of June 24 expecting to surprise their foes they were themselves completely taken by surprise and the whole force, consisting of upwards of five hundred men with a fieldpiece and fifty dragoons, was captured.

This was one of the turning-points of the war. But for Laura Secord's exploit the whole history of North America since that time might well have been different. As it was, the American invasion of Canada, while not entirely repulsed, was prevented from spreading during 1813, and the war came to an end with no changes in the



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